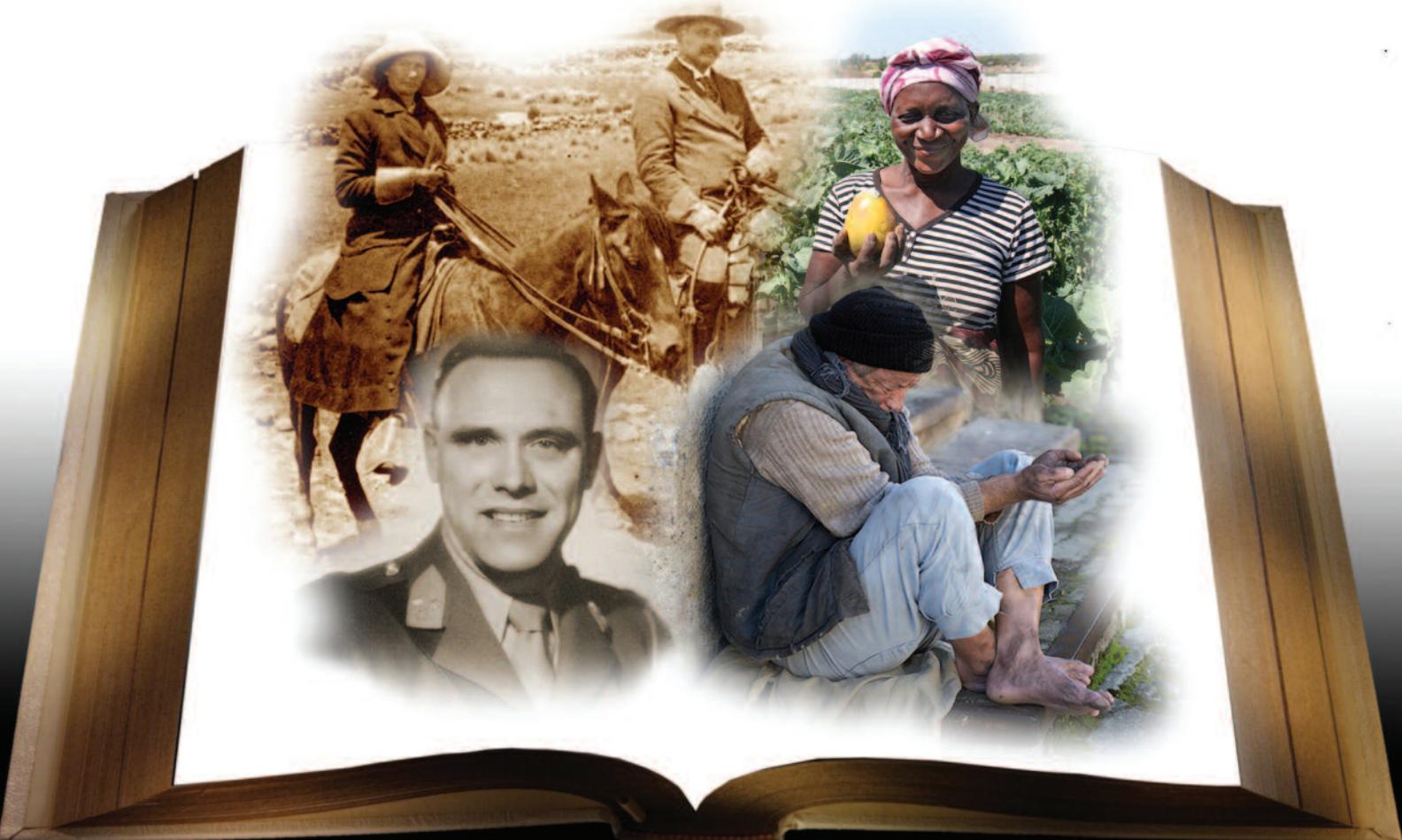


# ADVENTIST EDUCATION



BECAUSE HE HAS ANOINTED ME TO BE  
GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR    TO PROCEDE  
LEASE TO    RECOVER  
SIGHT TO    THE OPPRESSED

SPECIAL ISSUE  
**EDUCATING FOR PROPHETIC  
SOCIAL ACTIVISM**

**4****28****33****43**

SUMMER 2013 • VOLUME 75, NO. 5

## SPECIAL ISSUE: EDUCATING FOR PROPHETIC SOCIAL ACTIVISM

**3 Guest Editorial: Educating for Prophetic Social Activism**

By Lourdes Morales-Gudmundsson

**4 A Brief Reflection on Adventism and Social Causes**

By Floyd Greenleaf

**9 Eschatological Living: A Call to Restore God's Justice**

By Zack Plantak

**14 Ellen White as a Prophetic Voice for the Poor and the Oppressed**

By Ginger Hanks Harwood

**22 Fernando and Ana Stahl: Missionary Social Activists?**

By Charles Teel, Jr.

**28 "A Heart Open to the Suffering of Others": The John Henry Weidner Story**

By Kurt Ganter

**33 Pedagogical Models for Christian Social Engagement**

By Ramona L. Hyman and Andy Lampkin

**38 Karen Kotoske—Amistad: Helping Women and Children Around the World**

Interview by Jeff Boyd

**43 Build Your Own Peace Week**

By Chris Blake

**46 Resources****47 BREAKING NEWS: JAE Wins 2013 Distinguished Achievement Award From the Association of Educational Publishers**

*All of the articles in this issue have been peer reviewed.*

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**Lourdes Morales-Gudmundsson**

## EDUCATING FOR PROPHETIC SOCIAL ACTIVISM

In the fall of 2011, evangelical Christian pastors led by Jim Wallis of *Sojourners*<sup>1</sup> formed a coalition called The Circle of Protection to assist the working and non-working poor, the homeless, and the undocumented immigrant, who are affected by what the pastors regard as immoral laws that unfairly burden those who least can afford to carry the financial weight of the American economic crisis.

Throughout their 150-year history, Adventists, too, have felt a conviction to address social inequities, based on the biblical mandate expressed by their Master: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor....to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free” (Luke 4:18, 19, NRSV),<sup>2</sup> which echoes the challenge of Isaiah 58:6 and 7: “to loose the bonds of injustice, ... to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke.”

Like other people of faith who grapple with the biblical implications of these words in a complex world, Adventist educators are called on to prayerfully consider their own personal “moral compass” as they decide how they and their students can productively engage in contemporary issues relating to social justice.

Through a variety of topics, this issue of the JOURNAL addresses the following questions: “How can social outreach help to broaden our understanding and implementation of evangelism?” and “What strategies will inspire students to engage in these activities both while they are in our classrooms and throughout their lives?”

Floyd Greenleaf’s reflection on Adventist involvement with pressing social issues provides documentation showing that Adventists have always engaged in social activism, beginning with Ellen White’s support of the anti-

alcohol movement on down to the EndItNow campaign, an initiative of the General Conference’s Women’s Ministries Department in partnership with the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) to protect women and girls everywhere from violence.

By providing a framework for thinking about Adventism’s role in addressing social injustices, Zack Plantak challenges educators to find ways to connect the gospel, especially our unique emphasis on the Sabbath and the Second Coming, to a commitment to justice.

Adventists’ early prophetic/eschatological vision focused as much on living the gospel through deeds of compassion as on preaching doctrine. This understanding of the church’s mission is revealed through (1) the work and witness of Ellen White who, as Ginger Harwood’s article reveals, was a social activist, and later, (2) the sociopolitical work of such activists as Fernando and Ana Stahl who, as Charles Teel so compellingly describes, transformed the Peruvian sociopolitical structure that kept the indigenous populations on the margins of national life; and during World War II, (3) the heroic John Henry Weidner, who, Kurt Ganter shows, did not just deplore the injustice of the Nazi regime—he risked his life to do something about it. Sharing these and other stories of heroic action will go far in convincing the current and future generations of the relevance of their faith, and in inspiring them to make the world a better place.

Next, authors Hyman and Lampkin suggest possible models for Adventist social engagement by referencing the American civil rights movement and recent social involvement by Adventist universities. Their article is followed by an interview by Jeff Boyd with Karen Kotoske, founder of a worldwide humanitarian organization, who

*Continued on page 46*

# *A Brief*



## on Adventism and Social Causes<sup>1</sup>

**H**istorians of American religion typically describe the widespread social reform movements during the first half of the 19th century as the cradle of Adventism. However, it is safe to conjecture that most Seventh-day Adventists infer from the gospel commission in Matthew 28 that their primary responsibility is to preach the gospel of salvation rather than to become an activist organization as we generally understand the term in the 21st century.

Historians have also taught that Millerite Adventists believed that the immediately approaching eternal paradise they proclaimed would be the only cure to all of Earth's woes. The Millerites' faith in the Second Advent inspired them to endure the trials of this world and at the same time countered any proclivities to engage with reform movements whose activities they regarded as peripheral to the church's mission.<sup>2</sup>

### **Adventists Begin Social Reform**

The Great Disappointment of 1844 did not change their outlook. A conviction that the Second Advent was still literal and imminent lingered in the Adventist mind and pre-empted temptations to engage in social causes. However, a change began among those believers who organized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which shaped the denomination's orientation toward reform initiatives that has endured until the present. Three notable examples of their social reform efforts during the 19th century were the following:

- Founded in 1866 as the first Seventh-day Adventist health-care institution, the Western Health Reform Institute (later known as the Battle Creek Sanitarium), joined a growing number of institutions that promoted lifestyle reforms to improve the level of public health.
- A strong advocate of healthful living, Ellen White often chose to present anti-alcohol lectures (temperance was a

live issue at the time) to public audiences rather than to speak on traditional spiritual themes. Some have argued that her reputation as a public speaker depended as much on her temperance lectures as on her sermons.<sup>3</sup>

- In the area of education, from the outset of Adventist mission presence in countries with low literacy rates, the public regarded denominational schools as agents of social reform and uplift.

The change in Adventist thinking did not represent a denial of faith in the Second Advent. Adventists had always disagreed with the post-millennial theology of the 19th century, which provided a rationale for much of that era's reform. Post-millennialism held that humans were to reform the world into a thousand-year period of Christian goodness because the return of Jesus would not occur until this millennial paradise-on-earth had become a reality.

By contrast, Seventh-day Adventists continued to believe in a pre-millennial

B Y   F L O Y D   G R E E N L E A F

Second Advent. Post-millennialism not only violated prophetic chronology as they understood it, but also contradicted biblical teachings about salvation only through the atoning blood of Jesus. In addition to recognizing Jesus as the Savior of a sinful world, Adventists also believed that He was their example, and that they were to emulate His ministry, a large part of which was devoted to ameliorating human suffering. They first applied their insight to their own bodies, which led them to embrace the principles of healthful living. Thus, while Adventists rejected the theology of reform related to post-millennialism, they had no quarrel with the notion of reform itself.

Beginning in the 1870s, Adventists organized Dorcas Societies in local congregations that engaged in welfare activities to benefit the disadvantaged.<sup>4</sup> The term *Dorcas* memorialized the New Testament woman, also known as Tabitha, whose passion for the well-being of her community impelled her to conduct a personal ministry of projects to benefit the community. The name revealed how Adventists sought to relate to their neighbors.

### World Conditions Stimulate Adventist Engagement in Reform

But two world wars and a severe economic depression during the decades between 1914 and 1945 prompted Adventists to re-examine their relationship to the broken world around them. A conviction took hold after World War I that the church as an institution should reach beyond the local community. The congregation-based Dorcas Society became a first-line agency in collecting relief supplies for peoples shattered by war. Further, the Great Depression of the 1930s convinced Adventists that they should help ease economic dislocations, whose results were often as debilitating as wars and natural disasters. At first, the church directed much of its relief efforts to the Adventist community, but soon reached out to include the general public.

World War II and the subsequent Cold War marked a turning point in Adventist welfare and relief efforts. By 1946, the General Conference had

amassed several million dollars to spend on relief for a ravaged world. The combined threat of potential nuclear catastrophe and natural disasters, such as severe hurricanes in the Caribbean Basin, made it clear that the calamities for which the church would need to provide aid were both man-made and natural.

In the years following World War II, Adventist relief efforts frequently took the form of projects for which the denominational organization in the affected region assumed responsibility. A conference, union, or division might designate a special relief fund to which other fields would donate, with denomination-wide offerings occasionally providing additional funds. Adventist relief workers frequently labored side by side with other humanitarian agencies and even military personnel to assist victims of hurricanes and earthquakes.

With the formation of Seventh-day Adventist Welfare Relief, Inc., in 1956,<sup>5</sup> Adventists officially adopted the idea already in practice that relief not tied directly to evangelism constituted a legitimate end in itself. Although the purpose of this new entity was to provide centralized direction to the church's international relief program, it actually functioned as part of the General Conference Lay Activities Department.

In 1967, a major earthquake in Caracas, Venezuela, provided an added stimulus to the growing network of Adventist disaster welfare. When the quake struck, C. E. Guenther, an associate lay activities director of the General Conference, happened to be in the Venezuelan capital to attend a laymen's convention. To his chagrin, he learned that the Adventist congregations in the city were completely unprepared to provide assistance. His description of the experience, published in the *Review*



With 80 percent unemployment, the people of Zimbabwe struggle to feed themselves. ADRA's garden projects are the largest across the country, covering 125 acres and benefitting thousands of individuals.



ADRA works with mothers in southern Ethiopia to identify children who suffer from acute malnutrition. This therapeutic intervention saves the lives of thousands of children each year.

and *Herald* for the entire church to read, urged “that Adventists in every conference, mission, and church in this disaster-ridden world, will get ready now to minister to the needs and share with them our great hope and faith.”<sup>6</sup>

Guenther’s call associated humanitarianism with soul-winning. But six years later, in 1973, the denominational relief organization capitalized on the church’s earlier commitment to conduct community service independent of direct evangelism by reorganizing as Seventh-day Adventist World Services, commonly called SAWS. This new title also reflected a broader vision of development and community service, rather than relief alone. By 1980, its budget approximated \$20 million, with most of the money coming from the United States Agency for International Development. This relationship with USAID nudged many of SAWS’ activities beyond direct evangelistic purposes.

Although SAWS’ leadership embraced a global vision, Latin American countries received more assistance than other regions of the world. Chile, Peru,

and Brazil were the leading beneficiaries. Through the 1970s, SAWS’ activities became increasingly developmental, focusing on responses to chronic conditions including hunger and sanitation, and community projects such as agriculture, nutrition, and maternal health.

### **ADRA and Non-Sectarian Engagement**

Another name change in 1983 from SAWS to ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency)<sup>7</sup> more specifically described the church’s commitment to proactive involvement in social uplift. An event that dramatically signaled the church’s intention for engagement occurred in 1987, when General Conference President Neal Wilson led a delegation of Adventists to the USSR to promote religious freedom. Reflecting the spirit of *glasnost*, he offered to make Adventist expertise in operating health-care institutions available to the Soviet medical profession.

Over the years, ADRA’s projects have been quite diverse. In some large South American cities, ADRA set up rehabilitation centers for youth caught up in substance abuse and prostitution. During the 1990s, as Yugoslavia broke

into quarreling factions, ADRA’s assistance included a neutral mail service that bridged warring parties. In Zaire, ADRA showed its commitment to environmentalism by conducting a tree-planting campaign intended to replace the forests that refugees had ravaged for wood. At the same time, this initiative helped to restore the habitat of the silverback gorilla, an endangered species. Peasant farmers in the Lake Titicaca region of Peru received instruction about small-scale agricultural diversification that enabled them to improve their own nutrition and produce garden products for sale. By the mid-1990s, more than 130 ADRA employees in Bolivia were helping engineers to improve community water and sewer systems, pave streets, and institute soil-preservation procedures.

According to the ADRA Website, current projects, in addition to disaster relief, include drilling wells and building sanitation systems, collaborating with a local expert company to build centers for drying and processing fruits and vegetables, and creating a female-directed goat cooperative (both in Zambia);

micro-lending projects in several countries; and educational programs for women and girls, as well as for refugees and people living in poverty.<sup>8</sup>

ADRA embodies the denomination's supreme example of non-sectarian participation in humanitarian projects, but Adventists did not always separate evangelism from public causes. Ellen White's anti-alcohol lectures morphed into a well-developed temperance program under the auspices of a General Conference department. During the 1950s and 1960s, Adventist temperance activities included anti-tobacco campaigns such as the Five-Day Plan to Stop Smoking, featuring the manikin "Smoking Sam."<sup>9</sup> Informational films like *One in 20,000* also exposed the risks of tobacco use. Preachers in many parts of the world enhanced the appeal of their public evangelism by using these and similar tools to show that the Bible was a relevant source of health and social values.

### **Position Statements, Gender Equality, and Political Involvement**

Beginning in the 1980s, church leaders started to issue position statements about a variety of social issues with moral implications.<sup>10</sup> Topics ranged widely, including child abuse, drug addiction, poverty, family matters, sexuality, literacy, human cloning, assault weapons, and environmentalism. For more than a decade, the denomination's Christian View of Human Life Committee studied bioethical issues and made recommendations to church health-care institutions and the church at large. At times, position statements have addressed international politics, such as specific wars. Typically, these papers link biblical references to the topics, but only occasionally does a statement center upon a specific doctrine. Believing that the church should represent a moral force in a troubled world, church leaders have used these statements to announce to the public where Adventism stands on hot-button issues.

A major concern in both the church and society has been the question of gender equality. During the 1970s, the denomination equalized salaries for men

and women, and as the century drew to a close, most employment positions in the church were technically open to women. But meanwhile, an animated discussion, abetted by several study commissions, arose regarding the appropriate role of women in church leadership, which also drew attention to their unique responsibilities as wives and mothers. Women agreed that being wives and mothers was an important responsibility for their gender, but pointed out that this should not preclude leadership roles for married as well as for single women. Indeed, they pled for more official recognition of family values, and for the church to recognize the uniqueness of women's ministries. Although the debate centered upon the question of women's ordination, most women were probably more concerned about increasing their participation in church decision making.

While the denomination's official attention to women's and family issues extended back unevenly into the 19th century, the intensity of the debate during the last quarter of the 20th century helped to drive resolutions for establishing several new departments—Children's Ministries, Family Ministries, and Women's Ministries—at all levels of church administration.<sup>11</sup> These new entities promoted greater awareness and action on issues relating to women and children, among them literacy and poverty, as well as how to handle such matters as divorce, family violence, and parenting. They also continued to fuel the question of how to broaden leadership roles for women and increase their involvement in church deliberative processes at all levels.

In some instances, Adventists promoted social ideals by serving in public office. Notable among them were descendants of the Andean tribespeople who for centuries had lived in virtual slavery under Peruvian landowners. Another was Eunice Michiles, whose paternal grandparents were Adventist pioneers in the German communities in Brazil. Michiles became the first woman senator in Brazil, earning an

international reputation as a protagonist for education, women's rights, and family planning. In a sense, she simply raised the bar of engagement that earlier Adventists had previously set years earlier in Peru and the Amazon watershed. In these regions, Fernando and Ana Stahl, Leo and Jessie Halliwell, and an army of national workers who succeeded them had helped to transform the economy and society through education and public-health programs (see article in this issue by Charles Teel on page 22). In Peru, the Stahls' labors triggered a revision in the national constitution that opened the door to religious freedom. In 1958, the Brazilian government awarded the Halliwells its highest award for civilians.

### **Ellen White and "Disinterested Kindness"**

When describing the Good Samaritan, Ellen White termed his relief and assistance to a beaten and robbed traveler "disinterested kindness," explaining that such gestures may be the only means by which some will become conscious of God's benevolence.<sup>12</sup> Since their 19th-century origin, Adventists have come to realize that their commitment to the entire Bible as their rule of faith requires them to treat the natural world and other humans with care and respect because they are the product of divine creative power.

Yet, as the debate about gender equality has shown, engagement by Adventists in social causes has not been a unanimous undertaking, nor has it always followed a consistent line. The church equalized salaries for men and women in the U.S. only after a lawsuit forced the issue.<sup>13</sup> The position statements issued by the church speak only to some selected matters, not to all major questions. Some Adventists, especially those who have endured hardship, have voiced concern about what they view as slow or inadequate response by the church to issues such as political oppression and ethnic discrimination.

Questions have also been raised about ADRA, which has remained the most visible agent of Adventist humanitarian activism, cooperating with existing local or national authorities to

carry out its programs. Although the organization receives money and gifts-in-kind from many sources, including large private donations, congregational offerings in churches, and funds from various public agencies, by far its major support comes from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). ADRA functions as a faith-based agency that distributes government-furnished international aid in a non-sectarian manner, although it has been free to advertise itself as an Adventist organization.

Focusing on the imperative of the gospel commission, some argue that the church's involvement in social causes has distracted from its central purpose of preaching the gospel. It is not the responsibility of the church, they say, to treat every social problem; in fact, the church may be too involved already. Because ADRA depends extensively on public money, some Adventists have expressed fear that its policies have brought the denomination precariously close to breaching its traditional position on the separation of church and state. However, most Adventists now live in places characterized by economic scarcity rather than plenty, and for them, combining the social aspects of the gospel with evangelism represents a more nearly complete version of the meaning of Jesus' ministry than does preaching alone.

After a history of 150 years of promoting social reform, seeking a balance between preaching the urgency of the Second Advent and dealing with the reality of a disturbed world is still an elusive goal that sparks debate. This tension is not destructive. Proponents of both sides of the issue help the church to achieve balance. They remind each other of the constant need to redefine the spheres of legitimate activity for the church and help it achieve a workable consensus. The outcome of this confrontation of convictions is the ever-lengthening list of projects that the church supports, which indicates that the collective Adventist conscience has become more sensitive to the world's acute needs. At the same time, the Ad-

ventist purse has become more capable of supporting wider participation.

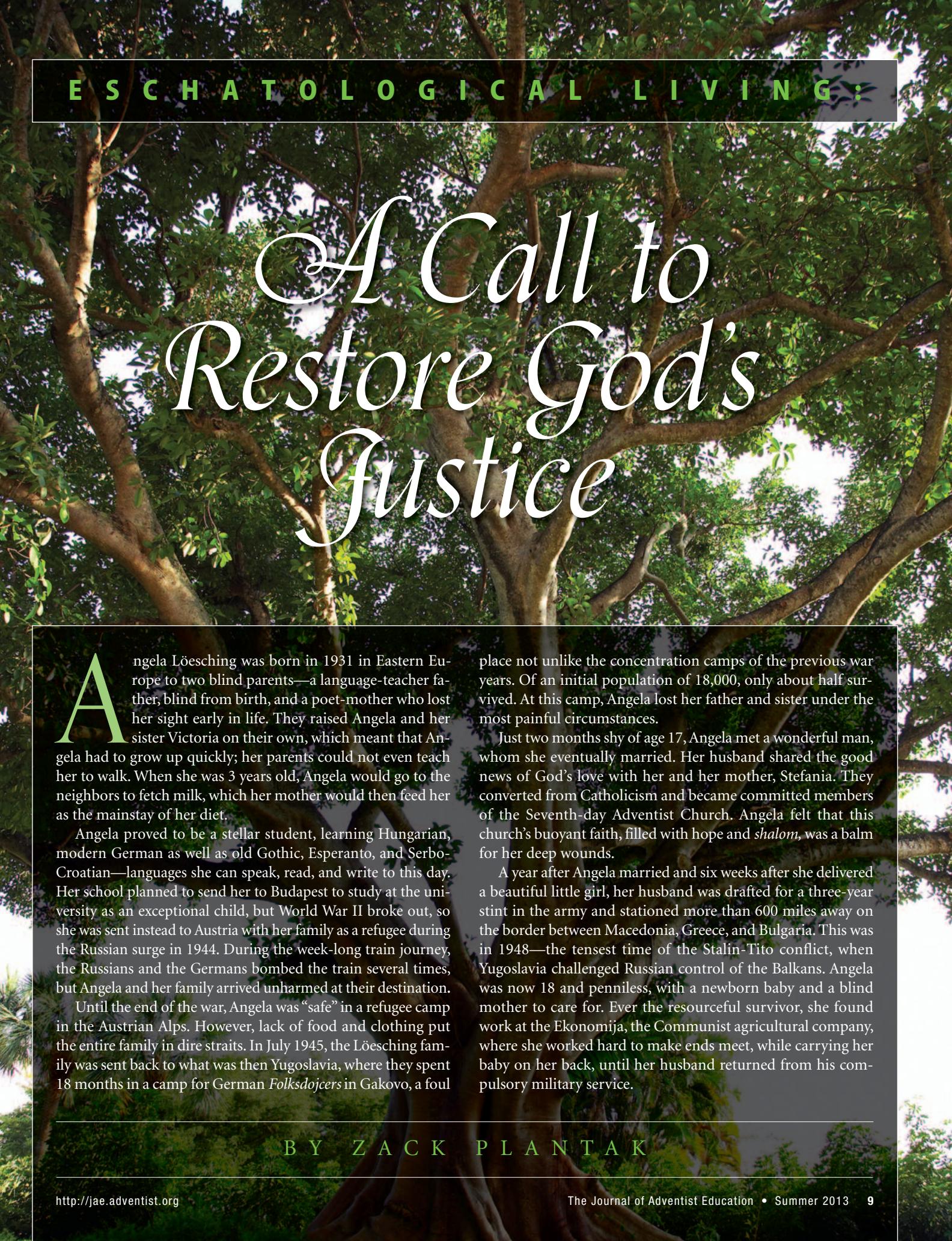
The final decades of the 20th century and the opening years of the 21st have witnessed a plethora of uplift activity within global Adventism. In many places, the old Dorcas Societies have evolved into well-recognized community-service centers offering financial assistance, Christian counseling, a variety of adult education courses ranging from computer programming to English for Speakers of Other Languages, as well as other types of material assistance to the needy. As a part of their services, educational and health-care institutions alike promote wellness among their employees and to the public. Many teens and young adults take a year off from college to serve as student missionaries, participate in mission trips during school vacations, and engage in a variety of volunteer activities on community-service days. Pathfinders march to draw attention to substance abuse and collect food for community-service centers. In order to assist with short-term projects in dozens of countries, adults raise funds and volunteer their skills, ranging from medical assistance to laying brick. For a church that teaches disinterested kindness, all of this has seemed the right thing to do. ☘



**Floyd Greenleaf** is a retired educator, historian, and author of books and articles about Seventh-day Adventist history and education. His most recent book is *A Land of Hope: The Growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South America*, which appeared in 2011 in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. He writes from Port Charlotte, Florida.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. I have distilled this article from previous research appearing in three of my books, primarily but not limited to the following pages: *The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1992), vol. 2, pages 476-499; *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* [coauthor Richard Schwarz] (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 2000), pages 458-477; *A Land of Hope: The Growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South America*, English edition (Tatui, Sao Paulo, Brazil: Casa Publicadora, 2011), pages 655-663. I have also relied on my research for *In Passion for the World: A History of Seventh-day Adventist Education* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 2005) and for articles I have written for *The Journal of Adventist Education*.
2. Charles Teel has aptly described this spiritual mood in "Bridegroom Cry" or 'Babylon Call?' *The Journal of Adventist Education* 57:1 (October/November 1994):23-29. See <http://circle.adventist.org/files/download/jae199457012307.pdf>. Accessed March 6, 2013.
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5. See "ADRA," *ibid.*, pp. 12-14.
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8. Projects listed on ADRA Website (<http://www.adra.org>), March 2013.
9. See "Five-Day Plan to Stop Smoking," *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, op. cit., pp. 463, 464.
10. The basic source for these position papers is the General Conference Website (<http://www.adventist.org>), which contains updated copies of each statement. For a helpful discussion about them, see Mark F. Carr and Gerald R. Winslow, "Using the Church's Ethics Statements in Your Classroom," *The Journal of Adventist Education* 70:1 (October/November 2007):4-11. See <http://circle.adventist.org/files/jae/en/jae200770010408.pdf>. Accessed March 6, 2013.
11. According to the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* for 2011, the Department of Children's Ministries organized in 1995, Family Ministries in 1975 but reorganized in 1995, and Women's Ministries in 1990. These dates do not represent when the first activities in each of these fields began, but only when the responsibilities became large enough to justify full department status.
12. Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1941), p. 387.
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# A Call to Restore God's Justice

**A**ngela Löeschling was born in 1931 in Eastern Europe to two blind parents—a language-teacher father, blind from birth, and a poet-mother who lost her sight early in life. They raised Angela and her sister Victoria on their own, which meant that Angela had to grow up quickly; her parents could not even teach her to walk. When she was 3 years old, Angela would go to the neighbors to fetch milk, which her mother would then feed her as the mainstay of her diet.

Angela proved to be a stellar student, learning Hungarian, modern German as well as old Gothic, Esperanto, and Serbo-Croatian—languages she can speak, read, and write to this day. Her school planned to send her to Budapest to study at the university as an exceptional child, but World War II broke out, so she was sent instead to Austria with her family as a refugee during the Russian surge in 1944. During the week-long train journey, the Russians and the Germans bombed the train several times, but Angela and her family arrived unharmed at their destination.

Until the end of the war, Angela was “safe” in a refugee camp in the Austrian Alps. However, lack of food and clothing put the entire family in dire straits. In July 1945, the Löeschling family was sent back to what was then Yugoslavia, where they spent 18 months in a camp for German *Folksdörfers* in Gakovo, a foul

place not unlike the concentration camps of the previous war years. Of an initial population of 18,000, only about half survived. At this camp, Angela lost her father and sister under the most painful circumstances.

Just two months shy of age 17, Angela met a wonderful man, whom she eventually married. Her husband shared the good news of God’s love with her and her mother, Stefania. They converted from Catholicism and became committed members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Angela felt that this church’s buoyant faith, filled with hope and *shalom*, was a balm for her deep wounds.

A year after Angela married and six weeks after she delivered a beautiful little girl, her husband was drafted for a three-year stint in the army and stationed more than 600 miles away on the border between Macedonia, Greece, and Bulgaria. This was in 1948—the tensest time of the Stalin-Tito conflict, when Yugoslavia challenged Russian control of the Balkans. Angela was now 18 and penniless, with a newborn baby and a blind mother to care for. Ever the resourceful survivor, she found work at the Ekonomija, the Communist agricultural company, where she worked hard to make ends meet, while carrying her baby on her back, until her husband returned from his compulsory military service.

BY ZACK PLANTAK

A small group of local Adventist believers helped Angela during that time by providing milk for the baby and wood to burn during the bitterly cold winters. This church community, despite its faults, became to Angela's family the body of Christ. It was, in a small but tangible way, what Isaiah described: "a well-watered garden, a spring whose waters never fail, . . . repairer of broken walls and restorer" of social justice (58:6-12).<sup>1</sup> Indeed, this community became the Sabbath of delight for a broken young woman, as they practiced the Isaiah "fast"—loosing the chains of injustice, untying the cords of the yoke, sharing food with the hungry; providing the poor with shelter; clothing the naked; spending itself on behalf of others; and satisfying the mental, emotional, and material needs of the oppressed.

Angela is my mother!

But why this personal story? I believe that our stories shape us and give us a theological center and meaning. If Angela could be healed of the despair and pain of the horrors of this ugly, sinful world, which are almost unimaginable to my generation, and if she could courageously raise all three of her children (and four grandchildren) in addition to performing humanitarian work in Adventist church communities in Australia, England, and the United States, then God's restoration and reparation of the world are real. And this is exactly what God calls us to do through our faith community.

### Prophetic Living

I have argued elsewhere<sup>2</sup> that today's Christian community must take a much more imaginative and visioning "prophetic role" in the present age, and that looking more closely at the biblical prophets will provide us with a much-needed clarification about the way that prophetic role must be fulfilled. We will gain these insights less through apocalyptic and time-line warnings and chart-ticking (in)securities, and more from studying the way biblical prophets accomplished their tasks—through imaginative visioning and social activism in the socio-ethical, political,<sup>3</sup> ecological, and economic arenas, especially as they fought for the people Jesus referred to as the "least of these" within the social, political, and economic strata, who suffered the worst injustices.

Furthermore, in several places I have made a strong call for two major theological tenets—the Sabbath<sup>4</sup> and soon coming of Christ—to become significantly more socio-ethically relevant. I believe that the richness of our theological heritage should give us much greater interest in the "other," whose human dignity, rights, and aspirations should be supported. Our Sabbath teaching and practice should include not only weekly Sabbaths that equalize us all before God, but also annual sabbaths that specifically focus on social justice and represent a moral embrace of that great jubilee year referred to not only by Leviticus and Deuteronomy but also by Jesus of Nazareth in describing His mission in His inaugural messianic proclamation.<sup>5</sup> The Second Coming encompasses both the hope that we

proclaim through evangelism but also—as referenced at the end of Christ's Olivet discourse—the doing for the least of our sisters and brothers socially and morally exactly what we would do if it was Jesus Himself on the receiving end of our actions.<sup>6</sup>

### Eschatological Living as Prophetic Living

For several years now, I have wrestled with one further point, which has helped me discover a more helpful and satisfying conclusion. Previously, I had been calling for more imaginative prophetic living, and I continue to believe that this is a special calling for any prophetic community, especially a remnant prophetic community.<sup>7</sup> However, I also now advocate for what I call "eschatological living." The seer in the Book of Revelation received a vision of how that new world looked. He directed our eyes to the lush garden with water flowing freely to energize the trees that give fruits in frequent cycles and produce leaves that are so therapeutic that they serve for the healing of the nations.

Until recently, I had always thought of this picture in terms of post-Second Coming and therefore had not tried to reconcile it with God's invitation to the moral community of all believers here and now. And yet, eschatological living urges us to take seriously the vision of New Jerusalem and to apply it to life today.<sup>8</sup> In some way, as South African scholar Adrio König argues in his book, our view must reject on one hand "a completed and [on another] a one-sidedly futuristic eschatology in favor of an eschatology in the process of being realized."<sup>9</sup> He further suggests that "full eschatological reality requires . . . a realized eschatology ('for us'), an eschatology being realized ('in us'), and an eschatology yet-to-be-realized ('with us')."<sup>10</sup>

König then unpacks what he means by his middle stage of "eschatology being realized" between the first and the second comings of Christ: "In the New Testament, God's children are sometimes called strangers and pilgrims in the world (Heb. 11:13ff; 1 Pet. 2:11). It is even said that their citizenship (Phil. 3:20-21) and treasure (Matt. 6:20) are in heaven, and that they aspire to a realm above (Col. 3:2). But this estrangement between God's children and the world is due to the fact that God's children are already (at least partly) renewed, while the earth is still old and 'lies in the power of the evil one' (1 John 5:19). Our alien status on earth is therefore temporary. It implies not that we are destined for some place other than earth, but rather that the old, unrenewed earth does not suit us yet. That is why the expectation of a new earth is a living hope for the faithful."<sup>11</sup>

That is why, having been born into a new life<sup>12</sup> and renewed by the living waters of the Holy Spirit (John 7:38-40),<sup>13</sup> we are already living the life that we are hoping for, and thus should be implementing the principles of the kingdom of grace that we soon expect to experience in the new earth and New Jerusalem in the kingdom of glory.<sup>14</sup> Jürgen Moltmann expresses it succinctly: "Time after the [first] coming of Christ must be seen as





**Left: The author's mother, Angela, at age 18; and above with her blind mother about three years ago.**

'fulfilled but not yet completed time.' It is no longer the time of pure expectation, nor is it as yet the eternal present of the time of completion. That is why we live between the 'now already' and the 'not yet.'<sup>15</sup> As this "future-made-present" creates new conditions for possibilities in history, it becomes the ultimate in the penultimate, and creates a reflection of the possibilities of the "future of time in the midst of time."<sup>16</sup>

N. T. Wright, in his recent book *Surprised by Hope*, elaborates for several hundred pages on this same concept. He speaks about "a sense of continuity as well as discontinuity between the present world (and the present state), and the future, whatever it shall be, with the result that what we do in the present matters enormously. . . . It was people who believed robustly in the resurrection . . . who stood up against Caesar in the first centuries of Christian era. A piety that sees death as the moment of 'going home at last,' the time, when we are 'called to God's eternal peace' has no quarrel with power-mongers who

want to carve up the world to suit their own ends. Resurrection, by contrast, has always gone with a strong view of God's justice and of God as the good creator. Those twin beliefs give rise not to a meek acquiescence to injustice in the world but to a robust determination to oppose it."<sup>17</sup>

I have become fully convinced that the biblical imagery of the leaves that are given for the healing of the nations (Revelation 22:2) must indeed be applied to our eschatological living here and now. The image is clearly linked to previous passages in the prophetic and wisdom literature and to several other metaphors used to call a community of God-fearing people to prophetic living laden with social justice. This type of prophetic living cares about and for the earth that God pronounced *good* when He created it, and for which He was willing to die in order to restore it from "Paradise Lost" to "Paradise Restored," in which the lion will lie down with the lamb.

Echoes of the wisdom poetry of Psalm 1 are clearly evident in the vision of the seer: "He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever [the righteous] does, prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous."<sup>18</sup> The righteousness that we strive for in this life is similarly described as the final righteousness of the new world order that God establishes when His will is finally enacted on earth as it is already fully realized in heaven. And the tree in Psalm 1 whose "leaves do not wither" seems to bear some connection to the original Edenic tree of life. "As the tree situated in the garden of God served to confer everlasting life to the primal couple, so the psalmist's tree is the sign and symbol" of blessedness and happiness for the individual.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, in wisdom literature elsewhere, such as Proverbs 11:30 and 15:4, texts explicitly associate the tree of life with righteousness and the healing properties of the speech. On numerous occasions in the Book of Proverbs, righteousness and wickedness are described with powerful imagery, so when we think about the word pair "righteous/wicked," the terms that are such essential "elements of the psalmic vocabulary,"<sup>20</sup> we cannot neglect the statement in Proverbs 29:7 regarding these two groups: "The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern."<sup>21</sup> This makes it clear that the righteous who are planted like trees with deep roots and nourishing supplies of ever-flowing water are indeed the kind of people that care for the socially and economically disadvantaged. If tree symbolism in Psalms, as William P. Brown suggests, "underscores YHWH's creative power to bless, recalling the shalom of the primordial garden,"<sup>22</sup> then it is logical to assume that the prophet Isaiah is further developing this ecologically friendly metaphor by adding parallel similes to paint a fuller theological canvass of the community that is watered by God and consequently produces His justice and enacts His righteousness.

In Isaiah 1, the faith community is called to repentance from meaningless worship and useless Sabbath assemblies (vss. 10-15) because they have failed to "seek justice, encourage the oppressed, defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow" (vss. 17, 22, 23), and have become "like an oak with fading leaves, like a garden without water," so dry that it burns

and cannot be extinguished (vss. 30, 31). God's anger is directed against those who have ruined His vineyard (Isaiah 5:7) because "the plunder of the poor is in [their] houses [because they are crushing God's people] and grinding the faces of the poor" (Isaiah 3:14, 15).

As an eco-friendly, sustainability-encouraging viticulturist and botanist, God plants His vineyard on a fertile hillside, takes care of it, and expects its fruit to reflect the gardener's loving touch. However, the spiritual vineyard and "the garden of his delight" (Isaiah 5:7) have become corrupted and lack social justice because God's people are so materially possessed and commercially driven that they add "house to house and join field to field till no space is left," while they live, alienated and alone, in their "fine mansions" (vss. 7, 8). So a shoot comes from the stump of Jesse and from His root a Branch bears fruit. The Spirit of the Lord is the Branch and will judge the needy with righteousness and give justice to the poor of the Earth (Isaiah 11:1-2, 4, 5). The "righteous branch" wields power to implement justice and, thereby, brings about peace and prosperity for his people<sup>23</sup> and for the nations.<sup>24</sup> And "a remnant [is called to once more] . . . take root below and bear fruit above" (Isaiah 37:31, 32), an invitation to deep spiritual rootedness that produces an abundance of fruit and ever-green branches in ethical, social, and environmental spheres. Thus, we see again the close linkage of social awareness and ecological justice in a concept of rootedness and fruit bearing.

Isaiah's most elaborate explanation of these metaphors appears in chapters 58 and 61. Just as the tree in the New Jerusalem expresses God's magnificence, the community of believers who "will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor . . . will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated" (Isaiah 61:3, 4). This paints a splendid picture of the community of faith serving as the leaves for the healing of the world.<sup>25</sup> The healing of the well-watered garden and the spring whose waters never fail (Isaiah 61:7, 11) are identified in terms of "to spend yourself on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed" (Isaiah 58:10),<sup>26</sup> just as the sheep in Jesus' last sermon (Matthew 25:31-46) are commended for what they have done for the needy as if for Christ Himself. Isaiah's community is, therefore, not dissimilar to Jeremiah's righteous person who "will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green" (Jeremiah 17:8). This resembles Jesus' description in John's Gospel that "whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within him" (7:38)<sup>27</sup>; and Ezekiel's vision "of a great river [that] is depicted issuing from the temple to fructify the land"<sup>28</sup> that the seer of Patmos replicates with modifications in Revelation 22. I believe that this is an unequivocal call for environmental and social justice to function collaboratively.

## Conclusion

G. K. Chesterton once wrote: "If small seeds in the black earth can become such beautiful roses, think what the heart of a human being can become on its long journey to the stars."<sup>29</sup> In our present eschatological living, we must live as resurrection people poised between Easter and the Eschaton, when Easter will

become completed in the second coming of Christ. In view of this, we as followers of Christ, motivated by the vision of the seer of Patmos, must not passively wait for our Master to return. Rather, we must become His hands and feet by becoming that well-watered garden envisioned by the poet, prophet, and seer. We must act here and now as righteous, green-leaved trees that work for justice on behalf of the poor. With the help of the Spirit, we can become ever-flowing waters of justice through whom God can accomplish His work of repairing broken communities and restoring justice. In simple terms, our prophetic calling and living must also become our Advent-directed eschatological living.<sup>30</sup> How can we accomplish this task?

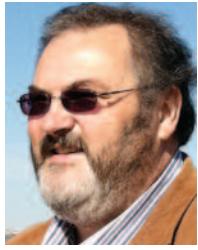
At the closing program of the World Council of Churches in Porto Alegre in 2006, Robina Marie Winbush preached a sermon entitled "For the Healing of the Nations." Her concluding questions are pertinent to our community as well:

"God is transforming the world: Are you willing to be a leaf on the tree of life, whom God uses for the healing of the nations? Are you willing to resist bowing down to the temporal gods of exploitation and domination and allow your life and your churches to be used for the healing of the nations and transformation of the world? Remember that the power and strength to be a leaf does not belong to you. It is a result of being attached to the tree of life whose roots are watered by the river of life that flows from the throne of God and the Lamb."<sup>31</sup>

C. S. Lewis draws a similar conclusion, noting that "In our world today Jesus Christ [the Lion] is on the move. He is real; he is present. His redeeming, reconciling, healing work is progressing. But he had also not yet come in his full power and glory. That lies in the future. Until that day Christians are called to be Christ's instruments for reconciliation and healing in a broken world."<sup>32</sup>

There is no doubt that the hope presented by John the Reuelator has begun to penetrate God's world already here and now. Angela still suffers terrible physical pain from arthritis and nerve damage that make those who love her cry, "How long, O Lord?" She is not fully healed. Neither is our world. And similarly, in our own experiences, we still see the innocent suffer and people subjected to systemic injustice. Unfortunately, many students in our schools and universities from comfortable backgrounds believe that people ought to be self-sufficient and pull themselves up by their bootstraps, which too often translates into contempt for the poor and those who are unlucky because of illness, unemployment, or other personal tragedies. Worldwide, more than three billion people live in abject poverty (one billion subsisting on less than \$1 a day, and two billion on \$2 a day).

But the Divine-on-the-Move has been healing the entire world with His grace and love and is willing to heal others through us. It is our responsibility as educators and mentors in Adventist schools to help a new generation embrace a radical philosophy that rejects the "I-Me-Mine" culture and incarnates the vision of the biblical prophets, becoming members of the kingdom of grace and working to accomplish God's universal purposes as they wait for the soon-coming kingdom of glory. And thus, we must pray and live daily that radical prayer of Jesus: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is [already] in heaven" (Matthew 6:10, KJV). ☩



Zack Plantak chairs the Department of Religion at Washington Adventist University in Takoma Park, Maryland, and is the author of a book and several articles on social justice issues. He grew up in Croatia and Yugoslavia, and completed his B.A. in Theology and M.A. in Religion with an additional year in Church Growth and Pastoral and Marital Counseling at Newbold College in England. While pastoring in London and teaching at Newbold College, he completed his Ph.D. at King's College, University of London. He can be reached at [zplantak@wau.edu](mailto:zplantak@wau.edu).

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Unless otherwise specified, all Scripture quotations in the article and endnotes are from the *New International Version* of the Bible. Scripture quotations credited to NIV are from *The Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.
2. Zdravko Plantak, *The Silent Church: Human Rights and Adventist Social Ethics* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press Ltd.; and New York: St. Martin's/Palgrave Press, 1998); \_\_\_\_\_, "A People of Prophecy: Recovering the Biblical Role of the Prophets," in *The Peacemaking Remnant: Essays and Historical Documents*, Douglas Morgan, ed. (Silver Spring, Md.: Adventist Peace Fellowship, 2005), pp. 21-34; and \_\_\_\_\_, "The Role of the Biblical Prophets: ADRA in the Midst of the Prophetic Community," *Adventist Development and Relief Agency International Reflections: A Journal for Study and Reflection on Development Issues From a Christian Perspective* 1:1 (2002):33-48.
3. Political theology is not politicizing or getting involved into party politics, but rather a theology of the marketplace or what is also known as "public theology" or "living theology."
4. Zdravko Plantak, "Why Should the Poor Concern Us?" *Adventist Review* 179:44 (November 7, 2002):10, 11: <http://www.adventistreview.org/2002/1545/story2.html>. Accessed April 1, 2013.
5. See e.g., Deuteronomy 15 and Leviticus 25. Also, compare with Jesus' announcement of "the year of the Lord's favor" in His Nazareth manifesto in Luke 4:18-21.
6. Mother Teresa often raised a similar point. She claimed that she could never have worked in the slums of Calcutta with the poorest of the poor if she did not think that when she was washing the sores of the lepers or holding a dying child, she was actually doing this to Jesus.
7. For further discussion, see Zdravko Plantak, "A Prophetic Community Today: Imaginative Visionaries and Social Activists for the Third Millennium," in *Exploring the Frontier of Faith: Festschrift in Honour of Dr. Jan Paulsen—Congratulatory Edition*, Reinder Bruinsma and Borge Schantz, eds. (Lueneburg: Advent-Verlag, 2010), pp. 139-156.
8. For further discussion, see Charles Scriven, *The Promise of Peace: Dare to Live the Advent Hope* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 2009), pages 20-33 and 72-84. A similar point is raised by Sigve K. Tonstad, "For the Healing of the Nations" (unpublished paper presented at the Adventist Society for Religious Studies, New Orleans, November 20, 2009), page 9. Tonstad concludes: "In this text [Revelation 22:2] the healing that belongs to the lush land of the future has broken in on the arid land of the present."
9. Adrio König, *The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology: Toward a Christ-Centered Approach* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), p. 147.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p. 236.
12. E.g., Romans 6:4, and other New Testament texts, on "new life," "life in the Spirit," being "in Christ."
13. Jürgen Moltmann suggests that, through His Spirit "God now already sets present and past in the light of his eschatological arrival, an arrival which means the establishment of his eternal kingdom, and his indwelling in the creation renewed for that indwelling" (*The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004], p. 23).
14. These two phrases about the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of glory are borrowed from Ellen G. White's books *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1888), pp. 347, 348; and *The Acts of the Apostles* (Pacific Press, 1911), page 228, and are based on the biblical concepts of the "kingdom of God being at hand" and "kingdom of God being in you." For more on this topic, as well as the larger discussion regarding the theological richness of the debate in the larger Christian and Adventist communities on the concept of the kingdom of God and its two realities, see Plantak, *The Silent Church: Human Rights and Adventist Social Ethics*, op. cit., pp. 168-184.
15. Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, op. cit., p. 11.
16. Ibid., p. 22.
17. N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), pp. 26, 27. Wright, furthermore, suggests that "to work for that intermediate hope, the surprising hope that comes forward from God's ultimate future into God's urgent present, is not a distraction from the task of mission and evangelism in the present. It is a central, essential, vital, and life-giving part of it" (p. 192). See also Scriven, (*The Promise of Peace*, op. cit., p. 25), who suggests that if Jesus "was the root meaning of a faith lived in the light of hope, then radical hope requires attention to the needs of today." In other words, "the future has present relevance—it colors my life right now" (*ibid.*, p. 76).
18. William P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor* (Louisville: John Knox, 2002), p. 60.
19. Ibid.
20. James Luther Mays, *Psalms: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox, 1994), p. 46.
21. For further discussion, see Plantak, "Wisdom Tradition on Poverty," *Adventist Development and Relief Agency International Reflections*, op. cit., pp. 48-65.
22. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, op. cit., p. 74. Brown explores the significance of the metaphor of "a tree" in Psalms and its significance at the beginning of the Psalter, comparing it to other biblically significant passages throughout the Jewish Scriptures. See also Sylvia Keesmaat, "The Beautiful Creatures: Trees in the Biblical Story": *TheOtherJournal.com* (July 16, 2009): <http://theotherjournal.com/2009/07/16/the-beautiful-creatures-trees-in-the-biblical-story/>. Accessed March 31, 2013.
23. Brown, *ibid.*, p. 69.
24. Tonstad, "For the Healing of the Nations," op. cit., pages 5-7, makes important connections between Isaiah 11 and Revelation 22, especially in the context of the plural term *nations*.
25. See the excellent discussion on justice and righteousness in Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets: An Introduction* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), 1:195-221; and Steve Monsma, *Healing for a Broken World: Christian Perspectives on Public Policy* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2008), pages 46-61.
26. Similar metaphors abound in the prophets such as Amos 5:24, which states, "let justice roll on like a river and righteousness like a never-failing stream!"
27. Verse 39 adds: "By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive," further showing how the healing of the nations through the well-watered gardens and trees rooted in God could and should give its effect between Jesus' first and second comings. The elements of Jesus as our temple, from whom the living waters flow, and the role of the Holy Spirit in that process after Jesus' resurrection are important themes that need to be further unpacked in a future study on eschatological pneumatology.
28. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, op. cit., p. 68.
29. G. K. Chesterton, cited in Maisie Ward, *Return to Chesterton* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1952), p. 137.
30. Scriven in *The Promise of Peace*, op. cit., page 77, refers to this type of living as "the practice of hope," "a hope grand and daring enough to motivate adventurous action today." See also Douglas Morgan, "Identity Without Insularity: Lewis Sheafe, Matthew Strachan, and the Threeness of African American Adventists" (unpublished paper presented at the Adventist Society for Religious Studies, New Orleans, November 20, 2009); and Roy Branson, "Healing of the Nations: Mission of the Adventist Pioneers" (unpublished paper presented at the Adventist Society for Religious Studies, New Orleans, November 20, 2009).
31. Robina Marie Winbush, "For the Healing of the Nations", found at <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/porto-alegre-2006/4-messages-other-statements-sermons/sermons/robina-marie-winbush-closing-sermon.html>. Accessed April 1, 2013.
32. Monsma, *Healing for a Broken World*, op. cit., p. 42.

# ELLEN WHITE



## as a Prophetic Voice for the Poor and the Oppressed

Ellen G. White's spiritual experiences and testimonies have contributed to the identity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church from its very beginning.<sup>1</sup> At a time when it seemed that prophecy had failed and that William Miller's message of Christ's soon return was a false hope that had produced only disappointment and chaos, the testimony of young Ellen Harmon (later White) captured the hearts and minds of a handful of believers who still clung to their faith in the movement. Her first vision of Jesus leading

the Advent people as they pressed upward toward the New Jerusalem provided the disappointed ones with encouragement to continue their journey.<sup>2</sup> Her visions were regarded as evidence that God was with the tiny remnant of the Millerites, and that they were living in the promised end times when "sons and daughters shall prophesy."<sup>3</sup> Ellen White played an important role in the nascent movement as she relayed God's messages to the Sabbatarian Adventists. Her messages sustained their hope in the soon coming of Jesus, encouraged their trust in God, and emphasized the application of scriptural

principles to every aspect of daily life.

Adventist pastors, teachers, church scholars, and administrators have a well-established history of emphasizing Ellen White's spiritual gifts and their contributions to the church. Her messages are often referred to as "the Spirit of Prophecy." Despite the fact that she preferred the term "messenger" over the title "prophet,"<sup>4</sup> church members and leaders have understood her role to be that of a prophet.<sup>5</sup>

The story of Ellen White's prophetic ministry is often related in terms of visions that strengthened Adventist com-

BY GINGER HANKS HARWOOD

mitment to specific doctrines (such as the Sabbath and the sanctuary) and messages that led to the creation of health-care, educational, and publishing ministries that became central to Adventist identity and mission. Occasionally, church pastors and leaders stress her trance-like physical state during visions or specific instances in which she “saw” events that were yet to transpire. These are intended to increase confidence in her visions as real events and to provide evidence of her prophetic gift.

While both apologists and detractors have wrestled with issues concerning the authenticity and source of Ellen White’s experiences, her originality, inspiration, and fallibility, as well as the process through which her published items were produced,<sup>6</sup> focusing on these issues can serve to detract from more pressing questions. The church’s current discussions need to scrutinize Ellen White’s works to ascertain whether her contributions (spiritual leadership, visions and dreams, writings, testimonies, and letters) position her as a “community prophet” in the biblical sense of that term, or primarily as an individual with premonitions of looming disaster for individuals and the world at large. The question, “What does it mean to be a prophet?” needs to be answered with a closer and more serious regard for the Bible’s own testimony. What role did biblical prophets play in their communities, according to the evidence we can draw from Scripture? Did Ellen White also engage in the tasks central to the role of the biblical prophets? And perhaps most crucially, how are those tasks related to the way Ellen White is interpreted and perpetuated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

### The Biblical Role of the Prophet

Luke presents Jesus’ Nazareth sermon as the key to His own understanding of the Messiah’s calling and teachings (Luke 4:14-30). In this sermon,

Jesus read the words of Isaiah 61:1, 2 to the approving worshippers, describing God’s favor and intervention for the poor and oppressed, and declaring those words as being fulfilled in their midst through His ministry. Luke chronicles the change in the group’s reaction as Jesus’ teaching emphasizes the inclusive nature of God’s love and intervention. Jesus stood in their midst as a prophet, speaking God’s words and proclaiming the good news: The God of all people is actively working for the healing and restoration of humanity. Enraged at His depiction of the history

Luke records Jesus’ response to the unspoken question: “When the messengers of John had departed, He [Jesus] began to speak to the multitudes concerning John: ‘What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed those who are gorgeously apparelled and live in luxury are in kings’ courts. But what did you go out to see? A prophet?’” (Luke 7:24-27, NKJV).<sup>7</sup> Jesus challenged the crowds with His answer: “A prophet.” Jesus’ hearers, knowing the history of Israel’s prophets, understood His meaning: Prophets frequently affront the sensitivities of the powerful as they declare the necessity of dealing justly and compassionately in all transactions and with all people, and they regularly suffered because of it.<sup>8</sup>

John, and ultimately Jesus, would follow in the tradition of their predecessors. Their calls for right relationships (justice and compassion) disturbed the status quo and so were silenced by the powerful. Rosemary Radford Reuther comments on the inherent tension created when a prophet calls for justice and righteousness. She notes:

“Prophetic faith . . . sets

of God’s grace towards Israel’s enemies, the congregation conspired to throw Him off a local cliff.

After the arrest of John the Baptist, Jesus demonstrated His Nazareth claims through His acts of healing among the poor. When the imprisoned John sent his disciples to ask Jesus whether He was the Messiah, Jesus sent them back with the report that the sick were being healed and the good news was being preached to the poor. Jesus expected that John, a prophet, would understand His message: God was present, healing the sick, strengthening the weak and downhearted, opening the eyes of the blind, and working on behalf of the poor. Jesus was the incarnate manifestation of God with us.

God in tension with the ruling class by having God speak through the prophet(ess) as the advocate of the poor and the oppressed.”<sup>9</sup> Theologian Neil Reimer describes the prophet as “a person who speaks God’s word and passes judgment on those who respect or violate God’s word.”<sup>10</sup>

Reimer further points out that prophets manifest certain core commitments that mark them as prophets. First, prophets stress allegiance to key values such as love, justice, freedom, peace, well-being, and moral excellence for all. Second, they provide critiques of existing societies based on fulfillment or nonfulfillment of those key values. Third, prophets demonstrate “a strong commitment to action . . . to

**J**esus expected that John, a prophet, would understand His message: God was present, healing the sick, strengthening the weak and downhearted, opening the eyes of the blind, and working on behalf of the poor. Jesus was the incarnate manifestation of God with us.

fulfill those values, to honor the commandments, and to narrow the gap between prophetic values and existential reality.<sup>11</sup>

Reimer employs the description of biblical prophets as tests for “modern prophets” as well. Biblical prophets called a community, its leaders, and its elite into accountability concerning the nature of their transactions, particularly where the poor, the alien, and those vulnerable to oppression were concerned. They were voices for the voiceless, those people whose lack of status and position made them easy targets for oppression.

### The Prophet as Visionary: Revealing God’s Vision for Community

While prophets served several functions in Israel’s history, none was more important than that of a visionary. A visionary is an individual who sees past the surface and material/cultural realities of any particular time into a spiritual dimension where another set of values and practices reign supreme. A society’s core vision provides the basis for measuring its virtue and morality.

The civil laws Moses gave Israel established the vision of *shalom*, the community at peace because its relationships were just and compassionate. The vision was embedded in Israel’s laws, structures, and covenant. Moses made it clear that Israel’s well-being depended upon following God’s plan for justice and mercy. Biblical scholars and ethicists alike have described the way in which Scripture links *shalom* (the longed-for community of peace) and the practice of justice that includes and gives special attention to the needs of the poor.<sup>12</sup> The prophets who followed Moses critiqued Israel’s established religious and civil power structures on the basis of their own prophetic visions or their under-

standings of the divine paradigm for social relations.

Throughout Israel’s history, the prophets reminded those in more secure economic positions that God had called them to protect the vulnerable. Prophets provided their hearers with a vision of right relationship and asserted ultimate accountability to a God who stood in the place of family to those without the protection that genetic relationships offer.<sup>13</sup> The prophets announced God’s evaluation of the nation in terms of their degree of faithfulness to this righteousness.

“Prophecy is not future telling, but articulating moral truth.”<sup>14</sup> God’s prophets often reveal more about present obligations and privileges than exact details concerning future events. They call humanity to trust in God’s revelation as the guideposts for their earthly journey, dealing justly and compassionately—however inconvenient, counter-intuitive, or risky such standards might be.

From this perspective, the prophets, even when their visions include predictive elements, are much more than future-tellers. The legitimate prophet aids the recipients of his or her messages by supplying a vision of the righteous community. He or she can be tested by the congruence of that vision with the laws God has already given for human relationships. Further, the life and the message of the prophet need to reveal personal commitments reflecting the vision.

The identification of these components enables us to evaluate Ellen White through the lens of the moral and scriptural role of a prophet. We can ask whether she demonstrated a passion for the central values evidenced by the biblical prophets, critiqued society in terms of these values, worked to narrow the gap between these values and the experiences of people within society, and maintained a sustained assessment of the social trajectory of her own church and society.

We can also use this lens to evaluate how Ellen White is being presented in Seventh-day Adventist churches, schools, and literature today. Do the focus and application of her prophetic vision represent a continuance of the values and missions of the biblical prophets?

### Ellen White: Prophetic Vision and Mission

Ellen White offered a metavision—an over-arching view—of God’s intention for human life and the structures

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While Christians sometimes emphasize the predictive element of a prophet’s work, this may cause them to miss the prophet’s core message. God’s messengers counsel individuals and communities to walk in God’s paths so that they will move toward life rather than to spend their energy on harmful activities and projects that will eventually return to dust. History is not simply the unfolding of God’s predetermined plan: Humans have an ongoing role in shaping both the present and the future. Focus on prophecy’s predictive element may lead Christians to deny human responsibility for their community’s fate, and to behave as if their present actions have no bearing on the future.

Jim Wallis, an evangelical Christian committed to faith-filled living among the poor in Washington, D.C., wrote that

of human relationships. She was clear that humanity was created in the image of God with a divinely given purpose: the care of creation and one another. She called on Christians to relieve the suffering of distressed humanity, to extend hope, healing, and education to the poor. She saw that Christians, and Adventists in particular, were to be engaged actively in peacemaking: the ongoing process of demonstrating God's love and healing presence. She insisted that the compassionate life of Christ was to be the model for the individual believer; the laws of Moses and the admonitions of the prophets were to guide institutional and national efforts. She critiqued individuals, Christianity, and society when they failed to adhere to God's vision. She asserted boldly that the neglect of the needs of the poor commanded God's attention:

"In the great cities there are multitudes living in poverty and wretchedness, well-nigh destitute of food, shelter, and clothing; while in the same cities are those who have more than heart could wish, who live luxuriously, spending their money on richly furnished houses, on personal adornment, or worse still, upon the gratification of sensual appetites, upon liquor, tobacco, and other things that destroy the powers of the brain, unbalance the mind, and debase the soul. The cries of starving humanity are coming up before God."<sup>15</sup>

Ellen White's metavision included the fundamental components of universal inclusivism, compassion for all, respect for human rights and dignity, and an insistence on justice in every transaction. She reaffirmed the Hebrew prophets' social vision by pointing individuals to Scripture for answers to contemporary social problems. In *The*

*Ministry of Healing*, dedicated to "medical missionaries," she reflected on the endeavors of those who wish to improve the state of the nation:

"How the unemployed and the homeless can be helped to secure the common blessings of God's providence and to live the life He intended man to live, is a question to which many are earnestly endeavoring to find an answer. But there are not many, even among educators and statesmen, who comprehend the causes that underlie the present state of society. Those who hold the reins of government are unable to solve the problem of poverty, pauperism, and increasing crime. They are struggling in vain to place business operations on a more secure basis. If men would give more heed to the teaching of God's word, they would find a solution of these problems that perplex them."<sup>16</sup>



**Ellen White, speaking at Loma Linda, California, in 1906. She was a popular speaker on a wide range of topics ranging from charity and benevolence to prophecy and healthful living.**

From the perspective of Ellen White's writings, many of the most critical social issues could be resolved through implementing Israel's laws regarding the necessity of justice and compassion. She testified to the imperative of justice in economic affairs, just as in personal relations:

"God's word sanctions no policy that will enrich one class by the oppression and suffering of another. In all our business transactions it teaches us to put ourselves in the place of those with whom we are dealing, to look not only on our own things, but also on the things of others. He who would take advantage of another's misfortunes in order to benefit himself, or who seeks to profit himself through another's weakness or incompetence, is a transgressor both of the principles and of the precepts of the word of God."<sup>17</sup>

Hebrew law was built on the understanding that every person is created to be God's steward and is obligated to manage his or her life and possessions from that perspective. All followers of God, including those of privileged inheritance, must acknowledge that the talents, abilities in skilled entrepreneurship, and money management that set them apart economically from others are gifts from God and need to be treated as such.

Ellen White also made it clear that when a society functions on the basis of a different paradigm, where personal gratification and indulgence are justified by an ethic of radical individualism, the net result is human suffering and the conviction that God is indifferent to the pain of the poor. She rebuked those who contributed to others' warped views of God by their disregard of His claims on their resources:

"God has made men His stewards, and He is not to be charged with the

sufferings, the misery, the nakedness, and the want of humanity. The Lord has made ample provision for all. He has given to thousands of men large supplies with which to alleviate the want of their fellows; but those whom God has made stewards have not stood the test, for they have failed to relieve the suffering and the needy."<sup>18</sup>

Ellen White made it clear that human misery is not God's intent. Israel's laws were God's plan to ensure Israel's future by building in safeguards to check grinding poverty and remove both the temptation and structures

earthly mission. After describing Jesus' healing activities, she noted: "Every soul was precious in His eyes. While He ever bore Himself with divine dignity, He bowed with the tenderest regard to every member of the family of God. In all men He saw fallen souls whom it was His mission to save."<sup>19</sup> It is important to note that Ellen White did not simply make generic statements about Christ's love that could be easily accepted without creating any internal discomfort or dissonance. She challenged the human tendency to apply the gospel commission narrowly to those most like one's self. She cited the Good Samaritan story as the definitive standard for radical inclusivity:

"By this parable the duty of man to his fellow man is forever settled. We are to care for every case of suffering and to look upon ourselves as God's agents to relieve the needy to the very uttermost of our ability. We are to be laborers together with God. There are some who manifest great affection for their relatives, for their friends and favorites, who yet fail to be kind and considerate to those who need tender sympathy, who need kindness and love. With earnest hearts let us inquire, 'Who is my

neighbor?' Our neighbors are not merely our associates and special friends; they are not simply those who belong to our church, or who think as we do. Our neighbors are the whole human family."<sup>20</sup>

In a period of American history characterized by nativism, religious triumphalism, class hatred, and racial division, she pushed her readers to reacquaint themselves with the inclusive practices of the One whom they called Lord. She stated unequivocally:

"The life of Christ established a religion in which there is no caste, a religion by which Jew and Gentile, free and bond, are linked in a common

**A ll followers of God, including those of privileged inheritance, must acknowledge that the talents, abilities in skilled entrepreneurship, and money management that set them apart economically from others are gifts from God and need to be treated as such.**

that create permanent class inequities. According to Ellen White, observable misery in the United States could be at least partially corrected if the principles governing Israel were utilized as guidelines for commerce and relations. And churches, as God's representatives on earth, must extend effort to correct the impression that true peace and prosperity are possible without just transactions, institutions, and accessible structures for recourse.

### The Inclusivity of Ellen White's Vision

In the first chapter of her book *Steps to Christ*, Ellen White traced God's inclusive love to all humanity, drawing on the Luke 4:18 description of Christ's



This sculpture of the Good Samaritan represents the attitude of service at Loma Linda University and Hospital in Loma Linda, California.

brotherhood, equal before God. No question of policy influenced His movements. He made no difference between neighbors and strangers, friends and enemies.”<sup>21</sup>

In other elaborations on this theme, she became quite specific about the universal nature of obligation to one’s neighbor. At a time when various races were labeled as inferior or sub-human even by the scientists of the period, she insisted that every individual was our “neighbor”:

“He [Jesus] showed that our neighbor does not mean merely one of the church or faith to which we belong. It has no reference to race, color, or class distinction. Our neighbor is every person who needs our help. Our neighbor is every soul who is wounded and bruised by the adversary. Our neighbor is every one who is the property of God.”<sup>22</sup>

Ellen White thus spoke for a God who recognized the human race as one people, and who demanded that all be included in the circle of care.

### **Ellen White and the Prophetic Brief**

Ellen White saw speaking for justice as a part of her assignment from God. “I was instructed,” she wrote, “that I must ever urge upon those who profess to believe the truth, the necessity of practicing the truth. . . . I was charged not to neglect or pass by those who were being wronged. . . . Disagreeable though the duty may be, I am to reprove the oppressor, and plead for justice. I am to present the necessity of maintaining justice and equity in all our institutions.”<sup>23</sup> While her influence was greatest within Adventism, she did not limit her commentary to Adventist practices. Her remarks could be quite emphatic, as when she declared:

“The cloak of religion covers the greatest crimes and iniquity. All heaven beholds with indignation, human beings, the workmanship of God, reduced to the lowest depths of

degradation. . . . These professed Christians read of the suffering of the martyrs, and. . . . wonder that men could ever possess hearts so hardened as to practice such inhuman cruelties towards their fellow-men, while at the same time they hold their fellow-man in slavery. . . . The names of such are written in blood, crossed with stripes, and flooded with agonizing, burning tears of suffering. God’s anger will not cease until He has caused the land of light to drink the dregs of the cup of His fury, and until He has rewarded unto Babylon double.”<sup>24</sup>

Ellen White pronounced a similar judgment against both the nation and the churches that did not take a stand against slavery: God’s “anger burns against this nation, and especially against the religious bodies who have sanctioned and have themselves engaged in this terrible merchandise.”<sup>25</sup>

When President Abraham Lincoln declared a day of prayer and fasting for the war, she responded: “Great men,

professing to have human hearts, have seen the slaves almost naked and starving, and have abused them, and sent them back to their cruel masters and hopeless bondage. . . . They have deprived them of their liberty and free air which heaven has never denied them, and then left them to suffer for food and clothing. In view of all this, a national fast is proclaimed! Oh, what an insult to Jehovah!”<sup>26</sup> Of a similar intensity was her warning to a Sabbath-keeper with proslavery sentiments: “Unless you undo what you have done, it will be the duty of God’s people to publicly withdraw their sympathy and fellowship from you.”<sup>27</sup>

Ellen White also spoke out against poverty, oppression, and injustice in American society. She was a consistent advocate for the poor, and described engagement with their lives as a Christian mandate: “Christ’s followers are to learn all about the woes of the poor in their immediate vicinity and in their own country, be they white or black.”<sup>28</sup> She called the Fugitive Slave Laws crimes against God’s law: “The law of the land requiring us to deliver a slave to his master, we are not to obey”<sup>29</sup>; declared slavery as a national crime, counseled against participating in the military during the patriotic fervor of war—“I was shown that God’s people, who are His peculiar treasure, cannot engage in this perplexing war, for it is opposed to every principle in their faith”<sup>30</sup>; and spoke for the fair treatment of workers, and against the oppression of freed persons in the post-Reconstruction South.<sup>31</sup>

Ellen White also addressed American racism and the realities of continued white oppression. She boldly described the obstacles faced by any endeavor to change the situation and the underlying economic motivation of those who resisted improving the situation:

“One of the difficulties attending

the work is that many of the white people living where the colored people are numerous are not willing that special efforts should be put forth to uplift them. When they see schools established for them, when they see them being taught to be self-supporting, to follow trades, to provide themselves with comfortable homes instead of continuing to live in hovels, they see the possibility that selfish plans will be interfered with—that they will no longer be able to hire the Negro for a mere pittance: and their enmity is aroused. . . . Some act as if slavery had

of the few. While there are many more examples in each of these areas (and several others as well) that demonstrate how Ellen White functioned as a prophet during her lifetime, these are adequate to conclude this sketch of her life and work.

### The Outcome of Ellen White’s Visions

Seventh-day Adventists have long embraced Ellen White’s vision of the church united with God in the mission of healing and redemption of humanity. Churches, hospitals, and educational centers stand as witnesses to the seriousness with which the members have taken her counsel, and great respect has been shown for her prophetic gift. At the same time, even those who hold her in high esteem may be unaware of the social implications of her messages. Ellen White was a voice for the poor and disenfranchised, and insisted that the Isaiah 58 mission to break the yokes of the oppressed, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and help the poor was “of the highest importance. . . . This is our work,” she wrote.<sup>35</sup>

Twenty-first century Adventists need to re-examine the church’s response to the

## Twenty-first century Adventists need to re-examine the church’s response to the woman they regard as God’s messenger. How is the prophetic voice of Ellen White appropriated and utilized in the modern church? How is her story presented in our schools?

never been abolished.”<sup>32</sup>

Although it created great tension, she spoke boldly for the reform of unrighteous attitudes and unjust practices within the church. At various times, she addressed the condition of institutional workers, the distribution of church funds for special projects, ministry to African-Americans,<sup>33</sup> the care for the elderly, and fair wages for women in ministry.<sup>34</sup>

When necessary, Mrs. White called institutional leaders into accountability for injustice toward their underlings, and in 1901 she demanded a restructuring of the church to redistribute the organizational and decision-making power that had been concentrated in the hands

woman they regard as God’s messenger. How is the prophetic voice of Ellen White appropriated and utilized in the modern church? How is her story presented in our schools? What does the Seventh-day Adventist Church teach (and neglect to teach) about Ellen White and her messages? Do her writings function for the church as prophetic proclamations did for Israel, raising awareness of God’s intentions and standards (justice and compassion) for both interpersonal and corporate relationships? Do her writings serve as prophetic invitations to be part of God’s liberating and redemptive action for humanity? Do they challenge the church to be more just and compassionate in its dealings, more inclu-

sive in its decision-making process, more committed to the liberation of the oppressed? If her story and writings are utilized primarily to sustain group identity and establish authority and legitimacy for distinctive doctrinal positions, then has she ceased to be a truly prophetic voice in Adventism? ☩



**Ginger Hanks  
Harwood, Ph.D., is  
Associate Professor  
of Religious and  
Theological Studies  
in the H. M. S.  
Richards School of  
Divinity at La  
Sierra University,**

*Riverside, California. Among the classes she teaches are the History of Seventh-day Adventism, Ellen White and the Church, and Adventism in Global Perspective. Dr. Harwood also does first-person scholarly and popularized presentations about Ellen White, addressing her life story and views on various issues.*

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. For an overview of Sabbatarian Adventists' struggle to consolidate a group identity and the role Ellen White's visions and testimonies played in that process between the Great Disappointment of 1844 and the organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1863, see George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 2000).
2. Ellen White's description of her vision is included in her book, *Early Writings of Ellen G. White* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1945), pp. 13-20.
3. See Beverly Beem and Ginger Hanks Harwood, "Your Daughters Shall Prophesy": James White, Uriah Smith, and the 'Triumphant Vindication of the Right of the Sisters' to Preach," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 43:1 (Spring 2005):41-58. Also, Ginger Hanks Harwood and Beverly G. Beem, "It Was Mary That First Preached a Risen Jesus": Early Seventh-day Adventist Answers to Objections to Women as Public Spiritual Leaders," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 45:2 (Autumn 2007):221-245.
4. "To claim to be a prophetess is something that I have never done. If others call me by that name, I have no controversy with them, but my work has covered so many lines that I cannot call myself other than a messenger, sent to bear a message from the Lord to His people, and to take up work in any line that He points out" (Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1958], Book 1, p. 34).
5. For review of the basic Adventist understanding of the role of Ellen White, see *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 2005), pp. 247-261.
6. For two recent examples of very extensive efforts to provide a solid overview and defense of Ellen White as a prophet, see Graeme S. Bradford, *More Than a Prophet: How We Lost and Found Again the Real Ellen White* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Biblical Perspectives, 2006), and Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1998).
7. Texts credited to NKJV are from the *New King James Version*. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982, Thomas Nelson, Ind., Publishers. All rights reserved.
8. Elsa Tamez has developed the analysis of the nature and relationship between the elites and those whose life efforts enrich them. She says, "oppression is historical in character and that the basic points of reference for understanding it are two identifiable and opposed groups. The oppressors are rich and influential people who never feel satisfied with what they have; their basic concern is to accumulate wealth. They turn to oppression and make use of various methods that bring them gain in one or another fashion. Oppressors are idolaters who follow false gods that can lend an aura of legitimacy to their actions; Yahweh, the God who demands that justice be done because he is himself justice and love, will not serve their purpose. The oppressed are the impoverished, the slaves, the day laborers, the widows, the resident aliens, and the orphans. All are poor and lack both social standing and power" (*Bible of the Oppressed*, Translated from Spanish by Matthew J. O'Connell [Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1982], p. 53).
9. Ruether continues her observation, noting: "The prophets in Hebrew Scripture and Jesus in the Gospels are figures in conflict with religious establishments, denouncers of the use of religion to sacralize unjust privilege and to ignore the needs of the people" (Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Prophetic Tradition and the Liberation of Women: A Story of Promise and Betrayal," in Neal Reimer, ed., *Let Justice Roll: Prophetic Challenges in Religion, Politics, and Society* [Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1996], pp. 59, 60).
10. *Ibid.*, p. x.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Mark Allman, an ethicist, traces the relationship between the experience of the shalom community and living in right relationship according to God's laws. See *Who Would Jesus Kill: War, Peace and the Christian Tradition* (Winona, Minn.: Anselm Academic, Christian Brothers Publications, 2008), p. 69.
13. As theologian José Miguez Bonino has noted: "Righteousness-justice is seen as the distinguishing characteristic of the kingdom—and hence as the mark of God's faithful action and people's correspondingly faith-full obedience. The condition of the poor and oppressed in fact becomes the test of God's redeeming presence and of human justice" (*Toward a Christian Political Ethics* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983], p. 84).
14. Jim Wallis, *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), p. 72.
15. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1911), vol. 9, p. 12; and \_\_\_\_\_, *Welfare Ministry* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1952), p. 173.
16. \_\_\_\_\_, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1942), p. 183.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
18. "Parable of the Rich Man," *Review and Herald* 71:26 (June 26, 1894):401, 402.
19. Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1908), p. 12.
20. \_\_\_\_\_, "Our Duty to the Poor and Afflicted," *Review and Herald* 72:1 (January 1, 1895):1, 2.
21. \_\_\_\_\_, *The Ministry of Healing*, op. cit., p. 25.
22. \_\_\_\_\_, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1941), p. 376.
23. \_\_\_\_\_, *Selected Messages*, op. cit., Book 1, p. 33.
24. See \_\_\_\_\_, *Spiritual Gifts* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1944), vol. I, pp. 189-192.
25. *Ibid.*
26. \_\_\_\_\_, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 257.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 360.
28. Ellen White to "Brethren in Responsible Positions in America," July 24, 1895 (B-5-1895).
29. \_\_\_\_\_, *Testimonies for the Church*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 202.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 361.
31. The following is one example of her critique of American efforts toward the emancipated slaves: "Much might have been accomplished by the people of America if adequate efforts in behalf of the freedmen had been put forth by the Government and by the Christian churches immediately after the emancipation of the slaves. Money should have been used freely to care for and educate them at the time they were so greatly in need of help. But the Government, after a little effort, left the Negro to struggle, unaided, with his burden of difficulties" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 205).
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 204, 205.
33. For example, "Our colored ministers are to be treated with consideration. This has not always been done. These men are to be encouraged to obtain a thorough knowledge of the truth. They are to learn how to be efficient in teaching the truth to others. And when they are faithfully engaged in work they should receive their hire. Remember that they must have bread" (*ibid.*, p. 223).
34. For a careful look at Ellen White's work to ensure justice within various church enterprises, see Gilbert M. Valentine, *The Prophet and the Presidents: Ellen White's Influence on the Leadership of the Early Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 2011).
35. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, section "Our Work for Today," p. 159.

# WANTED



"AT THESE SCHOOLS THEY WORK A LABOR OF DISSOLUTION. THEY SPREAD DOCTRINES OF THE MOST CRIMSON COMMUNISM. THEY ATTEMPT TO DESTROY THE PATRIOTISM AND SPIRIT OF THE NATION BY INculcATING THE MOST EXTREME AND DANGEROUS SOCIALIST CONCEPTS OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION, CLASS AND RACIAL EQUALITY, AND UNBOUNDED LIBERTY FOR THE IGNORANT MASSES. . . ."

-Women of Azangaro, 1923

# FERNANDO AND ANA STAHL: Missionary Social Activists?

Growing up in Loma Linda, California, during the late 1950s and early 1960s, I was taught a strong personal ethic. The Pathfinder Club Law taught me to "Keep the morning watch, Do my honest part, Care for my body, Keep a level eye, Be courteous and obedient, Walk softly in the sanctuary, Go on God's errands." I was also taught never to refer to blacks using the "N word." In these placid years, God was in His heaven, Dwight David Eisenhower was in the White House, *Leave It to Beaver* and, later, *The Brady Bunch* modeled ideal family life, and seemingly, all was well with the suburban world. In the Loma Linda of the 1950s, there were no freeways, no minorities, and little obvious sin. With very few exceptions, its gene pool was blandly white. This personal ethic of eschewing the "N word" was strictly followed in a town where we basically all looked alike.

In 1954, the Supreme Court unanimously struck down the "separate but equal" doctrine with regard to race, and soon, Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr. burst into the American consciousness. Loma Linda slumbered on as an isolated village surrounded by orange groves. Only when a West Indian Adventist physician family moved into the community did this village wake up: My father—

**"In the face of severe injustice, suffering, and oppression, the Stahls identified with the poorest of the poor and incarnated the gospel in ways which profoundly impacted the spiritual, social, economic, and political life of the Peruvian highlands. The experience of our friends Ana and Fernando calls us to live with the tension of enacting the 'now' of God's kingdom while recognizing that the 'not yet' fullness of that kingdom eludes human history."**

—Gustavo Gutiérrez, Catholic Priest and father of Liberation Theology, *La Sierra University Stahl Center Indigenous Education Conference, Lima, Peru, 1997.*



then pastor of the Loma Linda University College of Medical Evangelists Church—was deluged with phone calls from members complaining that "a black family has plans to move onto our side of the tracks." At that point, those residents of our town who had ears to hear realized that their personal ethics were being challenged by changing social norms, structures, and institutions. They were being called upon to recognize that racism must be challenged, not only as cherished in individual hearts, but also as manifested in America's traditions, laws, and social institutions. We gradually realized that personal transformation and social transformation were inseparable.

About the same time, I heard a mission story about a husband and wife nursing team from the midwest United States who had left a thriving business, and—bundling up two young children and paying their own passage—ended up in Peru's *altiplano* (high plain) on the shores of Lake Titicaca. The only other scrap of information I retained from this story was their surname (Stahl) and the fact that they and their followers had established a "Broken Stone Mission" in response to a village chieftain who requested that the Adventists open a school in his village.

B Y C H A R L E S T E E L , J R .

## The Stahls as Missionaries, Visionaries, and Revolutionaries

Fast forward some three decades. I traveled to the Peruvian Andes as a tourist, eager to bask in the glory of that “Wonder of the Modern World,” the Machu Picchu, a citadel nestled in a glorious landscape on the Inca Trail that appears to have been a ceremonial center. While in these mountains, I found myself in conversation with a Roman Catholic Maryknoll priest from Butte, Montana, who had labored in the Peruvian Andes for two decades.

Upon learning that I was an Adventist, the priest exclaimed: “Then you know the story of Adventist missionaries Fernando and Ana Stahl.” I said that I vaguely recalled an account of a “Broken Stone Mission” established by this couple that had thrived under the direction of an early convert. The priest responded with the following paean of praise: “We in the Catholic Maryknoll Order claim the Stahls as our spiritual forbears. The gospel that they incarnated was experienced not only in chapels and churches but in entrepreneurial free markets, in health-education initiatives, in clinics, and—above all—in the first coeducational school system for the marginalized Quechua and Aymara indigenous peoples, a system that would come to include as many as 200 schools and would train this fenced-out population to read, to write, to compute, to speak Spanish, to study the Judeo-Christian Scriptures for themselves, and to claim their place in society.”

Expanding on the fact that these excluded peoples represented 92 percent of the Andean population, the priest observed with admiration: “The Stahls’ actions on behalf of this dispossessed majority even contributed to the inclusion of a religious toleration clause in the National Constitution.” He concluded with a flourish: “Indeed, these Adventists were missionaries, visionaries, and revolutionaries.”<sup>1</sup>

## The Stahls’ Transformational Initiatives

While I have authored several articles on the Stahls’ work,<sup>2</sup> what follows are mere snippets that offer abbreviated glimpses into the priest’s assertion that Fernando and Ana Stahl fostered a social transformation that affected social institutions as well

as a personal transformation that impacted individual minds, hearts, and bodies.

For centuries, geographical realities kept the Peruvian *altiplano* isolated from the legal structure of the nation’s capital. Cultural barriers had reinforced a caste system in which white and *mestizo* (mixed race) land-holding families and merchants, plus state officials and religious functionaries of the state church (an eight percent minority), kept the 92 percent (Aymara and Quechua) in what historians refer to as a “near-feudal” condition.

These indigenous peoples were illiterate and had virtually no contact with the world beyond the remote Lake Titicaca Basin.<sup>3</sup> Land expropriations, forced labor, and arbitrary taxation were the chief tools of oppression.<sup>4</sup> These abuses created the climate for a series of violent revolts that erupted throughout the Peruvian highlands, lasting well into the 1930s. In this social context, far-reaching personal and social transformation endeavors would eventually flourish.

Unable to speak Spanish and unfamiliar with Latin American customs, Ana Stahl initially bartered her professional skills to the wealthy to keep bread on the table while Fernando stumbled about, intuitively exploring what it meant to be a missionary.<sup>5</sup> His first strategy, selling religious magazines to an indigenous population that could not read, failed miserably. However, this experience opened his eyes to the fact that the elite privileged class, in order to maintain their social and economic advantages, had every reason to keep the Aymara and Quechua peoples uneducated.<sup>6</sup>

By 1911, magazine peddling had taken a back seat to establishing schools, as the Stahls linked up with an Aymara visionary, Manuel Comacho, who had for some years clandestinely attempted to introduce reading skills to the Aymaras. Comacho had been jailed on more than one occasion for this offense. For a number of months, the Stahls shared quarters with the Comachos, living and teaching in a humble hut with a thatched roof and dirt floor.

The Stahls garnered funds to purchase property on the shores of Lake Titicaca in the sleepy village of Platería. Despite opposition by the privileged classes, in 1913 a “mother school” opened its doors, providing co-educational offerings in reading, writing,

### Selected Stahl Commentators

*With the coming of the Adventists to Puno, indigenous education was initiated with unanticipated and transcendent results. For the first time the Indian acceded to letters, hygiene, and a consciousness of his own identity.*

—José Tamayo Herrera, Peru National Library Director, 1982

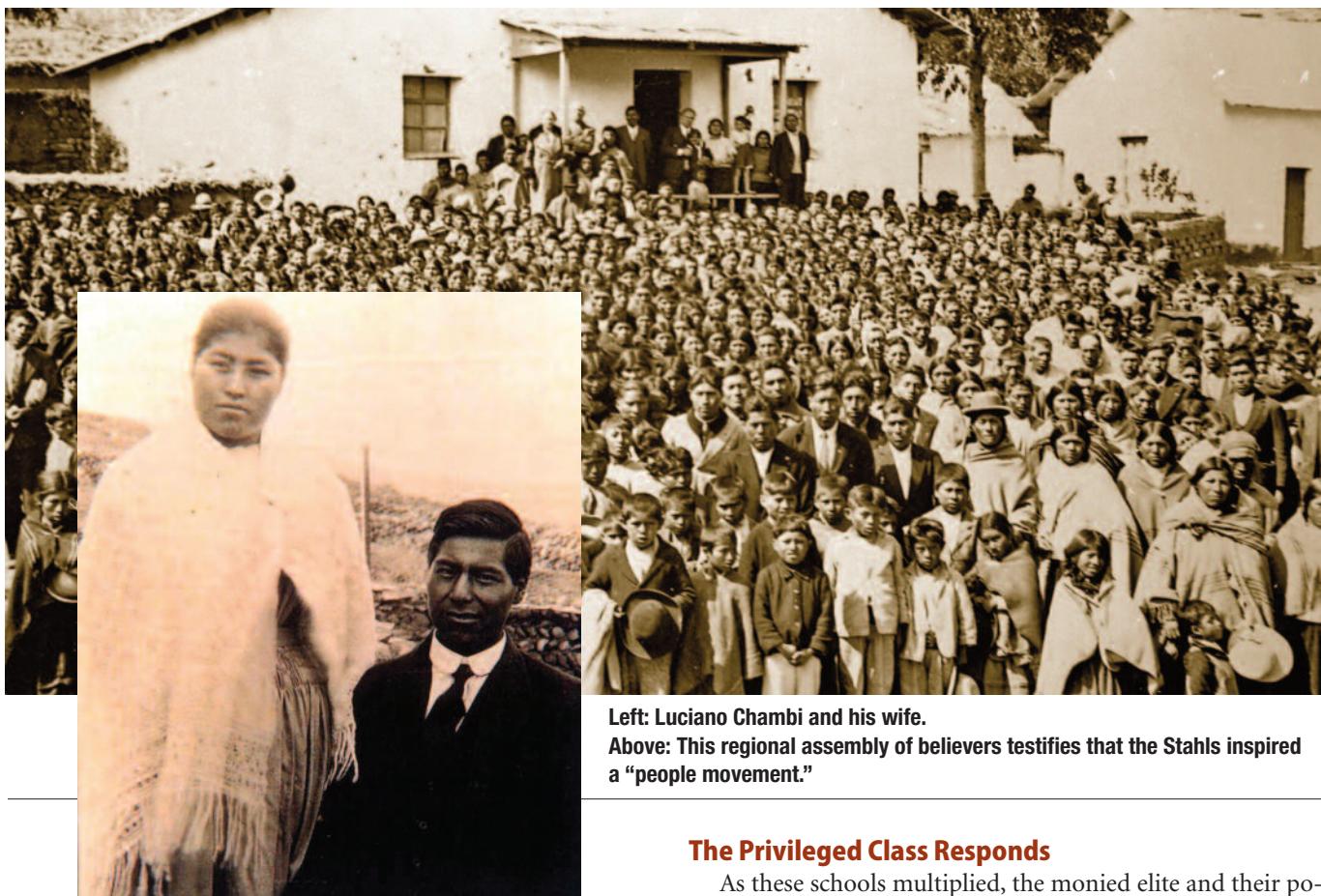
*The Adventist school system opened the way for the indigenous population of the Altiplano to achieve self-hood and self-sufficiency. The Stahl gospel both converted hearts and changed the social fabric of the highlands.*

—Rubén Chambi, Congressional Deputy, 1989

*Stahl transforms the spirit of the Indian, making him aware of his rights and obligations and showing him the route towards human dignity—treating him more as a comrade than a proselyte. I render homage to those Protestant educators who sacrifice all to the service of human redemption.*

*The gospel which came to Latin America with Protestantism came with a liberating force because it brought the force of the biblical message. A dramatic example is found in Peru with Manuel Comacho and Fernando and Ana Stahl.*

—Samuel Escobar, Peruvian Theologian, 1987



**Left: Luciano Chambi and his wife.**

**Above: This regional assembly of believers testifies that the Stahls inspired a “people movement.”**

and arithmetic, as well as hygiene and religion.<sup>7</sup> When credentialed professors imported to administer the new school could not handle the high-altitude conditions (over 12,000 feet),<sup>8</sup> Ana took over the administrative responsibilities, assisted by Camacho, and his young protégé Luciano Chambi<sup>9</sup> (Chambi would later run the Broken Stone Mission). As demands mushroomed for schools throughout the surrounding countryside, teacher-training courses were instituted in Platería, occupying classrooms on a year-round basis.<sup>10</sup>

The Stahls were generally welcomed by the indigenous peoples of these highlands, and even in the face of strong opposition by the privileged overlords, schools and churches soon encircled the vast Lake Titicaca, sprouting up like flowers following a spring rain.<sup>11</sup> The schools ranged from humble home schools to large institutions. By 1916, 2,000 students were registered in 19 schools; by 1924, 4,000 in 80 schools; and by 1947, a high of nearly 7,000 in 109 schools.<sup>12</sup> The Stahls' successor, E. H. Wilcox, reported that on one unforgettable day, 12 requests for village schools arrived from various villages.<sup>13</sup>

Church congregations followed schools. The baptized membership in the Lake Titicaca Mission numbered 445 in 1916; 2,255 in 1920; 5,963 in 1924; and 7,340 in 1927.<sup>14</sup> By 1940, membership rolls had been purged of non-attending members and showed a total of 6,579. Yet that year's national census showed that in the Lake Titicaca area alone, there were fully four times that number of self-professed Protestants, virtually all of whom would have been Adventists.<sup>15</sup>

### The Privileged Class Responds

As these schools multiplied, the monied elite and their political and religious functionaries readily grasped that their way of life would be threatened should the Quechua and Aymara peoples learn to read, write, and compute.

As the Adventist educational presence evolved from informal meetings in a mud hut to schools in permanent buildings, the power structure responded in force. In 1913, a mob of some 200 mounted men, led by Puno Bishop Monsignor Valentín Amuero, sacked the Stahl home in their absence, bound eight believers wrist to wrist, and led them on a 21-mile march to jail. As these *Protestantes* stumbled “hatless and coatless” on this overland trek, they were repeatedly “assaulted by man and beast.”<sup>16</sup> In 1916, the Stahls were violently attacked while inaugurating a new school, barely escaping with their lives.<sup>17</sup>

Only a few weeks later, the Stahls were run out of town in a neighboring village, and 50 of the villagers who had entertained them were beaten and placed in stocks or jailed.<sup>18</sup> Toward the end of 1920, 12 believers were murdered in the Azangaro province,<sup>19</sup> and later in the same area, as many as 15 believers met the same fate.<sup>20</sup> Schoolhouses were burned, Adventist teachers were assaulted, and one student was reportedly beaten to death.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, the perceived threats to the social order that these schools presented were made explicit in a memorial filed from Azangaro in 1923:

“These insidious evangelical schools daily bring together large numbers of impressionable and ignorant Indians attracted through false and fantastic promises made by individuals of suspicious social intentions.

“At these schools they teach the most depraved and heretical

practices, and preach a war of extermination against faithful Catholics and the Church itself.

"At these schools they work a labor of dissolution. They spread doctrines of the most crimson communism. They attempt to destroy patriotism and the spirit of the nation by inculcating the most extreme and dangerous socialist concepts of social organization, class and racial equality, and unbounded liberty for the ignorant masses....

"At these schools, finally, they openly attack our property system...."<sup>22</sup>

## On the Benefits of Personal and Social Transformation

The dramatic impact of the Stahls' efforts in effecting personal and social transformation can be witnessed in a 1920 march that traced the same route as the Bishop-led forced march to jail in 1913. José Antonio Encinas, congressional representative and future Rector of Lima's flagship University of San Marcos—among the scores of researchers, academics, and politicians on three continents who laud the social transformation work of the Stahls—praised the Stahls as agents "in the service of human redemption,"<sup>23</sup> calling for a commission to investigate local abuses in the highland and to implement reforms.

The Stahls seized upon the arrival of the visiting commission as an opportunity to showcase the indigenous students and to teach them how to lobby for social change. Commission member Erasmo Roca, distinguished head of the Labor Bureau in the Ministry of Development, reported on the "spectacle" that the Stahls engineered:

"What a beautiful spectacle it was for us, just a few days after our arrival in Puno, to see nearly two thousand Indian evangelists from the region of Platería . . . , who, in correct military formation and led by two musical bands, paraded before the commission."<sup>24</sup>

The Stahls doubtless took no small satisfaction in witnessing initial graduates of these indigenous schools parenting children who subsequently were elected to Peru's National Congress. Rapid social change, indeed! Likewise, they must have experienced satisfaction in contrasting the conditions that marked the Bishop-led forced march in 1913 with the demonstration that they had been able to stage in 1920, just seven years—but thousands of students—later. The route followed on both of these marches was the same, but the conditions were vastly different. The 1913 forced march consisted of individuals under arrest, tied, and "assaulted by man and

beast." But seven years later, the march featured nearly 2,000 Aymara and Quechua students parading before the commission on their own terms: confident, self-assured, and intent on demonstrating that an integrated gospel of personal and social transformation had liberated a fenced-out people from those internal and external principalities and powers that had formerly held them captive and in bondage.

Shortly thereafter, these self-taught North American Adventist change agents—"missionaries, visionaries, and revolutionaries"—would soon leave the Andean *altiplano* to work in the Amazon jungles for the next two decades of their lives.<sup>25</sup>

In 1938, the Stahls retired in Paradise, California, where

they now rest from their fruitful labors as personal and social transformers. There they await that day when that New Earth envisioned by the prophets and that Kingdom described by the Gospel writers become a reality for all. The Stahls' contributions are now commemorated by the Stahl Center at La Sierra University and its tours to the Amazon, as well as in the university's "Path of the Just," where their names are engraved on



**Students and community members from La Sierra University's 36th Andes Study Tour pose at the Stahl/Camacho statue in the Platería main square, celebrating the centennial of the forced march that marked the beginning of the Adventist educational presence in the Peruvian highlands.**

a split-granite boulder as examples of church members who functioned as transformers of societies no less than transformers of souls.

We hallow the memory of these "missionaries, visionaries, and revolutionaries." But much more: We affirm that educators and educational systems can improve the life of societies and effect social change as well as offering academic and religious training.

## The Stahl Legacy

While the Stahls' true legacy is in the lives of the peoples of Peru's Andes and Amazon, institutions currently bearing the Stahl name include:

- **Colegio Fernando Stahl.** This "Mother School" in Platería is located on the shores of Peru's vast Lake Titicaca.
- **Clínica Adventist Ana Stahl.** This clinic is perched on the banks of the Amazon River in Peru's provincial capital of Iquitos.
- **The Stahl Center for World Service and The Stahl Center Museum of Culture.** Founded in 1989 on the La Sierra University campus, the center's mission is "Passing a vision of world service to a new generation."

## Stahl Center Initiatives

- *Peru Andes and Amazon Tours* each March, which attract students, alumni, and people from various locales, follow in the footsteps of the Stahls cruising the Amazon, sailing Lake

Titicaca, touring Cusco, marveling at Machu Picchu, and walking the Inca Trail.

• *The Stahl Center Museum*, which features the Stahl Family Collection of artifacts and documents from the Andes and Amazon plus other artifacts bequeathed to the museum by missionary families and other world travelers.

• *Global Village* with ADRA International, which attracted more than 20,000 campus visitors who experienced authentic indigenous global habitats throughout the developing world.

• *Global Quilting*, which called for 1,000 handmade infant quilts to distribute with Archbishop Desmond Tutu to AIDS babies in South Africa—and garnered fully 20,000 such quilts! These quilts have been distributed to AIDS hospices and orphanages in such varied locales as South Africa's townships, Peru's Andes and Amazon, Russia's steppes, Thailand's sex triangle, Brazil's jungles, Armenia's cities, and numerous other global venues.

• *Stahl Center Sabbath* at the La Sierra University Church and campus, which annually celebrates the lives of individuals who have contributed to world mission and international development.

• *The Path of the Just*, on the campus of La Sierra University, which was initiated by the Stahl Center in concert with the university administration. It features a series of waterworks, international patios, and split granite boulders that honor the Stahls and others “whose lives of altruistic service have fostered human rights, individual empowerment, or religious toleration.” (See <http://circle.adventist.org/files/jae/en/jae 201274042410.pdf>). ☺

#### For further information:

The Stahl Center for World Service at La Sierra University  
4500 Riverwalk Parkway, Riverside CA 92505

(951) 785-2041 / e-mail: cmteel@aol.com

<http://www.lasierra.edu/doperu>



**Charles Teel, Jr., Ph.D., is Professor of Religion and Society at La Sierra University in Riverside, California, and Director of The Stahl Center for World Service. He is temporarily serving as acting Curator for the Stahl Center Museum of Culture, which houses and displays, in addition to the Stahl Family Collection, some 120 family collections of artifacts bequeathed by travelers and missionary families. As Director of the Stahl Center, Dr. Teel leads annual tours that follow in the footsteps of the Stahls in the Peruvian Andes and Amazon.**

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ano,” *Theologika* 4:2 (1989):250-289; “The Radical Roots of Peruvian Adventism,” *Spectrum* 21:1 (December 1990/January 1991):5-18; “Mission Stories and the Adventist Future: Fernando and Ana Stahl as a Case Study,” *The Journal of Adventist Education* 53:2 (December 1990/January 1991):16-19, 45, 46; “Lake Titicaca to the National Congress,” *Spectrum* 25:1 (September 1995):3-7; “Evangelists’ and ‘Liberationists,’” *Spectrum* 36 (Autumn 2008):53ff; “Histórias missionárias e o futuro do adventismo: Fernando e Ana Stahl como um estudo de caso,” *A Revista Formadores: Vivências e Estudos* 2:3 (2009):467-477.

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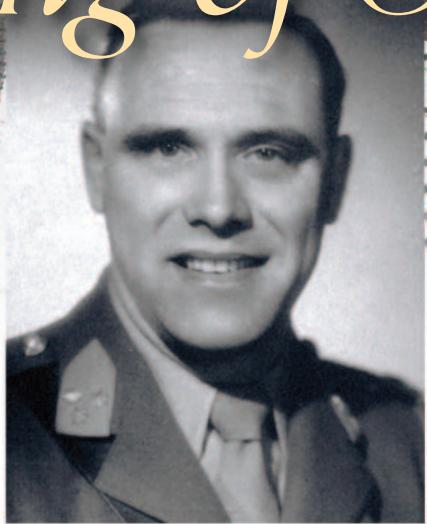
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# *“A Heart Open to the Suffering of Others”*



## The John Henry Weidner Story

**O**n February 28, 1944, German authorities raided an apartment at 19 Rue Franklin in Brussels and arrested 10 Allied aviators and six members of the Dutch-Paris Escape Line. The raid was part of a round-up of Dutch-Paris members in Belgium and France. The Germans' goal was to disrupt what some historians consider to have been the most efficient and effective escape line for Jews, resisters, and downed Allied aviators fleeing Nazi-occupied territories during World War II.

How the Nazis knew where these pi-

lots were hiding is still a mystery. However, it may not be a mystery much longer. The story of the Dutch-Paris Escape Line is being uncovered by World War II scholar Megan Koreman, who in 2008 was commissioned by the John Henry Weidner Foundation to write the complete history of Dutch-Paris. This book will be the first fully documented account of how this World War II underground escape line was organized, managed, and supported from the summer of 1942 to the late summer of 1944.

The Dutch-Paris story will also reveal how a young Dutch Seventh-day Adventist textile merchant living in Lyon, France, acted on his religious be-

liefs to become one of the most-decorated and honored heroes of the war. The manner in which this young man organized more than 300 individuals and families to rescue a thousand Jews, aviators, and other fugitives is a powerful example of human beings acting unselfishly and at great risk to themselves and their families.

The Dutch-Paris Escape Line evolved from a desire by John Henry Weidner, the son of a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, to assist Dutch nationals interned in French refugee camps. His visits to the refugee camps began in 1940. By 1942, his work had expanded into more serious resistance work as he

B Y K U R T G A N T E R

was asked to protect individuals and families who were being pursued by the Nazis. He soon established safe routes for Dutch Jews, resisters, and other refugees to safety in Switzerland or Spain. Weidner spoke French, Dutch, and English and, as a natural organizer, was perfectly suited to oversee the complex escape route that ran through the Netherlands, Belgium, and France.

Weidner's skills as a rescuer quickly caught the attention of the Dutch military attaché General W. A. van Tricht in Bern and Willem Visser't Hooft, general secretary of the World Council of Churches in Geneva. With their financial support, Weidner began moving more fugitives as well as microfilms with information needed by the Dutch government-in-exile in London.

Weidner and the Dutch-Paris Line participants did not discriminate among those coming to them for protection. They helped anyone needing hiding or support, regardless of their ability to cover expenses or personal, religious, and political associations. The Dutch-Paris organization itself was composed of hundreds of courageous men and women of various faiths and of many nationalities.

Although the line transported about 150 Allied aviators to safety, its primary mission was to protect fleeing Jews. This is because Jews were the ones in the greatest danger from the Nazis. Their only crime was having been labeled by the Nazis and by anti-Semites in their home countries as enemies of the state. In addition to Jews, the line helped young Dutch Christian men who were trying to avoid compulsory labor service established by the Nazis to replace Germans recruited for the army as well as those who wanted to join the Allied armies. The line was also used by resisters who were keeping one step ahead of the Gestapo, including such notables as Charles de Gaulle's brother, Xavier, and the future Nobel Prize win-

ner Gerrit Jan van Heuven Goedhart, aka "Colonel Blake." Among the rescued Dutch pilots, few were as famous as Bram van der Stok, who escaped from Stalag Luft III, popularized in the movie *The Great Escape*.

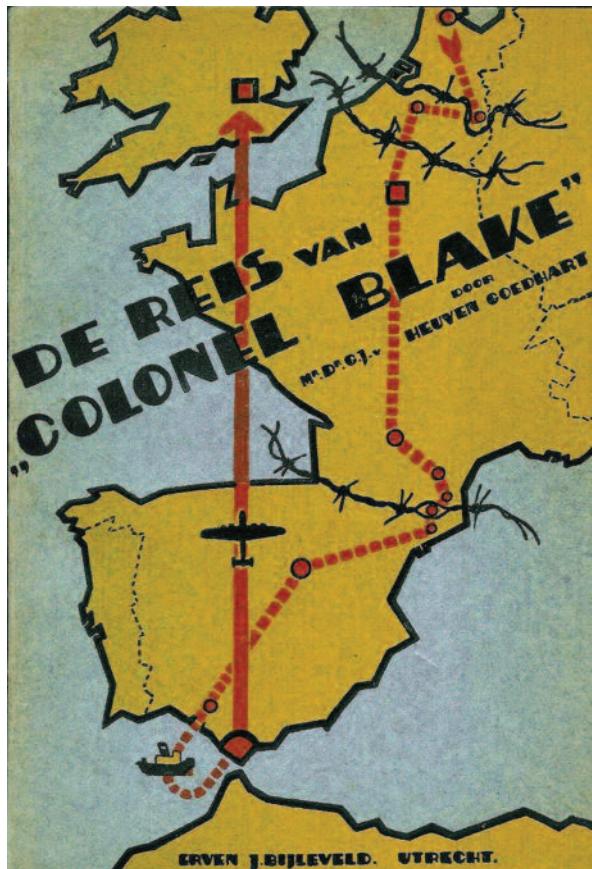
Weidner paid a price for his resistance leadership. Under constant surveillance by the Gestapo, he was captured twice during his underground

execution by the Germans the next morning. His escape was clever, harrowing, and heroic.

Weidner's family members also paid a price. In an attempt to get Weidner to turn himself in, the Gestapo arrested his sister, Gabrielle, on February 26, 1944, while she was attending Sabbath school in Paris. According to Dr. Koreman, "Gabrielle appears to have been

part of the courier system involving the Meyer brothers [Adventist pastors], which circulated mail and packages between the occupied and unoccupied zones in France. She also prepared and sent packages to Jews in internment camps for John Weidner and sheltered fugitives coming through Paris. She was a point of contact for the various agents in Dutch-Paris, meaning that she kept and delivered messages for them. She also kept microfilms that one courier had dropped off for another." In one of the more agonizing decisions of his life, John Weidner was forced to choose between continuing his rescue work or surrendering himself in exchange for Gabrielle's freedom. He chose to continue his work. Gabrielle Weidner died in the Ravensbrück concentration camp in northern Germany on February 15, 1945.

How did the line complete so many rescues before being shut down by the Nazis? In large part, the Dutch-Paris Line succeeded because of its flexibility and complexity. The Line was a clandestine "community of rescuers" that involved hundreds of people, both helpers and those seeking to escape: Dutch, Belgian, French, Swiss, Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, Allied airmen, students, innkeepers, diplomats, and children. The line utilized hundreds of waypoints: train stations, hotels, homes, mountain huts, and border crossings. The individual line members were bound together by shared resentment of Nazi occupation and brutality, a commitment to discretion, their shared risk, and compas-



**The Dutch-Paris Escape Line spanned five countries, taking refugees out of countries occupied by the Nazis and smuggling messages back into those countries.**

activities. In 1943, for example, Weidner was arrested on a mountain trail near Collonges and taken to Gestapo headquarters in Lyon, where he was brutalized with electric and water torture before being released. The next year, he was arrested by the French Milice (paramilitary force), at a café in Toulouse, ironically because he was mistaken for someone else. He was imprisoned, tortured, and scheduled for

sion toward those whose lives were in danger.

The Dutch-Paris Line also avoided the Gestapo by altering its routes as necessary. If one branch was threatened, the Dutch-Paris Line joined forces with similar but smaller groups such as the Comet or Burgundy lines, which used different routes to the same destinations.

John Weidner's recruiting of the Collonges College faculty and staff offers another insight into how he reduced the line's exposure to the Gestapo. A number of them were friends of John Weidner: including Roger Fasnacht, Jean and Anna Zurcher, Frederic Charpiot, Jean Lavanchy, and Raymond Meyer and Paul Meyer. Some of them accompanied refugees from Lyon, Annecy, Annemasse, and St. Julien to the seminary campus near the Swiss border, after which Jean Zurcher took them into Switzerland. Zurcher was both a teacher at Collonges and a student at Geneva University. As such, he had a pass that allowed him to cross the border daily and sometimes many times in a single day. This made it possible for Zurcher to guide some of the refugees into Switzerland using false identification documents that he had obtained in Switzerland. If papers were not available, he crossed the border where he knew the Swiss guards, many of whom helped the refugees get through the barbed-wire fences.

As with other line members, the Collonges rescuers opened their homes to people trying to escape, providing them with food and clothing despite the prospect that their actions could result in the Nazis closing the seminary, confiscating the property, and jailing its faculty, or worse.

The Collonges faculty who assisted Weidner were unaware of other Collonges faculty and staff who were also serving the Dutch-Paris Line. Thus, if one faculty member was arrested, he or she could not provide the names of other Collonges faculty members involved with the line.

To this day, memories of World War II resistance activities are vivid at Col-



Weidner's sister, Gabrielle, was kidnapped by the Gestapo while she attended Sabbath school in the Paris Adventist Church and taken to Ravensbrück Concentration Camp, where she died.

longes. Now called the Campus Adventiste du Salève, the college recently paid tribute to those faculty and staff who assisted Weidner some 70 years ago. At a 2006 event, Jewish leaders, community leaders, faculty, staff, and students recalled the unselfish and principled behavior of the World War II faculty. The college administration memorialized Weidner and the Dutch-Paris line by dedicating a plaque listing the college's Dutch-Paris participants.<sup>1</sup>

With the liberation of Holland and Belgium in 1945 and the return of the Dutch government to The Hague, the flow of refugees subsided. The Dutch Army then recruited Weidner to identify Dutch citizens living in France who had collaborated with the Nazis. Weidner pursued these collaborators with the same zeal and courage that he had shown in managing the Dutch-Paris Line.

In 1955, he immigrated to the U.S., where he and his second wife, Naomi, established a chain of health-food stores in southern California and attempted, without much success, to evade the spotlight.

A quiet, modest man, Weidner was "discovered" in 1963 by Haskell Lazare,

director of the Southern California branch of the American Jewish Congress, who recognized Weidner as the man who, since the war ended, had been honored by President Truman with the United States Medal of Freedom and had received the Military Order of the British Empire from King George VI, the Order of Orange-Nassau from the Dutch Queen Wilhelmina, and both the Croix de Guerre and the Medaille de la Resistance from the French government.

Lazare contacted the State of Israel, which entered Weidner's name among the Heroes in the Golden Book of Jerusalem and in 1978 recognized Weidner as one of the Righteous Among the Nations. In 1993, John Weidner was honored at the opening of the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.

Looking back over his wartime activities, John Weidner reflected on why he subjected himself to this ordeal. He said, "During our lives, each of us faces a choice to think only about ourselves, to get as much as we can for ourselves, or to think about others, to serve, to be helpful to those in need. I believe it is



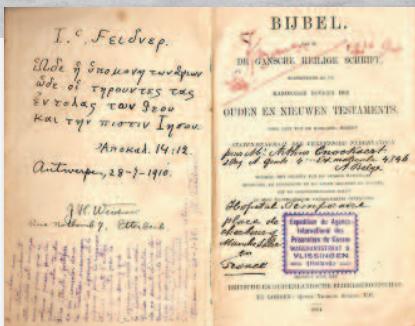
**Above:** John Weidner and other members of the Dutch-Paris Escape Line being interviewed for a 1964 Dutch telecast.

**Right:** A gift from his father, this Bible provided John Weidner with comfort and direction during the Dutch-Paris experience. It is now housed at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, along with 11 linear feet of Weidner's personal correspondence and his personal library.

important to develop our hearts, to have a heart open to the suffering of others.”<sup>2</sup>

The John Henry Weidner Foundation is continuing to honor the courage and commitment of John Weidner and all the men and women of the Dutch-Paris Line by commissioning a detailed history of their heroism. Using newly opened archival files in the Netherlands, Belgium, and France, Dr. Koreman is discovering how Weidner and his assistants recruited trustworthy line members and how they produced false identification papers and transit visas necessary for a journey across five countries. Koreman will describe how Weidner and his "lieutenants" developed a system to provide food, clothing, contacts, code words, and instructions to the refugees specifically designed to avoid detection by the many Nazi and Vichy security organizations.

During Koreman's six months of research in various European archives, she found many World War II files on Dutch-Paris operations that were recently declassified. At the Red Cross archives in The Hague, for example, she discovered a gold mine of informa-



Weidner receives one of the many medals awarded for his humanitarian service during the Holocaust.

tion on Dutch-Paris participants who were arrested and sent to concentration camps in Germany and Poland. These files and discoveries at other European archives were supplemented by interviews with surviving line members. Further information came from researchers and World War II scholars who contacted her at her blog (<http://www.dutchparisblog.com>).

John Weidner died in California in 1994. One of the speakers at his funeral, Rabbi Harold Schulweis, founding chairman of the Foundation to Sustain Righteous Christians, spoke of the meaning of the Weidner experience and the practical role it can play in our community:

*"Confronting goodness may be more painfully challenging than confronting evil. It is one thing to study and condemn the sadistic behavior of a Klaus Barbie but quite another to study and acknowledge the rescue behavior of a John Weidner. The latter presents us with a hard mirror.*

*"Would I rescue a pregnant woman, a hungry or homeless child, an aged, frightened couple—provide them with food and shelter, dispose of their refuse, and care for them in their sickness—knowing that doing so might bring disaster upon my family from Nazi pursuers and their informers?"*

*"The rescuer's goodness shakes the foundations of my claims to virtue. The behavior of flesh-and-blood rescuers compels me to think long and hard about my own goodness and to imaginatively rehearse my choices in analogous situations."<sup>73</sup>*

*Ordinary Heroes: The Dutch-Paris Line* is scheduled to go to the publishers this fall. You can play a role in its completion. Should you have information about those who served on or were rescued by the line, please contact Dr. Megan Koreman at her blog site (<http://www.dutchparisblog.com>). You can also learn more about the Weidner Foundation, the Weidner Archives, and the Weidner Chapters at U.S. colleges and universities by going to the foundation Website at <http://www.weidnerfoundation.org>.

The entire 100-box Weidner Ar-

chives collection is now housed at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University in California, which contains one of the world's largest collections of World War I and World War II documents and is an important resource for historians and researchers.

Finally, you can hear and see John Weidner in a 1967 documentary produced by Dutch documentarian Dick Verkijk by going to YouTube and typing in *Meer dan 1080*. ☺



**Kurt Ganter, Ed.D.,** is the Executive Director of The John Henry Weidner Foundation. He has served as an educator and health-care executive. He lives in Phippsburg, Maine.

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**HE UPHOLDS THE CAUSE OF THE OPPRESSED AND GIVES FOOD TO THE HUNGRY. THE LORD SETS PRISONERS FREE, THE LORD GIVES SIGHT TO THE BLIND, SUSTAINS THE FATHERLESS AND THE WIDOW, BUT HE FRUSTRATES THE WAYS OF THE WICKED**

**J**esus charges His church to be salt and light in a world compromised by spiritual decay, disease, suffering, and social unrest.<sup>1</sup> Our Christian calling requires us to demonstrate His compassion and to minister to hurting humanity. Jesus' profound solidarity with the dispossessed provides a glimpse into the very heart of God and enlightens us regarding our duties toward others. Throughout history, through social engagement, Christians have taken seriously their Master's command.

### **Roots of Christian Social Engagement**

The church's teachings on social engagement are rooted in Old Testament anthropology, prophetic calls for righteousness and justice, the life and teachings of Christ, and the New Testament call for love and service. The biblical account of Creation informs us that humankind was made in God's image (Genesis 1:26, 27). Therein lies the basis of the inherent dignity and worth of all humans, with serious implications on how we treat one another. We are duty bound to honor, respect, and give priority to the needs of human beings, as well as the rest of God's creation.

God cares for humankind and the relationship we have with one another, and has defined this concern in terms of the core values of righteousness and justice. Through Moses, God told the emerging community of Israel that they were not to take advantage of the weak or strangers among them (Exodus 22:21). They were not to allow the perpetuation of poverty and debt (Leviti-

# PEDAGOGICAL MODELS FOR CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

cus 25). They should periodically observe the Year of Jubilee, marking the celebration by freeing the slaves and proclaiming liberty to all, thus providing a corrective to human debt and fractured relationships.

God's extraordinary concern for the oppressed and poor is clearly portrayed in Psalm 146, where David reflects on the inherent goodness of God, which was to remain as an enduring part of Israel's social fabric: "He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind, . . . sustains the fatherless and the widow, . . . but he frustrates the ways of the wicked" (vss. 7-9).<sup>2</sup> God is concerned with the suffering and hurt of humanity, and He expects no less of His followers. A claim of allegiance to God, such as Christians make, demands that they embrace their social engagement with the spirit of righteousness, love, justice, caring for the needy and the poor, and relating with dignity with the less fortunate—all for the glory of God and in celebration of the knowledge that as humans, we all share the same divine image.

The prophets of Israel can, indeed, serve as models for engagement with the poor; they often expressed God's interest in and care for the poor and the oppressed. Amos calls God's people to justice and righteousness: "Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream" (5:24). Micah raises a fundamental question about the divine expectation of every person. The answer is a direct and fundamental call for human duty: "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good and what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (6:8). In refer-

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BY RAMONA L. HYMAN AND ANDY LAMPKIN

ring to fasting—a common religious practice—Isaiah subjects it to God's new definition: "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?" (58:6, 7). Jeremiah reminds us that God hears the cries of the captives, down-trodden, and oppressed and promises a time of peace and security, respite, and restoration (30:5-11).

These and other prophetic statements express God's overwhelming concern for humanity and His special concern for "the least" among us (see Matthew 25:40). The scriptural references cited above also emphasize God's compassion and concern for human wellbeing. These references do not support a dichotomy between spiritual and physical wellbeing. They clearly indicate that God values human beings and wishes them well.

Nowhere is this more exemplified than in the life and teachings of Jesus, which provide numerous examples of His concern for humankind. Indeed, the primary motive of Jesus' coming into the world is well summarized by one of the best-known passages in the Bible: "For God so loved the world that he gave his

one and only Son, that

whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). The same disciple who wrote those words tells us that "having loved his own who were in the world," Jesus "loved them to the end" (John 13:1).

The Gospels record many examples of Jesus' love in action. Matthew tells us that when Jesus "saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick" (Matthew 14:14). Matthew also records that when Jesus saw two blind men, He "had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him" (20:34). Luke takes Jesus' own words to define the Savior's mission in terms of social engagement: "The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor" (7:22).

The first Christians attempted to model Jesus' acts of compassion and taught one another to do the same. In Colossians 3:12, Paul exclaimed, "Therefore as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." In writing to Ephesians, Paul re-

minded Christians to "be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as Christ forgave you" (4:32). Peter also expresses the duty to be compassionate: "Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble" (1 Peter 3:8).

### Pedagogical Models of Social Engagement

Adventists, from their early beginnings, recognized their Christian duty to serve hurting humanity. The Millerite Adventists were quite vocal in their opposition to the evils of slavery in the U.S. and spoke out forcefully against it.<sup>3</sup> Some were quite actively involved in its abolition.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, early Adventists were outspoken against the harms of alcohol and provided key leadership to the temperance movement.<sup>5</sup> They also provided leadership in national religious-liberty debates.<sup>6</sup> Former president of the world church, Jan Paulsen, stresses the importance of social justice in the formation and practice of the Seventh-day Adventist worldview: "I want Seventh-day Adventists to be known as people who lift high their commitment to hope and peace. Let us speak from the pulpit and show through our actions that we oppose anything that instills hatred or inflames violence."<sup>7</sup> Thus, promoting social justice and social engagement are very much a part of the tradition of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In addition to Adventist faith and practice, in America, the social gospel and American civil rights movement emerge as pedagogical models of Christian social engagement. The social gospel movement, conditioned by biblical faith, had as its goal to ameliorate the social ills that confront society, particularly the plight of the poor. The Afro-American church in the 1950s and 1960s fueled the civil rights movement, supplying much of the leadership, financial resources, and vision.

If the next generation of Adventists is going to continue the noble Christian tradition of social ministry and engagement, administrators and teachers must include these activities in the curriculum. In this regard, it is helpful to examine what other institutions have done.

Throughout history, a number of institutions have taught students the importance of social responsibility. One example from the civil rights movement that can serve as an international model is the successful collaboration of educational and church organizations to achieve social engagement, as was demonstrated in 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama. Faculty at Alabama State University educated their students about the moral wrongs of segregation as an affront to the dignity and worth of all human beings. One of the professors who modeled the pedagogical model of teaching students how to be socially engaged was Jo Ann Robinson. In December of 1955, when Rosa Parks was arrested for breaking the bus segregation law, many of Robinson's students protested and agitated against the violation of Parks' human rights.

Stirred by her religious, political, and professional convictions, Robinson organized her students. Together they circulated 50,000 leaflets encouraging Montgomery citizens to boycott city buses on Monday, December 5, 1955. The leaflet read:

"Another Negro woman has been arrested and thrown in jail because she refused to get up out of her seat on the bus for

*"In the Christian faith the final law in which all other law is fulfilled is the law of love."*

—Reinhold Niebuhr,  
*Christianity and Society*  
(Summer 1950).

whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). The same disciple who wrote those words tells us that "having loved his own who were in the world," Jesus "loved them to the end" (John 13:1).

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a white person to sit down. It is the second time since the Claudette Colvin case that a Negro woman has been arrested for the same thing [sic]. This has to be stopped. Negroes have rights, too, for if Negroes did not ride the buses, they could not operate. Three-fourths of the riders are Negroes, yet we are arrested, or have to stand over empty seats. If we do not do something to stop these arrests, they will continue. The next time it may be you. . . . This woman's case will come up on Monday. We are, therefore, asking every Negro to stay off the buses Monday in protest of the arrest and trial. Don't ride the buses to work, to school, or anywhere on Monday. You can afford to stay out of school for one day if you have no other way to go except by bus. You can also afford to stay out of town for one day. If you work, take a cab, or walk. But please, children and grown-ups don't ride the bus at all on Monday. Please stay off of all buses Monday.”<sup>8</sup>

The students at Alabama State University, with their professor, supported the idea of fairness and democracy through social engagement and became student activists, thus aiding in the desegregation of city buses in Montgomery, Alabama. This call for integration and racial equality slowly spread across the nation, until the U.S. Congress passed several laws such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.



**Oakwood University students preparing to engage in community-centered activities on Agape Day.**

In the larger American context, movements like the Montgomery Bus Boycott are models of how the teachings of Jesus can inform the struggle for the rights and welfare of all people.

### Seventh-day Adventist Models

Pedagogical models of social engagement that seek to improve the condition of humankind are being replicated today in Seventh-day Adventist institutions.

- Each year the faculty, students, and administrators at Oakwood University in Huntsville, Alabama, come together to engage in community-centered activities on Agape Day, when the college family volunteers in the community. They participate in a variety of programs, such as tutoring at elementary schools and volunteering at a food bank. These real-life experiences help to sensitize students and faculty alike to the needs of the communities where they are called to bear witness and serve. One former student, Toson Antwan Knight, says, “This program has helped me to realize how important it is to give back to your community. I had the opportunity to volunteer at an elementary school. Participating in Agape day has taught me to love and care for everyone, even if I am not getting paid to do so.”<sup>9</sup>

- Another example of a successful student/faculty partnership

illustrating social action is the National Association for the Prevention of Starvation (NAPS). Founded by Dr. Anthony Paul, its stated mission is “to mitigate hunger, poverty, and disease, and to improve education and food security among suffering people, both nationally and internationally, regardless of race, religion, or nationality.”<sup>10</sup> Following the teachings of Jesus, NAPS, through collaboration among faculty, students, and administrators, has launched several campaigns to relieve the suffering of hurting humanity, nationally and internationally. NAPS members assisted with the clean-up and recovery after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York City. They provided relief to survivors of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, and have built schools in remote villages around the world. Closer to home, they have engaged in local service efforts in the Huntsville, Alabama, area and the desperate poverty-stricken Afro-American belt region in the South. NAPS is a successful model for socially conscious partnerships between



**Above:** The Enactus team from Washington Adventist University was named a regional champion at a March 23, 2013, competition held in Baltimore. Right: A Loma Linda University dental student participates in SIMS.

faculty, students, administrators and community needs.

- The Community-Academic Partners in Service (CAPS) sponsored by Loma Linda University (Loma Linda, California—LLU) provides community service, volunteerism, and service-learning opportunities for LLU students. Among its many outstanding programs are the Healthy Neighborhood Project, in which university students mentor primary and secondary school students; and Project Hope, which links expectant teen parents with student mentors who together attend health and parenting classes.

Like many other Adventist colleges and universities, LLU provides opportunities for its students to engage in short-term mission service. Its program, Students for International Mission Service (SIMS), enables students to provide basic health care to underserved populations worldwide. Through its partnership with more than 40 Adventist hospitals throughout Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Oceania, SIMS makes it possible for LLU students to serve the global community.<sup>11</sup>

- The Enactus team from Washington Adventist University (WAU) in Takoma Park, Maryland, formerly Students in Free Enterprise, was named a regional champion at a March 23, 2013, competition held in Baltimore. The event was one of 10 regional competitions being held across the United States during March and April where college students showcase how they use business ventures to help others in their communities.

"Our students presented three local projects they were involved with to a panel of judges under a rigid set of competition standards," said Weymouth Spence, WAU president. Spence expressed pride that the 44 WAU students and their projects were among 62,000 from 38 countries representing 1,600 universities and 7.3 million project volunteer hours towards a common commitment. Participating students use business concepts to develop



community outreach projects, transform lives and shape a better, more sustainable world. During this academic year, the WAU team organized eight projects in the Takoma Park community, including Job Quest, a partnership with Adventist Community Services of Greater Washington that provides job-readiness training for unemployed residents.<sup>12</sup>

- La Sierra University in Riverside, California, has recently been named a Presidential Awardee in the 2013 President's High Education Community Service Honor Roll, which was presented to university President Randal Wisbey during the annual meeting of the American Council on Education. This is the highest honor a college or university can receive for its commitment to volunteering, service learning, and civic engagement. The university was cited for its efforts during the 2011-2012 school year to aid southeastern California residents through various outreach programs, including service-learning classes.

Programs in which La Sierra University students have recently participated include the Home and Homelessness Class (History Department), which works with local residents to better understand the challenges of housing for those who are homeless, and helps people in group homes to assess their financial and personal situations in order to help them get into some type of housing. La Sierra students also work with Operation Safehouse, a temporary group home for street kids and runaways, helping the residents earn their high school diploma and acquire employment skills. Social work students get involved in government Lobby Days, when they make a trip to the state capitol to lobby for changes that benefit society.<sup>13</sup>

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has many other educational models of socially engaged evangelism. Continuing to educate our students in the challenges of life and their duty to help make the world a better place remains an implicit purpose of the church. Seventh-day Adventist schools and houses of worship are spiritual and educational outreach centers; they function as beacons of life that provide respite in a troubled world. ☙



**As part of a service-learning history class on the Vietnam War and its aftermath, students from La Sierra University (Riverside, California) partnered to interview veterans and record their personal oral histories. At the end of the quarter, the students and veterans joined in an event (above), during which the students presented personal gifts to "their veteran" and reflected on how much they had learned and how deeply the experience had affected them.**



**Ramona L. Hyman** is an Associate Professor of Humanities at Loma Linda University in Loma Linda, California. She received her B.A. from Temple University, her M.A. from Andrews University, and her Ph.D. from the University of Alabama. Dr. Hyman's literary work and research is grounded by an African-American cultural and religious

sensibility. She has been included in journals and anthologies such as Amiri and Amini Baraka's *An Anthology of African-American Women Writers* (Marrow Press), *African-American Pulpit, Message, and African American Review*, and is the author of the poetry collection, *In the Sanctuary of a South*. Dr. Hyman has shared her lecture/performance "Let Me Tell You Something About Rosa Parks" nationally. She is also the founder of the conference *African Americans: Healers in a Multicultural Nation*.



**Andy Lampkin** is currently an Associate Professor in the School of Religion at Loma Linda University, where he teaches Bioethics, Christian Social Ethics, and Health Disparities Ethics. He earned a bachelor's degree from Oakwood University and a Master of Theological Studies (M.T.S.) and Ph.D. in Ethics and Society from Vanderbilt University.

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2. All Scripture passages in this article are quoted from the New International Version. Scripture quotations credited to NIV are from The Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.
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9. E-mail message to the author, May 1, 2010.
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11. Visit the SIMS Website (<http://www.lluglobal.com>) for news stories, videos, and photos.
12. Adapted from [http://www.columbiaunion.org/article/1249/news/2013-news-archives/march-27-2013-wau-s-enactus-team-wins-at-u-s-regional-competition#.UVxgyl\\_D-ot](http://www.columbiaunion.org/article/1249/news/2013-news-archives/march-27-2013-wau-s-enactus-team-wins-at-u-s-regional-competition#.UVxgyl_D-ot).
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# Karen Kotoske— AMISTAD

## Helping Women and Children Around the World



*Karen Hanson Kotoske is the founder and Executive Director of Amistad International, a charity that sponsors programs for impoverished children and women in eight countries. She has a B.S. in Dental Hygiene from Loma Linda University. In 2007, Karen was honored as a Woman of the Year by the Association of Adventist Women for her work in philanthropy. The preferred method for contacting Karen is by e-mail: [tomamistad@aol.com](mailto:tomamistad@aol.com). Address: P.O. Box 455, Palo Alto, CA 94302 U.S.A.*

**Jeff:** After you committed your life to God, you spent some significant time praying for a work to do. Tell us about this.

**Karen:** Around age 30, I was newly awakened to God's love. I began to understand, for the first time, the Good News—God loves us, and we can't do anything about it. This is a paraphrase of a quote from La Sierra University theologian Fritz Guy. The only response one can sensibly make in return is gratitude. For me, this took the form of frequent fervent prayers asking God to give me a work to do for Him.

Each summer for five years, I went to the Sierra Nevada Mountains of Northern California to pray, since it has always seemed to me that God can be better heard in the quiet of nature. I was hoping that He would give me at least a small way of demonstrating my gratitude for His saving grace. I had had, since age 9, a vague notion of doing something for orphans, but I did not ask God for a specific work to do. Year Five, He responded to my prayers.



*Jeff Boyd has an M.A. in Peace Studies from the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary and an M.B.A. from Andrews University. He is the Assistant News Editor at Adventist Today, the Editor of the Adventist Activism blog, the Secretary of Adventist Peace Fellowship, and Research Coordinator at Tiny Hands International, an organization fighting human trafficking in Nepal. Mr. Boyd lives in Flint, Michigan.*

I N T E R V I E W   B Y   J E F F   B O Y D

**Jeff:** Your trip to Mexico in 1980 must have been part of this answer.

**Karen:** At age 35, by then married to my husband, Tom, for seven years and a dental hygienist for 13 years, I went to Guadalajara, Mexico, to visit my brother, who was attending medical school at the Autonomous University. On my first Sabbath there, I learned that the Adventist medical students, with the help of their pastor, Bill Baxter (a pilot with a plane), had restarted a flying clinic for the Huichol Indian tribe in the Sierra Madre Mountains of western Mexico, an area with no roads, electricity, phones, or running water. Baxter had first flown to this tribe in 1953 and had built the first Huichol elementary school. They invited me to fly with them on one of their clinic days.

The trip on May 18, 1980, left me quite different. Deplaning at the tiny village of Ocata del Llanos, the pastor asked if any ill persons wanted to see the medical students. But the villagers' only request was for food. Because of the drought, they were down to their last grains of corn.

Pastor Bill and the students flew away to buy corn in a more developed area, leaving me alone in the village. I had never before been with anyone who had little or no food. I thought: *Maybe helping with the flying clinic is something I can do.*

After I returned to California, I filed the IRS papers necessary to start a non-profit and began to tell people about the Indians who lived on the edge of starvation, with no clean water, almost no access to medical care, and very few schools. At first it was discouraging. It was clear I was not a fundraiser. But I had a reason to continue trying—people needed help. It was that simple.

**Jeff:** Had you been involved in service and social action before this?

**Karen:** I had done no volunteer work before my awakening at about age 30. During my five-year waiting period, I volunteered in my local community teaching English as a Second Language through the Red Cross and helped the "Friendly Visiting Service," which pairs



**Karen Kotoske, right, joining others for a mission flight into the Sierra Huichol, Mexico.**

volunteers with housebound and handicapped people.

A bit later, once I began Amistad, I volunteered in a food outreach to the "John Muirs" of our area—people who were living in our dry creek beds, or on the street, or in the VA hospital. For a while, I was a volunteer chaplain at Stanford University Hospital.

**Jeff:** Turning now to Amistad, what is the significance of the name?

**Karen:** Amistad means *friendship* in Spanish. Any outreach that has lasting value must be based on friendship and trust.

**Jeff:** In what ways has friendship been important in your work?

**Karen:** The majority of our projects have been made through people that I consider friends. For example, I have a friend who was attending my church while she was getting her Ph.D. at Berkeley and who now teaches Eastern Religion at the University of California. She wrote me: "Karen, I've got a graduate student who's studying in Varanasi, India, and she's come across a little school that just started up in somebody's front yard. It's struggling, and she would love to help it out. Is there any way you

could help this school?"

So her student started writing to me and telling me about a wonderful Indian woman, Rajan, who had built some little rooms and was teaching 60 kids how to read and write. We became her sponsors about eight years ago, and now she has 220 kids. Thirty-eight of them have already gone on to middle school, and some of them will probably graduate from the university someday. But it was through a friend that I heard about Buddha's Smile School.

As for the home for girls of sex workers in Calcutta, that started after I saw *Born Into Brothels*. I knew I had to do something to help the children of prostitutes in Calcutta. It took me several days to think of a woman I know, Juthica Stangl, who has a project—Shadhika—for imprisoned women in Calcutta. I e-mailed her: "Is anybody helping the children of the sex workers in Calcutta?"

Juthica's husband answered, "Karen, New Light/Calcutta's project director, Urmi Basu, is here in Paulo Alto this week, and she's going to be leaving in a couple days. Come over to our house and meet her. She runs a program for children of prostitutes in Calcutta."

I went over to their house and met Urmi, who has become a very dear friend of mine. She spent the afternoon telling me about the hundreds of children who come to her two shelters in the middle of the red-light district to study, wash, eat, and receive medical care. Paid teachers and volunteers give each child love and attention. Typically, the children arrive in the afternoon and stay until late at night while their mothers ply their trade in tiny one-room, doorless “homes.”

Urmi wanted a home where the girls could live safely, receive a good education, and be free from pressure to enter their mothers’ line of sad, deadly work. These women don’t belong to a caste, so they have no place in society, and neither do their daughters. We helped Urmi Basu open Soma Home, which now houses several dozen girls, the

eldest of whom have already graduated from high school and have gone on to college to learn a trade. One girl has become a social worker. Urmi is hoping to start businesses so she can employ the graduates. If you saw them in their sharp school uniforms, you’d think they’re private school students from prosperous families. All they needed was opportunity to realize their potential.

Another experience: In 1996, walking down the street a few blocks from my house, I passed a neighbor and started talking to her. She knew I was a Seventh-day Adventist, and she said, “Oh, Karen, my son just married a girl who was raised Adventist, and her mother’s an Adventist, and they live in Portland, Oregon. And her mother, Paula Leen, is in Zimbabwe trying to help orphans.” Within a few weeks, I met Paula and learned that she had no charitable organization in the U.S. to

help her. Since then, Amistad International has been the agency supporting Paula in her multi-faceted program of helping orphans, disabled, handicapped, vulnerable elderly, hydrocephalic babies, and malnourished children.

**Jeff:** Tell me more about Amistad’s activities today. In what areas of the world are you active, and in what types of programs are you involved?

**Karen:** Many of the programs we sponsor are schools. Education—literacy—is the first weapon in the arsenal against poverty and institutionalized corruption. Here’s a list of organizations Amistad is supporting around the world:

- **Zimbabwe:** Murwira orphanage.
- **South Africa:** Lambano Sanctuary, Johannesburg—a home for children



**Christian Huichol believers meeting on a Sabbath day. Karen Kotoske is in the center of the back row.**



Young Kenyan women empowered after attending CIFORD's new community-developed, coming-of-age seminar dance through the streets of their town to celebrate "Education, not Circumcision."

and babies who are HIV positive.

- **Kenya:** (1) Amri School—currently enrolls 203 impoverished children, many of whom are HIV positive and/or orphans of parents who died of AIDS. (2) Grow BioIntensive Agriculture Center of Kenya (G-BIACK)—teaches at-risk teens and women with AIDS how to grow food for their families, to do tailoring, and make crafts. G-BIACK was given the award as the best NGO in their area in 2013. (3) Pathfinder Academy—a school for 401 children where we have just built 12 classrooms and have a library fully stocked with 4,600 new books. (4) Community Initiatives for Rural Development (CIFORD)—a program for AIDS widows and women with AIDS where we teach agriculture and provide small breeding livestock for their farms. Our work with CIFORD includes three-to six-day sequestered Coming of Age seminars for young girls, teaching them about the dangers of female genital mutilation (FGM), as well as the importance of staying in school and avoiding early marriage. (5) Youth Action for Rural Development (YARD)—Amistad provides funds for about 500 loans in a micro-finance project.

- **India:** (1) Buddha's Smile School (BSS), Varanasi, India—a school for 220 untouchable caste, lepers' children, and Bangladeshi refugee children. These are the children of beggars, garbage pickers, rickshaw drivers, etc. We are the primary sponsor for BSS, supplying their month-to-month operations with the exception of the daily meal, which is paid for by a Norwegian group. (2) Calcutta—We are an infrequent sponsor of Soma Home, a home for 40 daughters of sex workers. In 2005, we provided the funds to open the home, but a Spanish NGO is now their main sponsor. We are hoping to help them soon in building a similar home for male children of sex workers in Calcutta.

- **Haiti:** We provide support for two Seventh-day Adventist orthopedic surgeons who serve at the Adventist Hospital of Haiti in Port-au-Prince—Scott Nelson and Terry Dietrich. We also have a new program that helps support four small orphanages.

- **Mongolia:** We have helped various elementary schools.

**Jeff:** How do you see these projects as addressing social injustice?

**Karen:** We focus primarily on the best weapon against poverty: education. Our most successful programs were started by teachers, pastors, or social workers whose great vision and determination inspired them to do what they could to change the world. Each one, though a visionary, is a person of action. Rajan Kaur, in Varanasi, India, is a good example. She was a Montessori school teacher from Calcutta who moved to Varanasi with her new husband 16 years ago. She began teaching rich kids who could afford to pay tuition. Every day, a clutch of ragged children would come to her front yard and beg to be taught, which broke Rajan's heart. She decided to leave teaching the children of those who could pay, and instead turned her attention to those who could not pay: children of beggars, street sweepers, garbage pickers, and lepers.

She and her husband built a warren of classrooms on a tiny plot of land they owned in Sarnath, and she initially enrolled 60 little children in her Buddha's Smile School. Now she has 220 students. She has already had 78 go on

to middle school, and about 80 will have graduated as of 2013.

**Jeff:** Your religious commitment was influential in motivating you to start Amistad. How does your faith shape the organization today?

**Karen:** Faith that this is God's work is what keeps me going. It is easy to get discouraged when working in so many areas in the world where poverty can seem to be permanently entrenched because of corruption, greed, lack of electricity, violence, hunger, unsafe water, and inadequate medical delivery systems. But if we all throw up our hands at these issues and walk away, then how will they ever be solved? I see Amistad's role as linking the rich with the poor to forge ahead, one small step at a time.

**Jeff:** Many people see "need" as you did in Mexico but don't start international humanitarian organizations. Why do you think you responded as you did?

**Karen:** I had no choice. I was by nature and temperament compelled to do this work. I believe many people would like to serve in a more active role. They see a need and genuinely want to do something significant; they just don't know how. Or in some instances, they mistrust large charities, fearing that their donation will not go where intended.

I see one of Amistad's most important roles as linking up donors who would probably prefer to be there in the trenches with the people but can't for a lot of reasons—age, young children, poor health, having to work, no vacation time, etc. Some of Amistad's donors help support one project and pay special attention to it by communicating with the project leaders and even by visiting on occasion. I keep

a very short link between projects. A significant portion of my day is spent writing letters to donors, whom I think of as partners and friends. I've developed long-time friendships with many people whom I've never actually met. In many instances, donors actually visit their project, which I highly encourage.

**Jeff:** It seems as if you have a gift for building trust so people know their money will go to those who need it.



**Karen Kotoske with Buddha's Smile School student Deepak, born deaf and mute. Deepak is studying tabla (Indian drum) at BSS and is hoping to become a tabla teacher when he's older. Amistad donors have purchased a mechanical hearing aid for Deepak, and he is now able to hear to a limited degree.**

**Karen:** It's a sacred trust. It really overwhelms me sometimes because I think, "Am I doing enough with Your gifts?" I pray, "Lord, make my mind clear. Tell me. Just tell me." I hope that doesn't seem presumptuous, but I do feel that for this time, for this period of my life, God has given me this sacred obligation. I'm very aware that He could take this privilege away tomorrow. But we'll just do it as long as we can and as well as we can.

**Jeff:** What advice do you have for young leaders who have a heart for Jesus and His kingdom?

**Karen:** When young leaders feel called—though I believe that every Christian is called—they cannot let anything stop them from following their God-given path. They will encounter every sort of stumbling block from fear of failure to "the task just seems too big." Nothing is too big to take on if God is leading. He will give the young leader the power, intelligence, and talents equal to the challenge.

One thing I'd also stress with a young leader is that when massive discouragements come—and they will—to keep putting one foot in front of another. In 1991, our Huichol mission plane crashed, killing all five aboard—our mission pilot (Conroy Donesky), two doctors, and two day visitors. The Inter-American Division (Amistad's partner in this project) thought they would close the mission aviation program after this tragedy. But our donors generated a letter-writing blizzard to the division, and the Huichol needed our services and wanted us to return, so God helped us rebuild and expanded the program.

A message for young Adventists: Always make your opinions and wishes known to the church leaders. They need to hear from you. And some will listen and help you effect change.

**Jeff:** How can teachers involve their students in the work of Amistad?

**Karen:** We have had several schools link with our school in Varanasi, India. They have exchanged artwork and raised funds. If a teacher wanted to ask me about that, we could discuss some ideas, perhaps creating a link to some particular subject they are studying. ☺

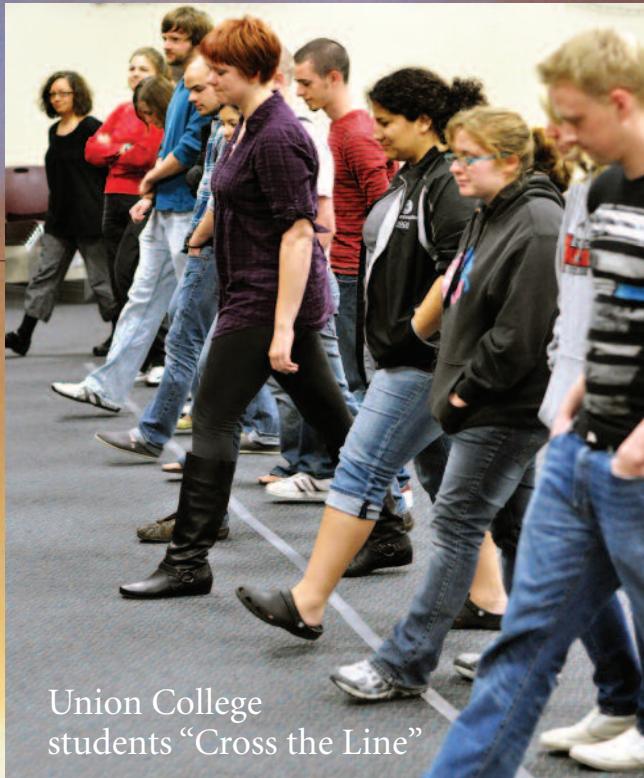
# *Build Your Own* PEACE WEEK

**O**ne week. Every Seventh-day Adventist school. Every year.

This call to action is laid out with astounding directness in an official Seventh-day Adventist Church statement entitled "A Call to Peace."<sup>1</sup>

The Seventh-day Adventist Church operates what may be the second-largest worldwide parochial school system. Each of its more than 6,000 schools, colleges, and universities is being asked to set aside one week each school year to emphasize and highlight, through various programs, respect, cultural awareness, nonviolence, peacemaking, conflict resolution, and reconciliation as a way of making a specifically 'Adventist' contribution to a culture of social harmony and peace. With this in mind, the Church's Education Department is preparing curricula and other materials to help in implementing this peace program.

Though that curricula has not seen daylight, the call endures. From its inception, Adventism has taken peacemaking seriously (see "Seventh-day Adventists: 'People of Peace'" on page 44). The spirit of peacemaking is simple: We must be followers of Jesus.



Union College  
students "Cross the Line"

Not surprisingly, misinterpretations of peace abound—so education remains paramount. Peacemaking is not principally a passive enterprise, just as light is not merely the absence of darkness. The difference between a peace lover and a peacemaker is similar to the difference between loving money and making money.

• Union College's second annual Peace Week, held April 17-24, 2011, was designed to turn minds toward existing conflicts—both on the per-

sonal and the societal levels—and to study peaceful methods to resolve them. "Helping people learn to become better at listening, problem solving, and staying aware of issues around the world and how they are a part of it is the purpose of Peace Week," said Kourtney Shoemaker, a member of the Conflict and Peacemaking class that helped plan the first Peace Week.<sup>2</sup>

• "Crossing the Line," a dialogue activity, took place on Monday. As students entered Woods Auditorium, Kelly Phipps, a junior communication major, directed them to gather on one side of the room. Participants were asked to follow instructions in silence, paying attention to feelings that arose. "Notice who is with you. Notice how it feels to be where you are."

In addition, participants were asked to respect one another

B Y C H R I S B L A K E

by maintaining confidentiality with regard to this activity. After explaining the rules, Phipps read aloud one statement at a time. Any participant who heard a phrase that was personally relevant could choose to step across a strip of duct tape 15 feet away. She began, "Cross the line if . . ."

"You were raised by a single parent."

"You had an imaginary friend as a child."

"You are of multiethnic heritage."

"You wish you were out of school right now."

"You do not consider yourself to be a member of any religion."

"Someone in your family  
is gay/lesbian/bisexual/trans-  
gendered."

"You have a visible or  
hidden physical, learning, or  
developmental disability or  
impairment."

"You speak more than  
one language."

"You have ever been dan-  
gerously or continuously sick."

"You have ever used food  
stamps."

"You have been discrimi-  
nated against because of who  
you are."

"You have cried in the  
past month."

These and more state-  
ments addressed depression,  
sexual orientation, and racial  
prejudice—topics that often  
drive people apart and stir  
up conflict. However, know-  
ing this was a safe place,  
a true sanctuary, students  
stepped forward without  
hesitation. The honest dia-  
logue, in word and action,  
paved a path toward accept-  
ance and unity in the de-  
briefing afterward.

When Phipps addressed those who had previously used food stamps, a shocked Bernice Tumangkeng, a sophomore nursing and international rescue and relief major at Union College, watched several schoolmates cross the line. "You don't know what's going on," she admitted, "so when you learn that other people are fighting battles, you get a sense of humanity, and you want to help carry those burdens."

When Tumangkeng was asked to find a peace role model, Mohandas Gandhi, Mother Teresa, and Martin Luther King, Jr., sprang to mind. Tumangkeng chose Jesus. "Even if I wasn't a Christian," she said, "that is the Person I would be following. Like Jesus, I want peace to be the root of my actions, but also the result of my actions."

For many students, Peace Week was another positive step in their education. "Service and being nice to everyone is not

enough," said Phipps. "We must take time to educate ourselves about issues around us and to seek a true understanding. Only then will true peace be achieved."

## Starting a Peace Week

What practical essentials are needed to "set aside one week each school year" to emphasize peacemaking?

1. Acknowledge that peacemaking is vital to education, to Christianity, and to the world. Without a genuine belief in the importance of peacemaking, any dedicated time will fail to retain

the requisite urgency to sustain creative viability. The Bible, the character of Jesus, official Adventist statements, and today's newspaper headlines help provide the foundation for sustained action.

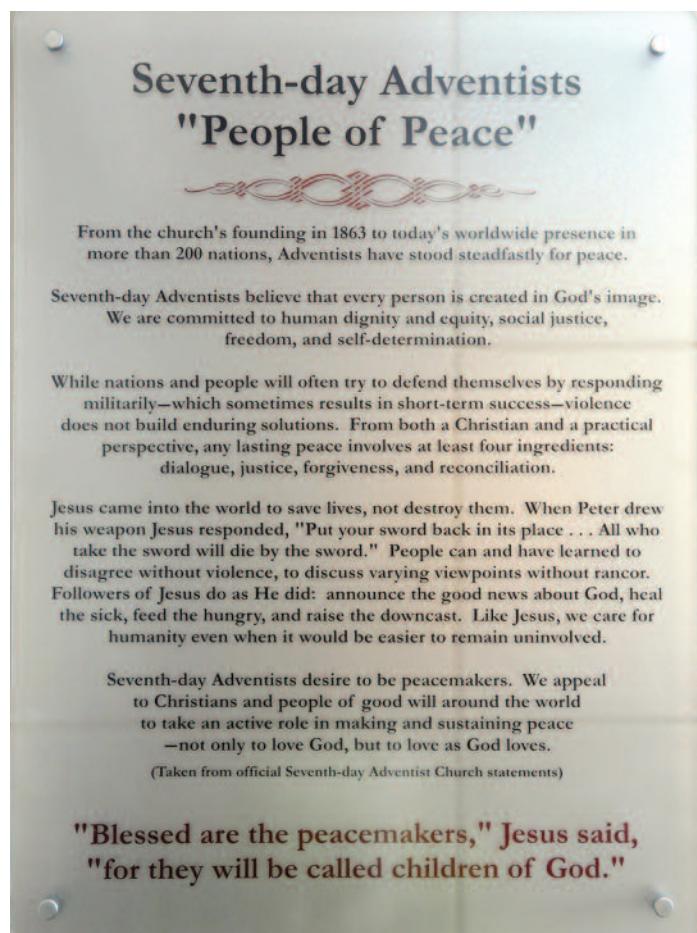
2. Encourage students to take major roles in planning and administering Peace Week. Students learn best by doing. Lao Tsu observed, "But of a good leader . . . when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say, 'We did this ourselves.'"<sup>3</sup> Jesus employed this principle often with His disciples: "The Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to come" (Luke 10:1, RSV).

3. Use one day to focus on each of these topics: dialogue, justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Union College follows this format (adapt to fit your situation):

**Sunday: Resurrection Day (Easter)**—when possible, begin with the liberating action of the Prince of Peace. On this day, Union College has also held a benefit fundraiser for a worthy cause.

**Monday: Dialogue activity.** Create opportunities for everyone to *listen*. Focus on active listening—paraphrasing—and on inclusive behaviors. For example, consult Google for a "Crossing the Line Activity." Provide a list of memorable quotes on the topics as a "takeaway" for each day's emphasis.

**Tuesday: Justice activity.** Many excellent articles and films—particularly documentaries—can be used to highlight injustices locally and worldwide. Be certain to provide opportunities for students to address the injustice. For example, have a staff member play the part of a prisoner of conscience—complete with meager food and furnishings behind duct-tape bars—and supply Amnesty International Urgent Actions for students and teachers to sign.





**Page 44: The “Seventh-day Adventists ‘People of Peace’” plaque in Ortner Center at Union College. Left: Students sign an Urgent Action for Amnesty International. Above: The Peace Sculpture Garden at Union College.**

**Wednesday: Forgiveness activity.** Distribute free carnations for students to give to someone as they ask the person for forgiveness. Be certain to qualify what forgiveness is and is not (e.g., releasing from our judgment entirely, *not* condoning the wrong). Carrying an unforgiving attitude harms us. As author Anne Lamott points out, “Not forgiving is like drinking rat poison and then waiting for the rat to die.”<sup>5</sup>

**Thursday: Reconciliation activity.** Read brief excerpts of how conflicts have been reconciled through peaceful means (the civil rights movement in the United States, the People Power Revolution of 1986 in the Philippines, Hungary’s Peaceful Revolution in 1989, the non-violent appeasement in Northern Ireland). Role-play various ways to achieve interpersonal non-violent reconciliation, even with bullies. Find ways to infuse each activity with fun.

**Friday: Concert, open mike, free clothing/book/art exchange.** We go outside to enjoy the day in peace and joy. It’s a day for everyone—tree huggers and military enthusiasts alike—to experience peaceful community.

**Saturday: Focus the sermon and liturgy on peace and peace-**

*making possibilities.* Then use the Sabbath as it was intended, as a day of liberation. “If you had known what this means [on the Sabbath], ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless” (Matthew 12:7, NKJV). Spread peace in active, merciful ways.

4. **Foster a climate throughout the year that nourishes peacemaking.** Build a consensus of respectful interaction—student to student, student to staff, and staff to staff. Be intentional about this on a daily basis. From this soil will sprout the fruits of peace you seek. ☺

**Chris Blake, M.A., is Associate Professor of English and Communication at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska.**



#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. See <http://adventist.org/beliefs/statements/main-stat52.html>.
2. Student quotes were gathered by Michelle Current.
3. Lao Tsu, *Tao Te Ching*, chapter 17.
4. Bible texts credited to RSV are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1946, 1952, 1971, by Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission. Texts credited to NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
5. Anne Lamott, *Traveling Mercies* (New York: Random House, 1999), p. 134.

**ADVENTIST SOCIAL JUSTICE ORGANIZATIONS****Amistad International**

**Karen Kotoske, Founder/Executive Director**

P.O. Box 455

Palo Alto, CA 94302

(650) 328-1737

<http://www.amistadinternational.org>

e-mail: [tomamistad@aol.com](mailto:tomamistad@aol.com)

**Adventist Disaster and Relief Association (ADRA)**

<http://www.adra.org>

**Adventist Peace Fellowship**

P.O. Box 2840

Silver Spring, MD 20915

(240) 515-1386

<http://www.adventistpeace.org>

**General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists**

Official Statements relating to social justice (abuse and family violence, birth control, child sexual abuse, drugs, environment, global poverty, homelessness and poverty, racism, literacy, tolerance)

<http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/statements/index.html>

**General Conference Women's Ministries Department and Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) *EndItNow Campaign*** (addressing violence toward women and girls worldwide)  
<http://www.enditnow.org>

**International Children's Care Alcyon and Ken Fleck, Founders**  
 2711 NE 134th Way  
 Vancouver, WA 98686

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 Vancouver, WA 98682-0013  
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<http://www.forhiskids.org>  
 e-mail: [info@forhiskids.org](mailto:info@forhiskids.org)

**REACH International**  
 P.O. Box 32  
 Berrien Springs, MI 49103  
 (800) 869-1412  
<http://www.reach.org>  
 e-mail: [info@reach.org](mailto:info@reach.org)

**Restore a Child and Defend Orphans Movement**  
**Norma Nashed, Founder**  
<http://restoreachild.org>  
[facebook.com/RestoreAChild](http://facebook.com/RestoreAChild)

**Saving Orphans through Healthcare and Outreach (SOHO)**  
**Cynthia Prime, Founder/Director**  
 8240 Naab Road, Suite 160  
 Indianapolis, IN 46260  
 (317) 471-5954  
<http://www.savingorphans.com>  
 e-mail: [info@savingorphans.com](mailto:info@savingorphans.com)

**OTHER CHRISTIAN SOCIAL JUSTICE ORGANIZATIONS****Operation Inasmuch: A Compassion Revolution**

A national nonprofit that employs proven models to motivate, train, and equip churches to inspire congregants to serve the neediest in their communities.

<http://operationinasmuch.org>

**Sojourners and Sojourners Magazine**  
**Jim Wallis, President, CEO, and Editor**  
 Provides a wealth of resources to get students involved in currently pressing social issues.

<http://www.sojo.net>

*Guest Editorial continued from page 3*

models an in-the-trenches prophetic Advent faith.

And finally, a how-to guide for Adventist campuses. Peace Weeks have been organized at a number of Adventist universities and colleges, such as Walla Walla University and La Sierra University. At Union College, Chris Blake draws on his years of experience to present a model for a yearly Peace Week that showcases the works of justice and mercy carried out by students, faculty, and staff.

Engagement in social-justice activities, such as short-term mission trips at home and abroad, feeding and clothing the poor, and raising funds for disaster relief and constructing chapels and schools help cultivate in students a spirit of selfless service that bodes well for the future of Adventism as it “occupies” until the Lord comes.

One of the participants in the New York City “Occupy Wall Street” protesters gave this answer when asked why she was there: “We are here because we know something is wrong.”<sup>3</sup> If we as Adventist educators know “something is wrong,” we, too, must respond in ways that honor our own faith tradition while implementing eternal biblical mandates in a manner that is relevant to hurting people in the 21st century. If we do, our students will rise and bless us for teaching them how to live relevant and meaningful Christian lives.

**NOTES AND REFERENCES**

1. See <http://www.sojo.net>.

2. All of the Bible texts in this editorial are quoted from the New Revised Standard Version. Bible texts credited to NRSV are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright ©1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.

3. Launched on September 17, 2011, the Occupy Wall Street movement sought to address issues relating to economic justice and corruption. The author accessed this statement on YouTube in October or November of that same year in video that is no longer available online.

*The Coordinator for this special issue, Lourdes Morales-Gudmundsson, Ph.D., is Chair of the World Languages Department at La Sierra University in Riverside, California. She is also a member of Clergy and Laity for Economic Justice (Pueblo de Fe Unido) and has published articles dealing with Christianity and immigration reform. The editorial staff of the JOURNAL express heartfelt appreciation for her assistance throughout the planning and production of the issue. Dr. Morales-Gudmundsson devoted many hours to identifying authors and topics, critiquing articles, and obtaining peer reviewers, but perhaps her most important contribution was inspiration, as she consistently radiated passion and conviction about the topics addressed in the issue.*

## JAE Wins 2013 Distinguished Achievement Award From the Association of Educational Publishers

The *Journal of Adventist Education* (JAE) won the Distinguished Achievement Award for Whole Publication Design for its theme issue "Principalship and Administration" (October/November 2012) from the Association of Educational Publishers on June 4. The editor, Beverly Robinson-Rumble, was present at the 2013 AEP Awards Gala in Washington, D.C., to accept the award, along with Harry Knox, JAE art director; and Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, world director of education for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

JAE had placed as a Finalist in three categories for the 2013 AEP Awards: Learned Article ("Providing Our Youth With Access and Opportunity to Attend Adventist Colleges" by Vinita Sauder in the April/May 2012 issue); Whole Publication Design; and Feature Article ("Setting Students Free With Poetry Writing" by Eurora Stevens in the February/March 2012 issue).



Designer Harry Knox with Editor Beverly Robinson-Rumble

About the awards: "Since 1967, the AEP Awards have honored outstanding resources for teaching and learning in all media and for any educational setting. The most prestigious and comprehensive recognition program of its kind, the AEP Awards recognize exceptional resources for students as well as professional development materials for teachers. A rigorous review process with instructors and other educational professionals serving as judges ensures that the winners meet all of AEP's established benchmarks for quality content. The AEP Awards are widely recognized for their success in identifying exemplars of excellence that broaden horizons, foster curiosity and critical thinking, and lay the foundation for lifelong learning" (From the 2013 AEP Awards Gala program).

JAE has been a finalist or winner of 14 awards from the Association of Educational Publishers.

Earlier in 2013, JAE also received Honorable Mention designations for two articles from the Associated Church Press.

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