

January 5, 2019

Local Church Budget

Negative inventory. At this time of year, many stores are involved in taking inventory as they prepare to file their business tax returns. One of the terms that has come out of this process is “negative inventory.”

As they attempt to reconcile their computer records between the goods they believe they have on hand and the actual amount, sometimes there is an unaccountable difference. Sadly, “negative inventory” reflects goods that are no longer there due to shoplifting or employee dishonesty.

This is a good time for us as Christians to take stock of our giving and lay good, solid plans to be faithful in this new year.

What does “faithful” actually mean? God’s Word in Malachi tells us: “Bring ye *all* the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Mal. 3:10, KJV, emphasis supplied).

As we begin this new year, let’s ask God to help us be faithful in our return of tithe and giving of offerings. We don’t want any negative inventory in God’s house!

January 12, 2019

Local Conference Advance

“Over and above.” Several years ago, our church needed to raise a large amount of money to pay off its mortgage. A very experienced retired Adventist stewardship director was hired to lead the campaign. A large kickoff banquet was held and pledges were taken. But one thing he often emphasized was this catchy phrase, “over and above.”

Because of the ongoing needs of the church—bills that must be paid and ministries that needed to be funded—he wanted to impress upon us that we absolutely *not* take from our giving to the local church budget or other offerings in order to give to the campaign. But that anything we pledged must be “over and above” all other giving.

As we, the givers, bought into this plan, an unusual thing happened. During the five years it took us to retire the church debt, tithes and other offerings went on the increase! How incredible! But, you see, we were excited about our church!

Unfortunately, after the campaign, it was “business as usual,” and the increase in offerings reverted back to its normal level. Aren’t people funny?

Let us all be solid, faithful stewards! This Sabbath, as we give for our local conference needs, let’s get excited about our fine conference-wide ministries such as church building programs, camp meeting, summer camps, and many other worthy endeavors. And let’s remember, “Over and above!”

January 19, 2019

Local Church Budget

MLK. My wife and I happened to be in Memphis, Tennessee, in early April of 1968, visiting friends. They took us on a ride to the motel where Martin Luther King, Jr., had just been assassinated on April 4. It was not yet a memorial; just a second-story room roped off with police tape. We stood there mute, thinking about the tragedy that had recently occurred. It was a solemn moment, and in our thoughts, we paid tribute to one whom we now consider to be a great hero of our nation, a victim of prevailing racial hatred.

Martin Luther King Jr. was an American Baptist minister and activist who became the most visible spokesperson and leader in the civil rights movement. He is best known for his role in the advancement of civil rights using the tactics of nonviolence and civil disobedience based on his Christian beliefs and inspired by the nonviolent activism of Mahatma Gandhi. – Wikipedia.

So here we are more than 50 years since his death. We reflect on other heroes from many lands, such as Mother Teresa, Martin Luther, and Nelson Mandela. Our church has had heroes and special people as well, and continues to have them.

Undoubtedly, the great majority of heroes remain unsung and unknown. Today, we have the opportunity to be heroes for Christ and His church, by being faithful to our calling. Please give generously today.

January 26, 2019

Religious Liberty

Religious Liberty. Nothing is more important than liberty of conscience and religious freedom. We were created to serve by choice, and Christ came to free us from the result of bad choices. The good news of the Gospel is a message of freedom.

It is no accident that the Adventist church has championed religious liberty from its very beginnings. Early Adventists suffered steep fines and even chain gang imprisonment under abusive Sunday blue laws. Our prophetic imperative told us that even in a land of blessed freedoms, powerful forces will again try to compel all to worship falsely.

Our church early on opposed a national Sunday law before Congress. Our church for well over 100 years has sent *Liberty* magazine to legislators and community leaders to clarify the great issues of conscience. Our church has defended Adventists in the workplace. And by radio, television, and a myriad of member events and outreach events, it keeps the freedom bells ringing.

In this offering today, you are making all this a continuing reality. Give as if your very liberties are at stake. They are. If the watchmen cry not, who will give the warning?—Lincoln Steed, editor *Liberty* magazine and associate director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty, North American Division.

February 2, 2019

Local Church Budget

Groundhog Day. Even Punxsutawney Phil has his day in the sun! As we consider this whimsical, legendary creature that supposedly makes his appearance each February and predicts the soon advent of Spring, we know that in some minds the groundhog or woodchuck is a nuisance, raiding gardens and leaving big holes in the ground. On the plus side, however, their abandoned dens provide homes for foxes and skunks that in turn eat mice and destructive field insects. And groundhogs are even used in biomedical research. Their susceptibility to a virus similar to human hepatitis B has made them valuable to researchers in finding a cure for the human affliction.

Who would have thought! But then, who would have thought that a church organization that began with a handful of believers in the mid-1800s would now number well over 20 million! This is all because of our wonderful Adventist message and our deep devotion to evangelism, both public and personal. And it is no doubt also due to our faithfulness in tithes and offerings, which fund the mission.

When you think about it, however, the early Christians in Acts 2 had no organizational infrastructure, but what they did have was lots of love for one another. They provided strongly for the needy among them, and they went forth preaching the Word in great faith.

Let us today demonstrate great faith and love as we return a faithful tithe and give liberally to the needs of our congregation.

February 9, 2019

It Is Written Canada

This morning all across Canada on CTV over 100,000 people are tuning into the *It Is Written Canada* broadcast. Through the visionary leadership of Henry Feyerabend, *It Is Written Canada* is the leading media ministry in market penetration in all of the North American Division. But more than just a media ministry, *It Is Written Canada* is committed to taking the three angels messages to all of Canada and around the world.

It Is Written Canada continues to emphasize evangelism in many different areas. Comprehensive evangelism is a key to making a major impact in the villages, towns, and cities across Canada. By working with churches for several years in advance in many different areas of ministry, these churches are able to impact their communities with the gospel. The continued work in city-wide evangelism projects also helps in the development of resources for local churches across Canada for evangelism.

It Is Written Canada continues to emphasize the work in the North. Through the faithful donations of people like you, *It Is Written Canada* has been able to deliver Bibles, study guides, and DVD resources to the Inuit in Nunavut in their native language. Your continued support will help fund Bible workers to the North and in helping to build church community centres in the major communities of Nunavut.

Today, the offering being taken throughout Canada is to support the work *It Is Written Canada*. Please be generous with your prayers and offerings.

February 16, 2019

Local Church Budget

Christian Parenting Day. While we have been called to go out into the world and make disciples for Jesus, we can't forget that we have a mission field inside the walls of our own home. Ellen G. White wrote in the book, *The Adventist Home*, "Our work for Christ is to begin with the family, in the home... There is no missionary field more important than this" (p. 35).

As parents, we play the most important role in the life of our children as we disciple them to be followers of Jesus and accept His free gift of forgiveness and eternal life. While we may teach them, it is much more important that we *show* them what it means to be a disciple.

When you set aside the tithe and offerings, write a check and put it inside the envelope, or when you go online to do the same, invite your child to sit by you and explain to them what you're doing and why. Your example of gratitude for God's goodness, of joyfully giving, and financial support of the ministry of the church is critically important as they develop these same traits.

Today is Christian Parenting Day. Give your child the tithes and offerings you have brought and let them place them in the offering plate. Since today's offerings are for the local church budget, take the time to explain to your child what that means and what the funds will be used for. You will be planting in their minds the importance of supporting the ministry of your local church.—Claudio Consuegra, NAD Family Ministries

February 23, 2019

Local Conference Advance

President's Day. George Washington, the first U.S. President and "father of our country," was highly respected for his integrity, leadership, and strong character. While the story of his chopping down the cherry tree may be apocryphal, it does portray his honesty. His humility is shown in his reluctance to serve as President, despite having led his troops to victory in the Revolutionary War. And his true heart showed up in the fact that he was the only president to completely free his slaves at his death. He was the only President to enter office upon the unanimous vote of his electors.

Abraham Lincoln, also known as "Honest Abe," towered over his people not only physically but morally. He was a six-foot four-inch be a man of prayer. Stories of his honesty include the one about when he was a store clerk, and accidentally overcharged a customer by six cents. As the store was closing for the evening he discovered his mistake, and walked three miles to the customer's house to return the money.

Are we people of honesty and integrity? An "integer" is a whole number, as opposed to a fraction like one-half; so "integrity" can be said of one who "has it all together." Do these values show up in our stewardship of God's tithe and our offerings?

Our local conference is well deserving of our support, as it ministers to us through youth camps, camp meetings, church building programs, etc. Give generously today.

March 2, 2019

Local Church Budget

The water's edge. Pastor and Mrs. James Hoffer once lived in St. Joseph, Michigan, just a mile or so from Glenlord Beach on Lake Michigan. When they moved there in 1989, there was a nice swimming area and sandy beach. Now, due to shoreline erosion, there is nothing. Over the years, erosion has claimed whole houses and radically altered the landscape. Barriers prevent people from venturing too close.

What causes erosion? The gentle and incessant lapping of water, the prevailing westerly winds, the action of rain and snow beating down—all have their effect. When roots or foundations aren't deeply secure, the elements slowly but surely wreak disintegration, and sand, rocks, and even structures topple into the lake.

This process is exactly what happens when little indiscretions and the world's influences begin eating away at our Christian foundation. We don't notice the erosion until it's too late. That is why we are encouraged with these words: "Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him" (Col. 2:6, 7). It is the daily commitment and attention to your root system that will keep your life standing tall and strong.

Today's offering is for Local Church Budget. Help us help others come to Jesus and stay close to Him. And prevent spiritual erosion!

March 9, 2019

Adventist World Radio

Adventist World Radio. "Change was in the wind in 1989 when the Cold War ended, the Berlin Wall came down, and Romania was liberated. As Romania's Communist leader, Nicolae Ceaușescu, and his wife fled for their lives, they were captured, tried, and executed.

"Ilie Radu and his wife, Lidia, felt free for the first time in their lives. Ilie began to search for answers to the questions that had been burning in his heart about God and about what happens when you die....

"After a few years, while studying the Bible, they discovered that Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River and not sprinkled. Ilie immediately requested that his new church family baptize him. He was informed that he had been sprinkled as a baby and that was good enough. Feeling devastated, Ilie began again to search for truth....

"Then four years ago, Ilie was working as a switcher for the railroad.... One day he noticed that a fellow worker had a radio app on his cell phone, and when they had some downtime waiting on the trains, he would listen to the radio on his phone. That gave Ilie the idea to do the same, so he began listening to a Christian station while at work. The station he liked most was the very popular Radio Vocea Sperantei, an affiliate of Adventist World Radio!"

Would you like to know the rest of the story? Go to the Adventist World Radio website, www.awr.org. And please give liberally to AWR today!

March 16, 2019

Local Church Budget

God's care for His own. Swallows can fly 7,000 miles without a chart, compass, or radio beam and land at the place they left six months before.

Spiders can make a silken rope, creating materials in their own chemical laboratory, very fine but strong enough for their own transport through the air.

Beavers are engineers, constructing without the aid of tools, cement, or precision instruments, bridges, tunnels, roadways, canals, and dams that last for years.

Bees, wasps, and ants solve their housing problem by building well-ventilated, weatherproof, well-designed, and practical apartment houses.

A young squid travels by jet propulsion. He swims by pumping water through a tube along his thin, streamlined body. When pursued, he can gather great speed, and he always jets backwards. When he gets going fast enough, he can set his fins at an angle and take off into the air. He has been seen to fly as far as sixty yards with one takeoff, leaving his foes far behind.

Can a Creator God like that take care of you and me? Of course! And shouldn't we respond to His loving care, most of which we take for granted, by living just as close to Him as we can? Yes!

Let us praise God for His blessings and respond in loving gifts for Him today.

March 23, 2019

Local Conference Advance

Spring has sprung!

O little bee on the red-topped clover,
Aren't you tired, you busy rover,
Of doing the same thing over and over—
 Gathering honey all day long,
 Singing the same little humming song?
Aren't you tired, you golden rover,
Of doing the same thing over and over?

O busy heart, O toiling mother,
Aren't you tired of work and bother—
The same dull task and never another?
 Over and over you brew and bake,
 Over and over you mend and make.
Aren't you tired, O weary mother,
Of the same dull round and never another?

Sweet and calm and clear I heard:
 "Over and over God paints the skies,
 Over and over His sun doth rise,
 Over and over He tints the flowers,
 Over and over He sends the showers,
 Over and over He guides the stars,
 Over and over the dawn unbars.
If over and over God deigns to work,
Why should we faint, one duty shirk?
So over and over our tasks we do,
Sure of reward if our work be true."

As we contemplate the beauties of Spring, let's give today for Conference Advance, which helps youth and others know the love and care of God through its ministries.

March 30, 2019

NAD Evangelism

Not hungry! If one of your children were frequently not hungry at dinnertime, would you be concerned? Well, that's what happened to one family while serving as missionaries in Brazil.

Rick had just turned three, and often at mealtime he would not have much appetite. This puzzled his parents for some time, until one day his mother happened to mention this to some of the neighbor ladies in her apartment building. Comparing notes, they discovered that Rick had been going around to the other apartments during the day mooching food! He would go up to a door and knock, and holding up three fingers, he would say something like this: "Mrs. So-and-so, I'm so hungry! May I please have three cookies [or three bananas, or three of whatever]?" No wonder he wasn't hungry at mealtime!

So, the expression "three cookies" (or "tres bolachas" in Portuguese) became a family joke.

One reason why some people don't come to church is that they are not hungry. Ellen White speaks of them, "[They] are feeding on husks and will remain spiritual dwarfs as long as they gratify Satan. . . These persons forget the words of Christ: 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you'" (1T 500).

Whatever we are feeding on that dulls our spiritual appetite must go. Please give to NAD Evangelism today so we can help people find Christ and feed on solid spiritual food.

April 6, 2019

Local Church Budget

Tax time! Through the years, the government has discussed whether to continue the deduction for charitable gifts. The day may come when this is no longer allowed. Questions in the minds of churches and other non-profits are, "How much would this affect their revenue?" and, "How much is this tax break an incentive in people's giving?"

We are used to the idea of the charitable deduction because of the countries in which we live, but many other countries don't have this benefit. Yet our people in these places are nevertheless faithful in their tithes and offerings.

A question to ask ourselves might be, "How does this affect *my* giving?"

Jesus tells us: "Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly" (Matt. 6:2-4, NKJV).

So, let us enjoy the deduction while we have it, but continue to be faithful regardless of what governments do or don't do.

Today's offering is for Local Church Budget.

April 13, 2019

Canadian Christian Record Services

Seventh-day Adventist churches in Canada have, for many years, provided summer camps for blind persons of all ages and from different backgrounds.

At these special Adventist camps across Canada, attendees are able to laugh, express their joy, and participate in a variety of fun activities together. Many of these attendees return year after year to enjoy their time together.

During blind camp, we are able to show people from the Bible how to find freedom, joy, contentment, peace, healing, and hope in Jesus.

In Toronto, Ontario, we have a church that ministers to the blind, both members and non-members.

Reading the story of Jesus's life, we see that He ministered and showed compassion to blind people. To many of them, He gave the gift of sight, and they became loyal followers.

Every year, a day is set aside for a special offering for Seventh-day Adventists across Canada. Today is that day when we can help our blind friends and neighbours. Thank you for your generous support.

April 20, 2019

Local Church Budget

Easter.

Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three;
One lived and died for self; one died for you and me.
The Greek died on a throne; the Jew died on a cross.
One's life a triumph seemed; the other but a loss.
One led vast armies forth; the other walked alone;
One shed a whole world's blood; the other gave His own.
One won the world in life and lost it all in death;
The other lost His life to win the whole world's faith.

Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three;
One died in Babylon; and one on Calvary.
One gained all for self; and one Himself He gave;
One conquered every throne; the other every grave.
The one made himself god; the God made Himself less;
The one lived but to blast; the other but to bless.
When died the Greek, forever fell his throne of swords;
But Jesus died to live forever Lord of lords.

Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three;
The Greek made all men slaves; the Jew made all men free.
One built a throne on blood; the other built on love;
The one was born of earth; the other from above.
One won all this earth, to lose all earth and heaven;
The other gave up all, that all to Him be given.
The Greek forever died; the Jew forever lives;
He loses all who gets, and wins all things who gives.

—Charles Ross Weede

April 27, 2019

Local Conference Advance

The biggest little word. The 40 years of wandering in the wilderness were about to come to an end. Moses, because of his own disobedience, was prohibited from crossing the Jordan into the Promised Land. Before transferring the leadership to Joshua, however, he wanted to admonish this new generation of Israelites regarding the two possible futures that awaited them. As you read his words in Deuteronomy 28, you will be struck by the fact that everything hinged on the biggest little word in the English language, “if.”

“If” you obey, great blessings will follow, and the world will flock to your doorstep, because they will sit up and take notice, and wonder how they can receive the same benefits. “If,” however, you rebel and become disobedient, the other nations will scorn and abuse you.

Despite this important sermon, not only spoken but written down for posterity, the Israelites spent hundreds of years of spiritual ups and downs. Over and over they succumbed to the cultural pressures around them, and soon became just like the other nations in so many ways. Following their exile in Babylon, some returned under Ezra and Nehemiah to rebuild the nation and entered a period of great zeal for the Law, which by the time of Christ resulted in legalism. We’re not much different from them.

Today, Christ calls *us* to faithful obedience based on the Gospel. The choice is ours, “if.”

May 4, 2019

Local Church Budget

Lest we also forget. When London was being blitzed during World War II, this article appeared in one of the British newspapers:

“We have been a pleasure-loving people, dishonoring God’s day, picnicking and bathing. Now the seashore is barred—no picnics, no bathing.

“We have preferred motor travel to church going. Now there is a shortage of motor fuel.

“We have ignored the ringing of church bells calling us to worship. Now the bells cannot ring, except to warn us of an invasion.

“We have left our churches half empty when they should have been well filled with worshippers. Now they are in ruins.

“We would not listen to the way of peace. Now we are forced to listen to the way of war.

“The money we would not give to the Lord’s work, now is taken from us in higher taxes and the high cost of living.

“The food for which we refused to give God thanks, now is unobtainable.

“The service we refused to give to God, is now conscripted for our country.

“Lives we refused to live under God’s control are now under the nation’s control.

“Nights we would not spend watching unto prayer are now spent anxiously in air raid precautions.”

“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.”- Ps. 33:12

May 11, 2019

Disaster and Famine Relief

War, refugees, floods, famine, drought, earthquakes, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions.

Most of us are not faced with the reality of these disasters. We don't know how devastating they can be. How a few minutes or hours can change our lives irrevocably, leaving loved ones dead, houses destroyed, and hope gone. We don't know how years of famine and war can wear down our bodies and weaken our souls.

For us, these disasters are only news reports. We are blessed to live in a peaceful and safe nation like Canada. So many others are not so blessed.

Isaiah 1:17 tell us to *“Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed.^[a] Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.”* (NIV)

When we see the news, we may not think we can do anything, but we can. We can pray. We can also reach out to help those affected by generously sharing our means.

Each year, the church dedicates one offering, the Disaster and Famine Relief Offering, which is today's offering, to give our brothers and sisters who are suffering the help that they need.

The offering collected today will be given to ADRA Canada to provide food, water, shelter, and other essential items.

Your compassion today will save lives.

‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

May 18, 2019

Local Church Budget

Adventist Single Adult Ministries Sabbath. Look around your church and you will notice church members and guests who have never been married, who are divorced, or who have lost their loved one. They are as important to the church as anyone else, and yet, often they feel forgotten or neglected by the church.

The apostle Paul wrote to the unmarried in the church at Corinth that not being married provides some opportunities that those who are married do not have. “I want all of you to be free from worry. An unmarried man worries about how to please the Lord. But a married man has more worries. He must worry about the things of this world, because he wants to please his wife. So, he is pulled in two directions. Unmarried women and women who have never been married worry only about pleasing the Lord, and they keep their bodies and minds pure. But a married woman worries about the things of this world, because she wants to please her husband. What I am saying is for your own good—it isn't to limit your freedom. I want to help you to live right and to love the Lord above all else,” (1 Cor. 7:32-35, CEV).

Whether married or unmarried, we all can participate in the ministry of the church. Through our prayers, personal efforts, and financial support, we contribute and assume responsibility and ownership for the mission with which God has entrusted us. The offering today, which is designated for the local church budget, demonstrates our response to God's generosity to us.—
Claudio Consuegra, NAD Family Ministries

May 25, 2019

Local Conference Advance

Praise the Lord for committees! This is a rather unusual title for an offertory reading, but we really mean it!

Part of the democratic process of the Seventh-day Adventist Church since the beginning has been committees. Yes, it does take longer to get things done, but it is really the only way to ensure that a proper system of checks and balances is in place.

On the local church level, it reminds us that no one is big enough or important enough to make all the decisions. We have committees to plan various forms of outreach, maintenance and building needs, programs, funding, membership issues, etc.

Yes, there is give and take, and free expression of opinions (99 percent of the time without hostility). And every committee is bathed in prayer and ultimately dependent, not on man's wisdom, but on God's.

So, while you are home in your easy chair some evening, remember that a brother or sister from the church may be sacrificing his or her personal time to make sure that the church runs well, and things get accomplished. Let's praise the Lord for all our wonderful volunteers and let's even praise the Lord for committees!

Our offering today is for Local Conference Advance. Let's continue to faithfully support God's work throughout our region.

June 1, 2019

Local Church Budget

Summertime dangers. Mosquitoes, flies, poison ivy, ticks—these are some of the nuisances that we may have to cope with during the warmer months. More serious are the dangers associated with sunburn (or even skin cancer), drowning, and increased risk of automobile injury due to the crowded highways.

But we should be even more concerned with the spiritual dangers that abound in summertime. Summer is when many spend more time in leisure activities, and sometimes because of travel and vacations our normal schedules are interrupted. It is much easier to neglect our personal devotions and attendance at our home church.

This can have a lasting negative impact on some people. Any time the patterns of our lives are interrupted, for whatever reason, there is potential for profound spiritual change.

On the positive side, summer presents wonderful opportunities for sharing our faith. We can stock our cars with literature and leave tracts in strategic places (inside of motel Bibles, in restrooms, for example). We can make new friends for Jesus in parks and camping areas and tourist sites.

Faithful members mail in their tithes and offerings even when they are away, because they understand that their church's needs continue in their absence. Thank you for remembering the needs of your local church family even when you're away.

June 8, 2019

Local Church Budget

It was a typical Sabbath morning. Nancy Axelson, a retired nurse and prison ministry enthusiast, sat in the fellowship hall before Sabbath School with five letters on the table from inmates throughout the state of Indiana. She looked forward to receiving those letters every Sabbath. However, this particular Sabbath, her eyes opened up wide as she found a check printed by the State penitentiary for the amount of \$186.76, addressed to the Marion SDA Church.

Sister Nancy read the two-page letter to find a powerful testimony. An inmate had learned about tithing while reading the Bible from cover to cover. Although he had been sending tithes to the church for the last 18 months, he realized, like Zacchaeus, that he owed God back tithes from the 20 dollars he occasionally received from his mother over the last 10 years. With nine dollars left in his pocket, he sent all of his hard-earned money as tithe. He figured that he should not rob God anymore. He also turned down the opportunity of making three dollars a day because it would require him to work on Sabbath. He prefers to keep his job of cleaning toilets, making \$1.25 a week, rather than having to work on Sabbath.

His faithfulness in tithing and Sabbath-keeping are paired with his passion for sharing Christ. He has brought another inmate to Christ and constantly shares the Good News with others. One day, may each one of us, along with this faithful inmate, hear Jesus say, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (Matt. 25:23)

June 15, 2019

Local Church Budget

Father’s Day. A pastor recounts: “Several years ago, I received a phone call from Mary, one of our church members. She sounded quite excited and wanted my wife and me to come by her house to hear a marvelous story. Her elderly mother and disabled brother had been living with Mary and her husband for several years, but the mother had recently died. Now, Mary was visiting the Social Security office to report her mother’s passing. Little did Mary know the surprise awaiting her:

“She handed over the death certificate and was going to make arrangements to halt her mother’s monthly payments and change her brother’s payments to herself. Then the lady said to Mary, ‘What about the benefits from your father?’ To which Mary replied, ‘My father has been dead for many years.’ Then the lady got a strange look on her face and said, ‘No, dear, your father is very much alive.’ Mary was totally shocked. Then the lady said, ‘Listen, I am not allowed to reveal his whereabouts, but if you will write a letter, we will forward it to him.’

“As it turned out, Mary’s parents had gone through a very bitter divorce when Mary and her brother were little, and her mother never told her about her father. Needless to say, a few days later her dad called from Chicago, and it brought an exceedingly happy reunion! And she was able to connect with half-sisters she never even knew about. God is so good.”

On Father’s Day weekend, let us remember our local church family needs, and look forward to one day seeing our heavenly Father face to face!

June 22, 2019

Local Conference Advance

Camp meeting memories. This is the time of year when many local conferences conduct their camp meetings, and what a blessing they are! Many of us have fond memories of camp meetings, and some have even met their future spouses there!

Many years ago, a local conference had a big tent for their main meetings (and some still do). At the back was a wooden structure that served as the sound booth and the main control point for public address across the campus. In the booth, there was a intercom telephone that was connected to the various outlying departments.

One of our pastors was on duty in the booth when a curious thing occurred. Just as someone on the platform was about to offer a prayer, the intercom phone rang, and the following situation took place: The pastor on the platform began with “Dear Lord...” and at that precise moment the pastor back in the booth, distracted, picked up the phone and in a rather strong stage whisper said “Ye-e-e-s.” Of course, everyone in the audience heard it and chuckled.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to have such direct answers to our prayers!

Let us faithfully and generously support our local conference in our Conference Advance projects, which include camp meeting, and many other ministries.

June 29, 2019

Canadian French and Native Ministries

The offering today is for both Canadian French and Native Ministries although the story is about the French work.

God knew Claudette's heart although Claudette had no idea that this God who loved her was about to change her life. In her loneliness, she was struggling to make sense of her life.

“By chance”, on a Sunday morning as she is watching television, Claudette comes across an episode of the Il Est Ecrit program that catches her attention. On this particular Sunday, the book offered at the end of the program is a large print Bible, for viewers who find it difficult to read the regular print.

Claudette, who lives in Montreal, decides that instead of ordering the Bible by mail she will visit the Il Est Ecrit studios to purchase her Bible. During her visit the team greets her with kindness, she purchases her Bible and at the same time she is offered the Discover Bible course to help her better understand what she will be reading in her Bible.

From that day Claudette became passionate about the Bible. She reads it, she studies it and is learning to live by its principles. In a few weeks she will be baptized and will then fully be part of God's family.

There are many more stories like this one. God greatly uses the Adventist French media to speak to the hearts of people. Tell your friends about Il Est Ecrit and the French media! Thank you for your support of this ministry.

July 6, 2019

Local Church Budget

Independence Day. In the year 2000, the General Conference session was held in Toronto, Canada. On July 4, the people of the city went to work and the General Conference did its normal business. You see, July 4 is not a holiday in Canada. It was a good reminder for us that “this world is not my home.”

It may surprise you to learn that the United States is one of the few countries where the national flag is displayed in the church sanctuary. Adventists in other countries feel that that would be mixing politics with religion. Americans, of course, consider that they have a spiritual heritage received from the founding fathers of the nation. Their patriotism has almost a spiritual feeling to it.

I personally have no problem displaying the flag or honoring our country, but the faithful Adventist always has in the back of his or her mind that someday even here the situation will change. Right now, we are prospering beyond measure and way too comfortable. Hopefully, we are taking full advantage of these conditions to be faithful in our stewardship and in sharing the gospel with others around us.

Jesus told Pilate that His kingdom was not of this world. As we celebrate the birth of our nation this month, let us also bear in mind our greater loyalty to Christ, and continue to strive for the coming of His kingdom. And let us support His kingdom work by giving to our local church this morning.

July 13, 2019

NAD Women’s Ministries

Women’s ministries. Today’s offering is for the North American Division (NAD) Women’s Ministries, which was first established in 1898 at the urging of Ellen G. White. In the book *Evangelism*, we find her marching orders to the women of the church: “The Lord has a work for women as well as for men. They may take their places in His work at this crisis, and He will work through them. If they are imbued with a sense of their duty and labor under the influence of the Holy Spirit, they will have just the self-possession required for this time. The Saviour will reflect upon these self-sacrificing women the light of His countenance, and will give them a power that exceeds that of men. They can do in families a work that men cannot do, a work that reaches the inner life. They can come close to the hearts of those whom men cannot reach. Their labor is needed” (*Evangelism*, p. 464).

All across the North American Division, from the United States to Canada and from Bermuda to Guam-Micronesia, the women of the church are engaged in serving others. They give Bible studies, hold evangelistic series, and minister to those in shelters for battered and homeless women. They provide for the needs of families seeking refuge on our shores from oppressive regimes, teach classes in English as a second language, tutor school children, and make bags of love for children who are displaced from their homes or their parents. The women of the church are making a significant difference in their communities and their congregations. I invite you to make a generous gift today to affirm their work and ministry.

July 20, 2019

Local Church Budget

The Clear Word. Several years ago, a pastor was preparing to officiate at his son's wedding in Minnesota. It was Saturday evening after sunset, and all were at the church going through the rehearsal.

The groom, the best man, and the dad were up on the platform awaiting the entrance of the bridal party. The flower girl proceeded, pretending to scatter flower petals as she went. Next came the Bible boy, empty-handed, pretending to carry a Bible. So, the pastor remarked, "Hmm, an invisible Bible." Without missing a beat, the best man quipped, "Yes, it's the *Clear Word!*" And of course, everyone had a good laugh.

Many thousands have been blessed by Dr. Jack Blanco's Bible paraphrase, *The Clear Word*, as well as by his life story as a little boy in Germany. How clear is God's Word to you and me?

God has made it clear in His Word about returning tithe and giving offerings. His desire is for us to remember that He is our Great Provider for all of our needs.

Today's offering goes to our local church budget. At this midpoint of the year, please make it a matter of earnest prayer regarding your giving. God has tremendous blessings in store for you if you are faithful!

July 27, 2019

Local Conference Advance

What is the church? If you were to ask the average person on the street, "What is the church?", they might reply, "It's a building." We as Christians know that the church is much more than a building—it is a building made of people. First Peter 2:5 says that we are living stones being built into a spiritual building. The people are the building materials, and they are also the building. The Holy Spirit lives inside us. We are literally God's temple.

There are different types of buildings, and there are different types of building materials. There are foundation stones, and there are windows, and shingles, and many other parts, and in their place, they are irreplaceable. Shingles don't make good windows, and windows don't make good foundations, but in fulfilling their role they are indispensable. Paul related this in 1 Corinthians 12, using the metaphor of the body, each part with a different, but important role.

What would this building be without all of its valuable parts, and what if you were missing body parts? You would be impaired, less able to function. The same with the church, which is made up of people. Without everyone doing their part, we are not able to function as we could. And just as an arm or a leg would get weak and atrophy without exercise, so the individual Christian will grow weak without using their gifts.

Today, God is again giving us the opportunity to exercise the gift of generosity and faithfulness. Let us all give cheerfully.—
by Pastor Jason Brooks, adapted from a church newsletter.

August 3, 2019

Local Church Budget

Too early. A pastor in Ohio had a speaking appointment in Indiana one Sabbath morning. He calculated the travel time and left his home promptly to make sure of an on-time arrival.

As he drove into the church parking lot, he found himself to be the first one to arrive. So, he patiently waited, figuring that very soon he would begin to see other cars pulling in. As he waited and waited, he began to get upset. Where were the people? After a few more minutes, he became alarmed and then angry. Again, *where were the people?*

As his patience grew thinner, he considered returning home, when suddenly a few cars began to appear, and then more and more. He hadn't realized that he had crossed the line from Eastern time to Central time. He was an hour early.

How many times have you or I had to say "Oh!" when we have made a hasty judgment based on poor information? Sometimes it is better to be more patient and wait until we know the whole story.

Smooth human relations can sometimes be a challenge, but it is an important and necessary part of getting along as part of God's family. As decisions are made about important issues in the church, let us go with cooler heads and committed hearts, that God's work may go forward. Please give liberally to His work today.

August 10, 2019

Oakwood/Andrews/Loma Linda Universities

Our marvelous educational system. A Seventh-day Adventist man who went through our educational system wrote: "My parents became Seventh-day Adventists when I was 8 years old. My mother had been a Jehovah's Witness and my father a former Adventist. They were not attending any church at the time, but they allowed my brother and me to attend Sunday school with the neighborhood children. The day we came home from Sunday school with notions of going to heaven when you die was the day our parents got to thinking about their spiritual responsibilities. You see, Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh-day Adventists have similar views on the state of the dead.

"A couple of years later we were enrolled in the local church school, and never again did we attend a non-Adventist school.

"I think back to that wonderful church school library, full of inspiring pioneer missionary stories; to our godly teachers and the Bible lessons through all levels of education; and to the lifelong friends we made along the way. Sadly, some of those friends have passed on, and some have left the faith of their childhood. But many of us have remained, and up into our later years still cherish our Adventist educational experience."

Our universities and other schools are not perfect, because people are not perfect. But they certainly deserve our support today as we render God's tithes and our offerings.

August 17, 2017

Local Church Budget

Anything for a buck. Commerce is an interesting phenomenon. There is a fine line between making money for our daily needs and making money because of greed. The human individual from day one is driven by thoughts of self-interest and self-benefit. It is in our very nature, and to some degree necessary for life but exploited by Satan to the extreme. From the baby crying because it is hungry to the business person pushing the envelope seeking to move upward, it is often about self.

Altruism and self-denial do not come naturally. Happy is the parent and blessed the child when by precept and example self-interest is suppressed and thinking of others is encouraged. A truly other-centered person is a miracle of God.

“The directions given by the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul in regard to gifts, present a principle that applies also to tithing: ‘Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.’ Parents *and children* are here included. Not only the rich, but the poor, are addressed. ‘Every man according as he purposeth in his heart [through the candid consideration of God’s prescribed plan], so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.’ The gifts are to be made in consideration of the great goodness of God to us”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 80, emphasis ours.

Today we have another opportunity to demonstrate our faithfulness and the joy of altruistic living.

August 24, 2019

Local Conference Advance

Wayward children. Losing our children to Satan’s wiles may seem like a modern problem and getting worse, but it is as old as Cain, Esau, and the rebellious Israelites. Throughout history people have spurned their godly upbringing and turned their lives in the devil’s direction. And concerned parents have always lifted up these dear ones in prayer to the Lord.

A pastor had in one of his churches an elderly couple who grieved for their wayward children, and as time went on, the father died and then the mother, never seeing their prayers answered.

Following the mother’s passing, he called up the daughter and asked if it would be alright to visit her, and she said yes. When he entered the home, the smell of cigarettes was present. Other signs of spiritual need were evident in her home as well. But the visit went well and was pleasant, and finally he asked her, “Have you ever considered coming back into the church?” And wonder of wonders, she replied, “Yes, pastor, I have!” So, Bible studies began, she started attending church, and one by one the worldly ways fell by the wayside. Finally came the day of her baptism. Later she became the secretary of the local academy principal.

Can you picture that joyful reunion when Jesus comes, when those blessed parents find their daughter there?

As we give to Conference Advance today, some of our funds will be used for evangelism, and perhaps someone you know will be reclaimed for Jesus!

August 31, 2019

Local Church Budget

In a culture where individualism is prevalent, the Bible stands at odds when encouraging believers to give. In fact, Jesus said, “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom...” (Luke 6:38).

Mark was driving his 1967 coupe on a wintery day in Wisconsin. He had to stop when the traffic light turned red, but to his surprise, his vehicle did not move forward when he accelerated. In fact, Mark’s car began to drift sideways toward oncoming traffic. After a few seconds, people behind him began to feel desperate. They honked their horns in frustration since Mark’s vehicle was not moving forward. Suddenly two men appeared out of nowhere and began to push the car off the black ice patch. In no time Mark was back on the road, and with much gratitude. It felt great to receive help!

Several days later, Mark was driving to his house when he noticed a car in a ditch full of ice and an elderly man giving assistance to the stuck car. Mark pulled in behind the car and jumped out to help. When both men pushed the car out of the ditch, the driver shouted words of gratitude, while motioning goodbye.

Mark did not need the thanks of the stranded driver; he was merely paying forward what someone already did for him. Will you exercise gratitude today for what the Lord has done for you by worshiping God with your generous giving?

September 7, 2019

Local Church Budget

Men’s Ministry Day of Prayer. When Claudio Consuegra, the current Family Ministries Director of the North American Division, was a young man, he began attending the Seventh-day Adventist Church and was receiving Bible instruction by the local church pastor. When they studied what the Bible said about tithes and offerings, Claudio became concerned. He had not been careful about money management and had fallen into a bad habit. He would get paid on Thursday, but by Monday all his money would be gone. He would then borrow money from friends to hold him over until the next paycheck.

When he was taught that God expects that the first 10 percent of our income be returned, he figured that would not be possible. His paycheck now didn’t even last a week so, surely, finances would be even tighter with 10 percent less to spend. When he told his pastor of his concern, the pastor challenged him to test God and claim His promises. Claudio prayed and put God to the test. The amazing thing is that the very first week he returned God’s tithe, his paycheck lasted until the next paycheck, even after paying back his debts. Since that day, more than 40 years ago, he has been returning God’s tithe and giving offerings faithfully, and God has shown His faithfulness and love to him and his family in many different ways.

His daughters witnessed their parents’ faithfulness and now as married women they follow the same practice. His prayers and his obedience have shown them what it means to be a spiritual head of household, as men of God are called to be.

September 14, 2019

Local Church Budget

Stewardship could be summarized with four words: Time, Talents, Temple, and Treasure. These four “T’s” sound simple, but would harvest immense results if given some consideration. When believers realize that absolutely everything one has belongs to God and that life on this earth is short, life begins!

Solomon wrote: “. . .Vanity of vanities, all is vanity” (Eccl. 1:2). Yet he also explained that there is a time for everything (Eccl. 3:1), and that it is good to enjoy little things such as food, drink, and the spoils of life. Solomon assured his readers that this is a gift from God.¹

Solomon closed his reflections by appealing to young people to consider the end of their lives, so that meaning and satisfaction can be found. “Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil” (Eccl. 12:13-14, NIV).

As good stewards of God’s gifts, let us reflect on how following the will of God will result in faithfulness in returning God’s tithes and giving liberal offerings. Using time wisely, making responsible decisions with our health, and using God-given talents for the common good should result in an abundant, faithful, and rewarding life of generosity. May God’s blessings be poured out on you as you prayerfully consider your local church’s needs today.

¹ Jacques B. Doukhan, *Ecclesiastes: All Is Vanity* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2006), 33.

September 21, 2019

Local Church Budget

Grandparent’s Day. Grandparents and grandchildren have a unique opportunity to learn lessons together across the generations. Grandparents have experienced the ups and downs of life, and can teach their grandchildren lessons of patience, planning, and perseverance so they can reach their goals in life.

Grandparents can teach grandchildren about saving, investing, spending, and giving. Perhaps they have experienced the ups and downs of the economy, so they can tell them stories of what it’s like to have more some days and less at other times.

Because many grew up and lived without much of the technology that surrounds us today, grandparents can teach their grandchildren how to communicate face-to-face and the importance of placing healthy boundaries around all of the technological gadgets that consume our time. Grandparents and grandchildren can do service projects together to help others make this world a better place. One way to accomplish this is by volunteering on projects or activities in your church and community. As you spend time together, you can share principles and life lessons that will help your grandchildren grow to be healthy adults and committed Christians.

The offering today is for local church budget. The church can serve as a vehicle where people come together for the common goal of sharing God’s message of love to those who don’t know Him yet. Our generosity is a lesson to God’s younger children and a tangible way to help others.

September 28, 2019

Local Conference Advance

Holdup! Elder Wayne Olson, at the time the associate pastor of the Battle Creek Tabernacle church in Michigan, was out making pastoral visits. As he left one house and was going over his notes in the car, a man approached the open car window holding a gun and demanding his wallet. Pastor Olson reached for his wallet and handed it over, and the man started to leave. Suddenly the pastor said, “Wait, you forgot something.” When the surprised man returned, the pastor handed him a copy of *Steps to Christ*. We will never know the result of that bold deed, at least not here on earth, and Elder Olson drove away unharmed.

We almost shiver after hearing a story like that. What if it had been you or me?

Many years ago, Matthew Henry, a well-known Bible scholar, was once robbed of his wallet. Knowing that it was his duty to give thanks in everything, he meditated on this incident and recorded in his diary the following:

“Let me be thankful, first, because he never robbed me before; second, because although he took my purse, he did not take my life; third, because although he took all I possessed, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed.”

And, of course, we wouldn't want to be guilty of robbing God! So, let's faithfully set aside our tithes and offerings to bring to God's house each Sabbath.

October 5, 2019

Local Church Budget

Tornado! Some of us have seen major disasters and lived to tell about it. On June 8, 1953, the west side of Cleveland, Ohio, was hit by a major tornado. Pastor James Hoffer was a teenager at the time. The Hoffers' house was not seriously affected, other than a two-by-four sticking through the roof, a garage leaning almost off its foundation, and a yard full of glass shards. But houses down the street were completely destroyed, and neighborhood after neighborhood looked like a war zone. A baby near us was picked right out of her crib and smashed against a wall. All in all, many either died or were hurt.

The signs had been there—an eerie greenish hue to the sky, followed by golf-ball-sized hail and a massive storm. Fortunately, the Hoffer family was safe and sound as they fled to the basement.

Then, three years later a fire caused serious damage, and the same family had to move out into rented quarters for several months.

Our possessions are precious to us, but in perilous times our lives are of much more value. What value do you place on your possessions, your home, your vehicles, your income?

Jesus is coming soon. Let us send our wealth on ahead to His kingdom. Today, we're investing in His kingdom by giving to the Local Church Budget.

October 12, 2019

Voice of Prophecy Canada

For 89 years, the Voice of Prophecy has been pointing people to the hope, joy and peace that are available through a vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ.

VOP is reaching the world in nearly three dozen languages, with Bible lessons—including the newly-updated *Discover Bible Guides*—available in more than 70 languages and in 2,400 churches across North America. In addition, weekly programs such as *Disclosure* (talk radio) and *Discovery Mountain* (for kids) are reaching adults and children worldwide.

The ministry has heart for evangelism, and recent award-winning events such as *Shadow Empire* and *A Pale Horse Rides* have equipped churches with top-quality resources for engaging with the community. VOP's next event, *The Appearing*, will take place Oct. 11-14 across North America. It's all part of an initiative called *Revelation 2020*, which will culminate with each church holding its own full-message series—preached by the local pastor—in 2020.

As the Voice of Prophecy looks to the future, it will continue to focus on sharing the love of Christ with a hurting world. VOP's humanitarian projects in countries such as India and Myanmar are meeting physical as well as spiritual needs.

Won't you give generously to this flagship Adventist ministry today and add your voice to the Voice of Prophecy? The gift you give now could make all the difference.

October 19, 2019

Local Church Budget

Working for Jesus. There is nothing in this world more wonderful than working for Jesus! This can be done vicariously, sustaining other workers with your prayers, offerings, and words of encouragement. But even more wonderful is to become a soul-winner yourself.

Perhaps you are picturing someone knocking on doors or preaching, and you can't see yourself in that picture. However, there are many more ways to win souls, and at least one of them is suited to you and your individual personality and gifts.

It can begin right in church, within the four walls of the building. How about this for a starter: "Everyone a greeter." Yes, we have our officially appointed greeters, and they do a wonderful job. But it was never meant for the rest of us to just fade into the woodwork. Each one of us should make a point of giving a friendly greeting to both visitors and fellow members. We should be proactive and intentional. And, where possible, even invite them to our homes for a fellowship meal, or sit with them in church.

Instead of viewing church passively, we should think of it as an evangelistic tool; it exists to draw the lost into our fellowship, rather than being an exclusive club for our members. Let us faithfully give our tithes and offerings but let us also give of ourselves!

October 26, 2019

Local Conference Advance

Dubious bargains. Have you noticed how things in the store are getting smaller and smaller, but their price remains the same? That the new “gallon” of ice cream is something like 56 ounces, and the candy bars have shrunk but the price hasn’t?

Have you noticed how early the stores are pushing all the holidays—putting out the Christmas merchandise even before Thanksgiving, the Valentine merchandise in early January, followed in quick succession by the Easter stuff?

Do you know why gum and candy and magazines are featured as you walk through the checkout line? And why a half-hour television program is 15 minutes of content and 15 minutes of commercials?

Welcome to the world of materialism, where consumers are victimized every day, and their likes and dislikes are even tracked by company computers.

It would seem to us that a big part of Christian stewardship should be smart shopping and awareness of the tricks of the trade; cutting back on, or even cutting up, our credit cards; and avoiding debt by not spending money we don’t have.

Today’s offering is for Local Conference Advance, which includes evangelism and youth programs. Rather than spend money we don’t have, let’s invest what we do have in God’s kingdom.

November 2, 2019

Local Church Budget

Divine counsel. “God is the source of life and light and joy to the universe. Like rays of light from the sun, like the streams of water bursting from a living spring, blessings flow out from Him to all His creatures. And wherever the life of God is in the hearts of men, it will flow out to others in love and blessing....

“So those who are the partakers of the grace of Christ will be ready to make any sacrifice, that others for whom He died may share the heavenly gift. They will do all they can to make the world better for their stay in it. This spirit is the sure outgrowth of a soul truly converted. No sooner does one come to Christ than there is born in his heart a desire to make known to others what a precious friend he has found in Jesus; the saving and sanctifying truth cannot be shut up in his heart. If we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ and are filled with the joy of His indwelling Spirit, we shall not be able to hold our peace. If we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good we shall have something to tell. Like Philip when he found the Saviour, we shall invite others into His presence. We shall seek to present to them the attractions of Christ and the unseen realities of the world to come. There will be an intensity of desire to follow in the path that Jesus trod.”—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 77, 78.

Your giving today will help our church family remain a godly presence to those in our community.

November 9, 2019

Annual Sacrifice (Global Mission)

Veteran's Day. Today we give special honor to our military veterans those who have put their lives on the line to ensure our freedom. Whether in times of war or times of peace, our military are there for us, protecting our shores and skies.

As we ponder that, let's also remember that each one here is engaged in a fierce battle, a battle called "the great controversy," or, the struggle between good and evil. We already know from the Bible who will win this battle, but until such a time we are living in an embattled world.

We have many "soldiers" among us as well. They are our Global Mission pioneers, pushing back the frontiers of the spiritual world.

Global Mission is the frontline arm of Adventist Mission, an office of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's world headquarters. The organization sends volunteer missionaries, typically for one or two years, to reach people in areas of the world where there are no Seventh-day Adventist members. Together, Global Mission pioneers and cross-cultural Seventh-day Adventist missionaries are working to "Tell the World" about the love of Christ in some of the world's hardest-to-reach places.

Let's give them our support today. And above all, let us uphold them in prayer.

November 16, 2019

Local Church Budget

Rescued! The Hagerstown Seventh-day Adventist church in Maryland has had an annual tradition: a fund-raising yard sale for the public. Members and others donate items, some provide baked goods for sale, and the proceeds go for a special church project.

The venue for the sale has always been a prominent location along the main road through town, known as Dual Highway or Route 40. The lot slopes gently down to the road. The church chose that vacant lot so that the many passers-by would notice it.

At one of these sales a few years ago, a folding table was with the children's items, including a large inflated rubber ball. Of course, that caught the eye of a three-year old boy. He grabbed it and began kicking it around the area. Unfortunately, as it rolled toward the highway the little boy was scampering after it. Most everyone was preoccupied at the time and did not notice the potential tragedy. Just then, the pastor saw this out of the corner of his eye and yelled "Stop!" in his loudest voice. Fortunately, the child stopped just in time, and the ball rolled out right in front of a rapidly passing car and was demolished.

That little boy is now a handsome young man in his twenties. You may not rescue one of our youth in such a dramatic fashion, but you can rescue some today, young and old, by your faithful giving.

November 23, 2019

Local Conference Advance

Working together for Christ. The disciples were all so different! Can you imagine the “motley crew” that faced Jesus as He stood before them, or sat among them, day by day? Even Judas was accepted into the group. And foot-in-his-mouth Peter. And doubting Thomas. And introverted Andrew.

And then, even after Jesus ascended into heaven, they still had their differences. The book of Acts reveals more than one occasion when there was strong disagreement among them over various issues. But they still worked together, and great things were accomplished for Christ and the advancement of His kingdom.

It is still the same today. I’m so glad everyone doesn’t think just like me! Of course, sometimes it is frustrating, but mostly it is a great learning experience. And it causes one to marvel over the greatness and goodness of God; a God who lives and thrives on variety and diversity. Among other things, the church is God’s great social experiment! If it can’t work here, it can’t work anywhere. He has given us different personalities, thought patterns, and backgrounds.

What do I need to help make it happen? Let’s start with a dose of patience, love, and above all forgiveness. Next, for the sake of the kingdom, let us submerge our will in the will of God, asking Him to help us to be more kind and compassionate with others. Lastly, let us give of ourselves and our means.

November 30, 2019

Burman University

Once each year there is a special offering to benefit our Seventh-day Adventist University in Canada, Burman University. Because students come from every Canadian province, from the US, and from abroad, Burman represents not only our church in Canada, but also the world church. At Burman, young men and women study and work together on a vibrant and diverse campus.

Many pastors, teachers, evangelists, administrators, and lay members are proud of their connection to Burman, a university where they learned to think, to explore their beliefs, and to act upon those beliefs.

When we invest in youth, we invest for eternity. Our gifts today will be carefully used to make a difference in the lives of young people, to help them become the people they were created and called to be.

This year, our goal is \$100,000. This is a goal that can be reached easily if every Canadian Adventist family donates \$7.00 or more. If you are not prepared to give today, please take note of the special envelopes provided for future giving.

Thank you for your financial support and for your prayers for the students, faculty, and staff of Burman University as, collectively and individually, they think, believe, and act...as they serve others and God.

December 7, 2019

Local Church Budget

Spiritual Frostbite. Frostbite is dangerous. As the mercury dips below the freezing mark, we must take extra precautions to keep our extremities warm. *Spiritual* frostbite is even more dangerous, as it can cause eternal damage. We have all been exposed to spiritual coldness at times, so we need to protect ourselves. The symptoms of spiritual frostbite in the church are the same as physical frostbite:

1. You begin to feel extreme coldness. We usually think it's everyone else who is cold. So, we think the church is not as friendly as it once was. The choir is not as good, and the message was cold and empty. Brother Tom didn't shake my hand today, etc.
2. The sensation of tingling takes place. You still have some spiritual memories of warmer days. Oh yes, once in a while you get a warm feeling, but you notice you don't respond as quickly as you used to; you begin to slow down.
3. Numbness begins to set in. There's no longer a concern for lost souls to be saved or much time for Bible study. You say the church needs a revival. The people just don't care anymore. Someone needs to do something—someone else, that is!
4. Then comes the loss of all feeling. Spiritual frostbite has taken its toll. Now you need to visit the Great Physician and let Him examine your heart.

December 14, 2019

Adventist Ministries of Compassion Canada

“Is this not the fast that I have chosen: ... Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh?” Isa. 58: 6. 7.

Why support the ministries of compassion? It is true that “It is in giving that we receive.” By being compassionate we will relieve the suffering of others but also increase our well-being.

1. The ministry of compassion will help us live a meaningful life. Albert Schweitzer said, “The purpose of human life is to serve, and to show compassion and the will to help others.”
2. The ministry of compassion is good for our health. “Thy light shall break forth as the morning, and thy health shall spring forth speedily.” (58: 8.)
3. The ministry of compassion is good for our prayer life. “Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, ‘Here I am.’” (58: 9.)

Ellen White gives us the perfect example for our right attitude while facing the suffering. “Man had been ... ruined by Satan, but the Saviour had compassion on our helpless condition.” DA, p. 503. This is also the biblical perspective: “As I have loved you, so you must love one another. John 13:34.

Compassion is not something you just talk about. It is something you do. As Teddy Roosevelt said, “People do not care how much you know, until they know how much you care.” Thank you for your generous offering in favor of the ministries of compassion.

December 21, 2019

Local Church Budget

The Christmas tree. Pastor James Hoffer reports: Several years ago, when I was pastoring a church in Michigan, I re-baptized a godly lady who in earlier years had been a faithful member but had fallen away. All went well until Christmas rolled around, and she learned that the decorating committee was going to place a Christmas tree in the sanctuary. She strongly objected and said she would not be returning to church until January. Sure enough, when January came she was back on a regular basis—until the following December! But we respected her opinion. We certainly don't have to think alike on every issue.

Does Ellen White say anything about this? Yes, she does: “God would be well pleased if on Christmas each church would have a Christmas tree on which shall be hung offerings, great and small, for these houses of worship. Letters of inquiry have come to us asking, Shall we have a Christmas tree? Will it not be like the world? We answer, You can make it like the world if you have a disposition to do so, or you can make it as unlike the world as possible. There is no particular sin in selecting a fragrant evergreen and placing it in our churches, but the sin lies in the motive which prompts to action and the use which is made of the gifts placed upon the tree”—*Adventist Home*, p. 482.

Whether or not we have a Christmas tree in our church, let us bring our special gifts to Jesus today.

December 28, 2019

Local Conference Advance

Wrapping it up. As 2019 draws to its close, and 2020 is awaiting us just around the corner, let us take a few moments to reflect on the past and peek into the future.

On a personal level, did I grow closer to Jesus this year? Did I speak to someone about Jesus and about our wonderful Adventist message? Did God bring me through a difficult time or two? Did our church reach out into the community, and did we experience growth? Was I faithful to the Lord in reading my Bible, returning a faithful tithe, and giving generous offerings? Or do I need to do some catching up?

During 2020, we are no doubt going to hear about having 20-20 vision, a vision for what God can do for us individually, and for us as a local church and our denomination. It's time to dream of what God can do in and through us in the new year.

And 2020 is a General Conference year. We would strongly encourage each one to make plans to attend at least part of the session in Indianapolis, June 25 to July 4. There is nothing like rubbing shoulders with our brothers and sisters from around the world. It affords an awesome, up-close-and-personal view of the universal scope of the Adventist Church like nothing else.

Today is the final opportunity this year to bless the Lord with our faithful financial stewardship for Local Church Advance. Will you?