

CONNECTION

SUMMER 2018 • VOLUME 36 • ISSUE 2

NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE

CONSTITUENCY

2018



Message From The President

BOB CUNDIFF



Bob taking a quick break after a wonderful 25 mile, downhill ride at a covered bridge north of St. Johnsbury, VT.

DO HARD THINGS

I just finished a crazy weekend. No, I wasn't preaching, conducting meetings, and traveling for work like I do most weekends. Rather, it was a holiday weekend and I scheduled myself off work. But, even though I wasn't working, my long weekend would not qualify as R&R. Why? Elder Christiansen and I rode our bikes to Canada and back.

Now, I could weave a romantic tale about the beauty of seeing Northern New England by bike, the quaint towns along the way, or the pleasing aroma of tree blossoms and spring flowers that greeted us along our route. I could also wax eloquent about the pristine farmlands of eastern Canada, and describe the epic moment of the ride when we topped a hill and were rewarded with a panoramic view of Mt. Washington flanked on both sides by the Presidential Range. It was all beautiful, though. But it was still hard!

By the end of four days of riding (our longest day was 95 miles with 4,700 feet of elevation gain and our shortest was Sabbath, with a very pleasant 30 miles), I was sunburned, sweaty,

smelly, sore, sandy, chaffed, greasy and a little grumpy. I often found myself grinding up a long hill at a mere 5 miles an hour, and a heart rate in the high 130s with this question on my mind: Why do you do this? I mean it's a holiday weekend. Normal people are with their families. They visit friends, barbeque on the back deck and watch basketball.



Scott also taking a quick break at the same covered bridge.

Sometimes, in life, we are just driven to do hard things. We see the mountain and want to climb it. We face obstacles and want to overcome them. We are presented with challenges and tackle them with an attitude of seeing our lives as cups half-full rather than half-empty.

Why do we do that? Why not always take the path of least resistance so that our lives can be

characterized by the pursuit of ease and comfort? Where does that drive come from?

I think God put that drive inside of us. And I think that part of us is real precious to God. The Bible hints of this as early as Genesis chapter 1 where God gave our first parents a work to do; He told them to fill the earth and subdue it.

After the fall the Bible records story after story of people choosing growth, mastery and challenge in the face of difficult circumstances. Abraham leaves his home, culture, family and religion of origin in order to follow an adventure with God. Moses chooses a path of great risk when he defends the defenseless and loses the privileges of royalty. Joseph chooses to honor God and be convicted of a false accusation rather than seek solace in the arms of another man's wife. Much of the Old Testament narrative follows a pattern of 1) difficult circumstance, 2) good choice, 3) trial and 4) finally a blessing.

Of course, the ultimate example is Jesus. He left the right hand of His father, myriads of adoring worshipers, comfort, respect, and all the privileges that come with being a member of

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THE FORGOTTEN COMMITTEE

“To promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.” I Corinthians 7:35

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was reorganized in 1901. One of the primary motivating factors for doing this was to decrease the power of the General Conference. Unions and Divisions were added to serve as a buffer between the local conferences and the General Conference.

If there's one thing that we as Seventh-day Adventists are against its “Kingly Power”. Even the local conference is organized in such a way that power isn't placed in the hands of individual people so much as in the committee system and policies of the church. Any easy example of this is evident in the fact that three officers provide administrative leadership for the conference, rather than one lone administrator.

The administrators answer to the Executive Committee as does every other committee of the conference except one. Most members are unaware of this committee, or, if they are aware of it they don't really understand the mandate of the committee. This forgotten committee is the Articles and Bylaws Committee, or the “A&B” committee. The A&B committee is elected by the Organizing Committee, (as a reminder, the Organizing Committee is made up of delegates from each local church). Prior to constituency session the Organizing Committee meets to elect a Nominating Committee and the A&B Committee. The Nominating Committee nominates the Executive Committee, officers and departmental leaders. So, at the end of Session there are two committees – Executive Committee and A&B Committee. They are parallel committees that serve alongside each other and hold each

other accountable. They relate to each other a little bit like the Senate and Supreme Court.

In this analogy, the A&B committee would be like the Supreme Court. Between Sessions they analyze the rules that govern us as an organization and propose changes to the representatives at Session. Some of these changes are editorial: adding a comma or moving a period. Others reflect our mandate to emulate the model constitution set by the General Conference (which also changes periodically). Finally, the committee looks at the entire document to see if changes could be made to enable us to “do business better.” From the last session, (2014), one of the changes the committee recommended and the constituents voted was language that specifically allowed the conference to legally operate a Trust Services Department. Without that change, the conference could have been on shaky ground if a lawsuit were brought to bear against us in relation to that department. It was a necessary change, and the committee and constituency were wise to approve it.

In preparation for Constituency Session this October 28th, the A&B

Do Hard Things

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the trinity to do the hard thing. Can you imagine being on a throne at the right hand of the Father, and the next minute being compressed into the body of a helpless human baby? Why would He choose to be dependent on the generosity of others to have even His basic physical needs cared for? Now that's hard! But, at the end of that hard road, there was a magnificent blessing for Him and for us.



Committee has spent considerable time reflecting upon our documents as well as the model constitution. This committee is made up of wise individuals from various walks of life who give keen attention to detail, and understand the power of the written word and how best to convey thoughts and protect the organization legally. The last organizing committee did a good job selecting individuals for the committee.

Most of the changes that will be recommended at our upcoming session are editorial and minor in

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So, what's the hard thing that faces you right now? There are two choices before you. The easy path calls loudly for your attention and commitment. The hard choice may require energy, frustration, patience and perseverance. But character is infrequently built during the cushy moments of life. A person once said that, “Real life begins at the end of your comfort zone.” So join me in choosing real life, the high road and the hard thing. It's in these moments of trial where we stand to gain God's richest blessing.

Message from the Executive Secretary

TED HUSKINS

The Forgotten Committee

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nature. In a few cases, the committee is recommending a change to better reflect the model constitution of the General Conference. And there are two fairly significant changes recommended that will affect how we do business. Allow me to talk to you about these two changes so you understand the rationale behind the recommendation.

The first of these changes is found in Article V- Representation. This article spells out how many delegates may comprise the field of regular delegates to constituency session. It currently reads: "All regular delegates properly accredited by any one of the organized churches of the conference. Each church shall be entitled to (1) Delegate for the organization and (1) additional Delegate for each fifteen (15) members or major fraction thereof and who hold membership in the local church which accredits them."

The A&B Committee recommends that additional delegates shall be given for each twenty (20) members or major fraction thereof. So what happens if we make this change? Well, first we'll have a few less regular delegates at session. Under our current A&B, a church of 60 members would send five delegates to constituency. With the suggested change they would send four. So why did the committee feel this is important? One big reason: many of our smaller churches tell us it is becoming a hardship for them to find enough delegates for constituency meeting. As our constituency ages (the entire Adventist church is getting older with an estimated average age of 58), some members are simply not able to travel. If the local church can't find delegates, that impacts quorum and negatively impacts our ability to conduct business. The recommended change would reduce delegate count by 40 or 50.

The second recommended change of note is found in Article IV Section 1: Regular Meeting. The second sentence of that session currently reads: "The Conference shall hold a regular quadrennial Constituency Meeting at such time and place as the Executive Committee of the Conference shall designate." The A&B Committee is recommending that we move from a quadrennial session to a quinquennial session. In other words instead of meeting every four years, we'd meet every five years. The General Conference, The North American Division and the Atlantic Union as well as many of our sister conferences have moved to a

"...we hold at least nine Executive Committee meetings every year, as well as six to eight town hall meetings"

quinquennial session. The reasons are logical and helpful:

Firstly, it provides the conference with a greater degree of stability. With a slightly longer term and an additional year between sessions your leadership will have the opportunity to carry out a longer range five-year plan, allowing for more accomplishments between meetings.

Secondly, it signals your Executive Committee, Officers and Departmental leaders that you believe in them and the work they are doing. Should the day arise when new leadership is needed, potential candidates will find a stable, well-run organization that is an appealing place to serve. Recently, we learned that 80% of Conference and Union Presidents are eligible to retire in the next five years. Over 60% of Executive Secretaries are eligible

to retire in the next five years and over half all ordained pastors will be eligible to retire in the next five years. This means there is an imminent shortage of experienced leadership in the denomination. To attract top leadership, our conference needs to be an inviting and stable place of service.

Thirdly, one year out of four is currently spent preparing for session instead of focusing more intently on the work of soul winning. Stretching it out by one additional year would enable not only your administration, but also enable administrative assistants and pastors to focus further on the task of soul winning.

Lastly, the cost of constituency meeting, including salary dedicated to the event, is estimated to exceed \$60,000 (\$15,000 for the cost of session and \$45,000 in time). Moving from every four to every five is good stewardship.

Some might argue, "But don't our leaders need to hear from us more often?" That argument assumes constituency session is the only time leadership can hear from the constituency. In truth, we hold at least nine Executive Committee meetings every year, as well as six to eight town hall meetings (three are required per the Bylaws). There are also numerous, less-costly and more personal ways for members to share their ideas with the Executive Committee or administration. In the end, it is just good stewardship move to a once-every-five-years footing.

The recommended changes are important, and the committee hopes you vote to approve them. Ultimately, however, it is the constituency that has not the right and sacred responsibility of prayerfully deciding which changes to approve or disapprove in relation to the document. Your A&B Committee would want it no other way – it's part of the beauty of our system.

ADVENTIST EDUCATION AND THE FIRST ANGEL'S MESSAGE

By Trevor Schlisner

After staring at my computer screen for nearly an hour, I have decided to just be blunt. Adventist education in the North American Division has had, and continues to have, a major crisis on its hands. In 1980, there were 73,861 students enrolled in Seventh-day Adventist K-12 schools. As of 2016, the number has dropped to 48,792 students in our K-12 schools. (Figure does not include Guam-Micronesia, <http://adventisteducation.org/stat.html>) This trend has also been occurring in the Northern New England Conference. Enrollment has declined each of the last six years. We have 35% less students than we did 10 years ago, which is slightly worse than the 33% drop throughout the North American Division.

We could both discuss and debate for days the reasons why there has been a sharp decline in support of Adventist education. I've had a first-hand experience with each of our schools, and I stand by our excellence. Every school in the NNEC has been granted a six-year term of accreditation, which is the highest term a school can be issued. Every full-time teacher in the NNEC is certificated. Our teachers consistently go above and beyond with the amount of time, effort, and prayer they pour into their students. Our teacher's greatest priority is helping each child develop a relationship with Jesus Christ and preparing them for eternity. The list of benefits could fill this magazine. However, as an old saying puts it, "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still."



Students reenacting a scene from the book of Daniel.

I would really like for you to consider a singular reason why Adventist education is essential for all children and critical to fulfilling the mission of our church. The real benefit is the holistic approach penned in the marvelous book *Education*, p. 13. "True education...has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers." If a child is attending a school that does not harmoniously blend the physical, mental, and spiritual powers, it is *not true education*. I'll take it one step further. It does not prepare our young people to fulfill the mission of our church, which is the proclamation of the three angels' messages.

This holistic approach is embedded in the first angel's message of Revelation 14:6-7. It says, "Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people— saying with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.' We see three major appeals in this verse: fear God, give glory to Him, and worship Him. This is Adventist



Students working in the hoop house.

education and the holistic approach. Proverbs 9:10 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,

And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." Wisdom, which comes from God, is the mental component. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Giving God glory is the physical component. "Worship Him who made", is the spiritual component. Can you see the prophetic importance

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RUTLAND S.D.A. SUPPORTS LOCAL DISMAS HOUSE

By Karrie Etzler

“Offering words of sympathy to those less fortunate than ourselves is not enough; we must improve their capabilities to help themselves.” - Anonymous.

Seventh-day Adventists have a divine mandate to assist those in need. We do this in many ways, including via the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), a network that extends throughout almost every country on earth. But, perhaps the most important assistance our churches offer is to those in our own neighborhoods.

Members from the Rutland Seventh-day Adventist Church recently put their beliefs into action by hosting a fellowship dinner for local ex-convicts living at the Rutland City Dismas House. The family-style, vegetarian dinner came complete with a main course of Special K loaf, accompanied by bread, veggies, casserole and dessert. The meal was a comfortable one and included lively conversation between residents and church members, including Pastor Edward



From left to right: Patricia Young, Rachel Kinne, Sandy Walker and Leigh Adams.

Bryan and Head Elder, Leigh Adams. Stories were swapped, and the talk was punctuated by laughter.

The event was organized by life-long volunteer, Celeste Perrino; who conveys her enthusiasm for always helping others as a way for the church to connect with communities. “I’ve always been very interested in community outreach, and I’ve always started outreach projects through the

church,” said Perrino. “God is really working in the church to get it outside of the four walls. I think that if we don’t get out into the community, then we cannot just expect them to come to us. I think it applies especially to these times, as we are not living in the same atmosphere anymore where people are just going to come in. I think we have to go out and find them.”

Perrino further underscored the importance of fellowship with these ex-convicts, asserting that spending time with them is important, and showing them that the community wants to help and support them as they transition from prison and back to their regular lives is a positive thing which also serves to break down barriers to re-entering society.

Members of the Rutland church are fully intent on fostering ongoing outreach into the community. As the saying goes: “We must always preach the gospel and, when necessary, use words”.

*Adventist Education and
The First Angel’s Message
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of our schools?

My appeal is for you to consider partnering with Adventist education here in the Northern New England Conference. What does that look like? That’s up to you. We need volunteers. We need business minds, trade skills for facility improvement and industry,

technology expertise, classroom support staff, substitute teachers, community service coordinators, prayer warriors, spiritual leaders, and financial gifts. We need contacts of families who can be blessed by our schools. This isn’t about numbers or notoriety – it’s about souls for the kingdom of God. It’s about fulfilling the Gospel commission He’s given us to do. Join me in praying for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and revival in our schools.

CONSTITUENCY MEETING: WHY WE MEET

**CoNNEction Editor Scott Christiansen
Interviews Conference Executive
Secretary Ted Huskins.**

Scott: Ted, help me understand what constituency meeting is.

Ted: Okay. So we've got some 5200 "constituents" who are members of our 58 churches spread across Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. These churches band together to form a sisterhood called a "conference", and it is this conference that administers the work of the church across Northern New England. Every four years, each of our 58 churches go through a process where they elect delegates to participate in a constituency session, which conducts the overarching business of the organization. Essentially, it is the "macro" or the "40,000 foot" decisions that get made at constituency session, such as changes to our charter and election of officers. Let me put it like this: the captain and crew of the conference run the ship. The Executive Committee monitors the work of the captain and crew and sets the course for where the ship will go. Constituency meeting decides who that captain and crew will be and who is on the Executive Committee.

Scott: So who are these delegates that churches send to constituency meeting?

Ted: Local churches elect the people whom they send as delegates. Each church gets one delegate, plus an additional delegate for each 15 members in that church. These are called "regular delegates" and there are more than 400 of them. In addition, there are also "delegates at large" which are the conference employees, as well as the members of the Executive Committee, and the Bylaws Committee, and also the officers of the Atlantic Union and representatives of the North

American Division.

Scott: How many delegates are involved all together?

Ted: All together, it comes to around 500 delegates.

Scott: Wow. That's a lot of people. And they have to somehow become a functioning group and conduct a great deal of important business in one day, right?

Ted: Well, yes and no.... Don't you love those kind of answers? Actually, a lot of business happens before October 28th. We will have an organizing committee convene that is elected by each local church. That committee meets on July 8th to elect an Articles and Bylaws Committee and a Nominating Committee who will meet on August 12th. The



Officers and directors reelected left to right: Becky Dixon, Elmer Malcolm, Peggy Fisher, Harry Sabnani, John DePalma, Lou Toscano, Not shown: Gaylen Johnson.

Nominating Committee will bring recommendations to the delegates on October 28th. This group of people will then prayerfully consider the nominations and then go on to elect an executive committee, then elect officers, and then elect departmental directors. Then they take up the recommendations of the outgoing Articles and Bylaws Committee. So,



Harry Sabnani, Trudy Wright, Richard Wilcox; Front row: Benjamin Schoun, John DePalma.

yes, they have to accomplish all of that in one day, as well as fit in time to eat.

Scott: That is a lot of committees.

Ted: Yes, but that is also the genius of the way our church operates. We rely upon a committee system which is only effective when coupled with a cooperative, trusting relationship between the constituency, the Executive Committee, and the administration. By its very design, it is meant to prevent a "king" system where too much power is invested in any single individual. The designed interaction between the groups provides numerous checks and balances to protect the organization. When you combine this conservative approach with our intentionality about risk taking in our statement of values, you have an organization that is as close to high functioning as any organization can be.

Scott: Okay. So, going from the macro to the micro, you've got this balanced committee process that carefully prepares an agenda. What happens when there is a particular item or person around whom there is considerable opinion and discussion? What happens when a great deal of floor time is dedicated to one

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agenda item?

Ted: This is the sort of thing that keeps constituency session organizers like me awake at night. In conducting the Lord's business the need to fully consider and discuss items has to be held in tension with completing the agenda for the day.



The group shares a prayer before the meeting begins.

Organizing a constituency session is such a huge effort (requiring such a significant outlay of resources), that we simply must be responsible and complete the agenda – we can't fail to manage ourselves and end up needing to schedule a second constituency meeting.

Scott: So, it all turns on completing the agenda?

Ted: Yes.

Scott: That being the case, how is the agenda developed?

Ted: Good question. Per our bylaws, the agenda must include the five mandates of the session as I previously outlined, and it generally includes reports from each of the three officers. The agenda is developed by the Executive Committee and is recommended to the delegates. The agenda can also contain other business as recommended by the Executive Committee.

Scott: So, we don't practice an open agenda for constituency session? People can't just add things to the agenda from the floor? Why not?

Ted: Two reasons. First, taking care of the five mandates that are the reason for the meeting is usually an all-day affair. Second, and perhaps more to the point, it is simply bad management to have an open agenda for any meeting, whether that is a school board meeting or a constituency meeting. When

you have an open agenda, you waste people's time considering items that aren't fully developed and should be given consideration by the appropriate committee before a decision is made. Let

me go back to my ship analogy. The purpose of the meeting is to choose who will crew the ship and to choose the committee that will set the course and monitor the crew. There will always be someone who wants to use the meeting to proclaim that the sails should be blue and not white, which is not the purpose of the meeting. But that person has an opportunity to bring up their sail burden at annual meetings, to their pastor, to the officers of the conference, and to the Executive Committee. A constituency session, held every four years, does not act as a substitute for using the channels and forums that are already in place.

Scott: Okay, so how do the actual mechanics of constituency session work? How do the wheels turn?

Ted: The Conference President serves as the Chair of the session, the Executive Secretary acts as secretary for the session and a parliamentarian is elected to assist the chair. The parliamentarian is selected by the Executive Committee. For our upcoming session, it will be a gentleman from Southern New

England, Charles Case – an attorney known to many of our members. The Chair conducts the business of the meeting until it is time to receive the report from the nominating committee, at which point the Union President or his designee assumes the chair.

Scott: Why is that?

Ted: Because it would be a conflict of interest to have the President preside over his own election. It is appropriate to have someone from outside the conference handle this aspect of the meeting. So, the report of the nominating committee is acted on, position by position, and the officers and directors are either re-elected to their positions or they aren't. And through it all, the General Conference rules of order are used to run the meeting.

Scott: So there are rules of order to follow. Are they actually needed?

Ted: Yes, they help us understand procedure and utilize that procedure



Skip Bell (left), President of the New York Conference, receiving congratulations from two of the delegates.

in a way that practices Christian Charity. Each delegate to the session will receive a copy of the rules of order in advance of the meeting. It is a very small booklet that can be easily understood. They also help us eliminate any inappropriate behavior, such as complaining about a specific employee from the floor – there is a conference Personnel committee for

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AND THEN SOME

By Jennifer Hernandez

Some time ago, when I was working as an Activity Director at an Assisted and Independent Living Facility for the elderly and as a way to create comradery, the Facility Director asked us to team up and play a game. Each day, we would receive one clue and we would have to guess as a team the phrase that the Director was looking for. It was around Valentine's Day, so when the first three clues came out on the first three days, "three", "little", "words", everyone said "Oh it must be 'I love you'". Wrong! Then the next clue was "secret", and the next day's clue, "success". We had no idea what we were looking for, but as my group discussed the options, I vaguely remembered the Director had a paragraph on his office wall which seemed to go along with the clues. I ran to his office and voila! What I had read when I was sitting around waiting to speak with the Director embraced the answer to the clues given. The title of the paragraph, and those three words, were...AND THEN SOME. It was written by Carl Holmes and goes like this:

AND THEN SOME

These three little words are the secret to success. They are the difference between average people and top people in most companies. The top people always do what is expected... and then some. They are thoughtful of others; they are considerate and kind...and then some. They meet their obligations and responsibilities fairly and squarely...and then some...they are good friends and helpful neighbors... and then some. They can be counted on in an emergency...and then some. I am thankful for people like this, for they make the world more livable; their spirit of service is summed up in these little words...and then some.

This makes me think of one of my favorite Bible verses, Colossians 3:23-24, which says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

I had the privilege of both seeing and experiencing this kind of loving service recently when I did an evangelistic series in the Dominican Republic. There, I spent time with a family that, with their own means, would have been unable to make ends meet. However, their priority was serving God and His work. By His grace, they fed and housed people in their church community – and everyone living with them pitched in. Despite their lack, their table was filled with healthy and natural foods, and the love in that house made it a perfect place to prepare for preaching. I was also inspired by the dedication of the church members in how they bring others to Jesus. During the series, they set aside time every afternoon (after working at physically, laborious jobs), to visit people and invite them to the meetings. The first night we had 12 visitors. The second night we had more than 20 visitors. The third night we had more than 30 visitors. The church was packed and it had nothing

to do with who was in the pulpit. Rather, it was the Holy Spirit bringing these people to a safe place to hear a story about falling in love with Jesus and a changed life.

Because of the hard work of this church – yes, the sweat and tears and prayers of the members who met their obligations *and then some*, people who allowed Christ to live in them *and then some*, people who listened to the voice of the Holy Spirit *and then some* – eight people gave their lives to Christ at the end of the series, and two more were baptized in the following two weeks.

There has never been a moment in my life where I have regretted giving my time, my money, my services and my life to God for His Kingdom's work. Because with God, the "*and then some*," comes as a natural result of falling in love with Him. At NNEC, I try to run the Trust Services and Planned Giving department in accordance with the "and then some" principle. If you would like to talk to find out how you can help build God's Kingdom while engaging in financial planning, please contact me. I pray that each and every day will be an "*and then some*" experience for you, and that as you find yourself in the work of the Almighty, that you will experience the true joy of giving everything you are to Him.

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that – or bringing up pet projects that are not on the agenda – that's what the Executive Committee is for – or introducing theological controversies that are not part of the agenda – that's what ADCOM and the Ethics Committee is for.

Scott: How can we prepare for a good and productive session?

Ted: Prayer. Pray fervently for the

leadership of the church – both our local church leaders and our regional church leaders. Then, continue in prayer as the church selects its delegates. One of those delegates from each local church will be a member of the organizing committee, so we should all continue in prayer as the organizing committee and nominating committee do their work, and as the delegates receive their information packets and ready themselves for the work of the session. Prayer first, prayer last, and prayer throughout.



Shown left to right are: Stacey Rickards, Joran Botelho, Janet Churchill, Amy Sailer, Daniela LaFerriere, Debbie Sailer, Elias Sailer, Pastor Bob Sailer, Josue Dugall, Chris Sawyer, Xena Sawyer and Esther Sawyer. Not shown is Daniel Girard, who also participated.

IN ROCHESTER, NH, THE SALT RUNS OUT OF THE SHAKER

By Chris Sawyer

The Rochester, NH, Seventh-day Adventist church believes that the “salt” should not just be kept in the shaker – they believe that in getting out into the community and proclaiming Christ by both word

and deed. They also seem to take it literally when 2 Timothy 4:7 talks about running the good race, because a team of runners and walkers from the church recently participated in the ninth annual Spirit of Recovery 5K run/walk. The event raises money for the Triangle Club, a local recovery center that provides support for those with addiction issues.

For Bob Sailer, pastor of the Rochester Adventist Church, having a fair-sized group turn out for the race was an indication of a growing intentionality in the church. “Members of the Rochester

church are increasingly intentional about being in the community and witnessing for Christ. I think you could say we are waking up and gearing up. The incremental step that this run represents is an important one. Our plans for the next year involve more outreach and engagement, so we’re pretty excited.”

At the starting line, before the race began, Pastor Sailer lead a group prayer reminding the team how their efforts are helping change lives for those in their community who are struggling with addiction issues.

**For upcoming events
calendar, please visit
www.NNEC.org
or find us on...**





PTA BELL-RINGERS AT BORDOVILLE — A SPECIAL CONCERT IN A SPECIAL PLACE

By Elizabeth Thomas

The morning sun was shining brightly as the Pine Tree Academy Bell Ringers drove up the scenic dirt road to the Bordoville Adventist Church in upstate Vermont. When we opened the doors of our vehicle, we were struck by the quiet of the country-side — only bird songs and leaves rustling in the breeze could be heard. We gathered in front of the old church and were greeted warmly by Pastor Cornel Preda.

Services at the Bordoville Church are held May through October, and we were graciously invited to give a musical presentation as the key component of the 2018 Opening Service. The small church provided an intimate setting, and it was a blessing to experience God with them in this special place.

The Bordoville SDA Church has spiritual history behind it, something

that Pastor Preda is especially dedicated and invested in. Built in 1864, it is the first Seventh-day Adventist church that was built specifically as an Adventist church. The site has historical documents that tell of the original leaders in this church. Pastor Preda told us stories associated with the church and the people who went there long ago. It truly blessed us to hear of their devotion and experiences.

Located on the hillside behind the church is a graveyard with many of the names associated with the start of the church. It gave us a further sense of respect and gratitude and brought the stories told us into reality. Most gravestones had epitaphs inspired by that soul's faith and trust in the soon Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Many of their friends and family believed that Jesus would return in their lifetime, inspiring them and encouraging them

in their walk. This motivated me and gave me hope, refreshing me of the truth of His soon return.

The presence of the Holy Spirit is known in this special place, and He continues to reside in the hearts of the little congregation. I felt a special holiness and sacredness in the air of the church, and the moments shared there reminded me of the reason the Seventh-day Adventist Church exists. It is not merely to put on services, and it is not a place we go on Saturday morning to gain the favor of God. The Church was built that we may have strength through Jesus with fellow believers and warn the world of His soon coming.

We know not the hour of His return, so let us be ready as those fellow believers were; and let us take as many as possible with us, that we may dwell in the house of the Lord, forever, blessing His Holy Name.

EVANGELISM IN THE NURSING HOME

By Pastor Jesse Santos

When I was student at Andrews University, I had the opportunity to be member of the visitation team from Michiana Fil-Am Seventh-day Adventist church. This team would go out every Sabbath afternoon visiting retired members in nursing homes and retirement villages. We would sing and have a few minutes of worship with them.

One of the times, as we were visiting a retired pastor at a nursing home in Berrien Springs, MI, I noticed, as we were singing, that the pastor's roommate was carefully listening and watching. Led by the Holy Spirit, I was compelled to talk to him and asked his name. "John", he said. I asked him if he'd like to learn about Jesus. Nodding, he said "I'd love to."

The following Tuesday, I returned to study with him and noticed he didn't have a Bible. I asked the elder of the church to buy him a large print, New King James version Bible. When John received it, he said it was the best gift he'd ever had.

As I continued studying with John, his interest increased with every subject we covered. His life changed. John started reading the Bible by himself between studies. He stopped eating unclean foods, and stopped watching TV on Sabbath.

A few weeks later, I asked John if he would like to go to church and he gladly accepted. This was not an easy thing considering he was paralyzed from his waist down, but I was able to bring him to church most Sabbaths. Church became his joy, something he looked forward to every week. Almost three months later, we came to the conclusion of our study, and I asked him if he would like to be baptized. He said he'd love to, but he didn't see how he could be baptized when he



couldn't stand up. Working with the pastor, we decided to baptize him in his wheelchair.

On the day of the baptism, we secured him in his wheelchair. Three other deacons and I lifted the wheelchair and carried him into the tank. His whole family was present and watched as he – and the wheelchair – went under the water and died to sin, coming up renewed. It was powerful, and after his baptism, I was able to start studying the Bible with his wife.

I went to visit John several times after the baptism, and I continued bringing him to church. Every time I'd see him, he'd look at me and say, "You saved my life". I'd respond, "No, John, I just introduced you to the One who saved you". A few months later, John passed. But he passed with the hope of being called forth from the grave to life eternal.

In the Lakes Valley region (southwestern Maine and east-

central New Hampshire) we do evangelism at nursing homes. Every third Sabbath of the month, Conway Church worships with the residents of Mineral Springs nursing home. Lakes Region church also has a worshipping time at Bridgton nursing home every fourth Sabbath of the month. It is true that some residents don't seem to understand, and others sometimes fall asleep. But there are always those who really listen (including the nursing home staff) and come ask questions after the service. As a result, I am studying the Bible with a resident in Bridgton, and I pray that God will open more and more doors so we can continue the work He commanded us to do.

There are many people living in nursing homes without hope. Among nursing home residents, it is common for them to feel they lived their lives and are simply waiting to die. But as Christians, it is our responsibility to tell them about Jesus and the hope of life beyond death. We are never too old to accept the gift of salvation.



HISPANIC CHURCH HOSTS SACRED MUSICAL

By Judy Sabnani

Recently, the growing Hispanic congregation at Portland Hispanic Church hosted a dramatic and touching, sacred musical performance called “Despierta! Christo Viene!” (Wake Up! Jesus is Coming!). It was co-directed by newly baptized member, Lee Brea. Some 75 people packed into the upstairs auditorium (which the church rents from the

conference office in Westbrook) to see the story of Salvation, the glorification of God's people, and the triumph of the bride of Christ—His church. Beautiful costumes and decorations enhanced the impact of the powerful music and the spoken word. Personal testimonies brought tears. At the conclusion, two lovely ladies who had been attending regularly were baptized in the newly purchased portable baptistery.

One of these ladies was Ana Iris Peralta, who also led out in the program. Ana has been a diabetic since age 16, and is now on dialysis because of renal failure. She says God has given her courage to face her health problems. She travels a

long way to church each week, and loves to share her talents of music.

Following her was Doris Rodriquez. Doris endured a nightmarish abusive childhood, and twice tried suicide because of hopelessness and despair. Filled with anger, violence and alcohol, her life was changed when she accepted Jesus as her Savior through a Christian veterinarian. She became an ordained Pentacostal Minister and missionary to Venezuela. Five years ago, she became friends with Pastor Wilbert Hernandez and Pastor Harry Sabnani at the conference office, and began attending the Hispanic church. We praise our God who lives with and works on the hearts of His people!

2018 PRAYER RETREAT EXPERIENCE

by Inge Houck

All my life I have wanted to have a relationship with God. I had a very hard time concentrating on reading the Bible and praying, because At age 50, I was finally diagnosed with moderate-to-severe Inattention ADHD. Decade after decade, something was missing. There would be moments where a text would impress me, or my heart would soar when music spoke to me, such as in Handel's Messiah, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor, and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." I was heavy-laden, empty, destitute.

Fast-forward to February of 2018. I had always enjoyed the Sherlock Holmes type of mystery, and had been watching various series of mysteries that I got at the library. After a few weeks, it occurred to me that these mystery stories were not entertainment, but actually temptations! I started

praying, and would ask my husband, every day, to pray that I would "Listen to God." I didn't tell him why. The "still, small Voice" was becoming fainter and fainter, and that worried me. But one day, I watched 3 episodes. It was like a switch was flipped. I was instantly hooked. I felt like I was no longer in control of it, and I was desperate. I finally realized this was an addiction. I was miserable. This activity was pushing other, more important, things out of my life. Bible reading and prayer were much less interesting to me than these mystery stories.

The purpose of the spring 2018 Prayer Retreat was to learn "inductive Bible study." To me, that sounded pretty dry, and maybe even boring. But I went anyway, because prayer retreats had always been very meaningful to me.

From the time we arrived at the Prayer Retreat, I was on the verge of tears. At the beginning of the retreat, Kelly Veilleux, leader of Prayer Ministries for the conference, told us to write down our greatest need. I wrote, "Time with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit." Kelly

said God would answer our need that weekend. I didn't even hope for that.

Friday, all the small groups were assigned Isa. 55:1-5 to study. I wasn't immediately affected by these words – we were just answering "who, what, where, when and how" questions. But as we read the verses over and over, studying and discussing them, I began to hear Jesus, very strongly but gently appealing, almost pleading, for me to come to Him. "Come, all you who are thirsty, (and I was so thirsty), come to the waters;... Why spend money (I heard 'Why spend time') on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, (not watching what is useless) and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live."

I met Jesus on April 25, 2018 in Isaiah 55. He was speaking to me, directly to my need, my thirst, my soul which was starving. And just as Kelly said He would, He was answering my greatest need.

Thank you, Jesus.

FOOTSTEPS OF PAUL 2019: NNEC RETURNS TO THE HOLY LAND!

By Ted Huskins

The spiritual and educational pilgrimage we took to Israel in 2017 was incredibly meaningful to those who experienced it. We walked where Jesus walked. We learned about what life was like during the time of Christ. The Bible came even more alive for us. Perhaps you have heard about the trip from those who went. Perhaps you even regretted not joining in the first trip. Well, good news: the pilgrims from the first trip asked us to plan another

trip for 2019, and all are welcome to join in!

We've almost finalized our plans for a Footsteps of Paul journey. The trip will take place from November 8th or 10th, 2019 until November 23rd, 2019. Features of the trip include visiting significant sites in four different countries; Italy, Greece, Israel and Turkey. Those who go will see Rome, Pompeii, Taormina, Rhodes, Corinth, Athens, Ephesus, Cyprus and of course Jerusalem and the Galilee. If you want you can add a pre-trip that will allow you to experience Rome in greater depth. Accommodations and most meals on this trip will be aboard the Royal Caribbean Jewell of the Seas. Cruising is the best way to follow Paul's footsteps around the Mediterranean,

and will enable us to see four countries instead of just one. The focus of the trip will be encountering Christ in a new light through the world and ministry of the Apostle Paul.

As part of the preparation for this trip, we will be recommending portions of the book Acts of the Apostles for devotional reading so that you can have a greater understanding of the spiritual significance of the sites we'll be visiting.

The cost of this trip starts at \$3,598.00 (depending upon cabin choice and port of departure). There will be an early bird discount of up to \$150 if you register by July 31, 2018. Please contact Ted Huskins or Rita Smith at the conference office (207-797-3760 ext. 214) for more details and to reserve your space.

WHY I'M ECSTATIC TO BE A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHRISTIAN

By Natalia Olm

I've not had much exposure to—or spent much time—studying other Christian denominations. However, I have spent a lot of time around intellectual, secular, un-churched, evolution-believing atheists, and I thought I was one of them for a period in high school and college. Since I've seen both ends of the spectrum, so to speak, I am well able to appreciate why my life is immensely more purposeful, fulfilling, and peaceful. And I am ecstatic to be a Seventh-day Adventist Christian.

Truths contained in the Bible are not mere theories to be studied alongside the centripetal force theory and the probability theory. The claim that there is a God and that He is love comes with mind-boggling wealth and a greater dimension to life that impacts the way we live today and how we treat others. A knowledge of God frames intellectual questions about why we deserve respect, love, basic human rights, women's rights, acceptance, social justice, and truth, and blends such questions with a real, emotional, and personal experience. Understanding the character of God as a Seventh-day Adventist Christian enables a comprehensive worldview where anything we encounter in life from science to love to disease and suffering can be explained and easily understood. Such a framework and knowledge is life-changing.

Adventists are known for the seventh-

day Sabbath rest. The belief and observance of the Sabbath is a proclamation that we are not defined by what we do during the week, or by our accomplishments, wealth or possessions. Instead, we choose to be defined by a proclamation that thinks much bigger than ourselves — by human relationships, by truth, by God's love, and by His desire to have a relationship with us that is deeper than any other bond. This definition culminates the necessary hope to have in this messy world as it comes to an end through God's perfect justice and unitedness with the One that died for me to have me live with Him forever.

But our belief in the Sabbath does more than clarify the present. The Sabbath also points us to the future as we contemplate on creation in the past and re-creation in the future. The Sabbath focuses us on the world we were created for. God created us to live with Him in a perfect place ruled by love, and He promises to bring us to that place one day soon. From the Bible, we understand what the world ought to be and, because of that, we have a roadmap for our lives. This roadmap leads us to start experiencing pieces of heaven on earth! This means living a healthy lifestyle. It means fostering deep meaningful relationships, striving for selflessness, humility, and compassion, and it means growing in knowledge of God through prayer and Bible study. An understanding



of our life as how it ought to be, and of our Creator, allows us to let go of fear, guilt, worry and shame because we were hand-crafted by God with purpose and value.

God suffers so much from the evil of this world, and He gave up His only Son to come to Earth and rescue us. His son, Jesus, while on earth was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserved. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share that we might be saved. He suffered the death that was ours that we might receive that life that was His. Because of this love, I know that my life is much more valuable and purposeful than anything this world can offer. And as I believe and accept this truth, and learn about God's love for me, I begin to have a relationship with Him, and my love for Him fulfills all my desires. For me, my life, my purpose, and my walk with God are the core of an ecstatic life.

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