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"ME TOO!"

The Journal



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Editor's Musings

Dear Friends,

My parents were children of the Depression. They endured hardship and deprivation during a very difficult period of American history. This, of course, impacted the way they organized and managed their own home. Growing up, my two sisters and I learned that things were to be used up, recycled, handed down (and up), reworked, and refurbished.

My adulthood, however, has consisted of a completely different set of American economics. Department stores carried lovely garments that were within the budget of a middle-class ministry family. Opportunity and availability led to indulgence. Sales and bargains caused my closet to become overstuffed. In some strange way, the ability to possess these pretty things enhanced my self-esteem.

So when I began traveling for Shepherdess, it seemed natural to haul all these treasures along with me. After all, pastors' wives should be prepared for everything—shoes to match each dress, outfits for any weather—I packed more than anyone could possibly need. And because airlines allowed for two checked suitcases—70 pounds each (that's 140 pounds!)—I ended up hauling far more than my own body weight. It was insanity. The result was two aching feet, a strained back, and a burned-out brain trying to keep track of it all.

Over time, enough was too much. I've learned that I need a lot less stuff, both at home and in my suitcase. And even though the airlines have instituted a 50-pound luggage limit, I am not going to stop there. Recently I made a personal trip with only my purse and carry-on suitcase. It was liberating! It reminded me of Jesus' promise that His burden for me is easy and His load for me is light.

So, friends, lighten your load, whatever excess you are carrying. If you are looking for a New Year's resolution, think about more than shedding a few pounds; try letting go of some other stuff, too. Wow! It feels good!

God bless you every one,

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The Angel Chauffeur



Mary Jane Zollbrecht

Mary Jane Zollbrecht loves being a pastor's wife. She works at the North Pacific Union Conference in the Trust Services Department and as the membership clerk. She and her husband have three married children—all working in ministry—and five grandchildren. She feels greatly blessed.

One of the blessings of being a pastor's wife is listening to people's stories. Often when we are visiting our members, my husband will ask them if they've ever seen an angel or felt the "hand that intervenes." We have heard some remarkable stories in our nearly 40 years of ministry.

One Sabbath we had been invited to dinner with several other couples. After a lovely meal, we were gathered in the living room, and my husband asked the group if they had ever seen an angel. Several people had, and they shared their experiences.

After a while, Lorene told her story. It happened when she was just a small girl, but she has never forgotten it.

Lorene and her sister Carol lived with their mother in Wyoming. Her mother had become a Seventh-day Adventist, and her father was so ashamed that he left the family and moved to California. Christmas was coming, and Mother wanted so much to be with her family in Montana. She worked hard to put food on the table. They had no car, so Mother saved every cent she could and bought bus tickets for them to travel to see Grandma and Grandpa in Montana. She mailed a postcard to her family, telling them when they would arrive so that one of her brothers could come and meet them at the bus depot.



The girls packed a suitcase with the few belongings they had. They were excited to travel on the bus to Grandma's house. The trip was uneventful, and they arrived late at night in the little town about 14 miles from Grandma and Grandpa's farm. The depot was deserted, and the small town was dark. The bus driver dropped them off and went on his way. No uncle was there to greet them. They felt very alone. Mother and the girls decided to start walking in the direction of the farm. Surely someone would come along to pick them up.

It was cold and dark and the girls were very small. They walked for a while, but soon Carol and Lorene began to cry. They were too cold to go on, and Mother realized that her decision to start walking had been a poor one. No cars had come along. Finally she sat the suitcase down on the ground and gathered her little girls to her. She said, "We need to pray that God will send someone to help us."

There along that highway, in the cold and the dark, they bowed their heads and prayed.


Almost immediately, they saw lights approaching. Expecting a pick-up truck or an old car, they silently watched as the car slowed down and stopped beside them. It was a beautiful, clean car, and the man who stepped out was dressed in clean clothes and was very polite. He

asked if he could give them a ride somewhere. He opened the door, and they hurriedly climbed into the warm car. It smelled new and clean, with no hint of tobacco smell, as most cars had in those days.

Mother told him where they were going but said it was too far and that her sister lived closer. She started to explain that it was a little complicated to get to her sister's house: you had to go through a gate and then through an orchard, but the driver quietly said, "I know where the Brown farm is. I know the way."

The girls leaned back in the seat and smiled. They weren't cold anymore, and God had answered their prayers.

Soon they drove into the orchard. Fearing that the dogs would start barking when they saw the strange car and wake the whole family, Mother asked the driver to stop before they reached the house. So he stopped and helped them with their suitcase. They walked the remainder of the way to the house. The family was so surprised to see them and asked how they got there. Mother described the man and the car, but no one knew anyone who fit that description. The next morning they asked around the neighborhood, but no one had seen the driver and his new car.

Lorene, Carol, and Mother are convinced that God sent an angel Chauffeur to answer the prayers of a believing, trusting little family. 



Maike Stepanek

Maike and her husband, Brian, have lived in South Korea for seven years. Maike works as an administrative secretary for the president of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division. She enjoys reading, being creative, meeting new people, and, most of all, getting to know Jesus and the treasures found in His Word. Maike loves the beach, being in nature, and taking walks with their really little dog, Albert. They hope to have children of their own someday.

The Prayer of a Shepherdess

The man I love accepted your call one day,
And there I was, confused and in dismay.
Is this the way you would have me go?
Please, Lord, do hurry to let me know.

So, here I am, a Shepherdess,
Hair combed, made up in my lovely dress,
But Lord, oh Lord, it's hard, you see
Everyone is always looking at me.

My husband feels this immense pressure,
The expectations of others
are a really tough measure.
The Shepherd and Shepherdess, our life story,
Lord, help us live to your glory.

Broken and bruised, a reed I am,
Sometimes my life feels like such a sham.
Jesus, when You were here, You promised me,
To give me life more abundantly.

What else is there for me to do
But fall on my knees and pray to you?
Thank you, Lord, for your big part,
In healing my aching and tired heart.

Help us, Lord, to work together,
Help us not be under the weather.
Give us strength and renewal each day,
And help us walk on the narrow way.

But above all, I ask just one more thing:
Help my spirit to soar and my heart to sing.
Joy and praise, on my lips a song,
May this be my treasure all my life long.

Finding Purpose in a Multichurch District



Ellie Gil

Ellie Gil is the wife of a pastor who serves in Gonzalez and Denham Springs, Louisiana, United States. This article originally appeared in the August 2008 issue of Ministry, International Journal for Pastors.

I often wish there was a crash course on how to be a pastor's wife. After all, it seems that the moment I said "I do" to the man of my dreams (who happened to be a pastor), I signed up to be a partner in team ministry, whether or not I was ready.

Once, when a good friend saw me frazzled and drained as I tried to juggle work, family, marriage, and church ministry, she said to me, "I think being the pastor's wife is the only job where you are expected to work alongside your husband. After all, a surgeon's wife is not expected to operate, a teacher's wife is not expected to teach, and the list could go on."

Those of us who are pastors' wives fell in love and married a man for his love and qualities and for who he was—and not what he did. But, in marrying a pastor, we signed up for a ministry that we must learn along the way.

It gets more complicated

Just as you are trying to figure out what your role will be as a pastor's wife, you suddenly realize that you will often have twice the challenge when serving in a multichurch district, as is often the case for today's pastors. You, then, have to learn the art of getting to know each of your church's distinct personalities and how you fit into the puzzle. Add a family and a career to this equation, and you will need to also learn how to balance more than you ever thought humanly possible. The good news is that no human effort will make your ministry with your husband a blessing but rather a complete surrender of your will to God's purpose for you.

Learn the basic skills

During the past 20 years, I have learned not to plan for a definite schedule but, instead, to live in the moment. Plans can change in a moment's notice; you'll need to learn to be flexible so you won't be disappointed. When serving a church, let alone two or more, you will always face one emergency or another.

Learn, too, that your children will be expected to behave a little better than everyone else's children. Therefore, you should put their spiritual well-being above living up to what others expect from you as a pastor's wife. Decide early in ministry, before your children grow resentful of sharing you with others so often, to give them the time they need, and deserve, to grow to their fullest spiritual potential. If you cannot make time to have family worship with your children because you are too busy with ministry, then you have misplaced your most important responsibility before God.

Learn to smile when your heart is crying. You might think that this is hypocrisy, but in ministry we often need to worry about the perception of others as we serve as ambassadors of Christ. God knows the pain in your heart, but try not to let it interfere with bringing joy and encouragement to others. And who wouldn't rather be in a happy and joyful situation all the time? However, sometimes the best ministry we can offer includes listening and crying with someone who feels disheartened and needs the comfort of someone who cares.

Learn to accept criticism as a way to grow in the role where God has placed you. Your first reaction to criticism will be defensive; after all, that is our human nature. Try to listen and decide if there is any validity to the criticism,

even when it comes in a nonconstructive way. Ask yourself, What God would have me learn from this?

Learn how to find that “invisible fine line” that you cannot cross as a pastor’s wife. Do not get ahead or behind your husband in ministry; keep your communication open so that you both serve as a team.

Learn to share your husband with others; your husband, the pastor, is the one you share and not your husband, the man. Make every effort to help him share the love of Jesus, and be his support when he needs a comforting word.

Is it really my job?

If you think of the ministry of a pastor’s wife as a job, you will be greatly disappointed. In a job, you expect to receive some type of reward or recognition for work well done; this is often not the case in ministry.

What is the difference between a job and a ministry?

If you do it because you are expected to, or because no one else will, then it’s a job.

If you do it because you want to be used by God, it’s a ministry. If you quit because no one appreciated you or thanked you, it’s a job. If you’re committed to doing it, expecting only to feel God smile down on you, it’s a ministry. If your main goal is to be successful, how you can move upward, it’s a job. If your main goal is to serve God, it’s a ministry.

God wants us to be happy in ministry. You might not feel qualified to do the ministry before you, but remember, God does not call the qualified—He qualifies the called. God shows off His mighty power when He works with impossibilities and uses those who have fully surrendered themselves to serve Him.

What is my ministry?

Many times you will be asked to take on the responsibility of a church position for which you might not feel a burden. Think about it before you answer. If God has not placed this position upon your heart, you will do a disservice to Him and to the church to accept it just because you are expected to do so.

The best ministries in which to get involved are the ones that the Holy Spirit places on your heart. How will you know? If you notice that the children’s departments seem to have fallen by the wayside, and no one has been selected to do something for them, maybe the Holy Spirit has impressed you to get involved. If the church facilities look dreary and abandoned, take an afternoon with your children, clean out a flowerbed, plant some flowers, and teach them that we should care for God’s house as much as we care for our own.

Early in our ministry when our children were young, I served in the Sabbath School department. Often the room used for our children was filled with outdated, dreary, and faded materials. I wanted to see a happy place for our children to meet Jesus, so I asked several individuals in the church if we had anyone with art skills who could paint a simple mural. I found several qualified people, but they did not have a burden to help; thus, I, the most unquali-

fied artist, took it upon myself to paint a mural for the Cradle Roll classroom. So with paint and pictures in hand, I painted my first mural. The expressions of joy and awe as the children came into Sabbath School made all the hours spent worthwhile.

It’s hard to get excited about a job, but it’s easy to be excited about a ministry. Let your children see the joy in you as you serve in a ministry for which you feel called. Teach them how to find their place in ministry.

Encourage your younger children to color pictures for shut-ins. Have older children find verses of encouragement to send to others. Once when I sent food to a family with a critically injured son in the hospital, my children, then 13 and 11, decided they would wrap the plastic utensils in a napkin and attach a verse from the Bible that talked about healing. This was a tiny gesture that meant the world to the family, and it gave my children an opportunity to share in ministry.


How do I choose where to minister?

One of the biggest challenges in serving in a multi-church district is deciding how to divide your time. I have learned through the years to step back when we first begin to serve in a new district and see where and what the needs are in each church. Sometimes your help may not be in taking on a challenge by yourself, but rather to support and help another church member to do a ministry for which they have felt a burden. When the church members feel that they are called to a ministry, we serve them best by offering the help they need and request. We enable them to serve better when the ministry is their own, a ministry that they can continue long after we have been called to serve in another place.

Even though you may consider yourself a big superwoman, you cannot be in two places at once, so choose where you will give of your time. Don’t spread yourself so thin that you feel discouraged and overwhelmed. The devil delights in making us feel as failures; we cannot possibly accomplish all the responsibilities that we might be called to do. Sometimes, we take on things with the best of intentions, even though we have not thought through the consequences of how it will affect our personal spiritual life, our marriage, and our children.

Don’t give up

You might wonder what challenges you accepted the day you said “I do” to your husband, the pastor. You took on a role you might not have wanted or for which you did not feel qualified. You will always fall short of filling the expectations that others put upon you, but remember that it is God whom you are serving.

I have learned that I will never be the perfect pastor’s wife, but I do know that I received this call almost 20 years ago. When I said “I do” to my husband, the pastor, I said “I do” to my Jesus, my Lord and my Savior, who has given me a special call, a call that I accept gladly and seriously, and one that I believe will make a difference in the lives of others now and for eternity. 

The Christmas Miracle

Author Unknown

This article is from the Iowa-Missouri Conference Shepherdess newsletter.

In 1960, I woke up one morning with six hungry babies and just 75 cents to my name. The boys ranged in age from 3 months to 7 years; their sister was 2. Their father was gone. He had never been much more than a presence they feared. Whenever they heard his tires crunch on the gravel driveway, they would scramble to hide under their beds. He did manage to provide \$15 a week to buy groceries. Now that he had decided to leave, there would be no more beatings, but no food either. If there was a welfare system in southern Indiana at that time, I certainly knew nothing about it.

I scrubbed the kids until they looked brand-new and then put on my best homemade dress, loaded them into our rusty old '51 Chevy, and drove off to find a job. The seven of us went to every factory, store, and restaurant in our small town. No luck. The kids stayed crammed in the car and tried to be quiet while I tried to convince whoever would listen that I was willing to learn or do anything. I needed a job, but no one would hire me.

The last place we went, just a few miles out of town, was an old Root Beer Barrel drive-in that had been converted to a truck stop. It was called the Big Wheel. An old lady named Granny owned the place, and

she peeked out the window from time to time, looking at all those kids. She needed someone to work the graveyard shift, 11:00 at night until 7:00 in the morning. She paid 65 cents an hour, and I could start that night. I raced home and called the teenager down the street who babysat for people. I bargained with her to come and sleep on my sofa for a dollar a night. She could arrive in her pajamas and the kids would already be asleep. This seemed like a good arrangement to her, so we made a deal. That night when the little ones and I knelt to say our prayers, we all thanked God for finding a job for mommy.

And so I started at the Big Wheel. When I got home in the mornings, I woke up the babysitter and sent her home with one dollar of my tip money—fully half of what I averaged each night. As the weeks went by, heating bills added a strain to my meager wage. The tires on the old Chevy had the consistency of penny balloons and began to leak. I had to fill them with air on the way to work and again every morning before I could go home. One bleak fall morning, I dragged myself to the car to go home and found four new tires in the back seat. New tires! There was no note, nothing, just those beautiful brand new tires. Had angels taken up residence in Indiana, I wondered? I



made a deal with the local service station; in exchange for his mounting the new tires, I would clean his office. I remember it took me a lot longer to scrub his floor than it did for him to do the tires.

I was now working six nights a week instead of five, and it still wasn't enough. Christmas was coming, and I knew there would be no money for toys for the kids. I found a can of red paint and started repairing and painting some old toys, then hid them in the basement so there would be something for Santa to deliver on Christmas morning. Clothes were a worry, too. I was sewing patches on top of patches on the boys' pants, and soon they would be too far gone to repair.

On Christmas Eve, the usual customers—truckers Les, Frank, and Jim and state trooper Joe—were drinking coffee at the Big Wheel. A few musicians were hanging around after a gig at the Legion and were dropping nickels in the pinball machine. The regulars all just sat around and talked through the wee hours of the morning and then left to get home before the sun came up. When it was time for me to go home at 7:00 a.m. Christmas morning, to my amazement, my old battered Chevy was filled to the top with boxes of all shapes and sizes. I quickly opened the driver's door, crawled inside, and kneeled in the front facing the back seat. Reaching back, I pulled the lid off of the top box. Inside was a whole case of little blue jeans, sizes

2-10! I looked inside another box; it was full of shirts to go with the jeans. Then I peeked inside some of the other boxes. There was candy and nuts and bananas and bags of groceries. There was an enormous ham for baking, and canned vegetables and potatoes. There was pudding and Jell-O and cookies, and pie filling and flour. There was a whole bag of laundry supplies and cleaning items. And there were five toy trucks and one beautiful doll. As I drove home through empty streets as the sun slowly rose on the most amazing Christmas Day of my life, I was sobbing with gratitude. And I will never forget the joy on the faces of my little ones that precious morning.

Yes, there were angels in Indiana that long-ago December, and they all hung out at the Big Wheel truck stop.

I believe that God only gives us three answers to prayer: "Yes!" "Not yet," and "I have something better in mind." God still sits on His throne; the devil is a liar. You may be going through a tough time right now, but God is getting ready to bless you in a way that you cannot imagine.

"Father, I ask you to bless my friends and relatives. Show them a new revelation of Your love and power. Amen." This prayer is powerful, and prayer is one of the best gifts we receive. There is no cost but a lot of rewards. Let's continue to pray for one another.



Circles of Prayer



Mary Barrett

Mary is the associate pastor at the Stanborough Park Church outside London, England. She is also a writer and speaker. She and her pastor/husband have two daughters in their late teens. For relaxation, Mary enjoys being with family and friends.

One of the hardest things to come to terms with in ministry can be the lack of support that we sometimes feel.

We can often feel alone when there are conflicts in our churches or when we are plagued with personal problems that seem to have no solution. In my experience, prayer always helps!

We all know that God has the power and the wisdom to deal with every situation that confronts us, even though we may not always feel His presence. At times, most of us have seen or heard of the most amazing things that God has done in response to prayer. There are times though, when we need to know that others are praying with us and that we are not alone in the struggles that we face. It can be difficult to share personal or church issues as prayer requests with church members, so why not share them with other ministerial wives?

Some time ago a group of pastors' wives and I decided that we were going to pray for one another on a regular basis. We mailed each other once a month, sharing the requests that we had. Once a week, we set aside time to pray for one another, some of us fasting or having a fruit fast during that time. As answers to our requests were realized, we rejoiced with one another.

Our prayer circle consisted of six wives from all over our conference; therefore, distance was not a barrier to supporting one another in prayer. We also tried to meet at worker's meetings or retreats to catch up on friendships and praise God together for the way in which He has answered our prayers.

I really believe that being part of a prayer circle can enrich our lives as well as make a huge difference to our ministries. Knowing that others care enough to share my problems and present them to God in prayer has been a great source of strength and encouragement. Knowing that I am supporting a friend's ministry and doing something practical and of value for her by praying for her on a regular basis give me a great sense of satisfaction.

Try forming a circle of prayer for yourself. Contact five other wives with whom you feel comfortable or that you would like to know better and begin. The circle can be less than seven, but it is better to go beyond that number.

A prayer circle will not only help to alleviate the isolation you may feel in ministry, but it will also be one way in which you can share your concerns with those who care for you on earth and the One who cares for you in heaven.



What An Embarrassment!

Anonymous

Camp meeting came and went and, as is common with the Adventist clergy, shifting became the order of the day as people moved to occupy the new offices they had been given. In the Adventist world, camp meeting causes pastors to move to higher or lower offices depending on what the nominating committees have prayerfully decided.

After this particular session, my husband had been asked to leave his office as publishing director to become a district pastor. He had been a departmental director for five years, meaning that our family had become used to his routine. But it was time to change and hence, a time to shift.

When my husband announced that we were going to shift to the district, I felt challenged because I had never experienced district life before.

Our children had attended services in one of the churches in this district, and the children's Sabbath School was very lively. They looked forward to having more of those good lessons again. Also, moving to this new district meant our children would be closer to their school. The family was happy about the move.

When the shifting day comes in our conference, the conference truck moves the ingoing pastor and the outgoing pastor on the same day; this plan helps cut expenses for the conference. However, this move did not go smoothly, and several embarrassing problems could have been avoided had the transfer been handled differently.

First, though the conference personnel had assumed that the outgoing pastor knew he was being moved, it was not so. The pastor and his wife were unaware of the move and consequently, not ready to shift.

Secondly, since the truck was not ours, we could not decide to go back home because it would mean an extra charge and also a disturbance of the planned program. Besides, a new pastor was already occupying our old home.

When we knocked on the door to our new home, we found that the pastor and his wife were not even there. Their children allowed us to unload our things in the lounge and dining room. That night we had to use wardrobes to demarcate the places where the maid, the children, and we were going to sleep.

The pastor and his wife arrived the following morning. They, especially the wife, were disgusted to find us there. It was difficult for her to hide her anger from us. The husband demonstrated his disgust through telephone conversations in which he told the elders that the church had been cruel to him and that he was not prepared for a different appointment. He told falsehoods about us and said my husband had chosen, on his own, to come to this district and push the pastor out. It was embarrassing to hear these false reports from church members. And as if the telephone reports were not enough, some leaders and their wives actually came to see how we had "wronged" this family. I was mortified.

When the pastor and his family finally left after two days, they took the telephone key so that we would not have access to it. The telephone belonged to the church, and because I was pregnant and near my due date, I worried about the lack of communication had I gone into labor and my husband not been home.

Yet through this embarrassing situation, I experienced the love of God and heard Him speak to me. When people started gossiping and asking for more information on what was happening in the two pastors' lives, God gave my husband and me the power to be silent or to speak only words which were seasoned with love.

This was a challenging experience for me, but it taught me that God was on our side. We can face every temptation and trial. Christ gives us strength and calm when we trust in Him.



Christmas Island

Mary Ellen Holmes

If you are ever lucky enough to visit Christmas Island off the rock-bound coast of Maine, the natives will point out to you, with quiet pride and deep affection, the home of Joseph and Mary Carpenter.

It is a tight, compact, freshly-painted little white house set in the very center of the village. You would have no way of knowing this, but every beam and rafter, every floor board and stair tread, has been laid carefully by the islanders themselves in recognition of their miracle—the miracle which, several years ago, gave Christmas Island its name.

In the neat white house, 32 year old Joseph Carpenter, his wife, Mary, and their three-year-old son live happily and comfortably—at peace with each other and with the world. One large front room is a sort of Yankee trader's shop. And so, even though Joseph is a victim of Parkinson's disease, he is independent and self-supporting.

Watching the villagers bustling in and out day after day, you would never guess that there was a time—not too long ago—when every resident on the island had signed a petition to have the Carpenters evicted.

Not from this house, mind you. They were living in the lighthouse then, and that is where the story really begins. For this is the story of the lighthouse on Gull Island, the lighthouse which gave Christmas Island its name on that never-to-be-forgotten twenty-fifth morning of December 1959.

To begin with, Mary and Joseph Carpenter bought the lighthouse—lock, stock, and barrel—for \$460. It was hopelessly run down, a derelict tower rising sharply at the sea's edge, unpainted, and weather-whipped, with a narrow, rough ribbon of water separating it from Gull Island. But to the Carpenters, it was their ivory tower. It was paid for, it was home, and that was all that really mattered.

By trade, Joseph had been an automobile mechanic—a good one, with his own little shop in Portland. It had been a great shock for him to learn in September that he had Parkinson's disease—progressive, chronic, incurable. With their first child expected in December, they didn't quite know what to do, for Joseph's limbs already were getting stiff. There was a noticeable rigidity in his movements, and he could no longer work in his shop because of the tremor in his right arm and hand.

Joseph's life expectancy was no doubt long, but if he were unemployable, how could he possibly plan a future for himself, Mary, and their child? Carefully he had checked his savings, sold his shop, and counted his assets. And then, almost as if it were a Godsend, he had heard about the Gull Island lighthouse. By a fluke of "horse-trading" it had come into the possessions of a Portland merchant who was glad to sell it "at a going price." For the Carpenters it was an answer to prayer—a seeming solution to all their problems. In a small place like Gull Island, the cost of living would be less than in the city. The pace would

be slower. They might even find some way to supplement their savings. Then, too, Joseph could be out-of-doors in fresh air and sunshine much of the year.

And so on the tenth of November 1959, Joseph and Mary Carpenter moved to their ivory tower.

If they had guessed how violently the villagers would react to what they termed “outsiders” taking up residence in the lighthouse, they might have hesitated. But they had no way of knowing how proud and steeped in tradition the Islanders were, each smug and respectable in his own small, neat home. They did not know, and so they paid their \$460 and came to what was then—before the miracle, of course—the Gull Island lighthouse.

It was snowing when they first saw it—one of those late fall/early winter snows that toss slivers of ice across the caps of the waves.

Their troubles began as soon as they reached the dock.

First, there was no boat to rent to ferry them across the small strip of water from the island itself to the lighthouse. And finally when Joseph, in desperation, bought one, he paid \$50 for an old flat-bottom scow not worth \$10.

Supplies were next, and here, too, Joseph and Mary met the undisguised resentment of the villagers. When Mary protested that the prices marked on the shelves were much lower than the prices she had paid, the storekeeper merely grunted, “Aych. Not to outsiders.”

From the very beginning, everything went the same way. It was very clear that Gull Island wanted no part of “squatters in the lighthouse,” and the sooner Joseph and Mary Carpenter headed back to the mainland, the better it would be for all concerned. Joseph would have gone back, too, many times. But for some strange reason, Mary would not leave. Especially, she would not leave after she found, in the lighthouse storeroom, the old driftwood cradle, shaped like a manger.

“Don’t ask me to go now, Joseph,” she pleaded. “I can’t explain why; I don’t know why. I only know that our baby has to be born here. Later, if you still wish it. I’ll go. Oh, indeed, I’ll gladly go! But not yet—not quite yet.”

So the Carpenters stayed. November lengthened into December. Joseph’s disease, aggravated by the conditions around him, grew worse. His arms trembled more, and it became harder and harder for him to make the trips to the village for supplies and kerosene—especially kerosene, for it was heavy and awkward to handle, and he could bring only a little at a time. They needed it desperately, though—for the pot burner which gave them heat, for the lamps which were their only source of light, for the old stove on which Mary cooked their meals.

There was regular oil delivery to every house on the village, but not, of course, to the Carpenters. And it seemed to Joseph as if the villagers, watching him trying to haul the five-gallon cans, were just waiting for the day when

he could no longer manage the task. It was as if they were saying, “When the kerosene is gone, they’ll have to move; they’ll have no heat, no light, no food.”

The disease would take many years to break Joseph Carpenter’s body, but what the islanders did to his spirit in six short weeks was a terrible thing. And what the entire experience did to his own soul was even worse, for gradually Joseph began to hate. He hated the place, the people, and eventually, God Himself.

Until that Christmas morning. There was no doctor on Gull Island, and because Mary would not leave the lighthouse and none of the women would help, only Joseph was with her when their son—a fine, strong, handsome

man-child—was born at midnight on Christmas Eve. Only Joseph was with her to wonderingly pick up his son in his arms and to stand straight and tall—not trembling now!—looking across the strip of sea to the land where they had been refused room, kindness, and understanding.

And then a strange thing happened to Joseph. He tried to put it into speech afterward, but there were no words. He only knew that as he held the baby in his arms, a great joy suddenly welled up within him, and he wanted to share this supreme moment of his happiness with all the world.

In that instant there was no longer any fear of his disease nor any hatred of his neighbors in Joseph Carpenter because suddenly there was no room inside him for anything but love.

He turned from the bed, still holding the baby warm and close against his chest lest his weakened hands should slip. He knew, as he looked across the swift strip of sea to the land beyond, that nothing mattered anymore. All the malice, all the frustration, all the bitterness were gone as if they never had been. Here in Joseph’s arms was only hope—hope eternal and everlasting, hope born in every child since the world began.

Gently Joseph gave the baby back to Mary and watched as she laid him in the driftwood cradle. And then, because he wanted to share this moment with the people of Gull Island, because he wanted to shout out loud to them, “Behold, my son. May he grow up a credit to your village!” because he wanted to say, “I’m not angry anymore, not hurt nor afraid. I only want to share with you this happiest moment of my life,” he took from his precious store of kerosene enough fuel to fill the five huge lamps in the lighthouse windows.

He filled them and set them blazing like large candles in the dark, and the five beams spread out in five separate directions, like the points of a giant star.

Some of the islanders saw the light. A few of them even thought it might be a distress signal, but they couldn’t have cared less. And so unconcernedly they went about their affairs.

*“Behold, my son.
May he grow up
a credit to your
village!”*

It was six o'clock on Christmas morning before they really found out, six o'clock when the radio commentators first began to flash across the nation the story of the miracle.

How could the villagers have guessed that at exactly midnight, Mary Carpenter gave birth to her first-born son and laid him in the driftwood cradle shaped like a manger?

And how could they possibly have known that at ten minutes past twelve, just as Joseph lit the lamps to proclaim to the world that his son had been born, the pilot of a giant airliner, lost in fog off the coast with his plane's communication system jammed, suddenly had seen the heavens open up around him and a huge five pointed beacon shine through?


The pilot tried to explain later to the reporters in Portland exactly what had happened, but, like Joseph, he could not put it into words. All he could tell them was that as the sky broke into light around him, he saw, in one horrified instant, that his plane was heading straight toward a crash landing in the center of Gull Island—Gull Island

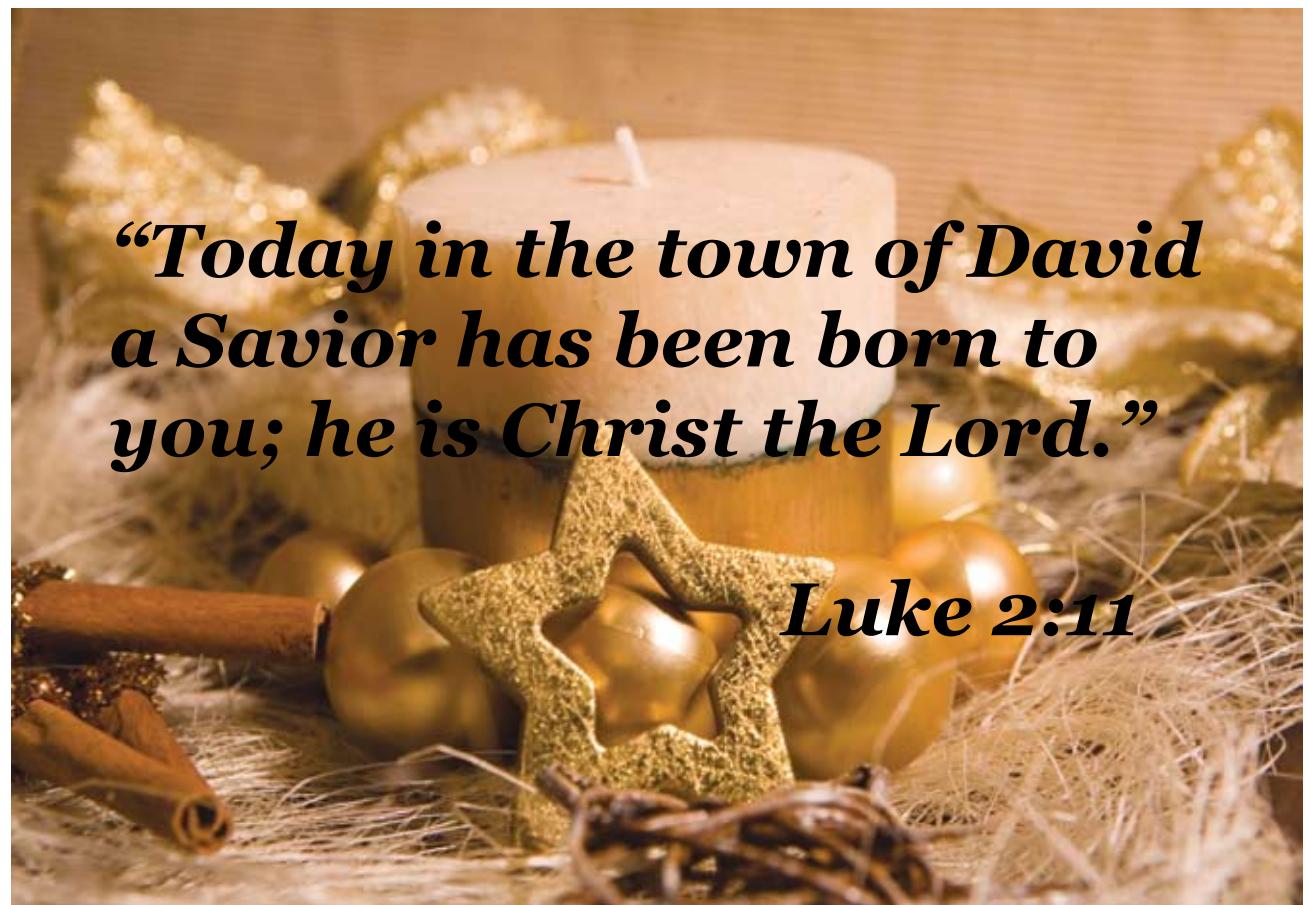
with its multitude of tiny, snug, little homes clustered close together; Gull Island with its families sleeping, unaware of danger, in their warm, comfortable beds.

Sharply he veered his craft back into the upper channels of air and out to sea.

Then, with the beacon to guide him, he found his course, and, like a wise man led by a star, carried his 88 passengers to a three-point-landing in Portland, leaving Christmas Island quietly, safely asleep under its Christmas star.

And now you know how the Island got its name, and why the villagers built the house for Joseph and Mary Carpenter. You know, too, why Christmas Island seems so different from much of the rest of the world. The reason is that a spirit pervaded the island—a spirit of love, understanding, and tolerance that is rare and genuine and wonderful.

It is a spirit that never can die because, in itself, it is part of the miracle of Christmas which, after all, began with the birth of a Baby and the star of forgiveness His Father lit to save our world. 



A Life with a Smell of Fragrance



Annabella Franco de Abril

Annabella Franco de Abril has enjoyed cooking since she was a child and is an expert in vegetarian meals. She and her husband Mauricio pastor in San Camilo, Prov. De Los Rios in Ecuador. They are teaching their son Mauricio to love God. Annabella enjoys singing praise to God and telling others about His love. She is also involved in serving her community through ministry.

My mother enjoyed cultivating roses, so I learned to enjoy their exquisite fragrance. On one occasion I remember accompanying her to choose a new rose plant. The vendor offered her a plant called “moraleche”. This plant is originally from Ambato, a city located in the mountains of Ecuador. It was so beautiful! It had two colors; the outer petals were purple and the inner petals were white. But the beauty of this plant was not only its beautiful appearance, giving a testimony of the Creator who had made it, but its fragrance exceeded any other rose I had ever smelled before.

This experience reminds me that this life is worth living when it produces a fragrance of eternal life. The meekness of which Jesus spoke that produces this kind of exquisite and lasting fragrance is the one you find in the heart, not in a person’s exterior but in his or her interior.

Throughout my life, I have met people whose exterior was very humble, but whose interior showed the strange work Satan is able to do in certain people who allow him to fill their hearts with envy and hate, rancor and bitterness. I have also found persons who exhibit good taste, refinement, and beauty—all the attributes that reflect that which is in our interior. A noble soul’s main objective is to obey and love God and his neighbors.

I remember that my father used to reflect with me about the fact that many people in our church isolate themselves from the external world, that they have no major contact with non-believers. He used to tell me that in John 17, Jesus tells us, “I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from evil.” If I may ask, where is the merit of those who have been “protected” inside a bubble? He considered that there was a greater merit in people who

mingle with the world and still keep faithful in the midst of temptation and come out victorious. They did not become contaminated, but instead, they permeated those around them with their fragrance.

As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, we should not form an isolationist cult, but should be the salt that gives flavor to the food and the light that dissipates darkness.

The Seventh-day Adventist faith came to my family more than 50 years ago, through my maternal grandmother, who became a disciple for Jesus. She evangelized her family—husband, daughter, son-in-law, and granddaughters—and many more with whom she had the opportunity to meet and help. Her witness did not conclude with only her religion. She was always willing to attend to the physical needs of the people in every way possible.

My family began to love her God, who was now shown to us, as well as the rest of the people. We shared with her as we saw the joy in the faces of the truly needy children, and grateful mothers. We learned about the inestimable value the work done on behalf of the less fortunate.

Since I was in kindergarten, I attended public schools, so I had the opportunity to speak to my classmates about Jesus and all that I learned in church. I could testify that the God whom I served was real and that when we are faithful and remain so even if the whole world is against us, people may sooner or later recognize that it is worth living the way we do. They may feel encouraged to try that which can give purpose to their empty lives.

My parents became vegetarians due to the fact that my mother became ill, and her doctor recommended that she change her diet. Since this was the only way to control this ailment, my father, my sisters, and I decided to follow her. I know that for the majority of people it would have been very difficult, but surely God worked a miracle, for it didn't take much effort to make the change.

By the time I got to high school, I was considered the most "weird of the class" because of my faith. To make matters worse, I was also a vegetarian. For the most part, my classmates respected me, but there were a few who mocked me, and whenever this occurred, God helped me know how to respond. Those who were my classmates had not yet accepted my faith, but all of them got to know about it at that time.

I thank my grandparents and parents for the education they gave me, first in my home, which set the base for my temperament: to put God first, develop my own personality, and live a transparent life. The academic preparation that I received opened before me a greater vision of life, an acceptance of my own self and an awareness of those around me, not to become like them but to accept them as they are and to try for that fragrance to come out from me to fill my own life and the lives of those who surround me.

In God's Word, Joseph, Daniel, and his friends are some of the most notable examples of young people who were educated in their homes by their parents in the love of God. They learned the simple jobs of life, but at the same time they were academically prepared in a special way. Their parents guided them to always seek excellence; had it not been this way, Joseph would have never been elected second to Pharaoh. Nor would Daniel and his friends have experienced success within the courts of Babylon.

In Ephesians 5:2 the apostle Paul says, "And live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

A legend tells of a traveler who found a very fragrant piece of clay. It emitted such an intense and sweet smell that it permeated the whole room. "Tell me, what are you?" asked the traveler. "Are you a rare pearl from a foreign country? Or an exotic nard that dresses up with clay? Or some other costly merchandise?"

"No! I am a common piece of clay."

"And how is it that you expel such extraordinary scent?"

"The secret of my mysterious fragrance, my friend, is that I have lived under the shade of a rose."

Certainly, love is a principle which never changes. No matter how strong the winds blow, the fragrance remains, and when each of us takes possession of this love that only the true God can bestow, we begin to exhale this special and lasting fragrance that permeates our whole life. It is no longer a feeling that springs forth occasionally, it is now a lifestyle that we can live happily! We will never be the same again, for we begin to understand that life is worth living. We share the fragrant smelling perfume of God with everyone else.



Breaking Free of Christmas Stress

Let Every Heart Prepare Him Room

Judy Kyser

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During this busy time of year when there are so many demands on our lives, how do we keep our priorities straight and our focus on Christ during the holidays? How do we give the gift of hospitality to our family and friends without getting caught up in the world's view of what hospitality should look like? How do we make gift-giving a gift of love and a symbol of the greatest gift—God's Son?

These lessons are not the result of long years of doing it all right but rather years of doing much of it wrong. Learning from my mistakes, I offer you some simple solutions the Lord has taught me as I have given my holidays to Him.

Where do we begin? We begin 2,000 years ago. Luke records the story this way: "And it came to pass in those days...that she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was *no room for them in the inn*" (Luke 2:6, 7).

Have you ever thought about what it was really like for Mary and Joseph on that night? We are so used to our handsome, hand-painted nativity scenes and our beautiful picture books depicting the birth of Christ that reality is distorted in our eyes. Can you imagine giving birth to a baby in a dirty, smelly stable where animals stayed? How distressed Joseph must have been, unable to provide a better place for his wife! Can you even fathom searching for one clean spot where the King of Kings could be brought into the world, where God could enter human history?

Where was hospitality on that first Christmas? Surely someone might have noticed Joseph and his very pregnant wife and felt compassion for them. What about the innkeeper or the other guests? Couldn't they have given up their lodging for one night? It seems almost inconceivable that no one noticed or cared.

What about us this Christmas season? We know the story, but does it truly make a difference in the way we live? We get so preoccupied with our own needs, our own social calendars, our own distorted ideas of how Christmas should be celebrated that we, too, come face to face with the Christ Child and discover we have no room for Him.

That is where I found myself the Christmas of 1988. I was in bondage to my own distorted ideas of Christmas. I needed to break free, as Beth Moore would say, and make liberty in Christ a reality in my life. But at the time, I didn't know how.

I grew up in a home where everything was decorated for the holidays. There were lots of presents under the tree. Mother made everything fun, and it all seemed so effortless. Added to those memories were my tendencies toward perfectionism, the pressures I put on myself in my business, and what I thought others expected of me. I found myself under a serious stronghold that needed to be broken. That Christmas Eve, I remember coming in the church sanctuary, climbing the steps to the balcony exhausted and almost collapsing in the pew. My heart was racing, my mind spinning with the preparations and activities. I *thought* I had given the gift of hospitality for Christmas. I had opened my home for a group to have their annual party. I had invited my husband's employees to dinner. I had cleaned and dared anyone in the family to mess up a single spot. I had decorated every nook and cranny in the house. I had wrapped dozens of packages with beautiful wrappings and ribbons and addressed several hundred Christmas cards. I had baked and prepared Christmas dinner and was exhausted and empty. I had done it all—except open my heart to Christ for Christmas. Dropping my head, I confessed my sin and asked God for

the grace to change. I promised Him that next year would be different.

The following year, I must have been headed down the wrong track, because the Lord knew I needed some help in keeping my promise to Him. Early in December, my business partner, Jean, and I were in a hurry to finish our last delivery and close the office. Too impatient to wait for help, we borrowed my husband's van and loaded it ourselves. In that delivery I injured a disk in my spine, had severe pain down my leg, and could not walk. To avoid surgery, my doctor insisted I remain flat on my back for *three weeks*. I realized that God was trying to teach me something and I would be wise to learn the lesson quickly. That year I learned how Christmas should really be celebrated. My family and friends were my gracious teachers.

During my recuperation, some friends came by and stayed for a few minutes. After all, it *was* Christmas. Others, however, stayed for longer visits and didn't seem in a hurry to leave. Their shopping list completed, they delivered hospitality—food—to our family and had already delivered gifts to friends. Some left their calendars open to volunteer at church or local agencies, packing Christmas boxes for the Salvation Army or stuffing stockings for the elderly. They taught me to leave time for the unexpected at Christmas. It allowed them to be available to the Lord, ready to be used for His purposes.

That year I had lots of time to pray, to read God's Word, and to plan for the future. The house was not decorated as it had always been; the gifts were not color-coordinated or beautifully wrapped. But it was one of the best Christmases I could remember because of the celebration in my heart. My life was transformed that Christmas. By God's grace, I began taking a series of steps that helped me simplify Christmas so I could be available to the Lord when He gave me opportunity.

How do we keep our focus on Christ? A string of P's is a good way to remember: Pray + Plan + Prepare + Ponder = Peace.

Pray, asking the Lord to give you a vision of how He wants to use you and your family at Christmas.

Plan, writing down specific goals. Make your shopping list early—the day after Christmas is not too early.

Prepare, methodically working through your list and organizing your decorations so they are not a chore to pack and unpack.

Ponder the Scriptures, essential to a Christ-centered Christmas. The devil will do everything to distract you. Don't give him the victory.


How do we share biblical hospitality without getting caught in the web of the world's view?

The gift of hospitality is not really an option for Christians. It is a mandate. Begin by reading Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9; and 3 John 8. Hospitality has almost become a forgotten Christian virtue. Our homes are gifts of God to be used for Him. For those who find hospitality challenging, remember 1 Thessalonians 5:24: "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (KJV).

Do not confuse hospitality with entertaining. Karen Mains, author of *Open Heart, Open Home*, explains the difference: "Entertaining is the source of human pride. It demands perfection, it fosters the urge to impress. It is a rigorous taskmaster which enslaves. It says, 'I want to impress you with my beautiful home, my clever decorating, my gourmet cooking. Entertaining is really all about me.'"

"Hospitality, on the other hand, is an act of generosity, the response of a truly benevolent heart. It is sharing the good provisions of God with others. It is an expression of the spiritual gift of serving. Hospitality is all about others. It says, 'This house may be a mess, but I love you and I want to be with you.'"

Hospitality takes on a different look during the various stages of our lives. Don't ride the guilt trip by thinking you have to do it all during the holidays. Biblical hospitality should be practiced throughout the year.

How do we make gift-giving an act of love reflecting the greatest gift of God's Son? This Christmas we have the opportunity to practice, "Come into my heart, Lord Jesus; there is room in my heart for Thee." Say it with me, won't you? 

Here are some suggestions:

- ★ *Start early, keeping a list in your billfold all year long.*
- ★ *Buy after-Christmas sales for next year.*
- ★ *Let stores do the wrapping for you!*
- ★ *Ask friends and family to make suggestions in starting a collection (an ornament, silver charm, set of books, piece of silver, etc.) for them. Add to the collection every year.*
- ★ *Consider making a special gift to a charity or your church in honor of Jesus' birthday.*
- ★ *Look for gifts that reflect the real meaning of Christmas. One year I bought some gold-star votive candles and attached a card that read, "We have seen his star in the East and are come to worship Him." Another time I found some pretty linen hand towels with a crown embroidered in gold. The tag read, "King of Kings and Lord of Lords."*



Shepherdess International News

Euro-Asia Division

Euro-Asia Division Advisory meetings were held from June 3-5, 2008, in Moscow, Russia. Following the advisory, a shepherdess congress was held at Zaoksky Adventist University, located about 75 miles (120 km) south of Moscow, where Sharon Cress was one of presenters. Shepherdesses from the union area attended the three-day congress. Presentations relating specifically to the attendees and the unique challenges and rewards they face as pastoral wives.



Enjoying an exercise break



Union Shepherdess Coordinators with (seated from left) Galina Stele, ESD Shepherdess Sponsor; Sharon Cress, GC Shepherdess International Director; and Mariya Leahu, ESD Shepherdess Coordinator



A retired pastor's wife and Lidia Stoliar, West Russian Union Conference Shepherdess Coordinator



Group Photo at the Shepherdess Congress in Zaoksky



On Sunday morning, Shepherdess retreat attendees enjoyed a horse-drawn carriage ride



Ministers' wives from across Northeastern Conference gathered in Lake George, New York, for a special weekend retreat

North American Division

Northeastern Conference Wives Enjoy Retreat: Elfreda Blue, Northeastern Conference Shepherdess Club president, shared that in November, 47 ministers' wives from the Northeastern Conference gathered at the Sagamore Resort on Bolton's Landing in Lake George, New York, for a very special weekend retreat. The retreat, supported by the conference administration and ministerial department, was the first in recent memory.

The women came from as far away as Rochester, New York, and Boston, Massachusetts. Most traveled in cars, but 20 of them from the New York City area utilized the specially arranged Hummer stretch limousine service. Upon arrival, all were warmly welcomed by the organizing committee as well as members of the Sagamore staff.

The weekend activities began at the hotel spa, where ladies were treated to massages, facials, body scrubs, and chromotherapy baths. The Sabbath hours were filled with songs of praise, worship, and fellowship. Special music for the occasion was presented by Miranda Manie and Daschelle Cuke, two pastors' daughters. Prayer time enabled the women to pray for their families, their church ministry, and themselves. One heartwarming experience occurred during one of the prayer sessions when a young female hotel guest requested prayer for her sister's children.

The main presenter for the retreat was Linda Penick from the Southeastern California Conference. She addressed areas pertinent to ministers' wives. Other inspiring presentations were made by Lois King, Atlantic Union Conference Shepherdess coordinator and adjunct professor at Atlantic Union College, and Roseclaire Bulgin, first lady of the Roxbury church in Roxbury, Massachusetts.

Included in the full program was time for leisurely walks around placid and beautiful Lake George, and a Sunday morning ride in the Sagamore horse-drawn carriage.

Everyone enjoyed the experience and left Sagamore with wonderful memories, closer bonds and looking forward to the next retreat.

Oklahoma Conference Wives Enjoy Special Retreat: Susan Jones presented the following report.

The Oklahoma pastors' wives who checked in for the Shepherdess Retreat at Wewoka Woods Adventist Center were greeted with hugs, roses, "Okie" pins, and welcome cards encouraging them to refresh and relax! In the rooms where the ladies were staying, they found "rainbow seeds" with planting instructions on each pillow, along with gifts of homemade oatmeal soap, rose bath salts, and a chocolate "rose" complete with stem.

The theme for the weekend was "Relationships of Women," featured Marti Schneider, the North American Division Shepherdess Coordinator. Her talk Friday evening was entitled "A Moving Story," and was followed by small groups where each of the ladies made a map of each place she had ministered. One of our ladies had made over 20 moves in her ministry career! There was also the sharing of memorable moves; the stories ranged from harrowing to hilarious. Some told of answered prayer and of God's leading.

Susan Jones presented a nature talk on spiritual applications from sea shells, including the murex shell from which purple dye came in Old Testament times. She explained that purple cloth had such high value because of the quantity of murex shells needed to produce the dye.

Music for the weekend was led by Teresa Ritter, Janelle Norman, Chrystal Flerchinger, and Sylvia Johnson, with Shirlene McClendon at the piano. As we sang, our hearts were lifted heavenward with praise to our Heavenly Father.

Sabbath began with a bountiful breakfast prepared by Lisa East. Following our worship in musical praise, Pam Fraser led out in the Sabbath School lesson on "Mystery of the Deity of Christ." Many deep and meaningful insights turned the lesson into a spiritual feast.

Marti's morning talk, "Elizabeth, Mary, and Me," was on how God relates to women, then and now. She shared insights gleaned from her own personal devotional Bible study about the birth of Jesus and his young mother, Mary. Marti shared her gift of music with a song that she composed called "Power of the Highest," a beautiful song from Mary's story, found in Luke 1:26-56.

In the afternoon Marti spoke on “Walking with Jesus Today,” where she presented her approach to personal devotions. Everyone found this to be a stimulating approach to devotional Bible study as Marti not only shared the “details” of her method, but also the “tools” for everyone to try while using a passage from the book of Mark. There was an impressive array of personal insights gleaned from a few moments of prayerful attention to a few Bible verses.

Later in the afternoon Teresa Shelton, Oklahoma Shepherdess President and coordinator for the retreat, led a discussion about ways to share Jesus.

In the evening, Teresa led out in a time of focus on evangelism, showing a segment of a “Share Him” evangelistic PowerPoint program, and giving attendees the opportunity to experience a portion of the series.

Small group discussions were interspersed throughout the days, with the small groups being creatively divided. One time each woman was given a bookmark and divided by the bookmark themes. Another time everyone was given a balloon to pop and each balloon had a piece of chocolate candy in it. Groups were divided by whether a person had dark chocolate, milk chocolate, chocolate with peanuts, or chocolate with crispy rice. Groups were also divided by color and fragrance of votive candles; another time the divisions were determined by the color of ribbon tied to a rose left at their place at the table. These groups added some warmth, humor, and variety to the retreat.

Lisa East shared her gift of “special touches” by providing lovely fresh floral arrangements for each table, adding to the overall sense of being cared for. In addition, she thoughtfully prepared tasteful, healthy, and beautiful meals that were not only delicious but very attractive.

Saturday night everyone relaxed by the fireplace as Teresa took on the role of auctioneer. The women brought wrapped gift items from home to be auctioned in a fundraiser for the Oklahoma Shepherdess organization, and they raised over \$300.

Sunday morning Marti Schneider gave her final talk on “Reaching Your Neighborhood for Jesus,” sharing personal stories of how she and her husband, Don, have reached out to their neighbors.

After a final small-group session, the retreat ended with everyone holding hands for a group prayer regarding specific needs that had been discovered during the weekend. Then there were lots more hugs and a determination to pray for each other more and to try to get together more often!

South American Division

Ecuador: The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Manta, Ecuador, recently led out in a “No Smoking Day” in their fishing port city. Activities included a special oratory contest held in the Municipal Hall featuring participating students from 12 different high schools, followed by a special parade the following day. “The community here was impressed, and today in the parade we have of the highest authority of the municipal Government with us,” writes Annabella Franco de Abril, a pastor’s wife.

“No Smoking Day” held in Manta, Ecuador



South Pacific Division

Future Shepherdesses Receive Training: Every Wednesday a group of women gather together at Fulton College in Fiji to participate in the Pastoral Partners Certification Program (PPCP) program and enjoy fellowship together. The women come from several South Pacific islands including Kiribati, Solomons, Vanatu, Kiribati, and Fiji.

Momoi Sausau, Shepherdess coordinator for Fulton College leads out in the popular classes. Topics in the series include: New Life for the Pastor’s Wife; Hospitality; Leadership; Doctrines; Life & Teachings of Jesus; Spiritual Gifts; Personality Plus; Pastoral Visitation; and Health for Life.

Started in 2007, the program was so successful that some members of the first session are returning to help with the new session. In the first group, a translator was needed for a French-speaking participant. Over the course of the year, that participant has now become so proficient in English that she has returned to translate for a new French-speaking Shepherdess.

Participants from both sessions continue to enjoy learning and fellowship together and are so appreciative of these special classes to help prepare them in their new role as a Shepherdess.

PNG Partners in Ministry Literacy Training: In Papua New Guinea, 32 ministers’ wives received special training that enabled them to make a powerful impact in their communities through literacy training.

The Training the Trainers for Literacy program was made possible through funding from Shepherdess International at the General Conference. Women from most of the local missions throughout PNG were able to attend, thanks to the grant from Shepherdess International.

Mrs. Beatrice Kemo, Papua New Guinea Union Mission Literacy Coordinator, facilitated the training. Being the former Women’s Ministries director in PNGUM, Beatrice has a lot of experience in literacy. Her skills and knowledge were passed on to those who attended.

During the training program, participants were taught basic ideas on the importance of being a teacher, and teaching those who cannot read and write, as well as other things.

The ladies were very happy that this training gave them many ideas about the work of literacy and methods of teaching those who are unable to read and write.

The benefits of the literacy program for women include lower birthrates; the ability to provide a Christian education for their children; decrease maternal and infant mortality; later marriages; overall improvement in family health; a greater sense of personal self-worth; the ability to read Scripture and to assume responsibility for personal spiritual choices; an expanded influence in teaching children spiritual values; a greater possibility of becoming financially stable; and an ability to become involved in the Church's mission, along with many other benefits.

New Zealand: In April 2008 the pastors wives in New Zealand met for a retreat. The featured speaker was Mary Maxson from California. The ladies enjoyed the time of fellowship and spiritual refreshment.



Enjoying discussion groups at the New Zealand Retreat



Taking a break to review notes



Pastors' wives in New Zealand enjoying meetings



Mrs. Ruth reciting 270 Bible verses from memory at the South East India Shepherdess and Women's Congress

Southern Asia Division

Women enjoy union-wide congress in South East India: The South East India Union Shepherdess and Women's Congress was conducted in the organization's oldest church at Prakasapuram from April 24-26, 2008, with the theme, "Let us rise up and build" (Neh. 2:18).

More than 200 women from across South East India attended the event featuring Mrs. Hepzibah Kore, Director of the Women's and Shepherdess Ministries, as the main speaker.

Seminars addressing topics pertinent to ministry in the local church, health, and women's issues were offered. The Women's Ministries Directors from the 10 local conferences in the South East India Union served as facilitators for this congress.

One of the highlights of the program was when Mrs. Ruth, age 70, recited 270 verses and entire chapters from the Bible from memory. Mrs. Ruth, from the Ramnad section of India, explained that she reads God's Word whenever she can, reciting verses "while cooking, tilling the soil, working in the field, walking on the road, lying in." Mrs. Ruth, who has only had two years of formal education, dreams of one day being able to recite the entire New Testament from memory.

Gift of goats enriching many lives: Shepherdess International's Goat Project is making a difference in the lives of numerous families across the Southern Asia Division. Reports and letters full of gratefulness show how much these gifts of goats are appreciated.

"We are filled with joy to record our appreciation and gratitude for granting funds to purchase 14 young goats for 14 economically challenged women, of whom half are widows," writes Eswaramma Halemane, Women's Ministries director for the South Karnataka Section in South-Central India. "These goats will grow up and have kids, which, when sold, will take care of some financial needs of our poor sisters. . . The 14 women and their families are very happy to thank you. We shall strive to lead these and many more women to the knowledge of salvation in Jesus Christ."

Fourteen goats were also given to women needing assistance in the Raichur-Bellary Region of South Central India.

“Thank you very much for supporting our region,” writes H.B. Stephens, director of the Raichur-Bellary Region. “The women are happy and wish to thank the donors.”

“It is my happy privilege to extend my sincere thanks and gratitude for helping those in our area who are finding it very difficult to make ends meet,” writes Mrs. Kamalam Rajamony, director of Women’s Ministries in the North Kerala Section of Southwest India. “Out of the beneficiaries, one is a widow; another is lame and her husband is blind. Another person has no house of her own and has three children to care for. The others are economically very poor. We appreciate your kind-hearted service for helping the poor. May God continue to bless and guide you as you serve Him through this ministry.”



Mrs. Buddamma, a widow, receives her goat and shares her joy with the church pastor and some members from the church in Ganadinni.



(left) Mrs. Susheelamma, a widow, is very happy and thankful to the donor of her goat. Although there is no Adventist church building in her village, she faithfully gathers with other believers in a home for Sabbath worship. She is shown here with her pastor in Kerebudhur, India.

(right) Rathnamma, in her late twenties, became a widow when her husband was killed in an accident. She has two children and works as a day laborer in a local institution. Income from the goat will help to support her family.



(left) Manjulamma is a widow in her late forties. She lost her husband in an accident and has six children to support. Her life is a hard one as she works as a day laborer, earning only 200 rupees a week. Her goat, named “Youthful Innocence,” will be very helpful in bringing in more income for the family.



Southern Asia-Pacific Division

Bangladesh Shepherdesses conduct evangelism programs: Church members in Bangladesh enthusiastically supported an evangelistic program conducted by the local Shepherdess organization at the Vanaikushlia Adventist Church in Bangladesh mid-February.

Mrs. Angela Panday, along with Pastor Edward P. Chambugong, ministerial secretary for the Bangladesh Union Mission, led out in the program.

“Reflect Christ Through Service” was the theme of the seminar, with almost 100 people from the surrounding community attending. Nine people were baptized.

In April, Shepherdesses of the West Bangladesh Mission conducted a series of meetings at Mathurapur. Out of the 85 attendees, 15 accepted Jesus Christ and were baptized. Mrs. Minoty Marandi and Mrs. Cecelia Kisku led out in these meetings.

Shepherdesses from East Bangladesh Field and led by Mrs. Mariam Bonowaree conducted evangelistic meetings at Khagrachori from May 8-11 and won 35 people to Christ. During the following week, another series was presented by Mrs. Surovi Hawee, Mrs. Porose Moni Kerkata, and Mrs. Mariam Bonowaree at the Adventist Hill Tracts School and Seminary, resulting in 36 baptisms.

Shepherdesses and spouses share joy in Bangladesh: Pastors and their wives in the Bangladesh Union Mission gathered at Cox’s Bazaar Sea Beach for a rewarding three-day Ministers’ Council and Bible Conference held March 17-19.

Presenters at the conference included Helen Gulfan, director for Women’s Ministries and Shepherdess International in the Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD); Houtman Sinaga, SSD Ministerial Secretary; and Joshua Mok, executive secretary of the Southeast Asia Union Mission.

Mrs. Gulfan presented four topics: (1) “Issues for Partners in Ministry,” (2) “Shepherdess—Spirit-Filled and Controlled Woman,” (3) “Shepherdess: A Heart that Encourages,” and (4) “Shepherdess: Reaching the Hearts of Your PKs (Preachers’ Kids).”

The 80 conference participants expressed appreciation for the excellent meetings, with many stating that while both ministers and spouses “share the same goals,

objectives, ordeals, concerns, and challenges in the advancement of God's cause, we now know better how to deal with the details."

Similar meetings were held in Myanmar and in Sri Lanka last March. "We really enjoyed our ministries with them all," said Mrs. Gulfan, "both pastors and wives. Thank you for your prayer support."



Pastors and wives enjoy Ministers' Council and Bible Conference at Cox's Bazaar Sea Beach

West-Central Africa Division

Ghana Shepherdess celebrates 21 years: More than 200 pastors' wives in the Ghana Union Conference attended a special 21st Anniversary National Shepherdess Retreat held April 9-13, 2008, at the Swedru SDA Secondary School located north of the capital city of Accra.

During the five-day bi-annual Shepherdess retreat, presentations were given on a variety of topics including health, marriage, fasting, prayer, and wealth creation. Special support and prayers were given for new as well as retiring pastor's wives and widows.

Each of the attendees received gift copies of *The Story of Redemption and Steps to Christ*.

"I would like to encourage them to read the Bible and also to read the books of Shepherdess E.G. White, a dedicated pastor's wife," said Angele Nlo Nlo, Shepherdess Coordinator for the West Central Africa Division.

Taking the theme of the retreat "Transforming the Life of the Shepherdess by the Signs of Hope" to heart, the pastor's wives wanted to give hope to the children living in a nearby orphanage. Together, the Shepherdess group donated over US\$1,500 worth of items such as food, soap, and detergents, as well as a cash gift of US\$200 to the Bawjiase orphanage. The story was covered along with a color picture in the April 29 issue of *The Ghanaian Times*, Ghana's national newspaper.

While visiting the orphanage, the Shepherdess leaders invited the "Mother" of the facility, Mrs. Amy Boafo-Yeboah to attend the Divine Worship service held during the retreat. On Sabbath, not only did Mrs. Boafo-Yeboah attend, but most of the children were with her. During the service, a special prayer was said for these dear ones.



Angele Nlo Nlo, Shepherdess Coordinator for WAD (2nd from left) along with Mrs. Constance Larmie, Ghana Union Conference Shepherdess Coordinator, count copies of The Story of Redemption and Steps to Christ. Each of the 210 pastors' wives attending the retreat received a copy of these books.




The orphanage mother, Mrs. Amy Boafo-Yeboah, with gifts from the Shepherdess group



Participants in the conference

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Welcome to our virtual home. We're glad you stopped by.

As a clergy spouse, you most often act as a hostess, responsible for entertaining everyone from the leaders to the least. Here at Shepherdess International, however, we would like to offer you a respite, a place where you can be spiritually fed, emotionally nurtured, and physically relaxed. Within our enclave, we want to provide an ambience of support and understanding. So take off that superwoman cape and make yourself comfortable.

We hope you find your best friend, Jesus, here. We also hope you experience His guidance as you claim the assurance of being His beloved daughter. And, we hope you find here candid snapshots of life in the parsonage—that enchanting temporary home we have hopefully learned to love.

If we don't meet personally here on earth, let's plan to meet around Jesus' supper table, at that magnificent dinner He's planned for us—the one where the pastors wives won't have to cook or clean up!



Sharon Cress
*Associate Secretary, GC Ministerial Department
Shepherdess International Director, Ministry to Clergy Spouses*

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