

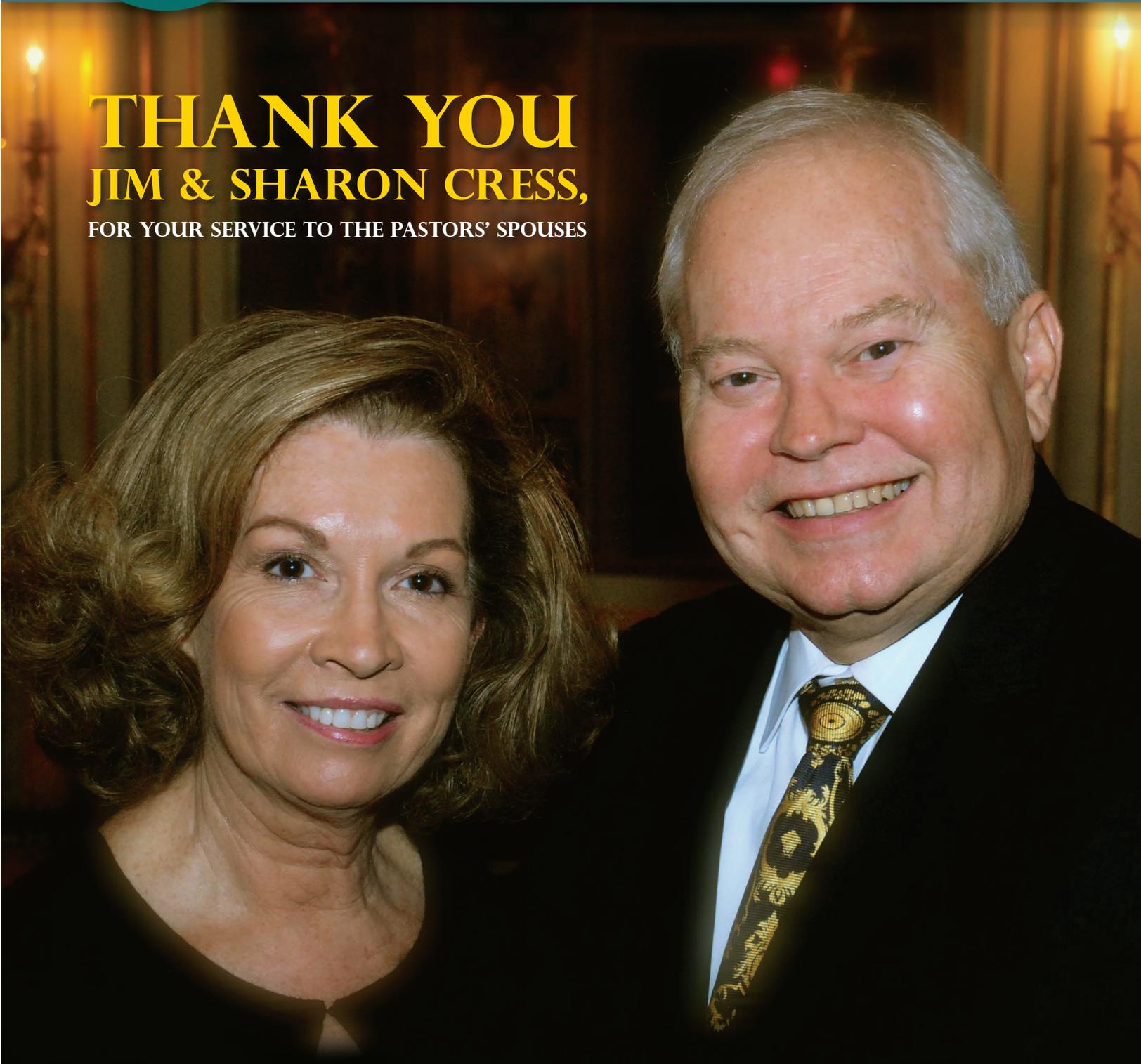


The Journal

Vol. 27 | Fourth Quarter 2010

A Shepherdess International Resource for Ministry Spouses

**THANK YOU
JIM & SHARON CRESS,
FOR YOUR SERVICE TO THE PASTORS' SPOUSES**





- 3 Farewell Editorial
- 4 Tributes to Sharon Cress
- 13 Changes: Next Exit
- 16 Let's Be Friends!
- 18 The View.... From the Hot Seat
- 20 From the Field

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THE PRAYER RING

As you open your Journal, the first feature you see is our Prayer Ring. This is on purpose! Prayer is our link to Jesus, our first and best Friend. We welcome your praises and petitions on this page. Please write or email us; you may share your name or remain anonymous. We here at Shepherdess, as well as ministry spouses around the world, will thank our Lord and petition Him on your behalf. Give your thanks and requests to the Lord right here!

“Whatever your anxieties and trials, spread out your case before the Lord. Your spirit will be braced for endurance. The way will be opened for you.... The weaker and more helpless you know yourself to be, the stronger will you become in His strength. The heavier your burdens, the more blessed the rest in casting them upon the Burden Bearer.”

The Desire of Ages, p. 329

“Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He who numbers the hairs of your head is not indifferent to the wants of His children. ‘The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.’ His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them. Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds. He rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice. There is no chapter in our experience too dark for Him to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel.... No sincere prayer [can] escape the lips, of which our heavenly Father is unobservant, or in which He takes no immediate interest.”

Steps to Christ, p. 100

Dear, dear ones,

There are certain words we would rather not hear. One word that usually falls in this category almost always has some sort of pain associated with it: goodbye.

During years spent itinerating in evangelism, I always dreaded the last night of the public meetings—leaving those who had just found Jesus. During our years of pastoral ministry, I always dreaded moving to a new area—leaving those who had become beloved members. During my years serving you, I always dreaded the final meeting of our retreats or conventions—leaving you, my Shepherdess friends. Maybe that is why the old Adventist hymn “Never Part Again” is so poignant and reassuring. Heaven is the place where we will never ever have to say goodbye again, and—praise the Lord!—heaven has never been so near as it is now.

As most of you know, these last months have brought me more goodbyes and losses than I thought a human could bear. Losing my husband, Jim, and my sister, Deanna, in death; losing my mother's cheerfulness and unconditional love; and now saying goodbye to you, my Shepherdess sisters. But through all this loss, there is One who will never leave us, One who will never say goodbye to us. He holds us tightly to Him, and when we are too tired to hold on to Him, He tenderly clutches us even closer. He knows when we are hurting, and because He created hearts, only He can heal a heart that is broken.

In Matthew 12:20, we read this promise: “A bruised reed He will not break; and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out” (NIV). A reed is usually strong and resilient. It stands straight and tall at the water's edge because it gains nourishment from the water and is rooted in the river soil. But when a reed is bruised or crushed, it becomes fragile and vulnerable. Similarly, a candle's wick burns bright and gives heat and warmth. It draws its flame from the oil in which it is established. But harsh, frigid winds can bear down upon the flame and snuff out a smoldering wick to a breath away from coldness. Quoting Isaiah, Matthew reminds us of this centuries-old, everlasting promise. We serve a loving God who knows all about strengthening bruised reeds and rekindling smoldering wicks.

If you feel like a bruised reed or a smoldering wick, re-read the story in Luke 24 about the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. These two had experienced unspeakable pain. They had said goodbye to all their hopes and dreams. They were discouraged and confused. They had watched Jesus, in whom they put all their trust and faith, die on a cross. More speculation surrounded them when Jesus' body went missing. The situation becomes personal when they sigh “We were hoping . . .” Obviously, they were hoping for anything except this!

They believed that Jesus was God, and God hadn't done what they wanted Him to do. They knew what they expected of Jesus, but God knows more about life than people do. These disciples wanted Jesus to redeem Israel, but Jesus knew that He would rather His people be temporarily oppressed than eternally lost. When forced to choose between tackling Pilate or battling Satan, Jesus chose to win the battle we couldn't win. He said No to what the disciples wanted and Yes to what they needed. He said No to a liberated Israel and Yes to a redeemed humanity.

It would be easy for us to look back at these two faithful followers and, knowing how the story ends, bypass their pain. But speaking personally, this is hard stuff. When God doesn't do what we want Him to do, it's not easy. Never has been, never will be. But my faith is simply the conviction that God knows more about my life than I do, and He will get

me through it. He never promised I wouldn't have dark, fearful valleys, but He did promise that I wouldn't have to navigate them alone.

When Jesus decided to make contact with these two confused disciples, He knew that disappointment makes people blind to God's presence. So, He did two things: He came to them where they were, and He asked them what they wanted.

Then He told them a story, not just any story but the story of God and His plan for His people. This same story is what I need to hear when I am hurting and life is beyond my understanding. The same story is what you need to hear when circumstances are beyond what you think you can bear. The cure for the disciples' broken hearts and keen disappointment was the story of God, and the cure for you and me is the story of God, too.

Jesus started the story with Moses and finished with Himself. Why? Maybe because what these two needed is the same thing you and I need: we need to hear that despite our loss, despite our lack of understanding, despite whatever evil does to crush us, God is still in control. We need to hear that these losses are not reasons to bail out; they are actually the very reasons we should sit tight and hold on.

Corrie ten Boom once said, “When the train goes through a tunnel and the world gets dark, do you jump out? Of course not. You sit still and trust the engineer to get you through.” Why did Jesus tell these disciples the story? Perhaps because 2,000 years later you and I would need to be reminded that the Engineer still controls the train.

- When challenges that lie ahead overwhelm us, we can read the story of Moses walking through the Red Sea.

- When worries seem unsolvable, we can read the story of daily manna faithfully feeding the Israelites.

- When wounds inflicted seem too deep to heal, we can read the story of Joseph forgiving his brothers.

- When the odds seem stacked against us, we can read the story of Jehoshaphat and the battle already won.

- When disappointment seems unbearable, we can read the story of the disciples walking the road to Emmaus. In Luke 24:31, they said, “It felt like a fire burning in us . . .” Jesus knew these disciples were bruised reeds and smoldering wicks. His presence and His story brought vibrant life back to them.

And so, dear ones, when you wonder if Jesus really cares, read the story of His sacrifice on the cross at Calvary. He died just for me. He died only for you. Read the story. Read it again and again and again.

You and I love and serve a God who said goodbye to His only Son and sent Him into our dark world so that we would never have to say goodbye again. Remember this story.

Leo Tolstoy, the famous Russian author, describes a time he saw a beggar on the street. When Tolstoy reached into his pocket to give the man some coins, he was startled to discover that he had no money. He turned to the man and said, “I am so sorry, my brother, but I have nothing to give you.” The beggar looked up at him, smiled, and said, “You have given me more than I asked for—you have called me your brother.”

Dear friends, through the years you have given me so much more than I could have ever asked for—you have called me your sister.

May God bless you every one.

Love,



TRIBUTES TO SHARON CRESS

Director of Shepherdess
International from 1992-2010

by Janet Page



Twenty-five years ago, before Sharon became the Director of Shepherdess International, she sent our family a gift for our newborn son. I was so surprised. We lived a long distance away from Sharon. I didn't know she even knew that I had a new baby! It meant so much to me that she would be so sensitive and caring.

Two years ago my pastor father passed away. One of the first flower arrangements to arrive to comfort my mother was from Sharon. She will never know how much that meant to my mom and to our family.

Sharon Cress is an amazing woman! After being with Sharon for just a few minutes, one realizes how much she loves the pastors' spouses. Sharon has worked hard for pastors' spouses around the world for 18 years. Sharon set many goals and accomplished many things as the Shepherdess director. Two of many accomplishments are:

- That every pastor's spouse be able to read and write. Now every pastor's spouse in the Papua New Guinea literacy program owns a Bible and is able to read it.
 - That an active Shepherdess ministry be established at every Seventh-day Adventist higher-education institution. Today every Adventist seminary worldwide has a self-sustaining Shepherdess ministry.
- Other goals Sharon has tirelessly worked on include:
- Encouraging leaders of church organizations to provide every pastor's spouse access to the *Shepherdess International Journal*.
 - Encouraging every local conference to have a retreat for their pastoral spouses.
 - Encouraging every Division to have counseling services available for their pastoral spouses.
 - Pursuing her goal of our church implementing Ellen White's mandate that ministry wives who



work with their husbands should be paid, Sharon has had the joy of seeing a successful plan for this accomplished in India. This dream, which Jim and Sharon shared, has become even more of a reality since Jim's death. Sharon established the Jim Cress Memorial Fund for the purpose of providing stipends to those spouses working alongside their pastor/spouse.

So much more could be written about Sharon; these are a few of the things this wonderful woman has accomplished.

We love you, Sharon, and we will be ever grateful for your years of showing us love and how to be excellent pastors' spouses! God has promised that He will bring tremendous fruit now and in eternity for all your hard work in people's lives.



JANET PAGE is the new Director of Shepherdess International.

BUT THANKS BE TO GOD,
 WHO GIVES US THE VICTORY
 THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS
 CHRIST. THEREFORE, MY
 BELOVED BRETHREN, BE
 STEADFAST, IMMOVEABLE,
 ALWAYS ABOUNDING IN
 THE WORK OF THE LORD,
 KNOWING THAT YOUR LABOR
 IS NOT IN VAIN IN THE LORD.

1 Corinthians 15:57-58 (NKJV)



Sharon has made a significant contribution to Shepherdess International. Her counterparts in the world divisions love her because of her personal interest in them, her affirmation of their ministry, and the high level of positive energy with which she does her work. Sharon not only knows how to work; she also knows how to enjoy life through relationships, fellowship, and doing things for others. Her generosity and infectious laugh endear her to others and put them at ease. Shepherdess has been her life at the General Conference for 18 years. The unfortunate death of her dear spouse, Jim, has brought her life to a jarring halt, and at this unexpected intersection in life, everything was different. Yet she has continued to forge ahead even while knowing the future was uncertain. She leaves some large organizational shoes to fill, but God has someone prepared to step in and carry on the good work she has done. We all stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us. I wish Sharon only the best for the days ahead and know that there is a place for her to continue to contribute to the mission of the church.

—A SPECIAL TRIBUTE FROM GERRY KARST, RETIRED GENERAL CONFERENCE VICE PRESIDENT
AND FORMER ADVISOR TO THE MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION



A passion for pastors' wives! Sharon Cress lived her ministry around what she could do to make ministry spouses feel loved and appreciated. Careful preparation went into every meeting and seminar so she could meet the needs in different parts of the world. She was always finding things to do to make them feel special. As a true Southern lady, Sharon had a gift for showing she cared, whether through gifts, a listening ear, a home-cooked dinner, a card, or a simple smile and hug. Sharon would take time out of her busy schedule to listen to anyone. Her ministry was all about serving others. Above all, Sharon loves Jesus and lets Him shine through her in good and bad times.

Sharon and Jim had a wonderful team ministry and set an example for so many to follow throughout their ministry. They loved to meet with pastoral couples around the world and train them for ministry.

It has been my privilege to work with Sharon for almost 12 years. At some point, she became not just my supervisor but my friend. I could not have asked for a better supervisor. She and Jim were both wonderful at showing they cared about me and making me feel appreciated for my work in the department. I have appreciated the many times Sharon prayed with me and encouraged me. She has inspired me to do more things for others so they know someone cares about them.

Although it is with sadness in my heart and tears in my eyes that I bid farewell to Sharon, my terrific supervisor, I am so grateful that we will continue to be friends. May God bless you in a special way, Sharon, as you continue to minister to others. We all pray that you receive great blessings from others for what you have given. Thank you for all you have done for Shepherdess! Remember you are loved by so many and will be greatly missed.

—SHELLY LOWE, SHEPHERDESS INTERNATIONAL, GENERAL CONFERENCE



Dear Sharon

You have blessed me and my fellow Shepherdesses with your excellent leadership. No words can describe the love and friendship you have had for me. You were my mentor, advisor, best friend, and a very caring person. I remember when you and your husband gave me some money after I was robbed at the airport hotel in South Africa while meeting with the General Conference Ministerial group. You didn't have to give me that money, but you did it out of love, and I will always remember that kind gesture. We will miss you so much, but remember that you have left a legacy at Shepherdess International to be remembered.

—Denise Ratsara, former Shepherdess Coordinator,
Southern Africa—Indian Ocean Division

You have always been there to encourage and share your wisdom and experience. You have always been personal and real, so it's easy to be comfortable with you. I have really appreciated that. As both of us are now facing an uncertain future, not knowing what God has in store for us, I pray that our paths will cross again. God has been good and has always led in the work that you and Jim did together, and He will continue to be with and bless you. Thank you for everything you have done and been to me.

—Anne—May Wollan, former Shepherdess Coordinator,
Trans—European Division

When I planned our first pastors' wives' retreat in 2001, I couldn't think of anyone who could do a better job than you. The theme was "Secrets of Success for the Pastor's Wife." It was a tremendous success! You are elegant and endearing, funny and factual, practical and perky, resilient and real, sophisticated and spiritual, talented and tenacious, witty and wise. I count you—as many do—as a very special friend who has blessed me and every pastor's wife in our conference. We love you, pray for you, and wish the very best for you. There aren't words to express my gratitude for your tireless efforts for ministers' wives.

—Rita Stevens, Texico Conference, North American Division

We sincerely hope you will write a book about your adventures as "a woman on a mission" in your quest for caring for fellow Shepherdesses around the world. You could have us in tears, on the edge of our seats, or in stitches as you relate a litany of your

experiences in your journeys to serve clergy wives. You often went alone where few women would dare to go, and you handled yourself valiantly in precarious situations reserved for the not-faint-of-heart. You could be nicknamed "Indiana Cress."

—Charles and Patti Mitchell, Palm Springs, California

Gordon and I will miss you and Jim as a couple in the Ministerial Association. Your contribution to Shepherdess International has changed the way women are viewed in the church, given Gordon and me a desire to minister as a couple, brought humor and laughter to our souls, and demonstrated God's love to us through your generous and caring spirit. I know God will bless you as you continue to serve Him in the way He leads.

—Cheryl Retzer, Shepherdess Coordinator,
Southern Union Conference, North American Division

You are open and real, full of joy and enthusiasm, inclusive, hospitable, generous, kind-hearted, a woman of God. Each time our paths have crossed, you have exuded these qualities, and it has been a privilege to grow in acquaintance with you. You have touched many lives in many countries, as did Jim. Thank you for your love, your service, and for being you.

—Robyn Stanley, Australia, South Pacific Division

I will miss seeing your beautiful smile here at the General Conference. You are truly a loving Christian lady, ready to help and assist whomever is in need and to give a word of comfort and encouragement to the people you meet. May God guide and support you every day.

—Marlene Bacchus, Biblical Research Institute,
General Conference

You are a very special woman! You have touched my life and heart several times. One of those times was with your article "The Elephant in the Room" (*Journal*, second quarter, 2010). Your wonderful writing skills, combined with a willingness to open your vulnerable and hurting heart, made a deep impact on me and I'm sure on countless others. Thank you, Sharon. Your many friends love and appreciate you! May you find comfort in the arms of our precious Savior.

—Cindy Tutsch, Ellen G. White Estate, General Conference



When our first child was born severely premature shortly before Christmas, you and Jim invited us to your home for Christmas Day. It was the best and worst Christmas of our lives. The best, as we had our first precious little baby. The worst, as our baby was lying in the neonatal intensive care unit struggling to maintain her heart rhythm and develop her lung capacity so she could be weaned off oxygen, gaining weight ever so slowly. We can't imagine how desolate we would have felt that day without the love, warmth, cheer, and company you and Jim gave us. We hope that one day we can be as kind and caring as you were at our moment of greatest vulnerability.

—James and Leisa Standish, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty, General Conference

You are truly an advocate for ministers' wives and their families. You and Jim poured your hearts out to people—offering them encouragement, friendship, and appreciation for one of the highest and most challenging callings. You are a role model in every way, showing these special women that they can be themselves and aspire to a role that is unique to their own individuality.

—Weslynn Sahly, executive assistant to Dr. Jan Paulsen, former General Conference President

I have been praying for you since Jim's death and since the General Conference Session. I am sure that this has been a difficult experience for you, but take heart: people are praying for you! There are women all around the world who have benefited from and appreciate your ministry.

—Fred Thomas, Mail Room, General Conference

We would like to express our special thanks to you for your love in giving all Shepherdesses in the West Indonesia Union Mission the best example and for sharing many good lessons to be used in the church and field. We will miss you, but your smile and love will stay forever in our hearts. We love you.

—Poppy Lubis, Shepherdess Coordinator, West Indonesia Union Mission, Southern Asia-Pacific Division

Some people effectively minister to just one person, some reach further out to their neighborhoods, others are able to reach even further out in their territories, but you have effectively ministered to the world! Your genuine love, concern, guidance, and especially

your beautiful smile have inspired people around the world. God truly found a dedicated person in you to spread His love, including through your great hugs!

—Sheryl Beck, Ministerial Association, General Conference

I want you to know that I have been truly blessed by your ministry as Shepherdess director. You did a fabulous job! You taught me how to be an effective Shepherdess coordinator. I'm sorry that you are no longer at Shepherdess, but I know that God has a plan for your life. He will bless in whatever He has prepared for you. Please know that the leadership you gave was appreciated and has been passed on to others worldwide. You have been a blessing to us. Thank you, Sharon, for a job well done.

—Patricia Allen, former Union Shepherdess coordinator, Kings House, Jamaica

You have always presented the interests of pastors' spouses and their families with enthusiasm. Your focused ministry in this area has encouraged many throughout the world. In various places you have also encouraged spouses to be directly involved in evangelism, and you have provided financial assistance for such programs. In other places you have assisted spouses in starting small industries to support their families. Congratulations on a very effective work for pastors' spouses and pastoral families. I wish you God's richest blessings.

—Nikolaus Satelmajer, Editor, Ministry Magazine

For many years I have watched you enthusiastically, unselfishly, exuberantly, and joyfully serve the Shepherdesses of our beloved church. You have provided valuable resources for us. You have supported and encouraged us. Whatever you did, you did it with a passion. You are our friend and sister all wrapped into one. Also, you are lots of fun! I remember when you brought lovely bathrobes for the pastors' wives in the Euro-Asia Division. I still have and wear that nice burgundy bathrobe, and whenever I wear it, I think warmly of you. I know that God will continue to use you and will expand your ministry even more.

—May-Ellen Colón, Sabbath School and Personal Ministries, General Conference

You define love, compassion, and strength. You represent character, loyalty, and faith. I'll always remember that in the midst of your tragedy, you reached out to me during my tragedy. That sums you up.

—Ricardo Bacchus, Ministerial Association, General Conference



You have always struck me as someone who really knows Jesus. Your specialty is an extraordinary ability to be practical. You can pick the winner among a wide spectrum of options, and you have the energy and organizational skills to deliver a clear, well-articulated direction. Thank you, Sharon, for setting the pace on the path that leads to heaven.

—Mike Ryan, Vice President, General Conference

One of the blessings of my life was to know and work with you, dear Sharon. As pastors' wives, we have many things in common, and what I admire most in you is the love you put into the Shepherdess ministry. I especially appreciate the motivation you gave to pastors' wives—and especially to me—when you presented the seminar on the wounds others give us. I remember when you came to a North Brazil Union Shepherdess meeting at a hotel by the beach. During our program Sabbath evening, fireworks suddenly began. You were concerned because they were so close—just over our heads! But then it finished, and it was great after all. You are special to me, and you will always be a great inspiration to all the pastors' wives in South America. You are in my heart.

—Evelyn Nagel, former Shepherdess Coordinator, South American Division

I will always be grateful for your cheery demeanor and encouraging words. I am especially thankful because your heart has always been with the families of pastors. When you inquired about my wife's and children's well-being, I knew your query was born of sincerity. I will miss you greatly, but I know God has much more work for you to do.

—Willie E. Hucks II, Ministerial Association, General Conference

It's the gentle touches of thoughtfulness during Annual Council that I will remember you for, Shepherdess Extraordinaire. God cares for you so much—and His love won't miss a single detail! You enjoyed fine-tuning all the details for the ladies, and it was always a pleasure helping you with events.

—Jeanette Jump, Employee Food Service, General Conference

You, and especially your thoughtfulness, have been a great inspiration to me. I will cherish that in my heart forever. I will miss you greatly, but I know in our adversity, God has a great plan for us that will also be a great blessing. We only have to trust in Him.

—Jocelyn Cosme, Treasury, General Conference

The first time I met you was on my first trip traveling with my husband Willie to Indonesia over 10 years ago. I had never been on such a long overseas trip, and I was suffering terribly from jetlag and the shock of being in a foreign country. You immediately recognized that much of my anxiety was due to leaving our young children at home. You offered me encouraging words, were extremely empathetic, and shared some of your own travel experiences. You also made arrangements for us to stay in a hotel that had facilities for us to communicate easily with our children. I was drawn to your genuine, caring, and compassionate manner.

—Elaine Oliver, Associate Director, Family Ministries, General Conference

While working in the Ministerial Association over the past several months, I have come to know and appreciate you. I was impressed with your leadership of Shepherdess International and your skill in producing such a fine *Journal*. I try to read every one. You have exhibited a lot of strength, grace, and perseverance through the untimely loss of your husband and our friend.

—Don Russell, Ministerial Association, General Conference

It has been a long time since I started attending Shepherdess meetings. Then it was mainly a North American service, but today the coordinator is expected to serve the needs of ministers' wives all over the world—a tall order to say the least! These women come from different nationalities, cultures, races, and educational backgrounds, to mention a few. Sharon, with your deep commitment to our Lord and Savior, your calling to the ministry, and your no-nonsense spirit and easy laughter, you have managed to cross boundaries. You have taught us to pray and laugh and to not take ourselves too seriously. In the midst of your own grief, you have managed to make others happy. Thank you, Sharon. Until we meet again, may God hold you safe in the palm of His hand.

—Kari Paulsen, former Shepherdess sponsor, General Conference

The Chinese saying—"Grab the opportunity to give, is a blessed man"—so appropriately describes you, for you have grabbed many opportunities to give generously and bless others around the world field. From giving goats to poor widows to assisting young women with financial scholarships, you have been called a "blessed woman." As you move on to other responsibilities, may the Lord be with you and may He always be your Guide.

—Linda Mei Lin Koh, Children's Ministries, General Conference

Ever since I have known you (and Jim), you took the time to send me a personal Christmas card almost every year; in fact, just last year, you even sent me a Thanksgiving card! This really touched my heart because I don't work in your department, and yet for you to think of me shows how caring and kind you are. You have mentored many pastors' wives, and now you are faced with the challenge of going through life without Jim, but you know your Heavenly Father is *always* with you to be a source of strength and courage.

—Stella Thomas, Adventist Mission, General Conference

Like so many other pastors' wives around the world, my life has been touched by you. You have made me feel loved, special, and of tremendous value. A visit with you always made me feel taller and more capable. You were there for my anointing service. God heard your prayers and those of your dear Jim, and I survived chemo and am doing better each day since that afternoon when we knelt together in the General Conference prayer chapel. I treasure the shawl you gave me then. You always came to the Division Shepherdess meetings with gifts for the wives, and we all looked forward to these tokens of your love, care, and faith in us. You are one of my most treasured friends.

—Dorothy Eaton Watts, retired administrator's wife

You came into my life 31 years ago in the hot Chicago summer of 1979, and you have been a friend, mentor, and role model ever since. During the many phases of our lives, you have always shown—with grace, class, and humor—how to be a ministry spouse. As a ministry team, Brad and I have tried to emulate “Jim—and—Sharon,” and I aspire to be the Shepherdess that you have been to thousands around the world. Sharon, your name will always be synonymous with Shepherdess International, and when I grow up, I want to be just like you.

—Jennifer Newton, *co-Shepherdess Coordinator, Pacific Union Conference, North American Division*

Sharon, your eyes tell your story—they sparkle and dance with vitality, spontaneity, energy, fun, generosity, kindness, and, above all, the love of God! Thanks for adding that sparkle to our lives!

—Anthony and Debora Kent, *Ministerial Association, General Conference*

Shortly after you and Jim arrived at the General Conference years ago, the three of us enjoyed a lunch together. During that time, you both stopped during our conversation to pray for me and the work performed by Human Resources. I’ve never forgotten the sincerity of the spoken prayer and the collegiality I felt at that time. It was a lovely introduction to the two of you as a special couple.

—Ruth Parish, *Human Resources, General Conference*

Although I haven’t met you, I am very thankful to you and Elder Cress. I’m the first recipient of the James Cress Memorial Scholarship for spouses working with their husbands in ministry. My husband is the senior associate pastor at the Spencerville Church, and I work with him in ministry. Before moving to Maryland two years ago, I was very active in the College Church at Atlantic Union College, where he was senior pastor and I served as associate pastor for seven years. My position here is part-time, so I’m able to enjoy both areas of ministry.

—Jane Morrison, *Human Resources, General Conference*

Sharon, you started out as my boss but quickly became my friend. You have been blessed with a spirit of kindness, and I have been impressed and encouraged by your ability to bring joy into people’s lives. With colleagues, long-time friends, and complete strangers alike, your spontaneous, caring nature always jumps into action through random gifts, affirming words, and sincere support. When you step into a life, you leave it blessed.

—Mary Fowler, *retired GC Shepherdess assistant*

Thank you for being a woman of integrity and courage. Though we will miss your presence here in the office, we know that the Lord has other places for your gifts and ministry to be exercised. Thank you for sharing your smile, encouragement, gifts of hospitality, and caring. As Jim’s spouse and partner in life, you demonstrated the true role of a minister’s wife. You stood with your husband and not before him, beside him and not behind him. You have cheered and comforted so many through the years, and now what you have given is coming back to you, so accept and embrace it all. May God uphold and strengthen you and continue His good works in you as you continue your good work with Him.

—Paula Johnson, *Ministerial Association, General Conference*

You, my beloved friend, played a major role in bringing me back to my heavenly Father. In November 2003, when tragedy struck our family with the loss of our only son in the prime of his youth, we were devastated. I questioned God in grief and pain. I did not want to have anything to do with a God who snatched away my son. Spiritually, I was zero. But from the first week of the tragedy and for one whole year—52 weeks—you sent me a card each week with comforting words from the Bible. I was overwhelmed when I received your cards—even when you fractured your collar bone! To you, my pain was greater than yours. King Solomon wisely said, “A friend loves at all times” and “There is a friend that sticks closer than a brother.” That is so true of you in my life, Sharon. I value and treasure your love and concern for me, my family, and my ministry. As you continue your life’s journey, please know that you are not alone. Our prayers are with you. The Father who sustained me and strengthened me will be with you every step of your way. He will carry you through the rugged path. He will be the balm of Gilead and heal your wounds. He will wipe away your tears. The golden morning, when we will be together with our lost loved ones, is fast approaching. Let us continue to serve Him with that *blessed hope*.

—Hepzibah Kore, *Director, Shepherdess Coordinator, Southern Asia Division*

Thank you for the great contribution you have given to all pastors’ wives during the past 18 years. Your many valuable insights, including the technique of packing clothes with dry-cleaning plastic, will always be remembered. The times we spent together—in the NSD-SSD Shepherdess meeting in Bangkok, women’s meetings during Annual Council, and meals in my condo—will ever be remembered. Here’s hoping that the song “His Eye is on the Sparrow” will inspire us throughout our lives, knowing that He cares for each one of us.

—Kathleen Kuntaraf, *Health Ministries, General Conference*

Thanks for all that you have done in mentoring and encouraging pastors’ spouses around the world. Your tireless service has greatly benefited the church, and only eternity will reveal the full impact of Jim’s and your ministries.

—Bob Lemon, *Treasury, General Conference*

Thank you so much for touching and shaping my ministry in so many ways. Thank you for the magical moments we shared together and for allowing me to learn from you. Thank you for understanding my fears and for praying for me. You are special, and I thank God for you. May God bless you, keep you, and be gracious to you. May God shine His face upon you and give you wings to fly. “The one who blesses others is abundantly blessed” (Proverbs 11:25, *The Message*). My dear friend, thank you for blessing my life.

—Raquel Arrais, *Women’s Ministries, General Conference*

You are a veritable angel. You embody the gentle tenderness of a baby newly born, the undying passion and vitality of the enterprising young, the exquisite warmth and geniality of true womanhood, and the distinctive brilliance of a mentor and teacher *par excellence*. All in all, Sharon, you are a transparent medium of the love of God. You have proven to be more than a conqueror through Jesus Christ. Sharon, you are dearly beloved.

—Peter J. Prime, *Ministerial Association, General Conference*



As the wife of a pastor and as the global director of the Shepherdess program for 18 years until the untimely passing of your husband Jim last November, you have been a woman of great spiritual strength, of undivided loyalty to the ministerial calling of your husband, and of singular commitment to befriend, empower, and embrace thousands of pastoral wives around the world. Side by side you stood with your pastor-husband to give dynamic meaning to the word “Shepherdess.” As director of the Shepherdess program, you crisscrossed the world and worked closely with your colleagues on the international scene in order to empower pastoral wives to discover their special role in the churches they served. It is my daily prayer that the Lord of the lonely will stand by you so that you will continue to enjoy the blessedness of serving the Lord and strengthening the women of the church.

—John Fowler, retired Associate Director, Education Department, General Conference

When I first saw you, I saw a sweet mother-figure filled with deep love and concern. That is the spirit you carried in your job. You not only did your job—you *loved* your job. You have been one of the pioneers in shaping Shepherdess International. Do you know that God has a special crown for such road-builders? Satan has not been pleased with this. His arrows of pain, disappointment, rejection, criticism, loneliness, and even jetlag have always been there. But his masterpiece of leaving you a widow has shaken and shattered you but left you *shining!* Through it all you stood like Job! Praise the Lord! Many Shepherdesses have lost their glitter, their purpose, their mission. But I am glad I know you, Sharon, a model of Shepherdesses for Christ. Your example will always light the way on this rugged Shepherdess road. May God bless and keep you, Sister Sharon. Remember to hold on because joy comes in the morning.

—Winnie Mwakalonge, Shepherdess Coordinator, East-Central Africa Division

You are a daughter of God, and you reflect His grace and love to all with whom you come in contact. I remember a meeting I had with you, and you made me feel not only at home but that I belonged. You are gracious and kind without realizing it, in all circumstances. You mentor and inspire. Without a doubt, this past year has been a hard trial, but even in your grieving, you

have carried yourself well. You have inspired me to seek a closer walk with our Savior, to be a woman who reflects His character at all times, to be a woman who inspires others, and to be a person others want to be around.

—Kathy Sowards, Family Ministries, General Conference

I am thinking of you and praying for you. I will never forget the good times we had when we were both involved with Shepherdess. To this day, I have enjoyed the birthday cards you sent me every year! Your life as a pastor’s wife in team ministry with Elder Cress has been an inspiration to me. I am grateful to know there are people like you who are interested in the affairs of a pastor’s wife like me. Thank you also for your article about your experience of losing your husband. May the Lord sustain you until He comes to unite us with our loved ones.

—Beauty Wakaba, former Shepherdess Coordinator, Southern Africa Union Conference, South Africa

As you turn the page and begin another chapter in your life, I would like to personally thank you again for marvelous moments of mentoring memories. Some of the earliest memories are from the day you sweltered inside PNG’s yellow van to meetings at the South Pacific Division and the release of the *Seasoned with Love* recipe book and the *Seasoned with Laughter* book of short stories. Your presence has brought joy and inspiration to the minds and hearts of Pastoral Partners at Newbold College, who count it a privilege to have benefited from your joint seminars with Jim and from your generous gifts of time and love. In “Private Lives of Public People,” you encouraged us to pursue friendships, reject artificial roles, demonstrate integrity inside and out, accept loss of privacy with God’s grace, dwell on the positives of ministry, and use our own lives as an example. In “Love Affair in the Parsonage,” you reminded us that oneness is important and that love, integrity, and commitment go together with a romantic notion to make a pastoral home. Your days as our Shepherdess coordinator have truly been a blessing. With heart and soul you have tended so lovingly and faithfully to the sheep and lambs of His fold around the world.

—Narisa Currow, Pastoral Partners, Newbold College, United Kingdom

I first got to know you from your articles in the *Journal*, through which I developed a sense of admiration for you. I finally got to see you in person during a Bible conference at Mountain View College, and in 2005, I was privileged to work with you when I was elected as the Shepherdess coordinator for the Southern Asia–Pacific Division. Working with you has been a wonderful learning experience. I found you to be kind, loving, considerate, thoughtful, and understanding—qualities that have made you a good example to all the pastors’ wives in the worldwide church. I have also seen how supportive you were to your husband’s ministry and how loving and caring you were to each other. As a leader and a friend, you are generous and thoughtful. I remember one Annual Council when you prepared a sumptuous dinner for my birthday and invited all the division presidents and their wives to celebrate—you made me feel really special that day. I always looked forward to the spiritual and informative seminars and workshops you organized for the leaders’ wives during Annual Council, and I especially enjoyed the shopping/city tour on the last day. On behalf of the SSD pastors’ wives, thank you for your invaluable leadership and support for our projects, especially in Bangladesh. We want you to know that the *Journal* has been a source of inspiration and strength. Thank you, Sharon, for being so faithful and dedicated to the work of the Lord!

—*Helen Gulfan, Shepherdess Coordinator,
Southern Asia–Pacific Division*

What I appreciate about you is that whatever you do, you do it to the best of your ability. You want to experience life to the fullest. You are always ready to go on an adventure, whether it be climbing the Sydney Harbor Bridge or learning a new computer program. This sometimes made life interesting for you and Jim because Jim would have preferred to sit down with friends or read a book than to risk his life going five feet off the ground. I remember Jim telling me how he loved your zest for life. I love that about you as well. Sharon, you are always a professional, and you have the most generous heart of anyone I know. Your love for Jesus is exemplified in everything you do. You are a special lady!

—*Cathy Payne, Ministerial Association, General Conference*

For more than 10 years I had the privilege of transporting you to the airport to meet your Shepherdess appointments around the world. Sometimes the Washington Beltway traffic was a challenge, but I enjoyed each trip. Thanks for the memories! Wishing God’s richest blessings for you.

—*Gene Gardner, General Conference airport driver*

When my husband served as ministerial secretary for the Euro–Africa Division from 1995–1997, I was asked to take over the Shepherdess position for this Division. It was always a pleasure for me to meet with you, listening and talking or eating your delicious food. As I have a bachelor’s degree in religion, I felt we had something in common. We shared our thoughts about preaching, and I was interested in hearing you preach. Because there were no opportunities at that time for me to listen to one of your sermons, you gave me one of your sermons to read. This was so special to me. Through it I was very closely connected to your inner thoughts and the hard work you put into a sermon. I appreciated it so much. Thank you, Sharon! It meant a lot to me!

—*Geri Mueller, former Shepherdess Coordinator,
Euro–Africa Division*

Sensitivity, creativity, humility, generosity, and a high level of spirituality—how one person can possess such a combination of virtues baffles me! The many years I have associated with you, Sharon, have revealed the many-sided virtues of a model of Christian womanhood. In addition to your ready, welcoming warmth, I will always remember you for your thoughtful and caring spirit. I have learned many lessons from you, and my wish is that you may continue to enjoy God’s blessings and sustenance. I pray that a chorus of voices of the many pastors’ wives you have ministered to will continually approach the throne of God on your behalf. May the rest of your days be filled with happiness and satisfaction that your work was not in vain.

—*Gloria Trotman, former Shepherdess Coordinator,
Inter–American Division*

I have appreciated your spunk and warmth from the moment we met at the wonderful training seminar you and Jim gave to us young ministerial couples in Northern California decades ago. Then what joy you brought again when visiting us in Russia and later in the Philippines. Your encouragement, strength, and sense of humor have often brought light into my life. I have also appreciated working with you on the *Journal* and seeing the care that you put into it, as well as everything else you do. But I will especially treasure the special memories I have of being in your home not long before the tragic loss of Jim. Sharon, what a unique, special lady you are. May God bless and strengthen you every day.

—*Gina Wahlen, Shepherdess Journal, General Conference*





“EVERY TIME I FIND THE MEANING OF LIFE,
THEY CHANGE IT.—AUTHOR UNKNOWN”

by Rae Lee Cooper

From early childhood we learn to look forward to life’s landmarks, transitions, and changes. With each birthday we celebrate growth and maturity. We excitedly advance into new eras of life which gleam bright with rewards and freedoms: we are old enough to stay up later, to wear high heels, to drive a car! It’s all good until we hit the late teen and adult years. Some of life’s changes may not be so welcome now. Birthdays tend to become just a date on the calendar. Physical changes may now include extra inches on our waistlines instead of to our height. We’ve traded late-night parties for early-to-bed routines in order to maintain energy for busy careers and demanding family obligations.

event occurs. A death in the family, a distressing medical diagnosis, the loss of a job or financial security, an injurious accident, divorce—any of these events can stop us in our tracks.

People are pattern-makers. In general, we are more comfortable with routine than with change. Do you usually sit in the same pew—and in the same place on that pew—every Sabbath? How does it affect you when you enter the sanctuary on Sabbath morning and find someone else sitting in “your” spot? Do you feel confused? A little disoriented? Maybe a bit indignant? Once a pattern is established, our left-brains are quite content to keep marching along that path. We like predictability.

“CHANGE IS INEVITABLE –
EXCEPT FROM A VENDING MACHINE.”

Robert C. Gallagher

“IF NOTHING EVER CHANGED,
THERE’D BE NO BUTTERFLIES.”

Author unknown

There’s no denying that change is a part of life. It’s endless and constant. Change is sometimes welcome: a promotion at work, a new baby in the family, or a new outfit that really works. Change may also be something we just have to accept. Yes, we may protest over hair loss, fuss about creeping extra pounds, and resist with much whining those menopausal symptoms, but that’s nothing compared to the effects on us when a catastrophic, sudden, and life-changing

Scientific, technological, cultural, and social changes are taking place at such breathtaking speed that no one can really keep up with it all. Yesterday’s revolutionary new product becomes commonplace today and will be outdated tomorrow. People constantly need to revise their skills to adapt to changing circumstances. Governments, organizations, and businesses are affected by the fast-paced times in which we live. For better or for worse, the effects



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trickle down to families and ultimately to individuals—you and me.

“IF YOU’RE IN A BAD SITUATION, DON’T WORRY; IT’LL CHANGE.
IF YOU’RE IN A GOOD SITUATION, DON’T WORRY; IT’LL CHANGE.”
John A. Simone, Sr.

The changes we are experiencing today are significantly more than the changes our forefathers had to embrace. And yet the reality is that the pace of change today is probably the slowest rate of change we will ever experience!

Without change we might eliminate some of life’s unpleasantness; however, there would be no improvement and no advancement—no beautiful butterfly emerging from a plain, dry chrysalis. There would be no refrigerators. Babies wouldn’t learn to walk and talk. There would be no graduations, no weddings, no new homes, no new jobs, no clean socks, no antibiotics, no airplanes, no new books to read, no conversions, no baptisms, etc., etc.

Virtually nothing stays the same, and all change comes with positive and negative aspects. Even perceived “good” change can create stress and require adjustment. Although that beautiful butterfly can fly freely about, now it must search for food and avoid danger. The new baby, while becoming more mobile, will fall many times. A new job may be welcomed but could require moving to a new location (maybe even to a foreign country), learning new skills, adjusting to a new boss and different co-workers. Any significant change comes with many smaller, related components of change, some that are easy and others that are challenging. The overall experience can create stress, sometimes to the point of physical illness and depression.

“IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO CHANGE.
SURVIVAL IS NOT MANDATORY.”
W. Edwards Deming

So if we can’t avoid change or even dictate the rate and type of changes that will come to us, what *can* we do? The answer lies in our attitude and in our ability to handle or react to change. Possible initial progressive stages resulting from significant change include shock or denial. These natural responses to unexpected events may be difficult to manage. The best way to progress through these stages, once acknowledged, is to feel the emotion these changes may have caused. Emotions can be painful to experience, but the only way to tackle such discomfort in a healthy manner is to let emotions run their course. Generally we can’t change something we don’t like; the only other option is for us to change our attitude toward it. Just as change itself is a process, so is the movement toward accepting it.

Here are a few suggestions that may be helpful:

Remember that you’re not alone. As Christians, we have access to amazing resources and support. First is our God, who has provided many promises of comfort, guidance, and peace to help us through life’s rough spots. Consider these examples:

- “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Ps. 46:1, KJV).
- “Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me” (Ps. 138:7, KJV).
- “The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him” (Nahum 1:7, KJV).
- “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee; he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved” (Ps. 55:22).

Along with these and many other Bible promises, support can also be found in our church family, in close friends and relatives, and in counseling services.

“GOD GRANT ME THE SERENITY TO
ACCEPT THE PEOPLE I CANNOT CHANGE,
THE COURAGE TO CHANGE THE
ONES I CAN, AND THE WISDOM TO KNOW
IT’S ME.”
Author unknown

Seek out the benefits of the changes you are experiencing. If appropriate, think about how you can use these changes to simplify or enhance your life or work. Resist fighting the changes and look for ways to make them work for you. View each situation as an opportunity for growth.

Think things through. Give yourself time. Recognize that adapting to and accepting change doesn't happen all at once. You will need to mentally process all the implications of the change and understand how it will affect you. Make choices thoughtfully. Connect with others. There is nothing like the comfort and counsel of people who have firsthand experience with what you are going through.

Stay positive. It is easy to find fault with changes or to condemn them, especially if these changes are imposed upon you or are beyond your control. The more positive you are, the more quickly you will be able to embrace these changes. Channeling your energy in a positive direction gives you not only a greater sense of empowerment in handling the situation but also greater control over the final outcome of the change.

Take care of yourself. Change often causes mental stress. Stress depletes energy and emotional reserves and can cause health problems—or make health problems worse. Some symptoms of stress may include:

- Anxiety
- Back pain
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Depression
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- High blood pressure
- Trouble sleeping or insomnia
- Problems with relationships
- Shortness of breath
- Upset stomach
- Weight gain or loss

What can you do to manage stress? The first step is to learn to recognize when you are feeling stressed. Early warning signs of stress include tension in your shoulders and neck or clenching your hands into fists. The next step is to choose a way to deal with stress, and this involves changing *how* we deal with it. Some ideas include:

- Not worrying about things you can't control, such as the weather.
- Solving little problems. This can help you gain a feeling of control.

- Preparing to the best of your ability for events you know may be stressful.

- Trying to look at change as a positive challenge, not as a threat.

- Working to resolve conflicts with other people.

- Talking with a trusted friend, family member, or counselor.

- Setting realistic goals at home and at work. Avoid over-scheduling.

- Exercising on a regular basis, which is a healthy way to relieve pent-up energy and tension. Exercise is also known to release feel-good brain chemicals while helping you get in better shape—which will also help you feel good.

- Keeping up with your prayer life and personal devotions—guaranteed sources of strength and encouragement.

- Participating in something you don't find stressful, such as social events, hobbies, or sports.

As you explore and develop ways to accept the changes that come into your life, it is important to view change as a new adventure rather than an upset. Much good can come about as a result of change—new growth, new perspectives, new horizons. Adjusting to and coping with change can have its challenges; however, with a positive attitude and some useful coping skills, change can become less problematic. Above all, remember that God dearly loves His children and has promised to be an abiding presence through *all* of life's experiences.

“Think you not that Christ values those who live wholly for Him? Think you not that He visits those who, like the beloved John in exile, are for His sake in hard and trying places? God will not suffer one of His truehearted workers to be left alone, to struggle against great odds and be overcome. He preserves as a precious jewel everyone whose life is hid with Christ in Him. Of every such one He says: ‘I . . . will make thee as a signet; for I have chosen thee’” (Haggai 2:23; *Help in Daily Living*, Ellen G. White, 30).



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LET'S BE FRIENDS!

by Karen Holford



Pippa finally settled the last child into bed, poured herself a glass of water, and slumped down on the sofa. She felt so alone. Jakob was out again at some church meeting or other; she had lost track of all the board meetings and business meetings and elders' meetings and prayer meetings. Except for the church banquet, they hadn't been out together for at least five months. She was exhausted from looking after the children and managing the chores by herself. She thought back to the time when her mother had come for a week; Pippa and Jakob had booked a table for two at their favorite restaurant, but Jakob had been called to the hospital because Mrs. Landers had been rushed in for emergency heart surgery.

When Pippa married Jakob, they'd been best friends for five years. But since they had moved to this new church district, they'd hardly had any time to talk unless it was in bed when they were both exhausted or while they were trying to feed breakfast to the twins. Jakob played golf once a week with another young pastor; they spent 3-4 hours on the greens every Monday and then had lunch together—networking, they called it. But he hadn't spent three hours doing anything with Pippa except sleeping or driving to camp meeting. Her mind began spiraling through other thoughts. Why doesn't Jakob want to spend time with me? What's wrong with me? Maybe he doesn't love me anymore. Why is everything about the church more important than me and my needs and our marriage? Can I cope with a lifetime of this intense loneliness?

Ministry marriages can easily suffer from friendship-hunger. Regular working hours are often opposite of pastoral working hours. Maybe you have small children who need care and attention, so it's hard to go out alone without paying for a babysitter. The weekend is crammed with activities, meetings, and other events, and even Sabbaths can be packed full of pressure and people who want a piece of the pastor!

FRIENDS AND LOVERS

Being friends with your spouse is not just a contemporary or "Western" idea; it's been happening for thousands of years and across different cultures. In the Song of Songs, the lovers are friends. Their exquisite poetry overflows with descriptions of their friendship. They long to be with each other (Song of Solomon 1:14; 3:1); they openly admire each other (2:9); they tease each other (5:2-6); they play games of hide-and-peek (3:1-4); they enjoy each other's bodies (4:1-5); they spend time in the countryside together (7:11-13); they pick flowers for each other (6:2); they have dinner together (2:4); and they sing and write each other love poetry (read the whole book!).

TAKE A FRIENDSHIP AUDIT

List the activities that each of you have done with your friends in the past month; maybe you shared lunch, played a sport, went shopping, took a walk, watched a film, exercised, sang together, worked on a charity project together, chatted on the phone, wrote a letter, sent a card, made a gift, etc. Then make a list of the non-routine friendship activities you've done

with your spouse in the last month. Compare the list of things you've done with your friends with the list of things you've done with your spouse. Don't be hard on yourselves—or each other—if you haven't written anything on this list! Be delighted about any small thing you've managed to do together, and remember that if you plan just one special friendship time in the next month, you'll have improved 100 percent!

Being friends isn't just about going on dates and spending special time together. Being friends is something that needs to happen every day. A sprinkling of friendship moments throughout the day will help you stay warmly connected, even when your lives are busy.

Friends speak kind and loving words. Send a text message or an email. Make a short phone call. Put a note in your spouse's lunch box. Send a greeting card or love letter. Whisper a special message into your spouse's ear. Say something appreciative and encouraging. Tell your spouse why you're glad you married him/her.

Friends give little gifts. Pick a few wildflowers and arrange them in a vase or jug. Hide a tiny treat in your spouse's bag or place it under his/her pillow. Slip a gift voucher for a favorite store into his wallet or her purse. Buy a magazine he/she enjoys. Borrow a book from the library that he/she would like to read. Driving together? When you stop for gas, buy a bottle of his/her favorite drink or an ice cream to share.

Friends help each other. Do a chore that your partner hates doing or pay someone else to do it. Offer to help with a task for an hour or run an errand that your spouse would normally run. Pick up a prepared meal so your partner doesn't have to cook. Make sure the car has a full tank of gas. Pick up after yourself. Take the children to the park for an hour or two.

GATHERING THE SCRAPS

Peter was a youth pastor, and Lynne worked full-time. Their lives were hectic, and there wasn't much time to be together. Peter was out in the evenings and busy during the weekends when Lynne was free. After a few months, they realized that all their time together was spent trying to sort out chores, bills, household repairs, and other mundane things. And they spent an increasing amount of time arguing or having rushed and inadequate conversations about important things.

One day Peter was preparing a sermon about feeding the 5,000. As he worked on his conclusion, he realized that it was very important to gather up the "scraps." He thought about the scraps of time that he and Lynne had together and decided to make the most

of them. He took a sheet of paper and divided it into four rectangles; he labeled the rectangles "5 minutes," "15 minutes," "30 minutes," and "1 hour." Then he listed different things he could do with Lynne if he had that much time to be with her.

Under the "5 minute" heading were suggestions like: "make her hot chocolate; give her a lingering kiss; share a joke together; send a romantic text message; read her a poem or psalm; tell her how much I love her; share one chocolate." Under "15 minutes" he wrote: "make pancakes for breakfast; let her sit and chat to me while I iron a shirt (or two); write her a letter; ask about her day and listen to her; walk around the garden together; take a photo of her looking beautiful; give her a hand massage." In the "30 minute" rectangle he wrote: "give her a back massage; have a long cuddle and chat about hopes and dreams; take a bath together; read a chapter aloud to her." In the "1 hour" section he wrote: "go for a walk in the park; watch a nature video together; take her out for lunch when she's at work; go to a short concert together; visit a beautiful place nearby; go to a free museum; go cycling; lie on a blanket and look for shooting stars; play a game together."

He showed his list to Lynne, and she added some more ideas. They made a poster and stuck it on the kitchen door. They made the best use of their scraps of time and spent one of the 30-minute sessions each week planning a special date for the following week.

HAVING FUN IS A SERIOUS MATTER!

Friendship deprivation can have serious consequences for ministry couples. Being friends is not just about having fun together. It's not a frivolous waste of time. It is seriously important! It can save your marriage by protecting both of you from the danger of an extramarital affair. It can even save your ministry. If you're having fun together, there's less room for you to feel bored or lonely, and you're less likely to be attracted to other people who make you feel loved, special, and happy.

When we have a warm, caring, and enjoyable relationship with our spouse, it helps to protect us from depression, addictions, and other negative experiences that can harm us and our relationships. Solomon wisely said that "a cheerful heart is good medicine" (Prov. 17:22, KJV). And cheerful hearts are grown when we work on building friendly and supportive relationships with our spouse.

When God created Adam, He said, "It is not good for the man [or woman] to be alone" (Gen. 2:18, NLT). We need each other. When a couple is united spiritually,

sexually, and as friends, they are much more likely to be resilient and able to manage the challenges of life that ministry families often face.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT OR DISCUSS:

- What did we do for fun before we were married?
- How can I spend time doing what my spouse most enjoys?
- What's the most fun we've had as a couple?
- What fun things have we always wanted to try but never had the chance?
- What could we write on our "scraps of time" list?
- How can I help my spouse feel less lonely?
- What can I do each day to be friends with my spouse?
- How does our friendship as a couple protect our marriage, our home, and our ministry?

FRIENDSHIP FUN THAT'S ALMOST FREE

- Register for free email updates or newsletters about events in your area.
- Find the most beautiful walks in your area.
- Go out and share one delicious drink together.
- Buy one pastry and eat it together in the park.
- Walk on a beach together and find a special shell or stone to give to each other.

- Paddle in safe water.
- Watch a sunset and then watch the stars come out.
- Feed each other slices of fresh fruit.
- Find a free concert or listen to rehearsals.
- Do something practical together—plant a garden, cook a meal, refinish a piece of furniture, etc.
- Read to each other.
- Watch a funny movie together.
- Learn how to give each other back, foot, or hand massages.
- Find a way to join in with each other's favorite hobbies.
- Watch each other play sports.
- Go to a zoo together.
- Visit tourist attractions in your local area.



KAREN HOLFORD, a family therapist and freelance writer, is married to Bernie, president of the Scottish Mission. Together they lead out in marriage retreats for ministry couples. They live in the ancient town of Auchtermuchty, and their home is next to fields where the Romans once camped. They have three grown children. For fun they like to walk in the Scottish countryside, sail on the local loch, and share a single chocolate together (affectionately known as The Chocolate Moment).

THE VIEW... FROM THE HOT SEAT

by Sarah K. Asaftei



A few weeks ago, I was sitting on the beach during our family vacation as we spent quality time with some (non-pastor) friends we hadn't seen in years. The men had gone to swim in the waves, and the little ones were happily building castles or eating sand. It was a deeply peaceful moment, full of companionship and comfortably meandering conversation.

And then my friend turned to me and said, "Can I ask you a personal question?"

"Of course."

I could see that she felt awkward. But she also felt the need to sort something out. Apparently, a relative in another state had been talking to a colleague of my husband's from a previous church, and the grapevine

had concocted a fantastical story of why we had left that district.

“Did your husband really have to leave that church because of trouble with the church members?” My friend went on to detail the dramatic saga she had heard. “It doesn’t sound like you, but Mrs. A told us all about it, and she heard it straight from Mrs. B, who was on the staff at your old church, so I wanted to ask you myself.”

It’s never fun when somebody else’s gossip-mongering puts you in the hot seat.

So I told her the real story. To avoid letting any pastors go, our conference had re-districted 40 families last year during the Christmas season. My husband was moved from an associate position to be the senior pastor of two churches. There was no conflict in the church we left behind. There was no drama (besides the craziness of house-hunting and moving six weeks after our son was born).

The tale my friend had been told was pure fiction, the result of tongues wagging from person to person as reality got manufactured through the rumor-mill. If I hadn’t known the source, I’d have been shocked. Even so, it wasn’t a pleasant surprise.

My friend apologized for bringing it up. She asked if I was okay. I assured her that there’s no better university for growing thick skin than the school of life as a pastor’s wife.

And I actually thanked her for asking me about it directly. Many people hear gossip and never bother to find out what is true and what is a lie. It’s rare when someone is honest and transparent enough to ask for the truth. I appreciated her bravery.

But, thick skin or not, no pastor’s wife likes hearing that she is the subject of back-stabbing chatter.

Later, as I shared the (so-false-they-were-almost-hilarious) details of the rumor with my husband, I felt a little sick to my stomach. Not because of the content, but because people I knew personally were spreading lies. Because those same people had smiled at me and hugged me and feigned interest in how I was doing.

I felt betrayed.

Part of me wanted to call and confront them directly. Another part wanted to hide away and make sure I never crossed paths with them again. In my head, I imagined how I might react the next time we met, but not many of my mental pictures were Christlike. My husband and I prayed together and agreed to leave



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twisted version of the story.

So if the opinion polls don’t count, what really matters? There’s only one question left to ask: What does God think of your situation?

It isn’t easy for me to let go of things like this. Ever since childhood, I’ve had a finely-tuned sense of right and wrong, of fairness and injustice. It’s hard for me to let people go on believing a falsehood. I tend to want the truth at any cost. Maybe you’re a little like me. But I’m learning to give things over to God and keep my mouth shut about it. I’m learning that He is big enough to set the record straight when the time is right. And when I’m in the hot seat, I’m learning that there is only one subject I should obsess about: Am I doing *God’s* will? Are my actions blameless according to what *He* has taught me? Have I checked with *Jesus* about my decision? Am I following *His* plan?

If I can answer those questions with a resounding “Yes!” then let the gossips chatter. Let the tongues wag. Let those who are jealous or intimidated or ill-informed have their opinions. They’ll move on to juicier news sooner or later.

Just because gossip puts us in the hot seat doesn’t mean we have to get burned.



SARAH K. ASAFTEI is a pastor’s wife and work-at-home mommy in the southern United States. She grew up a missionary kid; has traveled to 30 countries; developed Bible study resources for the General Conference Office of Adventist Mission; and loves photography, writing, traveling, evangelism, and women’s ministry. In addition to writing for *The Journal*, she authors CLUTCH, a blog for young pastors’ wives.

EURO-ASIA DIVISION

Once a month the ladies in Euro-Asia Division have a “playful breakfast” at the office where they discuss a topic which was chosen ahead of time. Then they pray together. They even choose a color theme for each meeting.



Red means “There where the love reigns.”



Blue stands for “Wisdom of the woman.”



Green stands for “Kindness of the woman.”



Sharon Cress, Galina Stele, and other coordinators carried the traditional bread as they entered the meeting hall.



Ladies in Russia show their beautiful scarves.

NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

Seminary wives at Andrews University welcomed Spring with their third annual retreat. Lynn Ortel, director of Communication and Support Ministry (and also a pastor’s wife!), was the featured speaker; the theme of her presentation was “Through His Eyes.” The ladies enjoyed a weekend of spiritual renewal, fellowship, pampering, and affirmation of their value in God’s sight. This retreat is the highlight of many activities organized to offer seminary spouses a chance to recharge their spirits and become better acquainted with others in the group.



Seminary wives at Andrews University enjoying their retreat, March 5-7, 2010.

MOUNTAIN VIEW CONFERENCE

During camp meeting, the Shepherdess ladies of Mountain View Conference (MVC) enjoyed a lovely evening complete with balloons, colorful table coverings, a scrumptious meal, and entertaining chatter. Elaine Buchanan, MVC Shepherdess President, and Jo’an Boggess, the conference president’s wife, led out in a short but meaningful time together. Besides electing officers

and completing a small survey, the women received lovely and colorful bags filled with goodies and practical gifts. Guest speakers were Clarence and Dianna Schilt, author/lecturers from Washington State, who were also presenters at camp meeting. The Schilts spoke from their hearts, received feedback, and listened to concerns from some wives who were facing difficult situations at home and/or in the church. This event was very encouraging and gave great support to the pastors' wives.



Pastors' wives at the Mountain View Conference Shepherdess luncheon.



Clarence and Diana Schilt, a retired pastoral couple, were guest speakers at the luncheon.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CONFERENCE

In May 2010 Rocky Mountain Shepherdess launched its first e-newsletter. The newsletter is filled with news, prayer and praise, book recommendations, recipes, birthday announcements, and much more. Diane Thurber, Shepherdess sponsor, along with co-sponsor Jerene Nelson, has planned luncheons for the pastors' wives at camp meetings as well as at workers' retreats. They have many ideas for their group, including a Web site and a care coordinator to send out cards.

Shepherdess News
Rocky Mountain Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Spring 2010

RMC Welcomes the Evenson Family
(Aspen Park and Franktown District)

Lisa Evenson, along with her husband, Chris, and their son, Jakob, recently returned to Colorado after spending time at the Seminary at Andrews University. Before that, Chris spent two years as an intern at the Denver South Church. Though Lisa was born in Loma Linda, California, she was raised in Louisville, Colorado. She says, "I'm happy to be back in Colorado!"

Lisa's favorite Bible passage at the moment is Jeremiah 29:11, because she says it reminds her that God has plans for her life when she faces uncertain situations.

The Evensons currently live in Littleton, but are considering a move closer to their Franktown Church in the next six months or so. We invite you to get better acquainted with Lisa and welcome her to the Rocky Mountain Conference. Here is her contact information:

Cell Phone: 269-313-1874
E-mail: LRNHARP@hotmail.com
Address:
8465 S. Holland Way, #202
Littleton, CO 80128

God's Promise to You
For the eyes of the Lord move over all the earth so that He may give strength to those whose whole heart is given to Him.
2 Chronicles 16:9

Inside this issue...

The Goat Project	2
The Joneses Increase	2
Prayer & Praise	2
Bookshelf Treasures	3
Sabbath Joy	3
A Family Adventure	3
Top 10	3
Camp Meeting Luncheons	4
Tasty Treats	4
Dates to Celebrate	4
Shepherdess Officer/Organization News	5
Meet Your New Shepherdess Sponsors	6

Chris and Lisa Evenson, and Jakob

The cover of the first Rocky Mountain Conference Shepherdess e-newsletter.

SOUTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION



Ignes was baptized as a result of her Bible studies with Anneke Wagiran.

BATAM ISLAND

Anneke Wagiran reports that in January 2010, she started an English small group with her friends: Nurhati, secretary of AWR-Asia Pacific, Batam; and Nancy Manik, a pianist at the Teratai SDA Church. Her efforts were supported by Mr. H. G. Sinaga (Personal Ministries Director of the Teratai SDA Church). Anneke first distributed Bible study charts which included 32 Bible study topics. She encouraged church members and non-Adventists to join this small group so they could improve their English skills and enrich their spiritual lives. About 15 people

joined her group; most are church members and a few are non-Adventists. They meet every Monday night at her house. Anneke also does visitation and holds cooking classes for her neighbors—Adventists, Muslims, Catholics, and Protestants. On March 13, 2010, one of the small-group participants—Miss Iignes Andries, a 22-year-old from a non-Adventist family—was baptized.

MANADO, NORTH SULAWESI, INDONESIA

What a treat! Thirty-seven administrators' wives from the hospital, college, and church offices of the Adventist Church in East Indonesia (EIUC) met in March 2010 for a five-day retreat. They gathered at the Hotel Sedona in Manado, North Sulawesi, Indonesia.

Themed "Renewed by God's Love," the retreat was held through the initiative of Mrs. Helen B. Gulfan, director for Shepherdess in the Southern Asia-Pacific Division. Mrs. Sharon Cress, Shepherdess Coordinator for the world church, addressed the topic of "Leaders Living Together." She pointed out that "headship is an assignment while leadership is a gift." She further said that "both husband and wife may be gifted with leadership, but respect and love find their proper places in the home."

An administrator's wife is like a pressure cooker that cooks tough food faster; hence, much is expected from her beyond her usual self. The problem rests on her being less appreciated and accepted, which subsequently puts her life at risk. Mrs. Gulfan assured the participants, "Wives, Christ commends you. He provides the strength to make you able to cope with the grind of daily life."

"The wives are often unappreciated," said Dr. Armand Fabella, a clinical psychology professor at the Adventist University of the Philippines and one of the presenters. "But building up self-affirmation

derivable from Jesus' commendation to the seven churches of Revelation buoys your spirit." He further noted that "wives should take the honor and appreciation their husbands receive as theirs as well." This, he added, is the essence of unity in the home.

In one of the sessions, Ms. Poppy Lubis, Shepherdess Coordinator in West Indonesia (WIUM), addressed the topic of family finance. She said that correctly managing one's finances gives joy to the family because it enables money to be used as a powerful instrument to glorify God.

On Friday evening, all participants enjoyed Kiddush, a special Jewish celebration of the Sabbath. Pastor Noldy Sakul, president of EIUC, took on the role of Patriarch and led out in the commemoration.

In Tomohon, Sharon Cress was the speaker for the Sabbath church service. She exhorted the ladies with Jesus' declaration, "I know the plans I have for you . . . plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jer. 29:11).

On Sabbath afternoon, participants were invited to give their testimonies. The women talked about personal experiences that reflected their reactions to calls, assignments, work, and challenges. They prayed for each other as they continue to face the challenges of their role.



Sharon Cress was the keynote speaker at the administrators' wives meetings in East Indonesia.



Administrators' wives met with Sharon Cress for a retreat in March 2010.

SOUTHERN AFRICA INDIAN-OCEAN DIVISION

The Malawi Union Shepherdess club had a blessed time in December 2009 visiting a support group in one of the villages which had only 34 people. The Shepherdesses took Christmas gifts, sang songs, and gave talks on positive living; some talks dealt with the AIDS situation in that area.



Shepherdesses from the Malawi Union visited a small village of 34 people.



Malawi Union Shepherdesses distribute clothes to those in need.

SOUTHERN ASIA DIVISION

SOUTHWEST INDIA UNION

The Shepherdesses in Southwest India Union met in Kanyakumari on January 7-10, 2010. The theme was "In the Footstep of the Samaritan Woman," and Mrs. Hepzibah Kore, SUD Shepherdess Coordinator, led out. The ladies had a wonderful Sabbath with a special Sabbath School program and lesson study, panel discussion, songs, a feature talk, and a mission report. Pastor W. G. Kore spoke on "Witness to Others." That evening the ladies enjoyed a cultural program that included skits, stories, and songs.



On Saturday evening some Shepherdesses put on a skit.



The union director welcomed the Shepherdesses to Kanyakumari.

Margaret Nathaniel from Hosur, India, shared a pictorial report of her work with children in January 2010.



Children in India enjoy learning about Jesus.



Children attending the Children's Bible Hour.

WEST CENTRAL-AFRICA DIVISION

Early in 2010 Angele Nlo Nlo, WAD Shepherdess Coordinator, was the guest speaker for the National Shepherdess Spiritual Retreat in Ghana. Approximately 250 pastors' wives and 30 children attended the meeting.

Mrs. Elsy Lanai, WAD Associate Treasurer, with Angele Nlo Nlo, WAD Shepherdess Coordinator



Sharon

Friendship isn't a big thing – it is a million little things.

Friendship is also a bond pulled together by laughter and tears.

Friends are like rainbows – they brighten up your life.

and you can see the beauty that comes after the rain.

Sharon, a friend is one of the nicest things a person can have.

You have left your footprints in my heart.

*by Marilyn Webster
Shepherdess Coordinator
South Pacific Division*

