

The SEVENTH MEETING

*Come and hear,
all ye that fear
God, and I will
declare what
he hath done for
my soul.*

Psalm 66:16

Elizabeth Sterndale

Lynn Schlisner

Wayne Young

Judy Aitken

Lionel Simmons

Walter C. Thompson

Gordon Bietz

James W. Gilley

Max Church

Russ Potter



HOW MUCH?

By Elizabeth Sterndale

I BEGAN my nursing career early in the 1950s. My father insisted that I buy a car so I wouldn't be standing on the street corner at 11:00 p.m. waiting for a bus. He further insisted that the car must be new because in his view, no woman should have "car trouble" anytime day or night. My father had never owned a new car.

My salary was \$200 a month for a 5½-day week. The car payments were \$100 a month. Tithes, room and board, clothes and other necessities of life left me with no excess. I was barely making it. When my mother persuaded me to drive her someplace, she bought the gas.

I had grown up attending church in a building that was a remodeled row house. Now our congregation had outgrown our building. The leadership called a business meeting to decide what to do. Many people came; but many, too, stayed home. Who would give to a building fund? And how much? The building committee's presentation impressed me. Their report showed considerable faith that we could meet a big challenge. I decided to make a monthly pledge. But how much?

It was the end of November and I remembered that the other nurses at work had told me that we'd probably get the usual annual raise of \$5 at the end of the month.

With this in mind, I wondered how much I should give to the building fund. I already was short on my monthly budget. On the pledge form I wrote \$5. Then I crossed it out. The church had a real need. I wrote \$20 and turned it in to the treasurer. I had pledged \$20 a month for two years.

The next day was payday—the day we would get our annual raise. As I busied myself in the clinic preparing for the patients who would soon begin to arrive, I was followed down the hall by the hospital administrator. She was a nurse whose uniform was starched so stiff I didn't need to turn to see who was behind me. Quietly she invited me into a private cubicle and she spoke very seriously.

"We have appreciated the work you have done this year," she said. "I know that when you go on coffee break today, everyone will be discussing their pay raise. I am asking you not to open your check. That way you will not have to tell how much of a raise you received. We wanted to reward you for your faithfulness." Then she was gone.

Coffee break came and by the administrator's order we had to have the break. It was law. Her law. We all picked up our checks from the office, but I headed for my locker without opening my check. It seemed to burn in my hand, but I didn't open it.

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True to form, when I rejoined the others on break, the topic was all about the raise.

“How much did you get, Liz?”

“I don’t actually know. I just put the check in my locker.”

“Well, don’t bother to look. We got the same old \$5 raise that comes every year. Pity they can’t give us more just once.”

After work, with my check still unopened, I drove my rider to the bus. That helped with my gas money too. She complained all the way about the usual \$5 annual raise.

That Sabbath at church a member of the building committee complimented me on my \$20 per month pledge. She was from a family of means. She said my pledge was a generous donation from someone just starting out. She called it a sacrifice.

“Well, to be honest, I really didn’t give anything,” I said. “You see, between the meeting on Wednesday night and today, I’ve been given a \$20 per month raise.”

God knew on Wednesday night how much of a raise I would get. He knew that \$20 was what I needed to give. Tears came to my eyes as I realized that I almost had pledged only \$5.

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Luke 6:38, NIV.

Elizabeth Sterndale retired in 1996 as director of the office of women’s ministries at the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, Maryland. She lives in Burtonsville, Maryland, and is a member of the Triadelphia Seventh-day Adventist Church.



DEBT-FREE FROM THE DAIRY FARM

By Lynn Schlisner

EVANGELIST Rex D. Edwards made sure that my wife, Lona, and I understood that accepting Jesus meant far more than just saying that we believed. It included being a good steward of our time, talents, and means. As a young couple, owning and operating a 320-acre dairy farm in South Dakota as well as farming an additional 1,200 acres with my brothers, we found that time and money were in short supply. But we took our faith in Jesus into our everyday lives. We did all we could for our little church by giving our time and by faithfully returning our tithes and offerings.

O V E R A N D O V E R A G A I N !

Before long, however, some members of the church family began to affirm our talents in ways that suggested broader use. They encouraged us to consider leaving the farm to pursue a career in full-time ministry. Then the South Dakota Conference president, George W. Liscombe, came to our farm for Sabbath dinner. He, too, suggested we should consider studying for the ministry. Lona and I decided that good stewardship required us to look further into this life-changing possibility.

Two big obstacles stood in our way. First, I had been a dreadful student. I had finished Lake Central High School with a 1.8 grade point average. But a three-year stint in the Army (including a year in Vietnam with the 101st Airborne Division), three years of work on the farm, and my dear wife's patient encouragement brought me to a necessary level of maturity and confidence to handle the academic demands. The second obstacle was the indebtedness we had incurred from starting out in the farming business.

Open now to radically altering the course of our lives, we made this covenant with God: "Over the past 18 months we have made You the center of our lives. If You make it possible for us to leave the farm free of debt, as we believe You would want, we will enter the full-time ministry."

We quickly had a buyer for the farm and equipment when one of my brothers took over the land payments and bought the machinery. This left only our debt to the Farmers Home Administration for our dairy cattle. After seeking counsel, we decided to hold a disbursement auction at the local cattle-sale barn. On the day of the sale we prayed, "Lord, You've said that the cattle on a thousand hills are Yours. We believe this includes these you have entrusted to us. Sell them today, Lord, for a good price."

In the summer of 1973 dairy cattle were selling for about \$400 per head. If we got \$425 each, we would be debt-free. God sold His cattle that day for an average price of \$625 each. He made it possible not only for us to leave for college free of debt but also with our hearts and pockets overflowing.

If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments so as to carry them out, then I shall give you rains in their season, so that the land will yield its produce. . . . You will thus eat your food to the full and live securely in your land. Leviticus 26:3-5, NASB.

Lynn Schlisner is senior pastor of the Madison Campus Seventh-day Adventist Church in Madison, Tennessee.



NEVER ON VACATION

By Wayne Young

HE LOOKED very successful, but apparently my perception was wrong. Mr. Chen* operated a clothing store in the middle of Puli, Taiwan. One day he shared with me his desire to take a two-year vacation away from God.

I wasn't sure that I had heard him correctly. "You want to do what?" He must have caught the surprised tone of my voice.

Without hesitation, Mr. Chen explained that for some 20 years he had been faithful to the Lord, but the Lord had not been faithful to him. He had given his tithes and offerings, but he was still poor.

"So I am going to take a two-year vacation from the Lord and earn a lot of money. Then I will come back to Him!"

In spite of my most careful response and Bible study with him, he held firmly to his decision. His words brought vividly to my mind our own family's experience.

When we left for the mission field, we took with us the usual collection of home appliances and air conditioners. These had been provided to us at half price by a good friend. We didn't expect them to last forever; appliances don't do that. And with the humidity of the subtropics, things don't even hold up the way they do in other parts of the world. Yet the Lord had been so good to us that we prayed and decided that we would like to show our appreciation to Him by returning a fourth of our income to His work.

The results were amazing. No, we didn't get rich suddenly. In fact, we wanted many things that we never received. Our wants were never met, but our needs for each day were. We also experienced the joy of seeing others benefit from what little extra we could give. We were blessed with health and plenty to eat. We were blessed with a closeness to Him that we had never known before.

We also noticed something else. While others at times struggled with worn-out appliances, ours just kept going and going and going! When we moved to Singapore, after 13 years in Taiwan, we sold all of our appliances and air conditioners for the same price we had paid for them. Upon our arrival in Singapore, the funds which we had received from the sale were just enough to purchase new appliances that would meet the electrical needs of our new home.

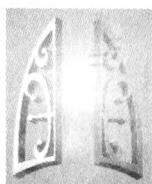
We are thankful that, although sometimes we may take vacations away from God, He never takes a vacation! Why would anyone want to take a vacation from Him?

And Mr. Chen? We're still praying that someday he will return from his vacation.

*The name has been changed.

Yet there is one ray of hope: his compassion never ends. It is only the Lord's mercies that have kept us from complete destruction. Great is his faithfulness; his lovingkindness begins afresh each day. My soul claims the Lord as my inheritance; therefore I will hope in him. Lamentations 3:21-24, TLB.

Wayne Young is senior pastor of the English Oaks Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lodi, California.



LOVEST THOU ME?

By Judy Aitken

AS A young bride in the 1960s I dreamed of raising children in a nice home with a white picket fence. My family was the center of my life. I was the typical intentional Christian who volunteered at Sabbath school and had many Adventist friends, all of whom lived in the neighborhood.

Early one morning a young man knocked at my door. His hands were shaking, and in a faltering voice, he begged, "Can I borrow a cigarette?" In a reserved, yet polite, voice, I told him that no one in my house smoked and that the neighbors were Adventists as well, so he was out of luck.

I conveniently forgot about this man until he knocked at my door a few days later, again requesting a cigarette. "Where do you live?" I asked, attempting to hide my irritation. He told me that he and his girlfriend lived in the duplex behind ours and that in addition to cigarettes, they needed food. I agreed to drive him to the store for food.

After shopping, I helped the young man take groceries into the house. There I met Rosy. I learned about her leg surgery, and the accompanying severe pain, which kept her in a wheelchair. I also learned that the shaking of her boyfriend's hand I had observed in our first encounter was caused by multiple sclerosis.

"Tell me about you Adventist people," Rosy asked. This began a long chat about Christ's deep love for her and how He cares about pain, suffering, and despair. As I prepared to leave, Rosy said, "I want to know Jesus." I promised to stop by again.

The days slipped by, but a thousand little details of life kept me from visiting the duplex behind ours. "There's always tomorrow," I told myself. Besides, I hated cigarette smoke.

One morning as I prepared breakfast I noticed an ambulance in Rosy's driveway. I ran across the lawn to find out what was wrong. The boyfriend told me that Rosy had overdosed on sleeping pills and liquor.

I returned home and mechanically went through the day. Repeatedly, I thought, *Lord, You impressed me to go. I didn't listen.* As this whirled through my

head a song on the radio focused on the love of earthly matters. One stanza asked, “Lovest thou Me more than these, My child?” I knew I had placed the comforts of life above the prompting of my conscience. I promised to make my walk with Christ one that would involve acting on His prompting.

That promise soon threw my whole family into a world of service. Soon after Rosy’s death I found Adam—a blind man living in terrible conditions. My children and I tackled the daunting task of cleaning his house, and then we made him food. This was the beginning of a lifelong journey in response to the Lord’s prompting.

Soon I started volunteering for Reach International, a service for orphans. Months later I worked on the opposite side of the world as a nurse in a refugee camp along the border of Thailand and Cambodia. I ate rice every day, worked long hours in blazing, tropical heat. I wrapped legs that had been shredded from land mines, and I fed malnourished children. The journey hasn’t been easy, and it kept my family overseas for 13 years in conditions that make the smoky duplex I once avoided seem desirable. But I have experienced joys far greater than I imagined possible. This happiness comes from following Christ’s prompting and bringing the Lord to those who don’t know Him.

Occasionally I feel a hesitation to respond to an undesirable prompting. At such times I am reminded of Rosy and also of Christ’s words, “Lovest thou me?”

He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. John 21:17.

Judy Aitken is a registered nurse and director of Southeast Asia Projects in Berrien Springs, Michigan. She is a member of Pioneer Memorial Church in Berrien Springs.



THE LORD WILL PROVIDE

By Lionel Simmons

I HAVE found that whenever I put my trust in the Lord’s promises and am determined to live my life according to His principles, no matter what, He always provides for my needs. Further, He often blesses me beyond what I could have ever imagined.

My wife and I had recently become Seventh-day Adventists. We already had been tithing faithfully for more than seven years. Now, determined to be a faithful Sabbathkeeper also, I was prepared and fully expected to lose my job as a service manager at an auto dealership. In fact, I was ready to resign, but my pastor

encouraged me at least to talk to my boss about my convictions.

To my surprise, the Lord intervened and allowed me to keep my job for another year. While I was there, one of the men who worked under me began asking about my convictions regarding Sabbath observance. Eventually I began giving him Bible studies, and he was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

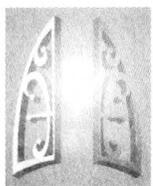
My employment at the auto dealership came to an end when my boss asked me to participate in an unethical business practice. When I declined, I was dismissed. Amazingly enough, I immediately found another job where I had Sabbaths off.

Not long after this I moved to Chicago and enrolled at an electronics school to learn radio and TV repair. I wanted to start my own business. Of course, I had to work to pay the school bill and support my wife and family; times were tough. I vividly remember the day we realized that, after returning our tithe, we had only two dollars left until the next week's paycheck. Not only did we make it through that week, but we were always able to pay our bills and have food on the table.

Within a few years the Lord had helped me to establish the largest electronics and appliance dealership in our area. This amazed my competitors, since I was closed every Sabbath, which normally was the best day for sales. After five years in my own business, my weekly tithe was now greater than my weekly salary had been when I was working at the auto dealership.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Matthew 6:33.

Lionel Simmons is a retired businessman and member of the Summerville, South Carolina, Community Seventh-day Adventist Church.



HAPPENSTANCE?

By Walter C. Thompson

BLOOD flowed and then slowly ebbed as my knife cut through the corpulent abdominal wall exposing a belly full of foul-smelling pus and feculent contents.

Don had been tending his oil wells in Texas when he became ill. Choosing to return to his home in the Chicago area, he arrived in our emergency department more than 24 hours later, now acutely ill. After my brief initial assessment we hurried him to the operating room, where I discovered a perforated diverticulum of the sigmoid colon. We performed a hasty resection of the diseased area, sutured the ends of the bowel back together, and washed the abdominal cavity with copious amounts of sterile saline solution.

T H E S E V E N T H M E E T I N G

That was how Don and I first got acquainted. Four days later he went home from the hospital and on to a rapid and full recovery. He was elated.

A few months later I saw Don again. This time the problem was different. He couldn't swallow. My diagnosis was that he had cancer of the esophagus. I outlined a treatment strategy. Don didn't do well this time.

Often during those last days of his life we shared our values, our hopes, and dreams. Don was a corporate attorney. Oil was only his sideline. Knowing this, I asked him about my view that it ought to be legitimate and possible to set my surgical practice up as a tax exempt, not for profit, 501 (c) 3 corporation. Such an arrangement would facilitate and broaden my opportunities to accomplish my lifelong objective of proclaiming the three angels' messages to the world. I had spoken with numerous attorneys before, and they all gave me a "thumbs down" response. Not Don! "Why, of course you can!" was his ready response. "I'll help you do it."

Don never got well enough to do the job, but before he died he introduced me to a law partner who promised to work it all out. Many months and several appeals to the IRS later, the documents were all signed and sealed. Now I had a better way to use my professional life to share the blessings of God more effectively with the world around me.

Perhaps it was only happenstance that I was the doctor on call the night Don first came into the hospital. Maybe I was only "lucky" that he did so well after such a potentially complicated first illness. Could it be that his terminal illness was also just a slip of fate? Perhaps it was all pure chance that I met Don and developed a warm doctor-patient relationship so that he was able to see my vision for my work and lay the proper foundation to develop it.

Perhaps. But as I have rehearsed this experience again and again in my mind I have always arrived at the same conclusion: My experience with Don was related somehow to another experience when I was a college freshman at Emmanuel Missionary College (now Andrews University). One night during the fall Week of Prayer the hall monitor came around to our rooms inviting us to contribute to the annual Week of Sacrifice offering. I thought I had nothing to give. I was working my way through school, putting in long hours of piecework at College Wood Products, making drawers.

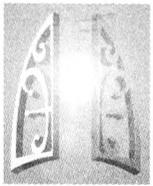
But wait! I did have something to give. My mother had just sacrificed to send me \$5. She had sensed that I might need some cash. Yet I felt good as I placed the \$5 bill in the offering basket. Such blessed foolishness!

But I believe that in that simple act of sacrifice, a template for my life was branded into my soul. From then on, as the Lord led me step by step in stewardship, perhaps He decided that it was worth the trouble to open unusual ways by which I could expand my usefulness for Him—even to arranging my "chance" acquaintance with Don. By God's grace, my impulsive act as a college freshman

ultimately has allowed me to experience the joy of giving again and again, and yet always receiving much more in return.

Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.
Ecclesiastes 11:1.

Walter C. Thompson is a general surgeon in Hinsdale and Chicago, Illinois. He is a member of the Hinsdale Seventh-day Adventist Church.



SAVING TIME?

By Gordon Bietz

WHILE living in Collegedale, Tennessee, I was elected president of the Georgia-Cumberland Conference, headquartered in Calhoun, Georgia. Rather than moving, I chose to endure the 45-mile commute from Collegedale to Calhoun.

I decided to reduce the normal 45 minutes of driving time by increasing my speed. This was easy to rationalize. Wanting to be a “good steward of my time,” I shouldn’t waste a lot of time unproductively on the highway. Figuring that I was a safe driver, I felt I should be able to drive a bit faster than the speed limit. And so I did.

One day I met a police officer who didn’t share my convictions about the importance of my time or my driving skills. He gave me a ticket for my excessive speed and counseled me to slow down.

As I reflected on the event, I calculated what I had actually been able to accomplish by my speeding. It wasn’t impressive. The speed limit for a 30-mile stretch of my commute was 70 miles an hour. Let’s say for the sake of discussion (just for discussion, you understand) that I drove 80 miles an hour instead of 70 miles an hour for those 30 miles. The actual time I would be saving would be five minutes.

Is that really good stewardship of my time? Is saving five minutes worth the stress and danger of the extra speed, to say nothing of the ethical wear-and-tear of blatantly breaking the law?

Do we really save all that much time by driving recklessly? If we look deeply inside our own psyche, we will find that other motivations less noble than “good stewardship” push us to drive too fast. More often than not, it has to do with machismo or poor planning rather than real concern about our use of time.

Stewardship of time isn’t about squeezing “productive” activity into every moment of life; it’s about putting meaningful life into each activity.

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a

thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 2 Peter 3:8, NIV.

Gordon Bietz is president of Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee. He is a member of the Collegedale Seventh-day Adventist Church.



MIRACLE AT P.O. BOX 172

By James W. Gilley

CAMILLE and I were in our junior year at Andrews University and our second year of marriage. Of course, money was very scarce, so we used the “envelope method” for managing our personal budget. Each month we divided up what little cash we had and put it all into envelopes: one for food, one for gasoline, one for rent, and so on.

Now the envelopes were empty.

At this critical, though typical, moment, we received a check from an organization in payment for some advertising specialities that I had sold. After paying the supplier for the cost of the goods sold, I had a profit of \$765. Wow! We were rich.

The first check we wrote was for tithe—\$76.50 to our home church back in Texas, where we were members. We wrote other checks to pay bills, including the biggest one to Andrews University for tuition. The last check to be written was to ourselves for cash to put into those envelopes, so we could pay for rent, food, gas, and other personal expenses. But after tithe and the university bill, we had less than \$10 left. It would be a month or more before any other checks would arrive.

Our earlier elation now turned to depression. I picked up the tithe check for \$76.50 and said to Camille, “I guess we could postpone mailing this one for a few days,” but even as I said it, I was ashamed of myself, and I was proud of my wife when she shook her head and said, “No, we can’t expect God’s blessing if we’re not completely honest with His tithe.”

As I drove the VW down to the post office with bills to be mailed, the devil really began to tempt me with many thoughts: “Do you really think the Lord expects you to tithe when you’re in college having such a hard time? You’re preparing for His service. Why should you tithe now? Just hold that envelope a few more days.”

I got out of the car and went into the post office. The last struggle came as I held that special envelope up to the outgoing mail slot. At last I let it slip away.

I walked over to my little post office Box 172. It contained only one letter, and it was from an old customer who had owed me money for more than a year. I had already written it off. The original amount had been \$75, but along with a copy of

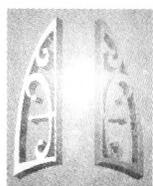
my original invoice was a note apologizing for taking so long to pay and stating that he was voluntarily adding a late charge, bringing the total to \$76.50—the exact amount of tithe I had just mailed. The Lord knew when we would need that money and had it there just at the right time to strengthen our faith.

This would not be our last test on tithe. Sometimes the Lord dramatically rewarded our faith, and sometimes it seemed as if we received no answer at all. But we have learned to trust Him either way.

God honors faith, and faith honors God!

It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear. Isaiah 65:24, NKJV.

James W. Gilley is president of the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Shreveport, Louisiana. He is a member of the Shreveport South Seventh-day Adventist Church.



READY FOR GOD'S TIMETABLE

By Max Church

WE often ask ourselves how, when, and even where we can witness for the Lord, and at what time. We fail to realize that in most cases the Lord has worked out situations even years in advance, giving us an opportunity to tell others about His love. The lesson I have learned from this is that we must be ready at all times. Then, as we see His plan unfold before our very eyes, we stand in wonder.

After my family and I returned from 20 years of mission work in Africa, we came home to put our children through college in the States. But having spent so many years with the “have-nots,” it was hard to live with the “haves.” So after a few years as the director of development at the Andrews University radio station, I felt that God was calling me to work for the people of the poorest country in the western hemisphere, Haiti.

Using my gift of speaking French and my experience in dealing with difficult circumstances, I began by teaching English as a second language. This gave me a chance to witness. Once I was able to organize a trip to Disney World in Florida, for a group of my students. One of those who went was an outstanding student named Maxo Sinal. The students had a fantastic time, as you can imagine. They found many new things that they had never seen before or imagined existed. Of course they wanted to stay, but I made it clear they didn't have the proper papers and made sure they all got home.

Maxo, however, made arrangements to return to Miami a year or so later. We kept in touch with each other for some time. He made wonderful progress and eventually married an American girl. A few years later I was returning to my mis-

sion in Haiti from my home in Berrien Springs. Arriving in Miami, I learned that for some political reason the airport in Port-au-Prince was closed. Not wanting to spend the money to return to Michigan, I decided to wait things out in Miami. I looked in my little pocket address book to see if I could find Maxo, but alas, his phone number was not there.

At that time my son Max and his family were living in Orlando, so I decided to drive up to visit them while I waited for the airport in Haiti to open. At Budget Rent a Car I filled out the usual papers and went to the garage to find the car they had selected for me. As I was searching for my car a voice behind me said, "Can I help you?" There stood Maxo Sinal. We were both deeply impressed that it was more than a mere coincidence. I felt it was God's plan. From that time on I subscribed to *Signs of the Times* for Maxo and his family.

Just before Christmas in 1996 I was on my way to Haiti again. Due to a late plane, I had to stay in a hotel overnight, so I contacted Maxo and invited him and his wife to come visit me. In the course of our conversation I asked Maxo what progress he was making in his spiritual life, and he replied, "I've been reading *Signs* magazine throughout the years, and we are taking Bible studies with a Haitian-American Adventist family."

To think that God Himself had orchestrated all this! Nothing is impossible for God, and time is nothing to Him. God will give us opportunities to witness, and He has already set up the timetable. We only have to accept the opportunities He puts in our path.

The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps. Proverbs 16:9, NASB.

Max Church is president of Eden Mission Outreach, a medical, spiritual, educational, and social ministry in Haiti. He is a member of the Village Seventh-day Adventist Church in Berrien Springs, Michigan.



FROM EXODUS TO CAMP MEETING

By Russ Potter

CAMP meeting's coming to town. Quick! Let's head for the lake!"

For several years that was the story. Our local conference, deeply in debt, had let camp meeting slide as a priority. Once 10 full days, it had faded to just a weekend with a few hundred attendees. But it still cost nearly \$40,000 to run.

Since Gentry was the largest church, our facility had been the site for camp meeting as far back as the oldest members could remember.

Now, however, camp meeting weekend had become a major stress point to local

lay leaders. The extra people made for overcrowded halls, a jam-packed children's division, and overloaded leaders. Add to that a program of very retired speakers, and the result was a mass exodus of local members to nearby Beaver Lake.

Away from the depressing events of camp meeting, we enjoyed the natural beauty while worshiping at the water's edge. This was an experience that at first brought peace, but later only frustration, to those of us who had escaped.

"Why can't camp meeting be this revitalizing?" I wondered aloud. "Why can't our kids grow up as we did, with cherished memories of tents full of singing, baptisms in the creek, family ball games in the afternoon, and new friendships formed over Vegeb主rgers at the snack tent?"

"Why not?" said another. "It still could happen! We have the acreage for several large tents, the creek just below the church for baptisms, everything we need in the way of physical facilities. And we certainly have a church full of talented people who could make it happen if we'd all just work together."

Within a few days our unofficial "camp meeting committee" had formed. Our first-choice speaker had agreed to come. Someone made a \$10,000 start-up donation. Someone else made a commitment to cover whatever expenses might remain at the end of our camp meeting, after offerings.

Best of all, our local church was now working together toward a common goal: giving the gift of an entire, ready-made camp meeting to our local conference!

That was three years ago. Today Ozark Family Camp meeting attracts nearly 3,000 people each June. Hundreds of kids, numerous former members, and scores of nonmembers come together in seven huge tents along the creek. Nearly 200 local volunteers prepare the site, provide security, and donate literally thousands of hours to make it all possible. We've discovered that even in the 1990s camp meeting again can be the blessing that it has been for scores of thousands of Adventists through the years.

And expenses? They are met entirely by offerings taken only on Friday night and Sabbath from those who have been blessed throughout the week.

Here, by the banks of Flint Creek, broken relationships have been mended, rebellious former members rebaptized, and lifetime memories made. And the voices of children laughing and racing past the huge old tents promise that God's family is continuing to grow, because—just as it was for their grandparents years ago—there is no place they would rather be than at camp meeting.

Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed. Proverbs 16:3, NIV.

Russ Potter is founder and president of Concerned Communications in Siloam Springs, Arkansas. He is a member of the Gentry, Arkansas, Seventh-day Adventist Church.