

The FOURTEENTH MEETING

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

Psalm 66:16

Juan R. Rivera

Mark Regazzi

Andre V. Jubert

Edward Motschiedler

Dave Weigley

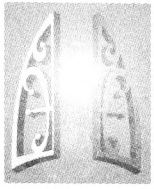
Linda P. Walton

Kermit Netteburg

Hyveth Williams

Norman K. Miles

Cameron Johnston



ONE SMALL BOX AND TWO HUGE ONES

By Juan R. Rivera

IN THE early spring of 1961 my father and mother, along with some of us older children, were baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We received the doctrines of the church with joy and gratefulness for what the Lord had done for my father, who had been spared from a terrible incurable disease.

During the summer my father was invited to work on a farm up north in the state of Oklahoma. With six boys and three girls in our family, the prospect of work was inviting. Our goal was to earn money for our education, clothes, food, and other necessities. Things went well, and we earned enough to justify our venture up north.

After the summer was over, the family decided to stay for the rest of that year and into the next, not knowing how devastating it would be for us. The winter rushed in with cold north winds, rain, and plenty of snow. The fields were soon covered with snow, and we found ourselves in the midst of a miserable winter. Weeks went by, and my father and two of my older brothers worked only one or two days a week, barely enough to place food on the table.

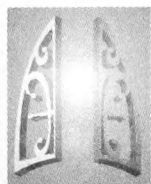
Three weeks before Christmas, work for my father dropped from one or two days a week to zero. My father trusted completely in the Lord's care and protection. We kids, however, had our eyes on a small box where our father kept his tithes and offering that he had saved from the previous summer's work. I remember clearly one night that we children all insisted on using that money for our desperate family needs. Our father, however, gently but firmly declared that this money was sacred. God had another purpose for it. We were not very happy with our father's decision, and we all went to bed with half-empty stomachs. Our father stayed up, talking to his Creator. Hardly had we gone to sleep when he woke the family up and asked us to go for a ride. It had snowed earlier, and the moon was so bright that it seemed to turn the night into day.

As we were driving along the road we spotted some sparkling tiny lights. We stopped the car and pointed the car lights in that direction. A raccoon family was busy trying to tear open two huge boxes. As boys like to do, we chased those raccoons all over the field. Tiring of that, we went back to inspect the huge boxes lying along the side of the road.

To our surprise, the two huge boxes were filled with different kinds of frozen food. We jumped up and down, our faces bright with joy and gratefulness, for we knew the Lord had impressed our father to go out in the middle of the night into the countryside, where He had an abundance of food stored up for all of us.

Honour the Lord with thy substance . . . so shall thy barns be filled with plenty.
Proverbs 3:9, 10.

Juan R. Rivera is secretary of the Central California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Clovis, California. He is a member of the Madera, California, Hispanic Seventh-day Adventist Church.



SABBATH DINNER

By Mark Regazzi

I RACED from my freshman comp class at the University of Notre Dame to drop off my books and grab a taxi. That Saturday morning I was going to visit the South Bend Seventh-day Adventist Church for the first time. As a Catholic, I didn't want to explain to the cabby why I was going to an Adventist church, so I told him to drop me off in the 1300 block of E. Altgeld, even though the church was several blocks away.

I signed the guest book and sat in a Sabbath school class taught by the pastor's wife. On the way out of church a woman asked me, "Where are you from?"

"The university," I replied.

She offered to drive me back, since she was going to see her sister anyway. I told her, "No thank you, I'll take the bus back." Only later did I discover that her sister lived near Andrews University, 25 miles from South Bend. Adventists in South Bend apparently assumed that a college student from "the university" had come from Andrews. When I realized the generosity of her offer, I was truly impressed. I attended church there two more weeks, each time signing the guest book with my Notre Dame address.

Apparently someone eventually read the guest register and was mortified at missing a great opportunity to reach out to a Notre Dame student. When I returned to the church three Sabbaths later, I had not walked 10 feet into the church before Ardis Meyer almost knocked me over, rushing to inform me that I would have lunch at her house that day.

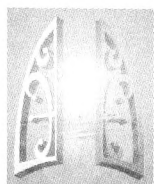
From then until I left Notre Dame I always had an invitation to Sabbath dinner. Members so much expected the Nelsons or Behners to take care of me that anyone wanting to have me to dinner called and asked *their* permission and then *told* me where I was eating that Sabbath.

A year later I was hospitalized in South Bend. My mother came from New Jersey to stay with me. After meeting many of the people from the church who came to see me in the hospital, my mother said, "Now I know why you became an Adventist. It's because those people loved you."

My mother was right.

Practice hospitality. Romans 12:13, NIV.

Mark Regazzi is assistant professor of religion at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. He is a member of Pioneer Memorial Church in Berrien Springs. This story originally appeared in More College Faith (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Worthy Books, 1997).



THE LORD'S BONUSES

By Andre V. Jubert

I FIRST learned the true principles of stewardship through a seminar when I was a member of the Central Seventh-day Adventist Church in Houston, Texas in 1972. I was a Fellow at the M. D. Anderson Cancer Center, and though my salary was adequate to take care of my wife and two young daughters, it by no means allowed for anything extravagant. My heart was touched by what I learned in the seminar, and I determined that those stewardship principles would govern my finances from that time forward.

After completion of my fellowship I was asked to return to Grand Rapids, Michigan, to set up an oncology program at the hospital where I had been a resident in general surgery. Of course we had to buy a house and the usual household furnishings. We met with our banker and accountant, and they both agreed with our budgetary plans. I was counting on working extra in the emergency room until the furniture was paid for in about three years. And so the plan went into effect—the house bought, the furniture delivered. I had been working for about three weeks when hospital administrators told me that my contract didn't allow for any extra work outside of oncology.

What were we going to do? We were counting on that extra income to pay for the furniture.

I met with our banker. He looked again at our budget and suggested that our problem would be solved if we simply cut down on the amount of tithe and offering we gave to the church. I still remember the look on his face when we told him this was not an option. We had made a covenant with the Lord when we earned little, and He had blessed us abundantly over the years. Now that He had given us a much bigger salary, we could not go back on our commitment to Him.

We discussed other options, including returning the furniture. Then I remembered that the hospital contract also included clauses about added income and bonuses based on work performance.

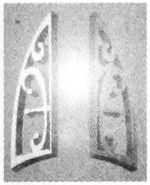
My wife and I presented the problem to the Lord. We decided to prove Him, as He asks us to do. We would be faithful to our commitment to Him and count on Him to provide extra income through our contract with the hospital regarding bonuses.

THE FOURTEENTH MEETING

The Lord certainly blessed, because the furniture was paid for on schedule in three years without any financial hardship.

But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. Isaiah 40:31.

Andre V. Jubert is a surgical oncologist in private practice in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is a member of the Bethel Seventh-day Adventist Church in Grand Rapids.



THE CURTAINS ON A THOUSAND WINDOWS

By Edward Motschiedler

I WAS about to be sent home from college because I didn't have enough material for the curtains.

One memorable day in my senior year I was called into the business office. There I listened to a long lecture about how I should have planned my finances better. I was told that I didn't have enough money to finish the school year, so I would have to leave for home the next day. The business manager pointed to the window curtains and said, "When you make curtains, you need to have enough material. Who would make curtains without first knowing there was enough material to cover the entire window? Your curtains cover only half the window. You started this year knowing you didn't have enough money to finish."

Of course I knew I had started college without enough money to finish the year. That's the way I had started *every* year of college. It had always been an adventure in faith. I believed that since I was preparing for God's service, He would somehow get me through school. During my senior year I worked three jobs and returned tithe on all three meager incomes. I often ate peanut-butter sandwiches in my room to avoid running up a big bill in the cafeteria. I studied hard so I could develop the talents that God had given me. I was doing the best I knew how, but now I had been told that I didn't have enough material "to make curtains," and therefore had to go home.

That night I wrestled with God as I packed to go home. I was doing my part. Why wasn't God doing His? I had been faithful in the stewardship of my money and my talents. I was living frugally, was returning tithe, and was developing my talents to be used in God's work. I brought before God in prayer all the promises of Scripture about how He would answer prayer and reward those who were faithful in returning the tithe. I told God I was waiting for Him to prove Himself

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

as was stated in the tithing promise of Malachi. I told God I wanted to see some material for the curtains, and soon.

The next morning I learned that God owns the curtains on a thousand windows. I stopped by the academic dean's office to say good-bye. He asked why I was leaving. I told him about my conversation in the business office. He laughed about the illustration of the curtains and then said I should unpack and plan on staying. He told me he had a friend who, when asked, would help a student finish his senior year. The dean told me to work on my studies and let him work on my bill.

Later that day I made it a point to stop by the business office to share the good news that God is a wonderful curtain maker.

For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. Psalm 50:10, NKJV.

For all the material in the store is Mine, and the curtains on a thousand windows. Psalm 50:10, Motschiedler paraphrase.

Edward Motschiedler is secretary of the Columbia Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Columbia, Maryland. He is a member of the Mount Vernon Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mount Vernon, Ohio.



GOD SUPPLIES MY EVERY NEED

By Dave Weigley

WHEN I was in college, I spent a summer coordinating a witnessing team in the Southwest. All summer long we'd been ministering and earning scholarships by selling the paperback edition of *Steps to Christ* and other devotional material. With the summer over, our team decided to caravan across the country to our college in the Southeast. We put our luggage in the back of a camper truck and in a large U-Haul trailer that we pulled behind one of the cars.

In Abilene, Texas, the car pulling the U-Haul trailer began to overheat and could no longer pull the trailer. At midnight we stopped in the parking lot of an all-night gas station and waited for the U-Haul shop to open the next morning. We wanted to discuss our options with the U-Haul dealer.

Most all of our summer earnings were in scholarships, so we were very low on cash. We had no idea how we would handle any extra expense. We gathered in a circle in the parking lot and prayed, asking God to provide.

After we'd finished our prayer, I noticed a car pull into the station, so I decided to share with the driver a copy of *Steps to Christ*. As I explained what we'd been doing that summer, he thanked me and gave me a \$5 bill.

THE FOURTEENTH MEETING

I went back to my car and tried to get some sleep. Minutes later one of the other students awoke me, explaining that the man had returned and wanted his \$5 back.

Soon I was sitting in the stranger's car, learning that he wanted not only his money back but also some of my time! He began telling me of his life's journey, including the fact that he was an undertaker by profession—a fact that seemed to fit in perfectly with our nighttime adventure.

"I was in a terrible car accident several years ago," he said. "And that caused me to turn to God for my source of strength. After I heard your story this evening and gave you the money, the Holy Spirit impressed me to come back to you again. I believe that your needs are much greater than a mere \$5 bill." He then wrote a check for \$35 and handed it to me. "I am impressed that God wants you to have this money, because you need it."

When the U-Haul store opened a few hours later, we found that our best solution was to have a temporary bumper hitch put on one of the other cars in our caravan.

"How much will this cost?" we asked.

"Thirty-five dollars."

Years before, my brother had told me, "Dave, when you work for God all summer and you give Him your time, sometimes God sends the greatest blessings near the end of summer just to show you how much He appreciates what you have done."

Philippians 4:19 became real to me that summer.

And my God will meet all your needs. Philippians 4:19, NIV.

Dave Weigley is president of the Washington Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Bothell, Washington. He is a member of the Enumclaw, Washington, Seventh-day Adventist Church.



STEPPING OUT, GETTING IT DONE

By Linda P. Walton

ADVENTIST Community Services was a problem in our church. Few in our congregation wanted to do it, even if everyone wanted it done. We suffered from the usual misconceptions about this type of service. Men wouldn't serve because they thought it only involved processing used clothing. Women wouldn't serve because they were fearful of strangers asking for gas money late at night.

Several years ago I became involved with our county Food and Care Coalition. At the same time I also was serving on our church nominating committee. When the committee began discussing Community Services, we couldn't find a likely

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

volunteer. Finally I decided that the position was very much like my work with the county Food and Care Coalition, so I agreed to do it.

Support came quickly from the church and community. We found some portable closets to store disaster-relief items. Then we held a drive for food, water, blankets, flashlights, medical and personal hygiene supplies, and other items. Our little church became Red Cross accredited and the first certified Adventist Community Center in the Nevada-Utah Conference.

We have assisted in numerous area disaster relief programs, and we have loved and helped many individuals and cooperated closely with community agencies throughout our county.

Several times a year (not just at Christmas and Thanksgiving) we distribute food and supplies to several dozen needy families. Nearly everyone in the church brings something to share. We enlist the help of non-Adventist college students, who gather canned goods and help with distribution.

Recently we had the opportunity of supplying handmade baby quilts and child-rearing books to the Young Mothers' Club in the local public high school. These teenage mothers were grateful for the only donation they had received to date this year.

We decided to hold another rummage sale to raise needed cash for our center. Previously such sales typically raised about \$500 and were considered by the staff to be a big hassle because of the long hours and difficulty in disposing of unsold items. This time the staff arrived to find people waiting for the sale to begin. We sold nearly \$1,500 worth of merchandise, and at day's end nothing was left.

Of course I get discouraged at times as I see the great need in our community. But then I remember that God has promised to supply that need. And I also remember that nothing happens until somebody actually steps out and starts doing something about it. Stewardship often means taking the first step.

You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? Matthew 16:8-10, NIV.

Linda P. Walton is a public relations practitioner and president of The Walton Group, Inc., in American Fork, Utah. She is a member of the Provo, Utah, Seventh-day Adventist Church.



FUN, FRUSTRATION, AND FULFILLMENT

By Kermit Netteburg

THE CHURCH wants to have Water Fun Night every Tuesday this summer. Would you be willing to bring your boat every Tuesday night from 6:00 to 9:00?" The request was deceptively simple.

"Sure. That sounds like fun," I responded.

But every Tuesday about 5:00 p.m., when there was still just a little work I wanted to stay at the office to finish, I regretted that commitment. Some office task was just starting to come together. It was a brochure one week, a proposal another week, a review of photos for advertising yet another time. Water Fun Night was really annoying.

I began to dread Tuesday afternoons. I got tense. I got edgy. As each Tuesday afternoon wore on, so did my patience. I didn't have time to take those kids water skiing or tubing or just boat riding. By 6:00 p.m., when I arrived at the boat dock, my anger, my tenseness, my frustration bubbled barely below the surface.

But I kept the time commitment each week. We would load five or six teens in the boat and leave the dock. Five minutes upriver, we'd attach the tow rope, throw the tube over the side, put wetsuits and life jackets on one or two of the teens, and start the thrill rides.

Around in circles. Creating our own waves. Tossing the tube—and its occupants—into the air. Laughter filled the evening sky, both from the boat and from the tube.

Then it was skiing. I remember the girl who had never skied before. The apprehension that filled her face as she crouched in the water was replaced by ecstasy as she got up and skied behind the boat. When she clambered back into the boat, her face wasn't large enough to contain her grin.

I remember the boy who tried six times to get up—and failed. I remember the pats on the back and the expressions of support when he climbed into the boat, exhausted and discouraged. "You'll make it next time," someone said. "Just rest a little."

And an hour later he did make it.

Something happened in those three hours in the boat. We didn't give Bible studies, didn't even have a *Steps to Christ* along. But young people learned that their church cared about them, learned that God loved them, learned that Jesus gave His life for them. I was ministering to those teenagers.

Something else happened in the boat every Tuesday night. My tension melted. My frustration subsided. Joy returned to my life. The things that were so important at the office faded. Those teenagers ministered to me.

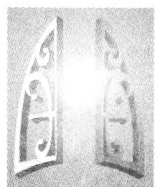
O V E R A N D O V E R A G A I N !

Every Tuesday afternoon that summer I regretted my time commitment to the young people of the church. But every Tuesday evening by 9:00, I was refreshed. I had a new perspective of what was—is—important.

And the next spring when the church asked for volunteers to bring boats to Water Fun Night every Tuesday night, I signed up.

He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. Psalm 1:3, RSV.

Kermit Netteburg is assistant to the president of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, Maryland. He is a member of Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church in Takoma Park, Maryland.



NOT AFRAID OF THE SNOW

By Hyveth Williams

IT WAS a long Sunday. I began working at 2:00 a.m. and by 5:30 p.m. was ready to collapse from exhaustion. Instead of taking time to deal with the loss of my 40-year-old friend, Kevin Budd, who had passed away the day before, I worked. He was a talented steward of music, yet without stopping to relish his legacy or recharge my desperately low emotional and physical batteries, I hastily prepared to leave for a speaking engagement. The telephone interrupted the frenzied pace. It was another emergency. My 48-year-old friend, Karen Lumb, was desperately ill in a Reno, Nevada, hospital. I dropped everything and rushed to her side, arriving minutes after her parents. We were devastated by the poor prognosis.

I've comforted many bereaved members after a death or funeral, but I was not prepared for the process I experienced that week. Karen's struggle with cancer was short-lived but seemed like an eternity as I sat at her bedside that final week.

One morning, after she asked to be taken to her familiar New England surroundings, her physician tersely remarked that she wouldn't make it home alive.

She told us that in spite of his negativity, she had hope. "Do you have hope?" she asked each one of us, pressing for personal assurances.

"Yes," I said, tentatively adding "but I'm prepared to deal with reality." Our body language belied our words. Karen soon realized the "reality" we were anticipating was death, not a miracle of life; yet she never lost faith or hope. She was an excellent steward of relationships. Three days before her death she was still dispatching and receiving E-mails, maximizing every precious moment to touch the lives of family and friends one last time.

I wasn't there that morning when my friend passed away. I had rushed home to comfort the family of Bette Behrends, a former four-star veteran, wife, mother, dedicated volunteer, and friend, who lost her battle with the dreaded disease, cancer. She was a faithful steward of love who spent her last hours reminding her family of our blessed hope in the return of Jesus Christ to put an end to death's unlimited dominion over us.

Proverbs 31:10-31 speaks powerfully to the woman who is a good steward of all her resources. The phrase "she is not afraid of snow" in verse 21 speaks poignantly to this. As I reflected on how fragile our lives and tenuous our existence in the aftermath of losing three special people in ten days, I had to admit that I've been afraid of the snow, both spiritually and existentially. After the Nor'easters and blizzards during the winter of 1996, which dumped over 130 inches of snow on New England, I fled from the East to embrace the uninterrupted warmth of the West. But my three friends, no matter what the winter of their experience, were not afraid of the snow, not even the blizzard of death. They left a rich legacy of how to be honorable stewards of a life lived in Christ in the living years. They showed me how to plow through the snowdrifts of fear, the enemy of faith, which paralyzes. I learned to strengthen my weak knees to escape the avalanches of criticism that so often cripple potential. I want to capture every ray of hope showered from the Son of Righteousness. Are you afraid of the snow?

She opens her hand to the poor, and reaches out her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet. Proverbs 31:20, 21, RSV.

Hyveth Williams is senior pastor of the Campus Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church in Loma Linda, California.



THE VALUE OF A GOOD NAME

By Norman K. Miles

MY MOTHER always taught us that doing good benefited the giver, the receiver, and often the children of the giver. Her philosophy was simple. The children inherit many of the blessings of good deeds done by the parents, just as children often suffer because of the evil deeds done by parents. She taught us that having a good name is important for the entire family.

As I grew older I saw that principle pay off for me, as people who thought highly of my parents were very kind to me. However, I was not aware of how my deeds affected my children until a few years ago.

My eldest son was a junior at Oakwood College. Like many other preacher's

kids, he was not always comfortable with people knowing who his parents were. In his case it was very difficult for him to hide his ancestry, since he is a "junior." Often he said that he would never name a son "Norman," but I chided him and said that he should not be ashamed of such a good name.

He worked for the college transportation department and often would be assigned to drive college guests to and from the airport. One night he called us and related an exciting experience of the day. A female executive of a large corporation had been on campus for a career-day program. My son was charged with taking her to the airport to catch her flight back home.

They struck up a conversation en route, and after discovering where he was from and his major, she asked his name. When he told her he was Norman Miles, her face lit up.

"Is your father a pastor with the same name?"

"Yes," he replied.

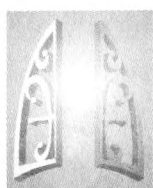
She then recounted a story of a 9-year-old little girl from Harlem at Victory Lake summer camp in Hyde Park, New York, many years before. The little girl was afraid of water, and no one could get her to try learning to swim. She sat on the side of the pool and watched the others until the art instructor noticed and asked her if she would like him to teach her to swim. Reluctantly she agreed to try, and after several days of failure it seemed that she would never learn. Finally, as a result of his coaching and support, she was able to swim the length of the pool by herself.

"Your dad taught me how to swim years ago, and I have never forgotten that," she told my son. At the airport she gave him a crisp \$20 bill as a tip. "That's because your father was so kind to me when I was a little girl."

After my son related the experience to me, I told him that he should split the money with me for giving him such a good name.

A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches. Proverbs 22:1.

Norman K. Miles is president of the Lake Region Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Chicago, Illinois. He is a member of the Hyde Park Seventh-day Adventist Church in Chicago.



TWICE THE PAY FOR HALF THE WORK

By Cameron Johnston

THE bumblebee, biologists tell us, cannot fly. Lacking this important information, bumble bees fly anyway. Financially I got through college the same

THE FOURTEENTH MEETING

way. Higher education is too expensive for someone with no money. But no one told me that, so I went to college and with the Lord's help graduated in four years just as those with money.

Since my first job at age 12, I had always faithfully returned the tithe. Additional offerings, I reasoned, did not apply to poor college students with little income and huge school bills.

In the fall of 1969 I was in my junior year as a theology major at Atlantic Union College. I was working two jobs, one on campus and one off campus.

I don't recall how it started, but the conviction was clear: I should begin returning some offerings from my earnings besides the Lord's tithe. So I did. By January the conviction increased, and I decided to give an additional full tithe. My calculations showed that I would have a \$1,200 shortfall on my school bill by the end of the year. But the Lord promised to bless.

That Friday I prepared my tithes and offerings according to my new plan, and on Sabbath I put it in the offering plate. The following Monday at my off-campus factory job the boss told me I would be let go on Thursday. The plant was closing.

This had been my best-paying job. What was happening? I finished my last shift on Thursday. Friday afternoon, I was at the library when a friend asked me to take him downtown. I agreed, but my car wouldn't start. The battery was dead. (Yes, somehow I had managed to own a car. To this day, only the Lord knows how.)

We located someone who helped us jump-start the car. Just as we were ready to leave, another friend came running from the library, shouting to me with a paper in his hand.

"Cameron, look at this! They're looking for part-time workers for just Saturday and Sunday nights from 11 to 7. Look at what they are paying!" He showed me a newspaper ad from a plastic factory in town, and I could hardly believe what I read! Within the hour both of us were hired for these new jobs and I went to work that Saturday night.

My pay for 16 hours at that new job was double what I earned from my other two jobs by working 35 hours. The job lasted until the end of the school year. I finished the year owing the school only a couple hundred dollars. The Lord had blessed me abundantly.

I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Let me prove it to you! Malachi 3:10, New Living Translation.

Cameron Johnston is owner of Well Choices Seminars and a member of the Son Valley Fellowship Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kelowna, British Columbia.