

D Y N A M I C

Steward

the power to live to submit to abide to give to serve

January-March, 2006

Senior Stewards

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Volume 10 Number 1X



Reunion Reflections



*Claire L. Eva, Assistant Director
General Conference Stewardship Department
Grammie Claire and Megan*

A friend's experience

A few months back, I received my regular Good \$ense e-letter from my good friend, Dick Towner. Dick is the executive director of Good \$ense Ministries. And though he confesses to being 68—at least by my last count!—he is still very much at work and involved in this wonderful ministry. I was impressed with Dick's reflections on his high school reunion and what retirement is to him. And so, with his permission, I share some of what he had to say with you:

"I attended my fiftieth high school reunion several weeks ago. It was an experience filled with many emotions. There was the sobriety associated with seeing the rather significant list of those classmates who had died and hearing of others who were engaged in life threatening illnesses. There was the joy of reconnecting with some folks for the first time in many years. There was the frustration of just beginning to enter into a conversation of some substance with one person and then being interrupted by yet another, 'Dick Towner! How are you?'"

"It was a time of reflection. As I've often said, the fun of getting older is you have more and more to look back upon and see how God's hand was at work in ways that were not clear then but are now.

"One discouraging thing was how many of my peers are now retired and when asked, 'How do you spend your days?' gave answers that were largely void of any meaningful contribution to others. While not wishing to be judgmental, it seemed to be a waste of the experience and expertise that could be applied in so many ways that could be helpful to others."

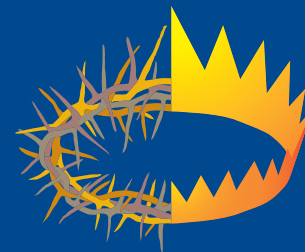
Even retirement!

"It reminded me that *all* of life, including retirement, is about stewardship. Lynn Miller,* a stewardship hero of mine, says it something like this: 'Stewardship is living my life in such a way that God can give me away.' And most certainly that includes the time of life we call retirement—a time that should be characterized by service, not by ease."

This issue of *Dynamic Steward* reflects what Dick describes. Just as Jesus Christ continues to be our Lord in retirement, we too continue as His disciples and partners in stewardship. Several of the articles in this issue have taken a slightly different flavor than our usual sermon articles. Three senior stewards share their stories of retirement, and I am confident you will be blessed in the way these individuals have dedicated their lives to His service. Not only will their stories be examples to us who follow, but to those we serve.

**Lynn Miller has served in a variety of stewardship positions in the Mennonite denomination and the MMA, and is author of two books: Firstfruits Living and The Power of Enough.*

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Exploring partnership with God

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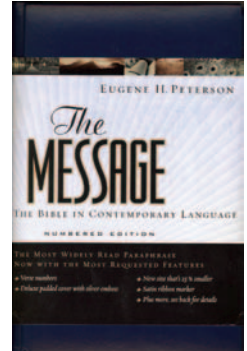
The Message Bible: Numbered Edition

The Message Bible, paraphrased from the original languages, has now been produced to include the most requested features.

These new features include:

- Verse Numbers, an exclusively designed numbering system
- New Portable Size, 25% thinner and half pound lighter
- Deluxe Feel, wrapped in a padded cover with silver emboss
- Study Helps, handcrafted maps and charts that enhance the big picture of Scripture
- Improved Typeset, while maintaining excellent readability
- Satin Ribbon Marker, to more easily keep your place

In our review of the new Message, we are happy to see the new numbering, although it would be nice to see all texts numbered, rather than a span of several verses. In all fairness, we can see how this would be difficult to accomplish, due to the nature of the translation. The typeset is indeed more readable and the margins generous.



by Eugene H. Peterson
NavPress
Colorado Springs, Colorado
2005 US \$34.99

“I am sixty-four, a minister’s daughter who has heard and read the Bible all my life. Now I have just read Luke in a few hours, unable to stop. New insights and tears.”

quotes

On Growing Older ...

He who laughs, lasts.—*Anonymous*

In youth, we learn; in age, we understand.—*Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach*

Do not grow old, no matter how long you live.—*Albert Einstein*

The longer I live, the more beautiful life becomes.—*Frank Lloyd Wright*

Seven Ages of Man: spills, drills, thrills, bills, ills, pills, wills.—*Traditional*

Don’t simply retire from something; have something to retire into.—*Harry Emerson Fosdick*

Live as though Christ died yesterday, rose from the grave today, and is coming back tomorrow.—*Theodore Epp*

We don’t stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.—*George Bernard Shaw*

Twenty years from now, you will be more disappointed by the things you did not do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.—*Mark Twain*

To Serve for Life

*Erika F. Puni, Director
General Conference Stewardship*



Number in the thousands

We see them in airports, hospitals, shopping malls, and other public places, giving volunteer service and support to various government entities and nonprofit organizations. At the Auckland International Airport in New Zealand, for example, they are known as the women and men in blue because of the color of their jackets. They may be staffing the Information Booth, or simply giving directions to visitors and travelers who are looking for a particular office, shop, or transport pick-up area.

These senior stewards number in the thousands anywhere in the world, providing crucial service and help to local authorities and community agencies whose resources are already stretched to the limit. These teams of retirees and seniors save their adopted organizations and beneficiaries thousands, even millions of dollars every year through their dedication and life of service to humanity.

A caring neighbor

In Woongarah, New South Wales, Australia, I know him as John Ball. He is my neighbor, an Anglican Christian, a retired soldier and a caring citizen of our local neighborhood. When John sees weeds such as bindii and clover in my front lawn, he sprays them without hesitation or question. For John, this act of kindness is what neighbors do.

When we are away for a few days or a prolonged period of time, he checks the mailbox for unsolicited advertising and newspapers and takes them away. On numerous occasions when I have been traveling within the South Pacific or abroad, he and his wife Kester have extended invitations to my wife Maxine to stay with them until I returned. John and Kester are good examples of senior stewards, people who understand the principles of giving and looking after people in community.

Mentors and friends

At Cooranbong, Australia, where Avondale College is located, I know him as Pastor Austin Fletcher—retired minister and former theology lecturer at the College. Austin was one of a number of retired pastors whom the Faculty of Theology called to assist with the field education component of the ministerial program offered at Avondale during my time of teaching there.

The primary task assigned to Austin and his retired friends who resided at the local Adventist Retirement Village was mentoring for the first-year theology students. These men did more than what was expected of them. They were mentors, counselors, tutors and friends to the students under their care. They shared their ministerial experience with them; giving generously of their time and resources and opened their homes and hearts in support of these young and upcoming leaders of the church. Austin was truly a senior steward of God's kingdom.

She served others

I knew her in New Zealand as a woman with a heart for the poor and the underprivileged. She is Margaret Jackson from the Cambridge Church, North New Zealand Conference. Margaret had been involved with the church's Community and Welfare Service for many years, known as the "Dorcas Society." She has been a member of the New Zealand Bible Society, teaching Bible in public schools, as well



as a class in floral art. She helps with the Citizen's Advice Bureau, and is a campaigner against alcohol. For five years, she was president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) for New Zealand, and one-time president for the world organization. Margaret is a senior steward working in partnership with God in the use of her gifts—making an effort to make a difference in the lives of people that she meets.

A common thread

So what do these individuals have in common? John, Austin and Margaret all believe in giving of themselves in service to others. Their commitment to doing good in community is part and parcel of their worship and their lifestyle as stewards of God's kingdom on earth. Their love for God results in their love for people. They understand the principles of biblical stewardship that call for men and women everywhere to give fully of themselves as Christ gave His all for us.

These three stewards represent many people in the world who believe that service is for life. And like Joshua, a senior steward and leader of Israel, their lives stand as a witness and challenge to the rest of us that a life of service to others really matters.

John, Austin and Margaret all believe in giving of themselves in service to others. Their love for God results in their love for people. These three stewards represent many people in the world who believe that service is for life.

stewardship window

news from the
director's desk ...

Steps to Discipleship Initiative

The General Conference Stewardship's *Steps to Discipleship* initiative is finally becoming a reality. Dr. Ben Maxson is working with our department to create and pilot this seven-week program in his Paradise, California church. Ben writes to our department:

"The *Steps to Discipleship* program is going very well. God has blessed far beyond my greatest imagination. I had hoped for 150-200 people who would follow the materials and put them to work. To date, we have over 400 copies being used, and people are starting to talk about how their time with God and His Word is already beginning to change them. Praise God!"

Following this initial pilot, the program will go into production in the new year.

It's a Girl!

We are happy to announce that Janae-Grace Puni was born to Erika and Maxine Puni on November 9, 2005!

This is the first child and daughter of the Puni's. The General Conference Stewardship Department staff is looking forward to the Puni's arrival in the near future so that we can help spoil this newest addition to our family!



Conversation with a Senior Servant

Life sketch

Ern Lemke
*Former Church Leader and
 Volunteer Minister
 Brisbane, Australia*



In searching for senior stewards to share their experiences with us in this issue of DS, Erika Puni introduced us to Pastor Ern Lemke. It did not take long to get acquainted. Elder Lemke was so generous of heart and willing to converse with us, despite his other commitments and busy schedule.

Before the interview, we want to share a bit of Ern's life history to give you a fuller picture of this mentor-steward and disciple of Christ. From 1948 to 1952, Ern served as an evangelist and district leader in Papua, New Guinea. For his travel, he had a 45-foot mission launch. After completing evangelistic meetings in December 1952, the Lemke's rose early to leave in the launch for Port Moresby.

Ern says: "When I pressed the starter button to start the ship's engine, there was a tremendous explosion. Tragically, the ship was torn apart, burst into flames and sank. My wife and two older boys were killed. Only our baby son and I were rescued, and we were both severely injured and badly burned by the explosion."

Ern and his infant son recovered in Australia over the next two years. "I served as a pastor-evangelist in Western Australia after that," he told me. "My present wife Val and I married in 1954, and we were called again to mission service in the South Pacific." Elder Lemke served in various positions in New Guinea and the Cook Islands until 1971. Returning to Australia, he worked in administration and lastly served as stewardship director of the South Pacific Division until his retirement.

Interview

DS: Pastor Lemke, how long has it been since you retired? And, if you don't mind my asking, how old are you?

EL: I have been retired now for 20 years, and on my next birthday I will be 84.

DS: How was it for you when you first retired? Did you find the adjustment difficult? Especially in the beginning?

EL: When I retired, I continued to enjoy the fellowship that I found in service, and because of my involvement this way, my adjustment to retirement was not difficult.

DS: During your retirement years, how have you continued partnering with God as His steward? Can you look back and list some of the activities?

EL: Since my retirement, I have served as a volunteer in several capacities. In 1985, I became director of Christian Services for the Blind and Hearing Impaired in the South Pacific Division. Then in 1991, I was involved in stewardship ministry for the South Queensland Conference. From 1995 until now, I have been caring for the spiritual needs of the residents of the Adventist Retirement Village in Brisbane, Australia.

From a mentoring perspective

DS: Have you been able to mentor stewardship leaders in the church since your retirement?

EL: During my years of volunteer service, I have had the wonderful opportunity to mentor other stewardship leaders and members by helping them understand the fundamental principles of Christian stewardship that have so wonderfully blessed my own stewardship ministry through the years.

DS: As a mentor, what is the best advice you could give to leaders in presenting biblical stewardship?

SCRIPTURE:
 Matthew 28:19-21

EL: I believe it is important to understand that Christian stewardship involves so much more than just finance. True stewardship involves the wise and unselfish use of life—all of life—and successful stewardship is only possible when our entire life, body, possessions, abilities and time are committed to God for His guidance.

DS: What would you tell these leaders NOT to do?

EL: In stewardship counseling, do not overemphasize the need or importance of financial giving for the support of God's work. When a person makes a total surrender of his or her life to God, under His guidance and direction, financial giving will take its place in harmony with His will and life will be wonderfully blessed.

DS: What would you say to a senior citizen who asks what he or she can do in partnership with God, at this time of life?

EL: I would counsel seniors to talk with the Lord about their desire to serve Him. And it may be helpful for them to counsel with their pastor. But remember, God does not require more of us than He will make possible for us. Naturally, we become less active in our senior years and may not be able to do all that we once could do, but in a less active way, the Lord will still make it possible for us to serve Him.

DS: What if they have physical limitations or a lack of funds?

EL: These same principles apply. When no other avenues of service are available, we can still serve God very effectively through prayer, remembering, "The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results" (Jm 5:16, NLT).

Looking at personal stewardship

DS: Did you always understand biblical stewardship as you do now?

EL: No. I did not always understand biblical stewardship. I began to understand the importance of what I now believe when I began serving in Papua, New Guinea. The people there had very little in financial possessions, and the only way they could be effective stewards for the Lord was through living lives totally consecrated to Him, trusting Him to bless their efforts to share His love through them.

DS: What is the most important lesson you have learned from God regarding stewardship, and how has this affected your life?

EL: I think the most important lesson I have learned is that God really can be trusted. When Jesus gave the Gospel commission, He said to His disciples, "Wherever you go, make disciples.... Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to do everything I have commanded you." Then He gave that wonderful promise, "Remember that I am with you always, even until the end of time" (Mt 28, GWT).

I believe God's call to ministry has been and still is to make disciples and to teach them about His plan for their lives, so that they may get to know Jesus and want to follow Him. This understanding of Christian stewardship changed my life and enabled me to make the message of salvation known to men and women in ways that otherwise may never have been possible.

DS: Thank you so much for sharing your story with us, Pastor Lemke! It will be an encouragement to our readers as they contemplate retirement and the future.

EL: It has been my pleasure. I must confess that ministry for me has been a wonderful and most rewarding experience, and while there has been devastating tragedy and loss in my life, I thank God for the privilege of having been able to serve Him!

"As a mentor, what is the best advice you could give to leaders in presenting biblical stewardship?"



Evening Splendor

Claire L. Eva, Assistant Director
General Conference Stewardship



Illusion of immortality

A young preschool teacher looked out to her lively class of three and four-year-olds and asked, “How old is the oldest person you know?” An exuberant boy waved his hand in the air and shouted out, “Thirty!”

Age, is a matter of perspective! But we cannot deny reality; growing old has its challenges. Developmentalists tell us that old age is the most difficult stage of life. For as we age, we experience many adjustments. There is the adjustment to retirement and the loss of power, the probable adjustment to limited income, declining health, the loss of family and friends and loneliness.

While some cultures hold the aged in high esteem, others tend to isolate them. Theologian Henri Nouwen implies that our need to push the elderly aside is, in part, due to the illusion that we are immortal. And when we come to terms with our own aging, our mortality, it is then that we can become present with the aged.

Smiling at the urgencies

From the perspective of the one who is growing older, though, “perhaps it is detachment, a gentle ‘letting-go,’ that allows the elderly to break through the illusions of immortality and smile at all the urgencies and emergencies of their past life. When everything is put in its proper place, there is time to greet the true reasons for living” (Henri Nouwen, *Aging*, p. 77).

What are the true reasons for living? Now that is a question! For the Christian, aging, instead of being the way to darkness, may be a journey toward the light. For as His child, I continue to walk with Him as long as life lasts. And walking with Christ is an adventure, no matter what your age! But it is in retirement that you can step back and enjoy the “being” as much as the “doing.” Retirement can be a time of freedom to live and serve as a steward and partner with God, as you have never served before.

“Some believe that life ends at sixty-five. Others believe that is when it begins, and nothing will hold them back. So Michelangelo worked on St. Peter’s Church at age seventy-one and began the Rondanini Pietà when he was nearly ninety. Verdi finished *Falstaff* at the age of eighty. Marc Chagall finished two murals for the Metropolitan Opera House in New York at the age of seventy-seven.... Thomas Edison patented his last invention when he was eighty-one. And at the same age Benjamin Franklin completed the compromise for the adoption of the Constitution of the United States.... And at one-hundred, Grandma Moses illustrated “’Twas the Night before Christmas” (*Graying Gracefully*, p. 16).

With my face to the future

More often than not, though their physical strength is diminishing, we see those who are aging with an increasing spiritual vitality. “Somehow they have discovered and taught us that there is a glory in the morning and the evening, too, has a splendor of its own. It was Sir William Mulock, Chief Justice of Canada, who said on his ninetieth birthday, ‘I am still at work with my face to the future. The shadows of evening lengthen ... but the morning is in my heart. The testimony I bear is this, the best of life is further on, hidden from our eyes beyond the hills of Time’” (Ibid, p. 18).

SCRIPTURE:
Luke 2:36-38

In his poem “Rabbi Ben Ezra,” Robert Browning writes:

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made ...
Youth shows but half; trust God; see all, nor be afraid!

Seniors God chose

There are many scriptural accounts that tell how God filled the lives of the elderly and gave them meaning and purpose. Look at Moses. His call to lead the children of Israel from captivity to the Promised Land came while he was in his eighties. And despite the fact that his personal weakness kept him from completing that task, God blessed him with a glorious entrance into the light of His kingdom (Dt 34).

Abraham was one-hundred, and Sarah not much younger, when Isaac, the son of promise was born. And God chose Zachariah and Elizabeth, who were well along in years, to be the parents of the prophet sent to prepare the way of the Lord—John the Baptist (Lk 1). Simeon, righteous and devout, had received a promise from the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he embraced the Light of the world—the Lord’s Christ. And octogenarian prophetess, Anna, who never left her mission of serving in the temple, was there to give witness to the Redeemer (Lk 2).

Mind and soul

Personally, it is difficult to believe that I have lived six decades and in the next few years will reach that “magical” age of retirement. But preparation for retirement needs to begin long before we reach the threshold of this entry to another phase of life. Not only financial preparation, but the preparation of mind and soul.

When thinking of the years to come—and people are living much longer post-retirement these days—I am reminded of the words of Jesus, “What does it profit a man [or woman] if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” I am convinced these words come from the Holy Spirit to prepare me as I look forward to the blessing of serving Christ during this time. For as long as life lasts, we have His love to share.

Always a ministry

No matter what your situation as a senior steward—whether living in abundance or little, whether you possess physical health or struggle with frailty—there is a ministry for you.

When my husband Will pastored for a few months before we were married and went to seminary, I had the opportunity to visit a Scottish couple he was studying with in Cleveland, Ohio, those forty years ago. Before we left, the wife led us up the winding mahogany staircase to a bedroom where her elderly mother, nearly ninety years old, lay. I don’t remember the words she spoke, but I can remember her sweetness and her lovely smile. Even though she was in the last stages of life, she ministered to me that day, and all these years later, I have never forgotten it.

The evening indeed has a splendor of its own. Though the shadows lengthen, it can still be morning in your heart. For we walk toward the Light and the best is yet to come.

Some people believe that life ends at sixty-five. Others believe that is when it begins, and nothing will hold them back!



To Finish the Race

*Robert Rawson, Retiree and
Former General Conference Treasurer
Surprise, Arizona*



One of my earliest childhood memories was of my mother and father sitting down with me to count out the pennies equal to ten percent of my allowance. From a small boy's perspective, it was sometimes painful to see those pennies set aside for tithe, but how thankful I have been through the years for that early training in financial stewardship principles. I have discovered that small things are important to God.

I love the story in Scripture where Jesus is standing in the temple, watching the rich bring their big offerings and "then a poor widow came and dropped in two pennies. He called his disciples to him and said, 'I assure you, this poor widow has given more than all the others have given. For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she has'" (Mk 12:42-44, NLT).

Following my college years, I was called into service for the church. For the next forty-four years, I, with my family, was abundantly blessed with opportunities to serve in financial administration, in medical, educational, media and conference organizations in many parts of the world. In July 2002, that service ended, and I launched into a new phase of life called retirement.

Not a clue!

I must admit, I did not have a clue as to how to enjoy my retirement years and yet be productive in service to God and my family. Committee meetings, board meetings, consultation sessions, travel responsibilities and daily interaction with colleagues had ended, and now what? Though I have no suggestions for others in this matter, allow me to share my pilgrimage into retirement.

Exhausted from the intensity of administration, I needed some time just to find myself again. I spent that time in extended hours each day in daily devotional experiences and in enjoying some casual reading of biographical and historical books. That time was a wonderful educational and inspirational experience for me.

For the first time in our married life, my wife Carolyn and I are able to be actively involved in our local church. We enjoy exercising and spend time each week in walking, weight training, swimming and golf. We bought a home in a retirement community in Arizona and found ourselves busy getting it furnished and ready for daily living. We have enjoyed entertaining family and friends who come to visit. Trips by car to scenic America were also an added pleasure.

Too comfortable

However, we found we were becoming too content in satisfying our own needs and felt a little like Jonah: "The Lord gave this message to Jonah, son of Amittai: 'Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh! Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are.' But Jonah got up and went in the opposite direction in order to get away from the Lord" (Jo 1:1-3 NLT). We were comfortable. So when God called, we were tempted to turn in another direction. Retirement was wonderful, but was there something else God wanted us to do?

Somewhere down deep, my wife and I felt there must be more to life in retirement than just seeking our own pleasure. What could we do to serve God and bring encouragement and hope to others in need? As we contemplated that question, I received a call from a friend who asked if I would be willing to volunteer with Gospel Outreach—a self-supporting ministry located in Walla Walla, Washington. I had not heard of Gospel Outreach (GO), so I did some research only to discover that the

SCRIPTURE:
2 Timothy 4:6-8

ministry's goal is to provide donated funds for church organizations in the 10-40 Window. These funds are used to employ indigenous workers to minister in the unentered villages in that area. I was assigned territory in southeast India. This assignment requires me to travel there once a year to meet with the Gospel Outreach pioneer missionaries. On these visits, I share devotional messages and assist in training these workers so that they may give more effective leadership in their territories. There are presently over four hundred GO pioneer missionaries in my assigned territory. A challenge to be sure!

On the other hand, Carolyn was impressed to volunteer locally with an organization called Interfaith Community Care. The mission of this organization is to assist elderly people with various needs that will enable them to live at home. Carolyn also helps me in my assignment.

What does this mean?

Jesus gave the following instruction to His eleven disciples in the mountains of Galilee, "I have been given complete authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this; I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mt 28:18-20 NLT).

For several months now, we and another couple have been holding Bible studies in our homes one night a week, inviting neighbors and new friends to join us. As numerous recent disasters have inflicted pain on unsuspecting victims, many around us are asking the question, "What does all this mean, and what is to become of our world?" These times offer us the privilege of sharing the good news that Jesus is coming again soon, and that there is hope for each of us in Him.

Waiting with eager anticipation

God has given us money and we want to be faithful to him in tithes and offerings. And especially as retired workers, He has given us time. We also need to be good stewards of our time. We place our time and resources back into the hands of the One who has given them to us in the first place, and we wait with eager anticipation for Him to show us how He desires to use us in these last days.

We have so much to share and the world is in such need. Current world events are opening doors of opportunities that we must walk through. As senior stewards, we may even have more freedom and opportunity to partner with Christ in reaching out to the world He loves.

An offering to God

I remember Paul's final words to Timothy, "As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God. The time of my death is near. I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness that the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that great day of His return. And the prize is not just for me, but for all who eagerly look forward to His glorious return" (2Tm 4:6-8 NLT).

Until the race is finished and we eagerly receive that prize, may God bless us as we continue to choose to live for Him.

*Somewhere down deep,
my wife and I felt there
must be more to life in
retirement than just
seeking our own pleasure.
What could we do to
serve God and bring
encouragement and hope
to others in need?*



A Passion and a Call

Eric Webster, Retired Worker and Editor, Signs of the Times Cape Town, South Africa



Eric and Ruth Webster have inspired many hearts with the work they have done these long years past the “normal” age of retirement. God has given them a passion to serve Him. This is an account of that passion.—The Editor

In Romans 12:1, Paul says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”

In the challenge to present ourselves as a living sacrifice, more is involved than just the physical body. In the concept of the unity of man, the body would include the mind, the spirit and the soul. It would encompass all that man is in his or her physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects. In offering to God our bodies, it would include our character, our personality, our talents and our abilities.

A “resurrection”

This call to dedication came to me when I first entered the ministry in 1949. But in 1991, as I was contemplating retirement after 43 years of ministry, a fresh call to sacrifice came to me. The call came suddenly and in an unexpected way.

In 1989, the South African *Signs of the Times* ceased to be published. The *Signs* had its beginnings in the 1890s. At that time, a missionary paper was published in South Africa. In 1923, that paper’s name was changed to the *Signs of the Times*. Under that name, it had been a beacon of light for some additional sixty-six years.

So, in 1991, the *Signs* had been silent for almost two years, and a number of voices were calling for its “resurrection.” The conviction came to my heart to try and do something about it. At the time, I was a member of the South African Union Committee and, as such, I tried in different ways to bring the item to discussion. After meeting with several committees, I was given the opportunity to present a proposal to the full Union Committee.

I prepared a dummy of the magazine and presented the whole scheme to the Committee. The members listened attentively and, at the conclusion, voted to grant me permission to restart the *Signs of the Times*. My proposal was to launch the new venture by printing 50,000 copies of one edition.

When I raised the question of finance, the brethren told me that there was no money for this new endeavor. As a result, I asked the Committee for permission to raise the funds and they graciously gave me the “green light.”

Really, Lord?

I went home that day with the challenge of trying to raise R50,000 (rand). I tried for several weeks but made no progress. Then one day, the Lord said to me, “Eric, why don’t you give the money?” I answered, “Lord, you know I don’t have that kind of money!”

But the conviction remained, so I spoke with my wife Ruth about it. As we prayed together, we felt impressed to approach the bank for a mortgage on our home. At that time, we still owed R19,000. However, we arranged with the bank to take a bond on our home for R45,000 and the indebtedness on our home rose to R64,000. But now we had the money to print the *Signs*! Stepping forward in faith, we printed 50,000 copies of that special launch issue in August 1991.

By the end of 1991, I took official retirement and Ruth and I began our journey in the self-supporting enterprise of publishing the *Signs of the Times*. There was a lot of work involved in printing that first batch. I had to arrange bank accounts and realized that I would have to work hard to save money. Only my wife stood by my side to help. We also had to market the 50,000 *Signs* to our churches and post them

SCRIPTURE:
Romans 12:1

I went home that day with the challenge of trying to raise R50,000. I tried for several weeks but made no progress. Then one day the Lord said to me, “Eric, why don’t you give the money?” I answered, “Lord, you know I don’t have that kind of money!”

as well. I had no secretary to assist. We did find a kind woman to do the address labels on her home computer and she has been producing the labels since that time—for the last fourteen years.

Judging from the response, we decided that we would begin by printing a bimonthly issue from Jan/Feb 1992. Since then, we have published a journal every two months. We print 15,000 copies each time, and these are produced in English and Afrikaans. In addition, we have printed a special issue for about eight years. Of the special issues, we print from 20,000 to 30,000 copies, and once printed 48,000 copies of one issue.

As we proceeded with the work in 1992, by the end of the year we discovered that we could repay most of the loan we had taken out. God is good and He has rewarded our faith!

He supplied every need

Over the years, we have seen many evidences of the Lord’s special help. I remember an incident several years back. We had to mail all the *Signs* at the end of the week and I said to my wife, “We only have R1000 in our checking account and we need R6000. I do not know how we will manage.”

The next day a woman called from a thousand miles away and asked, “How are things going?”

“Fine,” I said. She then told me that she wanted to deposit R3000 into our bank account. We were most grateful. The following day another woman phoned and said, “An offering for *Signs* was taken in our Sabbath School class and we did not have money on hand. We would like to deposit R2500 into your bank account.” I had no problem in paying the R6000 postage at the end of the week. God, indeed, is faithful.

Another incident made a deep impression. The *Signs* endeavor now has a budget of R500,000 a year. Recently we ran into a deficit of over R50,000. Just around that time an amount of R79,000 came to us from the estate of a dear woman who had been a keen supporter of the *Signs*. This is the only benefit we have received from an estate and it came right when it was needed!

The passion continues

The *Signs* continues to be our passion. I thank the Lord for my good health at the age of 78. My wife, Ruth, also enjoys excellent health and turns 80 soon.

Every week we have evidences of God’s blessing. Applications for Bible lessons keep coming in and new applications for the *Signs* reach our desk regularly. We are thrilled to see the rich rewards of dedicating ourselves to the Lord. He will use us, as we remain open to His calling.



The New Retirement

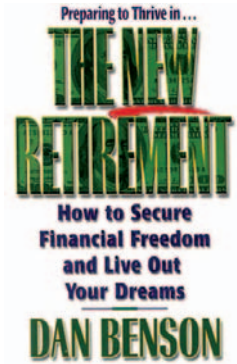
*Reviewed by Jean-Luc Lézeau, Associate Director
General Conference Stewardship Department*

I know, I know! We do not like to talk about it, but it will come. The question is, will you be ready for your retirement?

In major countries in Western Europe, retirement is not much of a concern, since the social security system there takes care of most of the problem.

Dan Benson, however, addresses a problem that most people in the United States have to face. Can I rely only on social security to live on during retirement? The problem is that with today's life expectancy, you may live as long in your retirement as in the years you have worked! Can any system guarantee your income for such a long period of time?

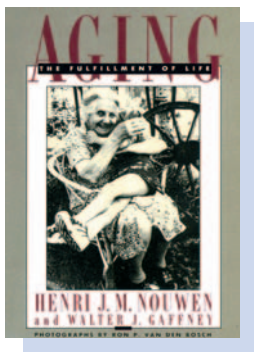
In his book, Dan gives much advice for saving today's money so that it may be placed in a secure investment. One chapter explains all the intricacies of various insurance policies, and for this information alone, his book is worth reading.



by Dan Benson
Word Publishing Group
Nashville, Tennessee
2000 US \$14.95

Aging: The Fulfillment of Life

*Reviewed by Claire L. Eva, Assistant Director
General Conference Stewardship Department*



by Henri J. M. Nouwen and
Walter J. Gaffney
Doubleday Publishing
New York, New York
1976 US \$15.00

Being particularly partial to the writings of the late Henri Nouwen, we were happy to review his 1976 classic work with Walter Gaffney, *Aging: The Fulfillment of Life*. The authors metaphorically describe each of us as a spoke on the great wheel of life—part of the ongoing cycle of growth.

“Aging,” the authors write, “is not a reason for despair, but a basis of hope ... a gradual maturing, not a fate to be undergone but a chance to be embraced”—a way out of darkness into light.

This small volume helps us understand the elderly and reminds us of our responsibility to incorporate the aged into our lives. Especially meaningful is the concept that we ourselves need to be detached from the illusion of immortality in our own lives, in order to present to the elderly. A small downside? The eighty-five photographs of scenes from life and nature that are included are copies and their quality is generally poor.

If you desire to understand your own feelings about aging, and the aged as well, you will find wisdom and insights in this work to help you do just that.

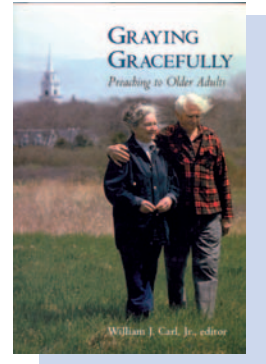
Graying Gracefully

Reviewed by Claire L. Eva, Assistant Director
General Conference Stewardship Department

The book, *Graying Gracefully: Preaching to Older Adults*, is written by seven authors—six from various protestant denominations and one Catholic priest of the Society of Jesus. The work is edited by William J. Carl, Jr., also one of the contributing authors. Each of the eight chapters in the volume contains an article and sermon by an author.

If you are looking for an understanding of the aged and inspiration for shepherding and preaching to the elderly, there is much here that is valuable. Because the book is written from various doctrinal perspectives, the leader who is reading should expect to find doctrinal differences and should keep this in mind.

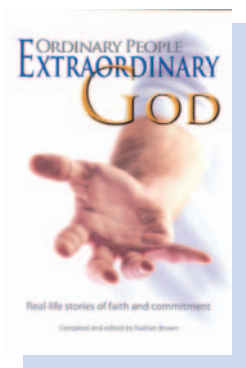
The first two chapters are special favorites, including the article, “The Graying Temple is Here and Now: A Challenge to Preaching” and the sermon, “What’s So Good about Getting Old?” Lastly and specifically of value is the first part of Chapter 2, or the article, “A Long Loving Look at the Real.”



Edited by William J. Carl, Jr.
Westminster John Knox Press
Louisville, Kentucky
1997 US \$16.95

Ordinary People: Extraordinary God

Reviewed by Erika F. Puni, Director
General Conference Stewardship Department



Compiled & edited by Nathan Brown
Signs Publishing Company
Warburton, Victoria, Australia
2005 A\$14.95

Also available through US Adventist
Book Centers: 1-800-765-6955
www.AdventistBookCenter.com

Ordinary People—Extraordinary God, edited by Nathan Brown, is a compilation of faith and commitment testimonies from the South Pacific Division. The common thread that runs through all of these stories is the fact that God is keenly interested in having a relationship with us. He “is willing to engage with the most practical and mundane aspects of our lives” (p. v), and in this sense, He is an Extraordinary God. But the book is also about the believer who chooses “to live life as a follower of Jesus, as a member of the kingdom of God today” (Ibid). This spiritual response and commitment to live under the rulership of Christ daily is what biblical stewardship is all about.

For too long, stewardship has been limited to the realm of church finances and the personal giving of tithes and offerings. But this collection of stories provides the reader with a holistic perspective on the subject that is centered in the person of Jesus Christ and is motivated by love. “Stewardship then is about our love relationship with God, and it is expressed within the context of people in community” (p. ix).

Ordinary People—Extraordinary God is about the journey of fifty-five people like you and me who have had a personal experience with God. And in this book, they tell their stories with warmth, passion, conviction, humility and trust that will touch your heart. It is easy to read and ideal as a devotional, as each reading is accompanied by a Bible verse for meditation and reflection.

Now available on DVD!

A must-have for **pastors** and **elders** and **teachers**

Let God be God— Biblical Stewardship Foundations

is a comprehensive stewardship training seminar geared for pastors, elders and teachers. Biblical stewardship is about the reign of Jesus in our hearts—having a personal encounter and relationship with Him. Presented by Ben Maxson, General Conference Stewardship Director (1994-2004), this seminar provides excellent teaching and preaching material that can be used for small and large group settings. The new paradigm presented in *Let God be God—Biblical Stewardship Foundations* will bring a change in personal perspective and life-changing values that are rooted in the person of Jesus Christ.



3 DVD set (7 hrs 26 min / 18 sessions) is available in NTSC or PAL. Only \$15 USD plus S&H

Student handbooks available. For more information and to order, contact:

Johnetta Barmadia at 301-680-6157 or E-mail: barmadiaj@gc.adventist.org

Order online at www.AdventistStewardship.com or www.AdventSource.com