

# Passport

Third Quarter 2008

*A newsletter for the  
Regional Conference Retirees  
of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*

## Let's Discuss the Money

One of the most difficult subjects to discuss among Seventh-day Adventist Workers is: "Can we or should we have an honest discussion about adequate compensation?" Of all those who do or have worked for the Church, it seems the most legitimate group to have this discussion are retired workers! Retirees can have this discussion because it will not be perceived as self-serving. They have already retired and do not have to feel threatened by church leaders for having an honest discussion about it. Also, since this group is small and removed from mainstream leadership thinking, it may be that very few leaders are concerned about their opinions anyway.

Because this is such a huge topic with many varying opinions, we may need to cover it in two issues. So, let's begin with some definitions to set the stage for the discussion:

- 1. Envy - is defined as the resentful or unhappy feeling of wanting somebody else's success, good fortune, qualities or possessions.**
- 2. Psychology - is defined as the subtle clever actions and words used to influence a person or group.**
- 3. Pathology - is defined as a condition that is a deviation from the normal; the scientific study of the nature, origin, progress and cause of disease.**

One of the most arresting issues The Church in North America may have to face, in view of the rapid upward spiral of the cost of living, is can the current compensation plan for its workers meet their basic financial needs. How steep is the climb for young people entering The Work? Is it reasonable to expect them to adequately **make it financially** in the current economic climate?

There are some historic broad assumptions circulating in this discussion that may not be grounded in fact. 1. Is that our compensation is adequate. 2. All Adventist Workers make the same salary. 3. Among other things beyond salary, the conference pays for housing, telephone, utilities and all educational expenses.

Compensation plans must take into account real world needs. In the church context real world needs must include the spirit of sacrifice for the good of The Work. Included in this topic is the need to properly define success. In the American Nation, it is impossible to ignore the markers of success and it is somewhat less than honest to pretend that they do not matter. *As such, the subject of sacrifice cannot be defined in the same manner as it is defined in other areas of the World Field.* Additionally, *opinions and expectations of status and symbols of success in the Black American Community are unique and must be recognized and acknowledged as differing widely from other communities of the North American Church, especially those in the majority community of our Church in North America.*

Another element of this discussion is the ability and growing difficulty of the North American Church to attract the best and brightest across all disciplines of employment into the service of The Lord: pastors, teachers, attorneys, accountants, administrative assistants, communication and information systems professionals.

Today, well-worn glib statements about sacrifice do not work effectively on those who are considered to be the best and brightest. Consequently, these individuals move on to other fields and when successful make stellar contributions to The Work of The Church. However, their everyday brilliance

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*(Discussing The Money continued)*

is lost to the progress of the work. Could it be that the loss of their **everyday brilliance** is hurting The Work and crippling our progress?

Could it be that ideas about the absence of the best and brightest carry into the attitudes the membership has about the adequacy and effectiveness of church leadership? If so, is it possible that this is negatively impacting the respect for the clergy, other workers and the level of commitment the membership gives to following their leaders? Income makes a statement about professional preparation and



success in your field in the United States. To continually ignore this fact may be working a hardship on our progress and it could be making it more difficult for the dedicated workers we are

blessed with, to be successful in their ministries and in their attempts to lead us.

Generally, Black Americans have a desire to see and imitate symbols of success demonstrated in the lifestyles of their leaders. Being a ward of The Church is not very appealing to the young or old in today's world or church. There is a misperception by some that we earn far more than we do and that all of our other expenses (phone, car, housing, tuition, etc) are cared for by The Conference, plus the salary. When we appear to struggle economically it can signal personal irresponsibility or at the very least, inability to handle the "huge" amount of money The Conferences pay their employees.

In our efforts to minimize the emphasis on money and exalt the emphasis on mission and sacrifice, The Church has determined that there shall not be any great differences in compensation with respect to the areas of service and responsibility we render in "the Lord's work." While that may be good on its face, it does not free us from some negative emotional baggage. In a peculiar way our sacrifice is freighted, however slight and seemingly unnoticeable, with a sense of entitlement - The Conference or the membership should do certain things for us because we are making a huge sacrifice to work for the Lord.

Could it be that this is a reason for our accepting second best in too many instances? Can it be that because of our "sacrifice" in working for The Church we expect the Lord to blind the eyes of our members to glaring inadequacies in our leadership performance, in the buildings we construct or in the courses we offer in our church schools? Does the current thinking of the majority of our membership, if broadly applied to the goods and services we offer, really subscribe to the notion that the "worse Church School is better than the best public school?"

Now let us revisit the early definitions in this article. The nearly universal understanding in our ranks about compensation – we all make the same salary; we are not in it for the money – could in a sense make us overly concerned that no one gets more than they deserve. More importantly can the byproduct of such thinking be an abnormal determination to insure that no one is getting more than I am getting? A determination that no one gets more than I get even if it means I get less is the psychology of envy and in our ranks it may be bordering on the pathological.

*(to be continued)*

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## Hard Questions That Demand an Answer



Recently one of our young Literature Evangelism Leaders, Rene' Barrow, lost his life in a terrible automobile accident. He leaves a grief stricken wife Delicia and a young son Randle to mourn his loss. They are not alone because hundreds of young people whose lives were positively impacted by the Barrow's work with the Summer Maga Book program over the last few years, are among those who also mourn his loss.

All who observed the work of Rene' and Delicia agree that they were special and that a significant portion of a bright future for the Publishing Work in the United States was perhaps wrapped up in them. His loss damaged the team ministry of the Barrow's but it did not destroy the dream. The dream continues in the mind and person of his loving wife Delicia.

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## Regional Conference Retirees

We are pleased to introduce the NEWEST retirees added in the 3rd quarter of 2008:

Lynda Straker	Northeastern	22 years
Paulette Reinhart	Lake Region	1.11 years
Robert Mann	South Central	25.10 years
Patricia Allen	Southeastern	37.3 years
Carolyn Jones	South Atlantic	5 years
Charles Creech	Northeastern	36.4 years
Desmond Francis	Northeastern	33 years
Joseph W. McCoy*	South Central	37.2 years
Moise Charles	Northeastern	23.4 years
Isaias Rojas	Northeastern	15.2 years
Florence Richards	Northeastern	20.10 years



### Retiree(s) Recently Departed:

Clara Reed (NEC) - Hollis, New York  
John Smith (LRC) - Huntsville, Alabama

### *\*The Retirement of Joseph W. McCoy – An Explanation:*

Scanning the list of new retirees is a familiar exercise when the Passport Newsletter arrives. Among the names listed for retirement this Quarter is that of Joseph W. McCoy. Long story short, he is **not** leaving his position as Executive Director of the Regional Conference Retirement Plan. The fact that the Regional Retirement Office **-is not** one of the **Participating Employers** of The Retirement Plan and **is not** an **Officially Recognized SDA Denominational Organization**, he can legally retire from the conferences and hold his position as the Executive Director of the Regional Conference Retirement Plan. This is not unique as it is done in other areas in the Seventh-day Adventist world of employment and retirement.

So the conclusion is: He is still here, on the job and on the case.

### *(Hard Questions continued)*

The strength of their ministry seemed to be the genuine affection and extreme dedication they displayed for the personal spiritual and financial wellbeing of the young people under their charge. The emphasis for them was on getting the “truth-filled literature” into the hands of the people. The money was secondary and it showed. It did not mean they did not give attention to diligence in business but it did not come at the expense of getting the books into the hands of the public.

In the last few years – (20 or more) – the emphasis of the Literature Work seemed to have shifted from spreading to gathering. Instead of emphasizing the spreading of the literature “like the leaves of autumn” it seems we began concentrating on raking in the dollars. It seems we overly professionalized the spreading of those leaves to the benefit of the publishing houses, bookstores and some LE’s and over time systematically excluded the membership in the pews from the spreading process.

Here is the question: If at creation God spoke into existence the world and everything in it except Adam and Eve whom he formed from the dust of the ground and breathed life into them. If when it was time to save us he left Heaven and came to earth stirring up Galilean dust on His sandals, eating and sleeping and working with us. If Christ is a personal Savior and Christianity grows best when carried en masse person to person. And since it is the thinking of many that the Publishing Work as we have known it in the United States in recent times is perishing. ***Then is it time to seriously give bold creative attention to restructuring the Literature Work in these United States? Restructuring that has at its core a membership centered, neighborhood based relationship building “leaves of Autumn” literature distribution program at the heart of this effort?*** Does anyone have an answer? Do you have an answer?



## The Wellness Corner

*Laugh Out Loud (LOL)*

One of the great deterrents to bad health is the renewed emphasis on prevention. The Regional Conference Retirement Plan has a vested interest and an incentive to succeed in prevention. While our Plan is designed well and is adequately funded at this point, it is not a bottomless pit of wealth security.

Our participants can help us stem the tide of escalating healthcare expense by giving attention to the extensive counsel on health coming from the inspired writings of our Church. **“Counsels On Diets and Foods”** is good reading for the health-challenged soul.

As with many of the things the Lord has given to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we may have squandered them by trying not to be too different from the world around us. Recently, logged on to Wellness.Com and found an interesting article by Dr. Arthur Agatston entitled **“Why is America So Fat?”** In his article Dr. Agatston noted that in our efforts to “limit fat we were consuming ever-higher amounts of bad carbohydrates . . . – sugary sweets and refined



starches.” He talked extensively about sugar and dramatic blood sugar swings and how to combat it. He further stated that “the foods that keep blood sugar nice and stable . . . include whole grains, most vegetables, and low-sugar fruits (such as berries) which are digested slowly, making you feel full and satisfied for a longer period of time.”

Does that not sound familiar? Sounds like words and counsel from an oft ignored Messenger to “The Remnant.” Take the time to go to that website and read the rest of that article. Then “come home” to the rest of the things the Lord gave to us long, long ago.



## Pastor vs. Choir



There was a feud between the Pastor and the Choir Director of a church. It seems the first hint of trouble came when the Pastor preached on “Dedicating Yourselves to Service” and the Choir Director chose to sing: I Shall Not Be Moved.

Trying to believe it was a coincidence, the Pastor put the incident behind him. The next Sunday he preached on “Giving.”

Afterwards, the choir squirmed as the director led them in the hymn: Jesus Paid It All.

By this time, the Pastor was losing his temper. Sunday morning attendance swelled as the tension between the two built.

A large crowd showed up the next week to hear his sermon on “The Sin of Gossiping.” Would you believe the Choir Director selected the song: I Love to Tell the Story?

There was no turning back. The following Sunday the Pastor told the Congregation that unless something changed, he was considering resignation. The entire church gasped when the Choir Director led them in: Why Not Tonight?

Truthfully, no one was surprised when the Pastor resigned a week later, explaining that Jesus had led him there and Jesus was leading him away.

The Choir Director could not resist: What a Friend We Have in Jesus.



### Words of Appreciation

From time to time I like to salute Elaine Allston for the work that she does. This Newsletter **The Passport** is her exclusive design. All of the nice graphic art and little design touches that make it pleasant to read are her work. Please let her know that you appreciate her work when you see her or just drop her a note when you have a moment.

Thanks,  
JWM

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