

# CALLED BY GOD

Stories of  
Seventh-day Adventist  
Women Ministers

Josephine Benton

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*Cover photograph from top:*

*Clockwise starting on the left: Minnie Sype, the minister, with three book-selling companions—Gertrude Sype, Georgia Goy and Elleanore Norman.*

*Unknown*

*Ellen G. White preaching at the 1901 General Conference Session in Battle Creek, Michigan. Used by permission of the Review and Herald Publishing Association.*

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# For my parents

Elder and Mrs. A. C. Griffin

from whom I first learned the joys of ministry

## Appreciation

Relatives and friends of the women presented in this book have made the project possible by their letters, tapes, phone calls, and photographs. Some of these helpful people are credited in footnotes. Others, unnamed, I thank you all.

My colleagues at Columbia Union College have given marvelous support: the offices of the Adult Evening Program, the academic dean and admissions, Weiss Library, to mention a few but by no means all. Greg Ingram and David Wright in computer services were kind and effective enablers.

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My family have offered valuable suggestions and have been supportive in every way.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

—Galatians 3:28, RSV



## Opening Thoughts

### “I Knew a Woman Minister”

During June 1973, Elder N. R. Dower and I met in a crowded aisle of the book exhibit at Potomac Conference camp meeting. He was ministerial director of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists; I had just been asked by the Potomac Conference Committee to become an associate pastor at Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church, an action considered to be highly innovative by most people.

“Josephine,” Elder Dower asked me in his genial way, “Did you know that I started in the ministry under a woman?”

I was too nonplussed to ask many questions. I did manage to write down, “Elder Dower interned in the ministry under Jessie Weiss Curtis in Pennsylvania.” Looking at that note afterward, I wondered, “Who was this woman minister? Why have we never heard of her?”

Several months later, as I shook hands with worshippers departing from Sligo Church, a guest grasped my hand warmly and exclaimed, “I knew a woman minister!” She was assuring me that as a woman pastor I was not unique, for her sister-in-law had also been an Adventist minister. She offered to send me the relative’s ministerial license.

Suggesting that the family should keep the original document, I said I would be glad to receive a copy, along with other material that was being offered. Thus I learned more about Jessie Weiss Curtis.

During the 1980s I interviewed several of Mrs. Curtis’ family members and had the privilege of preaching in the church that she raised up in Drums, Pennsylvania. There I visited with several of her converts, friends, and relatives. What I learned about this capable, dedicated, yet humble evangelist thrilled me (*chapter 5*).

The following letter to the editor of *Insight* magazine in 1974, with the heading under which it was published, aroused my interest concerning another woman minister:

#### **A Real Lady Preacher**

I have been interested in the various discussions about women ministers in our denomination. It may interest you that my mother was baptized into the SDA Church back in the early 1900s by an ordained minister, a Mrs. Minnie Sype. I quote from a recent letter of my mother:

"I met Mrs. Sype in Hawarden, Iowa, in 1908. That's when I first heard of the Adventist faith. She was a minister. Her husband did the housework at home and he also led the song services for the tent meetings. She was a powerful speaker as I remember!"...

—Thomas E. Durst, Colville, Washington.  
"A Real Lady Preacher," *Insight* (May 7, 1974): 2-3.

In the *Yearbook* for 1908, the year specifically mentioned, I found Minnie Sype among the ministers of the Iowa Conference. Although she was not ordained, it was significant that she was functioning in 1908 as a licensed minister; moreover, she was not alone, for the Iowa Conference had another female *licensed minister* that year also, Mrs. G. R. Hawkins.

Becoming curious concerning whether women ministers may have been serving in other conferences as well, I leafed through the little 1908 *Yearbook*. I found Mrs. Bertha Jorgensen among the licensed ministers of the North Dakota Conference; in the General Conference, Mrs. E. G. White appears as an ordained minister and Mrs. H. H. Haskell as a licensed minister; Mrs. J. S. Wightman is listed as an ordained minister of the California Conference.

Naturally the question arises, How is it that Mrs. White and Mrs. Wightman are included among the ordained ministers? As much information as I have been able to assemble in answer to this question will be found in the coverage of Ellen White in chapter 7 and Lulu Wightman in chapter 3.

Pleasantly surprised to find six women listed as ministers in 1908, I looked in other *Yearbooks*. I made a list, simply going by names that seemed obviously to be those of women. Later, the General Conference Archives staff enhanced this list, which you will find in Appendix B. It is by no means exhaustive, and a great deal more work could be done in this area.

Like fragments of glass, bits of information have come to me concerning some of these ministers, here a bright scrap and there a colorful piece, gradually forming together into stained glass cameos of women who have been active in ministry over the years but whose history has been largely forgotten.

Several women's ministries are described in some detail in chapters 1-7; brief coverage of additional pioneer women evangelists and pastors is provided in chapter 8. The account is brought to the present in chapter 9 with the briefest mention of a group of living women who are active or retired ministers. Chapter 10 considers a Biblical analogy, and in the conclusion we take a look into the future in light of the past and present.

My purposes in writing are three:

1. I believe that readers will take inspiration for their own lives from the dedication shown by these women ministers in times of challenge, crisis, and rich reward as they have answered their individual calls to ministry.

## Opening Thoughts

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2. For women who today understand themselves to be called to the ministry, these courageous women who have led the way can serve as role models.
3. I hope church leaders and lay members will realize that women ministers are not an innovation of the 1970s in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, but rather have been woven into the warp and woof of our denominational fiber from the earliest years. Although in the minority, they have served with distinction, bringing hundreds, yes, thousands of converts to rejoice in Christ and the church. Today Adventist women ministers continue this tradition.





I had not been long in Montana before Elder Watt commenced urging me to speak to the people. Both he and Mr. Williams were very much pleased with my first effort.

—Helen Williams, 1922



## Urged to Preach

Helen Williams: 1868 to 1940

*Licensed minister 1897 to 1914*

Helen May Stanton arrested one's attention—a beautiful, golden-haired young woman who appeared never to lack self-assurance. She was born in 1868, the fourth child of a prosperous Michigan farmer. The family tree traced back to Secretary of State Stanton, who served under Abraham Lincoln.

From childhood Helen May showed a remarkable zest for living. This confident and intelligent girl went out to teach after graduating from high school at the age of 15.

At 17 the young teacher decided to further her education by attending Battle Creek College, located in her home state. She arrived for the 1885-86 school year to become part of a student body made up of 184 Ladies and 220 Gentlemen.

The Biblical Course for freshmen included English language, mathematics, Biblical lectures or missionary instruction, reading selections, and writing. Health care principles were central to the curriculum. Helen was preparing to share what she learned with people not familiar with the Bible teachings of her church.

Helen paid approximately 75 cents a week for tuition, 50 cents for room rent, and \$1.75 for the week's meals. For the entire school year textbook costs ranged from \$3 to \$7, laundry cost \$8.50, while fuel and oil ran about \$6.60 annually. Those amounts were as great a sacrifice to parents in 1885 as tuition is for parents today. However, Mr. and Mrs. Stanton were glad to make it possible for Helen to attend the Seventh-day Adventist college. (*Eleventh Annual Catalogue*, Battle Creek College, 1885-86.)

Helen helped to defray her expenses by working at Battle Creek Sanitarium, attending guests who had come for rest and therapy. She often served meals to Ellen G. White, who stopped over at the sanitarium frequently. Helen grew to like Mrs. White very much.

An anecdote recalled with considerable relish by Helen's son Elder Hugh Williams concerns his mother and church leader Ellen White. (*Taken from a taped conversation sent to the writer by Elder Hugh Williams and Dr. Earl Williams, son and grandson, respectively, of Helen Williams, July 1985.*) Helen Stanton had purchased a gray silk dress that, in the mode of the time, had a miniature train; some of the church elders criticized the dress,

perhaps because it was fashionable. One day while wearing the gray dress, Helen entered Ellen White's room to deliver a meal. Mrs. White surprised Helen by requesting, "Turn around, honey, and let me see that dress." Holding her breath while waiting for whatever comment Mrs. White might make, Helen heard the words, "My, what lovely taste you have! That's a beautiful dress." After Helen made sure that the critical elders learned that Mrs. White approved her dress, she heard no more about it.

A flair for clothes and a naturally attractive appearance did not detract from Helen's dedication to God's service. Having deepened her commitment to share the gospel with the world, she finished her studies at Battle Creek and took employment in 1887 as a Bible worker for the Michigan Conference. Elder G. I. Butler, who issued the invitation to Miss Stanton, was president not only of the Michigan Conference but of the General Conference as well.

For two years Helen taught Biblical principles to people in Grand Rapids and Saginaw, preparing them for baptism. Then the General Conference asked her to move to Indianapolis. While faithfully giving Bible studies, Helen managed also to take college classes in Indianapolis. We do not know specifically what she studied; her son said perhaps speech or elocution, in which she became very competent.

Besides work and studies, Helen had still another important interest in life. Eugene Williams, whom she had met at Battle Creek College and who now was a licensed minister in the Michigan Conference, showed a growing attraction toward the golden-haired Bible worker. Eugene was the only son of James Williams, an immigrant from Wales who had become prosperous in Michigan as a bridge contractor.

Eugene was one year older than Helen. Although the geographical distance between the two increased when Eugene was transferred to the Montana Mission, the emotional bond grew closer.

In August 1890 Eugene Williams and Helen May Stanton were united in marriage; afterward they went to Yellowstone National Park for their honeymoon. Then Helen set up housekeeping with her new husband in Montana and worked alongside him in ministry.

Before Mrs. Williams had been in her new home long, the mission director, Elder Watt, urged her to hold evangelistic meetings. With delight she accepted the challenge. Both the mission president and her husband were pleased with the way Helen conducted her first effort. (Taken from a letter accompanying Sustentation Fund Application, by Helen Williams, 1922. General Conference Archives. *This important document, letters, and tapes from the Williams family form the basis for facts and quotations not otherwise credited in this chapter.*)

Why would a mission director in the early 1890s urge a young woman to hold meetings? First, Helen Williams was a person of unusual natural ability, an outstanding elocutionist at an early age. Giving readings was a form of community entertainment which she, in that era before television, had considerable experience in providing. Second, she had received professional training in Biblical principles and health ministry at Battle Creek College. Most importantly, add the guidance and blessing of the Holy



Helen May Stanton, lower left, one of a group of students at Battle Creek College during the 1885-86 school year. The serving trays were probably used to deliver meals to patients in the Battle Creek Sanitarium.

*Photo courtesy of Dr. Earl R. Williams.*

Spirit, and you find a woman called to the ministry. According to her son Hugh, Helen felt this call early and hoped that marrying a minister might help open doors for her to use her gifts in ministry. (*From a transcribed tape of Hugh Williams' memories, sent to the author by Phyllis Vineyard, August 1989. See appendix A, 1.1.*)

While she was still a Bible worker, Helen Stanton had become a popular camp meeting speaker. Ministers were in short supply on the frontier; young Helen Williams was needed as an evangelist.

While Helen and Eugene Williams built their united lives around the ministry, family was also important to them. In 1891 their first son, Irwin, was born. Not long afterward the Williamses moved back to Michigan in order to be near Eugene's father, who was ill; he lived just a few months longer. A second baby boy, Lewis, arrived in 1893 in the midst of his parents' busy ministerial activity.

Two years later the Williamses were asked to move to a community called Bell's Corners near Elsie, Michigan, to hold evangelistic meetings. In this small town only one house was available to rent, a dwelling hardly suitable for a minister's family with two children and another expected soon. Fortunately, compassionate women of the community gave the house a good scrubbing; by loving care they made it ready for the young ministerial family. The third son, Hugh, was born there in 1895.

In 1897 the Williamses moved to Grand Rapids, where Eugene pastored the Adventist congregation in the city while supervising the construction of a church. Helen preached intermittently, gave Bible studies, and assisted otherwise in the ministry as much as she could while bringing up three little boys.

Elder Williams became quite popular as a "marrying parson" throughout the Michigan Conference, which had a limited pastoral staff in the 1890s. He might be called away from his post of duty to conduct a wedding or funeral on very short notice. At such times Mrs. Williams could be counted on to preach for the Sabbath worship service or any other meeting in the Grand Rapids Church. More and more frequently this occurred.

On one occasion when Helen Williams was to fill the pulpit, the conference president, Elder J. D. Gowell, decided to come hear her preach. He entered unnoticed after the service was well under way, sat in the back, and managed to slip out at the end of the sermon without Helen's even knowing that he had come.

A day or two later Elder Gowell visited the Williamses in their home. Helen and Eugene were surprised to learn that the conference president had heard her sermon the previous Sabbath. To their great relief, he had been pleased.

Elder Gowell recommended that the Williamses hire a competent person to help with the house work and to look after the little boys, in order to allow Helen to work more for the conference than she had been able to do with all her home responsibilities. Elder Gowell promised that he would arrange at the coming conference session for Mrs. Williams to receive at least enough income to pay for the household help.

Helen found a baby-sitter, Clara, on whom she could depend. The president was better than his word. At the time of the conference session, Mrs. Williams was issued a ministerial license and paid retroactively for all the previous year. (*From Helen Williams, letter accompanying Sustentation Fund Application, 1922.*) This appears to have occurred in 1897.

The usual adventures that occur in families with small children did not pass the Williamses by, as an incident related by Helen Williams' granddaughter shows. (*From a tape recording made for the author by Phyllis Vineyard, July 22, 1985. See appendix A, 1.2.*) One day when Helen was baking bread, she found she needed yeast. Not being dressed to go out, she called three-year-old Hugh, folded his hand around two pennies, and asked him to go to the corner store for a package of yeast. He did as he was told. The man at the market took the pennies out of Hugh's hand and put in a cake of yeast.

Instead of turning the corner toward home, Hugh was daydreaming (he explained later) and just kept going. Not being able to find his house, he continued walking and walking. When at length he reached paved city streets, he began to cry because the hot pavement burned his feet.

A kind man noted Hugh's distress and helped him get back to the corner store. There the owner carefully laid the tired little boy down on bags of flour, where he immediately fell asleep, and called the police station.

The next thing that Hugh knew, he was being embraced by his parents, who were beaming because their missing little boy had been found. Hugh made up a little song about being lost and being found by Papa and Mama. Although the parents doubtless had misgivings about their skill in parenting just then, the three-year-old in that crisis celebrated the love in his home.

A family portrait from this period shows Eugene Williams, who was about 5' 6" in height, to be a handsome man with carefully groomed dark hair, mustache, and beard. Helen Williams, slightly shorter, was attractive with her blonde, wavy hair and blue eyes. All the boys were good looking, Irwin with dark hair and eyes like his father, Lewis with brown hair and hazel eyes, and little Hugh with blue eyes and curly golden locks.

Eugene Williams accepted a call to be superintendent of the North Michigan Mission; consequently, from Grand Rapids the Williamses moved north to Sault Sainte Marie. The journey was made by train. Father went first, to prepare the way. Later his wife and children came to join him. The children loved the long train ride to their new home, viewing the wild and beautiful country flying past the windows. The train was put on a ferry to cross the upper peninsula; this adventure provided a memory the children never forgot. (*From Hugh Williams' memories, taped, received August 1989.*)

Imagine the boys' excitement when father met them with a sleigh drawn by a horse, Patsy, that now belonged to their family! In the sleigh father took his family to their new home in Dafter. They lived seven miles from Sault Sainte Marie and the Canadian border, surrounded by woods and breathtaking beauty.

While Eugene proved himself an effective administrator, Helen preached on Sabbaths and continued to develop as a minister. In the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbooks* for 1904 through 1906, both E. R. Williams and Mrs. E. R. Williams are listed, he as an ordained minister and she as a licensed minister of the Superior Mission and then the Lake Union Conference. (See *Mrs. Williams' listing for those years in appendix B.*)

A woman named Grace, who later became Mrs. Cremens, took care of the children. The family moved to a log cabin deep in the woods, where they could see deer and hear wolves and the neighborhood fox. As the parents ministered, the children accumulated childhood experiences in close contact with nature.

Later the Williamses lived in tents while they built a home on the edge of Sault Sainte Marie. This was a large house, part of which they rented out. From their home they could view the rapids on the river as it entered Lake Superior. The boys loved this home. They could go down to a shallow bay in which they could safely swim. With Dad's help the boys built a canoe in which they could all three ride together. During the summer they went fishing. Miss Arnet, Agnes White, and Miss Campbell, a Bible worker, took responsibility for the children at various times.

In 1905 Eugene decided that he needed to concentrate his efforts at Menominee (the other area in his mission at which there was an Adventist center); the family moved there, on the Wisconsin border. Following the custom of their new location, the boys looked in the forest until they found a very straight tree; using it for a mast, they made themselves an iceboat. Having two ministers for parents did not prevent the Williams boys from having an eventful, learning-filled childhood.

Eugene's and Helen's reputations grew, his as a pastor and administrator, hers as an outstanding speaker and licensed minister. In 1906 they both received calls to pastor churches in the Chicago area. Quite an adaptation must have been required of the entire family as they relocated from Northern Michigan to burgeoning Chicago; however, they seemed equal to the challenge. Helen pastored the Harvey Church while Eugene nurtured the West Side congregation. The maturing boys learned to get around the city on the "El," a system of elevated railways.

Since pastors were few, the conference president made a schedule for each minister to preach twice every Sabbath in different locations in the conference; consequently, Helen preached in a number of congregations. However, she concentrated her efforts during the week on her special assignment, the Harvey Church. Giving Bible studies faithfully two or three days a week, conducting regular prayer meetings, and providing an overall ministry, Helen Williams had the pleasure of seeing her congregation grow as she welcomed new converts.

Life for the woman pastor was not without periodic occurrences to test her equanimity. One day when Mrs. Williams went to the conference office, she was greeted by a secretary, Pearl Hallock, who said, "I want to talk with you." When they had found a place to converse, Pearl informed Helen, "Your name is not in the new *Yearbook*."



Helen May Stanton Williams, pastor and evangelist in the United States and South Africa. Licensed minister 1897-1914.

*Photo courtesy of Dr. Earl R. Williams.*

“Why not?” Pastor Williams inquired. “Did you not send it in with the others?”

“I thought I did—I am almost sure I did,” Pearl answered, beginning to cry.

“Never mind,” Helen assured her. “You are sure that I have a ministerial license?”

“Indeed I am.”

“Are you sure that I am on the payroll?” Mrs. Williams asked.

“Yes,” Miss Hallock assured her.

“Then what do we care about that old *Yearbook*?” the minister concluded. “If God has given me work to do, no man or set of men can take that work away from me. And if He has not, I do not want it.” This ended the matter. (*From Helen Williams, letter accompanying Sustentation Fund Application, 1922.*)

Helen Williams was not dependent on status to function as a minister. She never heard an explanation about why her name, which had been listed with the other licensed ministers in the *Yearbooks*, ceased appearing for several years. In the 1907 *Yearbook* only E. R. Williams is listed. Yet Helen Williams’ work continued, and she did receive a ministerial license.

Information concerning Mrs. Williams’ ministry can be found in the *Northern Illinois Recorder*. In the Week of Prayer Appointments for the winter of 1906, Helen Williams had responsibility for the churches in Harvey, Elgin, and Hinsdale. When Mrs. Williams visited the Hinsdale Sanitarium Church on Sabbath, December 22, she was pleased to find a well organized Sabbath school numbering 25 people. She preached, and afterward almost everyone present added a testimony. Mrs. Williams wrote concerning the sanitarium workers, “As I looked into these happy and bright young faces, I prayed that God would keep them faithful to their calling, for they surely have access to a class of people that are not so easily reached by our other workers.” (*From Mrs. E. R. Williams, “Hinsdale Sanitarium,” Northern Illinois Recorder, February 19, 1907: 1.*)

During the summer of 1907 the Williamses moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to be part of a city evangelistic team. A few months later they accepted a call to the Cape Conference in South Africa.

Helen, always ready for adventure, enjoyed the trip to Africa. Letters she wrote to her parents during January 1908 from aboard ship provide glimpses of the journey. The voyage to England on the 725-foot *Baltic* was pleasant except for a bout with the flu that infected all members of the family except Irwin.

Helen described sailing by the beautiful country of Wales, resplendent with white houses and castles nestled among mountains, and then being surrounded by an impenetrable English fog.

In England the Williamses changed to the Union Castle Line to sail for South Africa. The ship, much smaller, ran into rough seas. Writing with difficulty while confined to her bunk because of the turbulence, Helen expressed appreciation for the two suitably appointed staterooms that she and her family were occupying. “I think that the General



Conference is just lovely to us, don't you?" she asked her mom and dad. She described the generous and frequent meals, seven each day, adding that she and her husband bypassed most of them.

Helen referred to the periodic ringing of the ship's bell. "I suppose they had watches on the other boat, but they did not ring the bell at all," she observed. "It is rather nice, however, when you are being rocked in the cradle of the great deep, to have the bell say, 'All is well, all is well.'" (Taken from the letters by Helen May Williams in London, England, to her parents, January 10, 1908, and from letters written aboard ship on the Union Castle Line en route to South Africa, January 14, 1908.)

A few months after arrival in South Africa, Elder Eugene Williams was elected president of the Cape Colony Conference. Helen Williams conducted mission work in Grahamstown, the city in which the family lived.

A fourth son, Eugene, was welcomed into the family in South Africa. Suitable native women were found to watch the children so that Helen Williams could continue preaching. She was well liked and recognized as a preacher in her own right. Her husband was known primarily as an administrator, admired and respected; as president of the conference, he showed remarkable organizational ability. It was generally conceded that his sermons and public speeches were not as compelling and effective as those of his wife. Fortunately, he was secure enough to be delighted with Helen's speaking abilities, welcoming the requests that came for her services. The two of them sometimes chuckled over the fact that people liked her speaking better. (*Vineyard tape.*)

Mrs. Williams, sometimes assertive, was also humble, gracious, and willing to serve. She "made waves" now and then by expressing ideas that were a bit controversial, stirring people to think. However, her preaching was well founded in the Bible.

Pastor Williams spoke with extemporaneous delivery, from brief notes. She had a simple but effective filing system in which to keep her sermon notes. In a section labeled "Topical" is a set of handwritten notes on the subject of "Humility," consisting of numbered questions followed by Bible references. (*From Helen Williams, "Humility," unpublished sermon notes. See appendix A, 1.3.*) It begins as follows:

### **Humility**

1. Where does God dwell? Isaiah. 57:15.
2. Is it natural for us to be humble? Rom. 8:7.
3. Why? Gen. 2:17, 3:6.
4. Is it reasonable that we should be humble? Rom. 12:1.

The tone of this Christ-centered sermon is buoyant. Speaking from brief notes allowed Mrs. Williams direct contact with her listeners. One can picture how through the inspiration of the Spirit she breathed life into this simple outline, adding illustrations, applications, and an appeal. Of striking appearance, she spoke with a compelling voice and dramatic ways, at the same time expressing thoughts that were spiritual and persuasive. To hear and see her was a memorable experience.

Helen Williams wrote later concerning this period of mission service that her ministerial license and her work continued without any break, but that her separate pay stopped upon her arrival in Africa. It is puzzling that she is not listed in the 1908-10 *Yearbooks*, because the family have Helen's ministerial licenses for 1908 and 1910, the first issued by the South African Union and signed by President W. S. Hyatt, the second issued by the Cape Colony Conference and signed by Mrs. Williams' husband, President E. R. Williams.

Elder Eugene Williams, in the midst of a busy itinerary, set aside Sunday, November 20, 1910, to spend with his two oldest sons. Irwin and Lewis had gone to sell Adventist books in Malmesbury, and their father knew that a visitor from home would be welcome. He bicycled from Worcester, where he had organized a church on Sabbath. The day was hot as Eugene Williams pedaled on his way, making good time. But about nine miles from Worcester "he fell prostrate by the roadside with apoplexy, where he was found a few hours later by a passing stranger." (*South African Missionary November 28, 1910: 1.*) Irwin and Lewis, anticipating their father's arrival, received instead the tragic message of his death. Their beloved father had fallen in his prime at the age of 43.

Because the law required burial the next day, Helen Williams with Hugh and little Eugene could not come from Grahamstown in time for the funeral service. Thus a sad occasion was made even more traumatic. Later a memorial service was held in Grahamstown for the widow to attend.

Helen Williams at 42 years of age became the single parent of four sons ranging in age from 18 months to 18 years.

The General Conference Committee voted to appropriate \$500 to bring Mrs. Williams and her sons back to the United States, supposing that the move would be best for them. However, the action stated that if the South African Union could find ways "for Sister Williams to render good service in the South African field, and if the boys give promise of making workers for the missions with a little more training," the \$500 could be used to help accomplish those ends. (*General Conference Committee Actions, December 27, 1910.*)

Helen Williams was clear about her calling. In spite of her painful loss, as soon as the period of mourning was over she moved back to Grahamstown with the two younger boys and resumed pastoring the Grahamstown Church. The two older sons continued their book selling. By the time the General Conference action mentioned above was taken on December 27, Helen was already back at work. Pastoring an urban church and performing mission service for indigenous South Africans, she completed the seven-year term for which she and her husband had been sent as missionaries. She labored alone in South Africa four years.

Frequently Helen Williams encouraged people in trying circumstances by assuring them, "The battle is not yours, it's God's!" Her faith in that principle was tested severely during this period, but held firm.

After her husband's death, Helen Williams began receiving a salary in her own name again. Her name also reappeared in the *Yearbook* as a licensed minister starting in 1911.

In the fall of 1914, Helen Williams and her sons returned to the United States. Mrs. Williams directed the Bible workers' training program at Washington Missionary College in Takoma Park, Maryland, and pastored a small church in the Washington, D.C., area.

Later, when Elder Votaw became ill, Helen Williams accepted the invitation to teach his Bible classes at the college. She gave up the pastoral assignment to devote all her time and energy to a heavy teaching load, which she enjoyed. In this employment her salary reached a new high of \$25 a week.

An anecdote recalled by Ethel Longacre Hannum relates to the human side of Helen Williams the teacher. (*Taken from a letter to the author by Ethel Longacre Hannum, July 25, 1985.*) It was customary for the professor who taught Bible in the college to teach the same subject in the academy. Ethel Longacre attended one of Mrs. Williams' academy Bible classes; three of her classmates were Donald Griggs, Arthur Walters, and George Harding, who afterward became a cardiologist, owner of a mortuary, and founder of Harding Hospital, respectively; but impressive as their later accomplishments may be, these young men were normal teenagers.

Arthur was the class comedian, with many pranks up his sleeve. One day he was even more lively and creative than usual. Finally Mrs. Williams placed a chair close to her desk, facing the blackboard behind her, and asked Arthur to sit there, quietly, until the close of class.

Arthur went to the chair as requested, managing to pick up a piece of chalk on the way. Mrs. Williams was standing beside him but could not very well watch him as she looked about the class. She was wearing an attractive red dress with large patch pockets on the skirt. Leaning over very carefully, Arthur with his chalk drew a smiling face on the nearer pocket. The students, releasing their repressed laughter, were filing out at the close of class before Mrs. Williams discovered the impromptu art work. She took it good naturedly, never seeming to hold resentment against students for their classroom pranks. They could create few situations for which her four sons had not already prepared her.

Ever gracious and pleasant, Mrs. Williams was loved and respected as a Bible teacher. Nevertheless, after five years the teaching position was given to someone else, doubtless a man, perhaps one with more formal education. One could wish that the college had assisted Mrs. Williams in pursuit of further education. Nothing appropriate was provided for her to do; all that she was offered was the work of residence hall dean at the college where she was being replaced. Mrs. Williams was game to try. Unfortunately, she had neither preparation for nor experience in this line of work. Therefore it should not be surprising that the arrangement did not work out well. In Helen's own stern evaluation of herself, "I was just fool enough to think that late in life I could change my line of work and make a success of it. Result: a fizzle." (*Taken from a letter accompanying Sustentation Fund Application by Helen Williams, 1922.*) It is sad that a woman of her experience in pastoring was asked to do something else totally unfamiliar and not within her gifts.

At the close of the school year, in spite of her hard experience as preceptress, Mrs. Williams found herself being offered the same kind of work again, along with Bible teaching, at Melrose Sanitarium. Again she tried, and again there were problems. Her brief comment (found in a letter that accompanied her sustentation application years later): “Again I was a bigger fool. It was a fizzle but worse, I went to pieces physically.” Originally the text read, “I was made a bigger fool,” but the *made* is crossed out. (*Ibid.*) Helen Williams took responsibility for her actions. It is unfortunate, but understandable, that under the strain of employment unsuited to her, Helen’s physical health deteriorated.

For good reason, when the next call came, Mrs. Williams was cautious. She said she would study the situation for two weeks; the invitation was to work on the staff of the Adventist sanitarium in Middle Town, New York, while pastoring the local church. She found that conditions were not promising at either the hospital or the church. Besides, the director of the sanitarium had heard such exaggerated accounts of Helen’s success as both pastor and Bible worker that she believed there was no way she could do the work of the *two* positions without completely ruining her health. Regretfully turning down the invitation, she went to the home of her oldest son, Irwin, in Michigan for rest and healing.

After she had enjoyed several months of recuperation, her son Hugh came to visit. Hugh, having followed his mother’s calling, worked as an ordained minister in the Indiana Conference. Hugh inquired concerning his mother’s health.

“I am well,” she replied, “and if I stay out of the work of preceptress and have sleep nights, I shall remain well forever and ever.”

“Mother,” Hugh announced with conviction, “you ought to go to work again. How would you like to be your son’s Bible worker?”

“I would not like anything better,” Mrs. Williams promptly replied. Then she added, “But is there any prospect?”

“Yes,” Hugh assured her, “I have spoken to the conference president, and he will be delighted for you to work with us.”

Within a few days Helen Williams was in Indiana; she found a lovely room in a house near the big evangelistic tent and went to work without delay, bringing the wealth of her experience to the assistance of her son the evangelist. Working in the occupation to which she was called, for which she was gifted, and in which she was experienced, Helen Williams became effective again. The mother-son team worked out splendidly, thanks to Helen’s gracious acceptance of a secondary role.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Williams’ concern for her youngest son was growing. Eugene at the age of 16 was a student at Michigan State University. No amount of persuading could convince him to attend the Adventist college at Berrien Springs, Michigan. The mother sensed that it would not be wise to try to coerce her son on this point. However, she kept praying, for her “baby” was not a Christian. Having been his only parent since his infancy, Helen felt a great responsibility for Eugene and was burdened for his soul.

Mrs. Williams conceived the idea that if she went so far away that Eugene could not get home frequently to see her, he might get homesick for mother and be willing to

attend an Adventist college to be near her. While attending the General Conference Session in Milwaukee, Helen received and accepted a call to work in the Upper Columbia Conference, made up of eastern Washington and Oregon and part of Idaho. After only a year, Eugene cheerfully agreed to attend school at Walla Walla College in Washington State. (*Ibid.*)

While attending Walla Walla College, Eugene accepted Christ. He went on from college to Loma Linda University in California to study medicine. Before long Dr. Eugene Williams was throwing his energies into the medical work of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. All four sons brought satisfaction to their mother's heart: Eugene, the doctor; Hugh, the minister; Lewis, the artist; and Irwin, the musician and farmer.

In the Northwest, Helen Williams functioned in the lines of work in which she excelled, evangelistic and pastoral. She enjoyed her years in the Upper Columbia Conference, preparing converts for baptism, pastoring, and preaching on Sabbath mornings as she had done in years past. Her title may have been that of Bible worker, but her employment was that of a minister.

Working in the Viola district in Washington, Helen Williams taught prospective members the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. Sometimes ministers specifically directed interested people to Mrs. Williams' church for nurturing.

The Harvest Ingathering solicitation in her area was effectively organized by Mrs. Williams. She took laypersons out to work with her, teaching them how to approach people and what to say. This work lasted for several months, almost until Christmas each year. Now in her sixties, Mrs. William continued with energy and enthusiasm unabated.

In addition to the earlier painful experience that Helen Williams had suffered concerning her ministerial license while in Chicago, another frustrating event occurred near the end of her ministry. A woman whom she had trained to do Bible work came to Mrs. Williams and said, "Sister \_\_\_\_\_ has a ministerial license; have you one?"

"No," Helen Williams replied simply.

"Why not? You do the same kind of work," the woman reasoned.

"Oh, I don't know," Helen answered. "I had one for many years."

Several months later the same woman approached Mrs. Williams and asked, "Did you not tell me that you had been issued a ministerial license for several years?"

"Yes," Helen replied, "I told you that. Why? What difference does it make?"

"Well, I told Elder \_\_\_\_\_, and he said, 'We have looked up Sister Williams' record, and she never had a ministerial license in her life. And if she says she has had, she lies about it.'"

Mrs. Williams was surprised and hurt.

Despite the confusion and misunderstanding caused by intermittent licensing, Helen Williams' experiences were mostly positive and rewarding during her 35 years of official ministry. After retirement she remained active because she loved her work, and also to supplement her income so that she could help Eugene pay for his medical education.

She was a licensed minister from 1897 through 1914.

Helen Williams died on December 23, 1940, at the age of 72. The obituary in the *Review* for this devoted worker contains the following information concerning her ministry:

While her children were still small, Mrs. Williams employed help to care for the family, and resumed her profession in the regular Bible work. She gained an extensive reputation as a public speaker; was given charge of churches, and was granted a ministerial license by the Michigan Conference. Williams,

—Helen May Stanton, obituary, *Review and Herald*,  
January 30, 1941: 24.

A daughter-in-law sums up by saying that Mrs. Williams lived “a full and active life as a pioneer woman preacher and teacher.” (*Taken from letters to the author by Katherine D. Williams, St. Joseph, Michigan, July 22 and August 3, 1985. See appendix A, 1.4.*) She prepared many people for membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the kingdom of heaven as she pastored and evangelized on two continents. How wise was the mission president who urged young Helen Williams to hold evangelistic meetings in Montana, and how perceptive the husband who encouraged her to make free use of her ministerial gifts!

“We have improved the opportunities  
as they came along.”

—Minnie Sype, 1908



## Farmer's Wife Becomes Evangelist

Marinda (Minnie) Day Sype: 1869 to 1956

*Licensed minister from 1902 to 1956*

There was no doubt about it—the Baptists were spoiling for a debate. Minnie Sype sighed. She disliked debating from the depths of her being.

Mrs. Sype stopped by Putnam, Oklahoma Territory, to preach on Sabbath and again Sunday night. She had held tent meetings in Putnam starting May 23, 1902, and God had blessed her with success. By July she was able to invite the conference president to come organize a new Seventh-day Adventist church.

Immediately thereafter she prepared to hold a series of meetings in Taloga, so great was the urgency of taking the good news of Jesus' return to every community. However, when she returned to Putnam to strengthen the new believers, she learned that the Baptists had pitched a tent and brought in a preacher, Dr. Ellison, who intended to show that the Adventists were preaching heresy from start to finish.

Debating religion struck Minnie Sype, a 33-year-old farmer's wife who had been called into the ministry, as the wrong way to approach the right subject. She avoided this kind of public theological confrontation whenever possible. However, the truths that she had been preaching were being attacked, and her converts were the target. Therefore, she prayed for wisdom, and afterward responded that she would stand by what she had taught and remain as long as the doctor did.

The Baptist minister seemed eager to debate. At length, in the presence of witnesses, the two ministers agreed upon the guidelines for their polemic. The Baptists suggested discussing “faith.” Mrs. Sype said that she believed in “faith” as strongly as the Baptists; her opponent denied this, but Mrs. Sype thought that she knew best what she believed. In any event, this was chosen as the first night's topic.

The large crowd was electric with anticipation as the Adventist minister showed the importance and nature of faith from the Bible. Then the Baptist preacher rose to make response. At first he had a difficult time proving much wrong with Mrs. Sype's presentation; then he brought out his reserved “ammunition”, a letter about William Miller.

After reading it, Dr. Ellison condemned Seventh-day Adventists for teaching that the world would end in 1844. He spent quite a while criticizing William Miller's teachings and ridiculing the Adventists. He sat down, sure that his material about Miller had discredited the Seventh-day Adventists.

Calmly Minnie Sype, with her regal bearing, acknowledged that William Miller, while a good man, had like most people made some mistakes. She then went on to point out that when Dr. Ellison condemned William Miller, he was speaking about a member of his own denomination, for William Miller was a Baptist, not a Seventh-day Adventist; the Seventh-day Adventists had not become a church nor started their work in 1844. This information disappointed the Baptist minister while affording some amusement to the listeners.

After several nights, the debaters got to the topic, "The Origin, History, and Destiny of Satan." The Baptist speaker refused to go further, and so the debate closed. He announced, however, that he would continue speaking separately against the Adventist teachings concerning the Sabbath and the immortality of the soul.

Not being able to rent the Baptists' tent to answer their presentations, Minnie Sype announced that she would reserve the local schoolhouse for Sunday evening to review Dr. Ellison's assertions. That summer evening in 1902 the school house in Putnam, Oklahoma Territory, was jammed with people. They listened attentively to Pastor Sype as she defended the teachings of her church against the accusation that they were heresy. This confrontation was used by the Holy Spirit to further advance the work begun by Mrs. Sype in Putnam. Several stood for the truth. Soon afterward the Baptists lost interest and moved their tent elsewhere. (*Minnie Syp\**, "Putnam, O. T. [Oklahoma Territory]", *Southwestern Union Record*, September 8, 1902. \*The spelling of the family name, originally *Syp*, was changed to *Sype* when son Ross was in academy, at his request.)

The little company of believers at Putnam rejoiced in their newfound faith, and the town people became more friendly, some admitting that the Adventist teachings were correct. At the end of this taxing bout for truth, Minnie Sype was still buoyant in her praise to the Lord for His holy Word and its power to prevail.

This gifted communicator of Bible truth did not knowingly set out in life to become a Seventh-day Adventist evangelist. There are few clues from her early years as a shy farm girl to foreshadow that ultimate call, aside from her persistent longing to know God.

When Elias and Mary Day welcomed their first child to the farm homestead near Thayer, Iowa, on April 18, 1869, they named her Marinda. However, "Minnie" seemed more appropriate for the timid, feminine little girl; and by that name she was called throughout her life. (*Minnie Sype, Life Sketches and Experiences in Missionary Work* (Hutchinson, Minnesota: Seminary Press, 1916), 15.) *Much of the biographical information in this book is based on the autobiography. The Andrews University Library has a copy. The Review and Herald Publishing Association Library has a copy of the 1912 edition.*

Because she was the first child of ten, and all the older children were girls, Minnie became her father's helper in the fields. She drove the team to harrow the ground, sat on



the corn planter trying to make straight rows across the wide field, and pulled herself reluctantly from the clutches of a warm bed to harvest corn before school on shivery fall mornings. Although life was demanding—Minnie worked away from home on-and-off from the age of 13 to contribute to the family income—the children felt love and security in their family.

Mrs. Day occasionally read the Bible to her children, but Minnie grew up craving more religious instruction. After hearing her mother read the story of the flood from Genesis, Minnie found her mind whirling with questions, questions, questions, for which she could not find answers.

Sometimes as she rounded up the cows on the prairie to bring them home to be milked, Minnie looked up into the blue sky and felt a keen longing to know about God. She wished that people around her would talk about God more. At the age of 10, the child felt herself a wicked person whom no one could understand or help.

When meetings were held in the Brethren Church, Minnie eagerly responded to a call to give her heart to God. Although she felt somewhat better as a result, after the meetings ended she was still dissatisfied because she didn't understand the basics of how to believe in God.

At 13 Minnie was glad that her parents finally consented for her to be baptized into the Christian Church. As she tried to live a godly life, the troubled girl sometimes felt peace. More often, however, she seemed overwhelmed with a sense of her sinfulness. The reassuring knowledge that she was forgiven eluded her.

Mrs. Day longed for her children to receive an education. She taught Minnie to read and encouraged the girl to attend school as much as possible. Eventually Minnie had opportunity to attend normal school for teacher training. From this program she received a certificate that allowed her to start teaching just before her eighteenth birthday.

Minnie Day taught at several schools. For the most part, she was a successful teacher. She did encounter a few challenging discipline problems. On her first day of teaching, a 14-year-old lad asserted his authority over the younger boys in challenge to the teacher (who, you recall, had reached the mature age of 17). Minnie decided that she must give the uncooperative lad a sound thrashing. She kept him after school, closed all the doors and windows, and set to the task with determination. She found with relief that the young man responded by causing no more trouble. All such crises Minnie resolved with creative resourcefulness. She came to regard the classroom an effective training place for teachers as well as students.

Soon after she went to teach in Sand Creek Township, Minnie met an eligible young man of good reputation, Logan P. Sype. One reason she liked him was that he didn't smoke or drink. Minnie had vowed that no suitor would ever puff tobacco smoke in her face.

Logan was a religious person; more specifically, he and his parents were Seventh-day Adventists. This religion sounded strange to Minnie, but she admired Logan's Christian principles enough to be happy to date him. Because he had a splendid voice, frequently he was asked to present a solo or lead the singing for some event, and he would ask

Minnie to go with him. They made an attractive couple, she with dark brown hair, 5' 7 1/2" tall, he with black hair, about the same height.

Minnie Day and Logan Sype joined their lives in marriage March 6, 1889, a month before Minnie's twentieth birthday. The newlyweds agreed to disagree on matters of religion, she being a member of the Christian Church and he a Seventh-day Adventist. They committed to respect each other's religion and accompany one another to both churches. They had worship together with prayer and Bible reading, carefully staying away from controversial topics.

When Minnie attended Logan's church, she noticed that the members were energetic Bible students. They could cite many texts in support of their beliefs. She began wondering why her husband worshiped on the seventh day of the week while she worshiped on the first day. Wasn't that strange when they were both basing their practice on the same Bible?

Expecting help in finding Biblical support for her beliefs, Minnie went to see her pastor. The minister's inability to comply with this request for Biblical evidence supporting Sunday observance proved a painful disappointment to Minnie; secretly she had hoped that she would be able to persuade her husband to worship on Sunday with her.

Minnie's father-in-law, Mr. J. L. Sype, studied the Bible with her. He had been elder of the Afton, Iowa, church for years and was well prepared to guide his eager young daughter-in-law. Minnie approached the Bible as ravenous people come to food. While washing dishes, she memorized Bible verses. Many times after the day's work was over, her father-in-law would walk over from his farm across the road and answer Minnie's Bible questions until midnight. The millennium, the resurrection, the second coming of Christ, and Bible prophecies for the last days all were investigated. Minnie developed ever greater admiration for God's Word. The longing to know more about God that had pained her throughout her childhood was finally being satisfied.

After several months of intensive Bible study, Minnie saw clearly that the seventh day is the Sabbath. This put her in a difficult position: she had to choose between satisfying her conscience, on the one hand, or remaining in a comfortable tradition on the other.

One Sabbath Minnie worshiped with the little company to which her husband belonged; then on Sunday she stood in her doorway watching dearly loved friends make their way to the church that she had shared with them for years. Her friends were going one way, literally, while she was about to go another. The separation seemed more than she could bear. In her anguish she cried out, "Oh, my God! Do you ask this of me?"

Minnie went into her sitting room and knelt down with her Bible open to the Ten Commandments. She told God that she could not knowingly break one of those commandments while living as a committed Christian. The fourth commandment cried out from the surface of the page, "The *seventh day* is the *sabbath of the Lord thy God*." (Exodus 20:10, *emphasis supplied*.) She knew that she must keep the seventh-day Sabbath. On her knees she promised to do this, asking God to give her strength.

In July 1889, Minnie Day Sype became part of the body of Christ in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Attending her first Seventh-day Adventist camp meeting, Minnie heard a preacher read from the Bible, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." He continued, "Thou hast in love to my soul... cast all my sins behind thy back." 1 John 1:9 and Isaiah 38:17. Then Minnie heard the preacher asking, "Can God tell a lie?" No, Minnie responded, certainly not. God will do His part, the preacher was explaining, which is to forgive our sins. Then we must do our part, which is to believe that we are forgiven. Jesus has purchased our sins by His blood, the minister pointed out; therefore after we confess them, *they are no longer ours*. If we are still troubled by those forgiven sins, that is Satan bringing them up to try to discourage us.

At last Minnie Sype grasped the assurance that God had forgiven her. The peace and joy that entered her life with that understanding she never lost, in spite of severe trials. Life was worth living from that day forward in a new and richer way.

Furthermore, this assurance of God's love and salvation must be shared. True, there were compelling demands on Minnie's limited time and scarce money. Her domestic responsibilities increased as children were welcomed into the farm home: Ross was born in 1889, followed by a second son, James, in 1892. However, a real burden for souls rested upon Minnie Sype's heart. Because she had earlier longed for Christian help, she vowed that other people would not lack such assistance and encouragement as she could supply.

She recognized that her first mission field was her home. She loved to observe Sabbath on the farm, making preparation on Friday and attending church with the family on Sabbath morning.

Important as Minnie's family ministry was to her, she looked for ways to reach out to others as well. She and her husband found the seven-mile drive to church gave them an excellent opportunity for distributing literature; they saved their church papers and dropped them off in mail boxes along the way. Ross and James liked to save their Little Friends to leave at homes where there were children. The children's interest grew to the point that they sometimes climbed in to attend Sabbath school with the Sypes; the buggy was fairly bulging by the time it reached the church.

Minnie Sype was ingenious at time management. She so efficiently organized her many household duties that she could devote Thursdays to missionary work. Some Thursdays she visited the sick. Other times she sold Adventist books; the profit provided postage stamps for missionary letters—the Sypes had no money for this purpose—while the books and papers took truth right into people's homes. Again, she might make sunbonnets to sell to provide literature for the rack by her door. If detained at home by company, she kept quilt-blocks ready, that she might spend time on these while chatting; the quilts and comforters were sold to support mission work.

On rainy days Minnie wrote missionary letters, enclosing a tract, a poem that she had clipped, or whatever she thought might turn a person's mind toward God. As a result of

reading such a letter and the enclosed tract on the Sabbath, one woman resolved to keep the Sabbath day holy. Another woman who was at the point of giving up her Christian life, after reading Minnie's letter and an enclosed poem, was sent to her knees to renew her hold upon God.

To a newcomer in the neighborhood Minnie Sype arranged to give her first series of Bible lessons. When the woman asked that the studies be changed to the evening so that her husband could attend, the entire Sype family presented the lessons. Mr. Sype sang and prayed, Mrs. Sype taught the content, and the children helped by sitting still; their mother even paid them a few pennies for assisting in this way. The couple accepted the truths presented and shared the good news with others.

When Mr. Sype took a heavy load of grain to town, making for a slow trip, Mrs. Sype would go along to sell *Signs of the Times* magazines and small books to people in homes by the road. She was exuberant as she found ways to serve her Master, who had given her freedom and joy.

Another means of service that occurred to Minnie was that of canning a plentiful supply of fruit to store in the cellar; thus a stranger never needed to be turned away from her door. As she and her husband entertained travelers, they talked earnestly with their guests about Bible truths. Sometimes a guest would later write to ask questions or request more literature. Since Minnie's ability to visit other people was limited, she trusted God to bring to her home people who were thirsting for the water of salvation. She genuinely liked her life on the farm. She enjoyed raising chickens, milking cows, working in the garden, caring for her family, and doing missionary work. She especially wanted to minister to her parents and siblings. (*Over the years of praying and witnessing, Minnie saw three of her sisters become Seventh-day Adventists. Much later her father also accepted Adventism.*)

A little daughter, Anna, was born in 1898, completing the family of Logan and Minnie Sype. Soon afterward an illness caused Minnie to spend time at the Nebraska Sanitarium, which together with Union College was operated by the Seventh-day Adventists in Lincoln. Little Anna went along with her mother. When Minnie became an outpatient, she arranged for a community woman to watch the baby at certain hours; then Minnie studied at Union College while continuing therapeutic treatments at the sanitarium. Thus she returned home better prepared than when she left for the life work that, unknown to her, lay ahead.

Soon after Minnie and Anna returned home, Mr. Sype took employment that required the family's moving to the Higby mining camp near Sheridan, Wyoming. Against a backdrop of breathtaking mountain beauty, the Sypes found themselves among people many of whom seemed to be without hope or an experience with God. Although existence in a miner's shanty was quite different from life in the pleasant Iowa farm home that Minnie had just left, she focused on the work God made available to her. When cholera attacked the infants in the camp, mothers relied on her bedside care and wisdom.

Minnie conceived a ministry even while Anna was ill for several months due to complications following measles. She invited camp women into her home to sew quilts; as the women quilted, she read to them, planting seeds of truth.

She found herself in situations that caused her to take a stand for temperance, a virtue not commonly championed in the camp. Although she experienced ridicule at first, after a while other mothers, watching Minnie's example, gave up their heavy drinking and took an interest in caring for their families.

With her husband's splendid musical contribution, Minnie conducted both a Sabbath school and a Sunday school. The Sypes also invited the mining families into their home one night a week for singing. Logan led the group in songs full of Advent hope. Afterward people could be heard around the grounds humming or singing snatches of this uplifting music.

The mine work proved detrimental to Mr. Sype's health. At the end of a year, as his father urged him to return to Iowa, Logan and his family decided to make the move. There was genuine sorrow among the camp people when the Sypes departed, leaving a little Sabbath school and a few people keeping the Sabbath. As Minnie corresponded with them later, she prayed that she would meet some people from that Wyoming mining camp in God's eternal kingdom.

Not long after their return to Iowa, the Sypes received glowing accounts from a family who had moved to Oklahoma. Following the Oklahoma Land Rush of 1889, settlement continued in pulsations through the turn of the century. Mr. Sype thought it would be wise to move to the Oklahoma Territory to homestead on land that was available. Mrs. Sype struggled with thoughts of leaving her beloved Iowa farm. However, as the couple prayed they saw indications of God's leading, such as the rapid sale of their Iowa land. Minnie agreed to move.

Her husband traveled ahead to build a cottage on their 160 acres. When Minnie arrived with the children, she found that Logan, knowing her dedication to study, had included a reading room especially for her! By settling several miles from any other Seventh-day Adventists, the Sypes made sure they would have opportunity to share truth with those who did not know it.

During the summer of 1901 the crops that Logan and the neighboring settlers had planted were prospering. Then in July a miserable, hot wind began to blow. This continued until crops shriveled and corn cooked on the stalk. Livestock, unable to graze, were fed from scanty stores until supplies ran out; after that, farm animals died in alarming numbers. During the devastating winter that followed, hundreds of homesteaders abandoned their claims. So great was the trauma that some who lived through it banded together as Drought Survivors of 1901 and met annually for at least forty years. (*Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration, Oklahoma: A Guide to the Sooner State* [Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1941], 241.)

Most of the people around them suffered even more than the Sypes, who kept their courage up by leaning on the Lord and quoting Scripture promises to each other. As she

saw her neighbors, Minnie sought to comfort them with her own source of hope. She received invitations to speak to groups of people, to present a message after the Sunday school, to tell a family about her understanding of the Sabbath.

As people's economic status deteriorated, their interest in God increased. The superintendent of the Sunday school and his wife began keeping the Sabbath, along with other members of the community.

During the winter of 1901-1902 the Sypes' dream of starting a church in their area became a reality. They called for the Oklahoma Conference president to organize the Gyp Seventh-day Adventist Church (later known as the Butler Church).

Minnie was surprised to receive from the Oklahoma Conference a letter of appreciation and a check for 25 dollars. Although she had worked without any thought of remuneration, the unsolicited money certainly arrived at an appropriate time.

In the spring the Oklahoma Conference administration invited Minnie Sype to become an evangelist employed by the conference and assisted by her husband.

The Sypes talked and prayed at length about this request, considering carefully the changes that it might bring in their lifestyle. Minnie Sype had not sought to become a minister. Yet she was engaged in evangelism, and now this formal invitation had come. Minnie's sister who had come to Oklahoma offered to look after the children.

Mr. Sype volunteered, "Mamma, if you go into this work, I will stand by you and do what I can. I can sing and open the meetings, and you can tell the people the truth." (Sype, *Life Sketches*, 71.)

After careful consideration, the Sypes concluded that the call was from God. Minnie Sype entered the ministry in the Oklahoma Territory, assisted by her husband.

Soon thereafter Mrs. Sype traveled by horse and buggy 13 miles to the Ruth, Oklahoma, church to conduct prayer meeting and minister to the believers there. As soon as she arrived, one of the members urged her to speak that night on the law of God. She responded that she was not prepared. The member insisted that she must, because a local preacher had been trying to tear down God's law, and people were eager to hear the subject explained.

Wondering how on such short notice she could do justice to the subject, yet believing that what the Lord wanted her to do she should not refuse, Minnie Sype descended into a large canyon near the member's home to pray and study. So greatly did her concern for lost souls weigh on the one hand, but her perceived inability on the other, that she cried out to God for help.

He heard her prayers; she spoke freely and with conviction. The people were attentive and asked her to return. The new minister went home to prepare. When she returned, a large number of people had gathered. Thus began Minnie Sype's formal ministry, a process of studying further, preaching, relying on the Lord, and being rewarded with his rich blessings. She was 32 years of age.

After the second meeting at Ruth, a young woman came up to comment about the “sermon” ; hearing that term applied to her presentation startled Minnie. People who asked her to hold meetings called her the “woman preacher.” Being thus labeled disturbed Mrs. Sype for she had developed, she discovered, prejudice against the idea of “women preachers” herself.

This sent Minnie to her knees again. As she thought about the criticism and opposition she was bound to encounter, she cried in despair, “I can never do this!” However, in her anguish she received an impression that she believed was from God: “My grace is sufficient for you.” (2 Corinthians 12:9, RSV. )The young minister got up from her knees determined to accept whatever work God might ask of her, leaving the results to Him. As she had responded negatively toward women preachers, so other people might act toward her. But she knew that her calling was from God.

Not long after she entered the ministry in Oklahoma, Mrs. Sype experienced prejudice against women in the ministry. A minister of the Christian Church started attacking what Minnie was preaching. When she asked for an opportunity to respond, the man replied that he would never talk in public with a woman. He emphasized the point that a woman should never speak in public. (Sype, *Life Sketches*, 73-76.)

Minnie Sype arranged to use the school house the following night. When she arrived, a large crowd had assembled. Minnie had prayed at length about this matter and had sought counsel from church leadership. She asked the Christian minister, who was present, to join her in the front of the hall, for she wanted nothing more than to make peace with him.

Because of his attacks, she proceeded to defend herself. She asserted that she received her commission from the Lord Jesus Himself—that after His resurrection He had commissioned Mary to go tell the brethren that He was alive. Minnie claimed that she was following in Mary’s footsteps, telling people that Jesus, who has risen, will be coming again. (John 20:17.)

Mrs. Sype next mentioned Paul’s commendation of a number of women workers in Romans, chapter 16, particularly Phebe, a minister in Corinth who had helped Paul, and after going to Rome, was commended by Paul. (Romans 16:1, 2.) She pointed out that Priscilla and Aquila labored with Paul in giving the gospel. (Romans 16:3, 4; Acts 18:18, 26.)

She referred to other women leaders of the Bible: Miriam, Moses’ sister, worked with him in administration; Deborah ruled Israel as a judge; Anna and Philip’s four daughters all prophesied. (Micah 6:4; Judges 4:4-9; Luke 2:36-38; Acts 21:8, 9.)

Yes, she agreed, women are told in 1 Corinthians 14 to keep silence to prevent confusion, but men are told in the same chapter to keep silence on certain occasions, also. (1 Corinthians 14:34, 28.)

She quoted Acts 2:17, 18, foretelling that sons and daughters will prophesy. She then told her brother in ministry that he was behind the times—that modern civilizations are beginning to accept woman as a helper qualified to labor with man in every good work. In heathen countries, she pointed out, women are downtrodden and treated as

inferiors; but the more enlightened the civilization, the better the treatment women receive. While Minnie had ministered in Oklahoma only for the purpose of being a blessing, yet she felt she had been treated as heathen women are treated.

The other minister was looking down by the end of Mrs. Sype's defense. She wished him well and expressed hope that they might be friends. Her appeal succeeded. The man did not publicly oppose her work again, and he treated her as a friend.

During July 1902 the Oklahoma Conference president, Elder G. F. Haffner, visited Gyp and Putnam. At Gyp he visited the first church the Sypes had established. Now, as a result of hard work in cooperation with the Holy Spirit—Minnie's preaching and visiting, Logan's singing and assisting—Elder Haffner welcomed seven converts by baptism and several others by profession of faith, organizing them into a new church at Putnam.

While he was in Putnam, the conference president learned that several ministers previously had tried without success to raise up a church there. They had been defeated by their listeners' inattention and disorderly conduct. The woman minister proved to be the first who was able to deal with the behavioral problems and hold the people's attention.

The conference president departed with praise on his lips for the Lord's womanservant. Elder Haffner expressed hope that God would raise up other faithful laborers on the order of the Sypes, people who would commit themselves fully to the work, not giving up until they saw results. (*Taken from G. F. Haffner, "A Visit to Gyp and Putnam," Southwestern Union Record, July 7, 1902.*)

It was agreed that Minnie Sype would hold meetings next in Taloga while at the same time nurturing the work at Putnam. It was while she was working in Putnam and Taloga that Mrs. Sype encountered the challenge to debate that was reported at the first of this chapter.

Assisted by her husband, Minnie Sype held three separate efforts in the Putnam area, bringing 42 converts to rejoice in the Lord.

At the Oklahoma annual conference and camp meeting, which the Sypes reached by covered wagon during September 1902, Minnie Sype was issued a ministerial license, as were 18 male ministers. (*The Oklahoma Conference at that time had only eight ordained ministers, including the conference president. Therefore in this early period of denominational development, a woman could be one with a majority of the male ministers in credentialing.*) In view of the success Mrs. Sype was having in raising up churches, the Conference Committee moved to recognize her ministry by licensing her.

Minnie Sype performed most of the usual functions of a minister. On September 30, 1902, she officiated at a wedding, uniting in marriage W. L. Manfull, of Addington, Indian Territory, and Miss Myrtle Day, of Gyp, Oklahoma Territory. The bride was the minister's sister. Mrs. Sype wrote in her article in the *Record* concerning the wedding that both the bride and groom were formerly from Iowa, where Mr. Manfull had been "a good, faithful worker" employed by the church. (*Southwestern Union Record, October 13, 1902.*)



A pattern was set up in which Mrs. Sype concentrated on tent evangelism during the summer; then, when the weather became too cold for the tent, she conducted meetings in a school house or in the homes of interested people.

Although her hard work was usually rewarded with noticeable success, there were times when all her efforts did not produce immediate, visible results. In Taloga she experienced difficulty. While her ministry continued to attract new converts at Putnam, Taloga proved strongly resistant to the Biblical truths that the young minister was presenting. After preaching 26 sermons and making 41 visits, Mrs. Sype decided that since no significant interest had been shown, she could close the Taloga meetings and still be clear before God in the judgment. She said of Taloga that the entire neighborhood appeared to be convinced but not converted. Therefore the Sypes went on to Meno, Oklahoma, for meetings early in 1904. It is clear from her letters of the period that reverses did not prevent Minnie Sype from being joyful in the Lord's service.

Sometimes Logan assisted Minnie in the meetings. When he was there he supervised pitching the tents, conducted song services, offered prayers, and helped to look after the children. With this welcome support Mrs. Sype preached, prayed, and visited, engaging in the strenuous work of evangelism. Other times Mr. Sype had the children with him at the Oklahoma farm when he needed to manage the property. After her marriage, Minnie's sister no longer could care for the children.

As a precursor of today's mobile homes, Mr. Sype built a house on a wagon bed; it could be moved on wheels to the meeting sites, allowing the family more conveniences than a tent. Mrs. Sype was excited that the family could be housed together this way. (Sype, *Life Sketches*, 85.) When the children were with her, she had ingenious, practical ways of caring for them. She cooked simple, nourishing meals. During meetings little Anna was sometimes put down to sleep behind the pump organ on the platform in easy view of her parents' watchful eyes.

In Meno Mrs. Sype's evangelism produced an increase in church membership from 5 to 29. Others had begun keeping the Sabbath but were not yet members.

The ordained minister who was sent to baptize the new converts at Meno, Elder A. E. Field, was impressed that a 75-year-old man had given up his tobacco and was worshipping on Sabbath. Such visible evidence of the Spirit's work constituted a large part of Minnie Sype's "pay" for arduous labor for which she received meager monetary remuneration.

Mrs. Sype enjoyed organizing a young people's society to help make the church a pleasant and profitable place for youth. A less pleasant, but all too typical, event occurred at Meno when a minister of a mainline denomination opened verbal fire on the Adventists. Because Minnie handled the situation with wisdom, the preacher stopped his attack when he observed that his actions were advancing the cause that he opposed.

In his report at the Annual Meeting of the Oklahoma Conference in 1904, the president reported concerning Mrs. Minnie Sype's work that she had held two successful meetings, bringing approximately 42 people to full acceptance of Adventist teachings. Fifteen were added to the Putnam church, and from the meetings near Meno 25 took

their stand for the Lord and were added to the Concord Church. He went on to say that Mrs. Sype had worked hard, preaching 244 sermons during the year, holding 89 Bible readings, making 484 visits, and taking 22 subscriptions for church papers. Looking at reports for all the ministers, one can see that Minnie Sype was being blessed by the Lord as one of the most productive evangelists in the conference. (*Taken from F.G. F. Haffner, "The President's Address," Record, September 12, 1904.*)

Up to this point the Sypes' work had concentrated on evangelism in previously unworked areas. However, in order to provide a church school for their children, in 1905 they chose to accept a call for Mrs. Sype to be pastor in Enid, where the Adventist work was well established. She was excited to see doors opening to the work in every part of the city.

During May 1905 the Sypes enjoyed the inspiration of attending the General Conference Session in Washington, D.C. When they returned, Minnie worked hard in Enid and Meno, assisted by her husband. Between General Conference and the middle of August Minnie's reports showed 118 visits made, 34 sermons preached, 10 other meetings held, and 12 Bible readings conducted.

Supervising the established church and school in Enid, Minnie found that working with brothers and sisters of like faith brought some new challenges. Satan eagerly sought to cause strife and division. Yet with much prayer Minnie brought the crisis to resolution, and the church members set to work to bring converts to Christ.

Mrs. Sype did not hold a regular series of evangelistic meetings in Enid. Instead, she organized her church to work for Christ. The members sold Christian literature, filled reading racks, and ran a Christian aid society. Even the little children sold church papers. Church membership increased at a steady rate.

Two of the Sype children, James and Anna, attended the Enid church school, but Ross was enough advanced to go to Keene Industrial Academy in Texas. Eagerly desiring further education herself, Minnie Sype decided to accompany her son to the Texas school. She was there until the Union Session was held at Keene during the winter. At that time the conference president appealed to Mrs. Sype urgently, "I need you back in the field." Therefore she resumed her work, giving God responsibility for any further preparation that she needed.

At the Oklahoma Conference Session held in Oklahoma City, the work of Minnie Sype and of the other ministers was summarized in the conference president's annual report delivered on August 27, 1905. First, a statement was made concerning the work of each of the ordained ministers in the conference. Then the president reported on Sister Minnie Sype's work: 31 had been added to the church as a result of her labors, most of them being baptized by the local elder; in addition, 9 or 10 prospective members were keeping the Sabbath. (*From F.G. F. Haffner, "Address of the Conference President," Record, September 12, 1905.*)

In the few cases in which other ministers' baptisms numbered more than Mrs. Sype's (perhaps 40 or 50), this represented the work of a team of two or more ministers.

Minnie, on the other hand, was typically working on her own, except for the help of her spouse, which help of course all the other ministerial teams had also.

After camp meeting in 1905, the Sypes moved from Enid to Carrier. The Adventist message had been preached there under circumstances that left many people decided against the truth and prejudiced. In this difficult situation the Sypes pitched their tent and started their demanding program of visiting homes during the day and preaching in the tent at night.

In some parts of town the residents were so antagonistic that they would hardly let Adventists into their homes; if they did let them in, they would require that there be no discussion of religion.

Besides the prejudice, the evangelist and her spouse had to compete with carnivals, dances, and shows in Carrier. One show pitched its tent about 50 yards from the evangelistic tent and nightly told people that no meeting would be held at the preaching tent! The Sypes went right ahead under these trying circumstances, and with God's help Minnie Sype preached in total control.

The opposition's next tactic was more direct. Just as she was starting to preach one night, Mrs. Sype and the startled congregation heard large rocks thumping the tent roof right over their heads. Praying for wisdom, the preacher told the congregation not to be frightened. She said that the rocks were aimed, not at the people attending, but at those conducting the meeting. If anyone is hurt, it will be my husband and me, Mrs. Sype remarked. Her listeners must have been impressed to hear her calmly continue right on preaching. Eventually the bombardment stopped.

The next day Mr. and Mrs. Sype counted 35 rocks and chunks of coal that had been thrown. No damage had been done except for a few holes in the tent. They always looked back on that night as a time when it was particularly sweet to trust in Jesus. Rather than being frightened out of town, the Sypes found their resolve to remain strengthened. They continued the meetings until October 12 and then, according to their plan, took down the tent.

Some good results came from the difficult effort in Carrier. One family who had not even been Christians took their stand to obey all of God's commandments and became firm on all points of truth.

After taking down the tent, the Sypes moved the meetings to a school house five miles out of Carrier. Here Mrs. Sype addressed repeatedly a full house of people interested in Biblical truths. She also enjoyed preaching, with the assistance of an interpreter, to the German Adventists in the area.

For five years Minnie Sype worked diligently in the Oklahoma Territory, raising up churches where none had been, enlarging and strengthening existing churches.

However, her health was not excellent. In many places the Oklahoma water had an alkali content, called gyp (from gypsum, common in hard waters), that was very hard on Mrs. Sype's stomach. She suffered frequent, lengthy vomiting spells. Doctors recommended a change of climate.

The Iowa Conference president, visiting the Oklahoma camp meeting in 1905, urged the Sypes to return to their home state of Iowa. The next year, in view of Mrs. Sype's health, the family decided to accept the invitation to work in Iowa. They left Enid the first day of May 1906.

Setting foot on Iowa soil again was an emotional event for Logan and Minnie Sype. They and all three of their children had been born in that state.

Visiting her family, Minnie Sype found a young minister conducting an effort in Afton. The conference president asked her to assist him until camp meeting in June. Here Minnie Sype had first heard the Adventist beliefs. It was a rich experience now to be teaching others in Afton. At the same time, she could visit her family. Minnie was thankful beyond words to see two of her sisters baptized as fruitage from those meetings and from her years of praying and witnessing.

At the forty-third annual session of the Iowa Conference, held in June 1906, the committee on credentials and licenses recommended seven people to be credentialed as ordained ministers; 19 were awarded ministerial licenses, including Mrs. Minnie Sype. (*"Conference Proceedings," Iowa Workers' Bulletin, June 19, 1906: 195.*)

After camp meeting the Sypes started work in the southeastern part of Iowa at Fairfield. There was an existing church, but members had moved away, and church attendance was not large. Mrs. Sype divided the town into districts. She and the members went from house to house distributing tracts, and on the third visit they asked for the privilege of conducting Bible studies. Minnie preached and organized the work.

The work in Fairfield was in several ways a hard struggle. The splendid new tent—for which Minnie Sype had personally raised the money—was tested when a cyclone struck Fairfield on August 15, 1906. The Sypes awakened about midnight to find themselves in the midst of the most severe storm they had ever experienced in all their tent work. It seemed that tents and people might all be dashed to pieces. However, while trees were being uprooted, houses unroofed, and barns torn down, God kept his precious evangelistic team safe; and the tents suffered no damage except that the very old family tent was slightly torn. People of the town were surprised the next day to see the evangelistic tents standing sturdily after the storm.

Local ministers worked with all their ingenuity against this Adventist intrusion into their territory. One day Mrs. Sype went to visit an interested person in the home and found a minister there trying to keep his flock from disintegrating.

In Fairfield Mrs. Sype had more support than usual, with Anna Camp as the Bible worker and the Caviness family to help with speaking, visitation, and music. Mrs. Sype prepared short doctrinal articles that were accepted by the local paper.

Because people in neighboring Libertyville showed interest in Mrs. Sype's preaching, she began working there as well as in Fairfield. During one invitation that she made in Libertyville, the Holy Spirit seemed very near, and eight people came forward for prayer, six of whom had never lived as Christians previously.

A Swedish Methodist minister studied the Bible prophecies with the Sypes at Fairfield and ordered a prophetic chart. How much Adventism he preached to his congregation, the Sypes could only guess.

Minnie Sype felt a sense of urgency. She did not know how much time would be allowed for human beings to decide for or against the truth. Therefore when converts began to keep the Sabbath and then went on to join the church in spite of the trying circumstances experienced in the town of Fairfield, the results seemed especially sweet. Five people joined the Fairfield church by profession of faith and two by letter on Sabbath, August 31, with three more awaiting baptism. After working early and late, through storm and opposition, Minnie Sype considered that Sabbath a day of celebration. She and the rest of the team could say that though Fairfield presented a grueling struggle, through faith in God they had triumphed.

While she was pastor-evangelist that year in Fairfield, Mrs. Sype led the membership in sacrificing and working until they had paid off their church debt. This relieved financial pressure and allowed the church to move forward.

During the winter of 1906-1907, Mrs. Sype held meetings at Darbyville. When the meetings ended in April, 12 people—mostly adults—united with the church. Several male converts gave up habitual card playing, whiskey drinking, and tobacco smoking; this evangelist was thorough in preparing people for baptism.

Minnie Sype became increasingly involved in the overall work of the conference. In “Our Camp Meeting Symposium,” which appeared in the *Iowa Worker's Bulletin* prior to camp meeting and the conference session of 1907, Mrs. Sype was the only woman to write, along with several male ministers.

One of the conference session meetings dealt with the importance of daily study of the Sabbath school lessons. The printed report told how Anna Sype had learned to study her Sabbath school lesson while doing the laundry, sewing, and caring for her children. By studying this way throughout the week she prepared to teach a class on Sabbath. Only recently she had heard from a former member of her class; this woman, with no Adventists in her family, was keeping the Sabbath because of what she had learned in the Sabbath school class. (“*Conference Proceedings, Eleventh Meeting*,” *Iowa Workers' Bulletin*, June 18, 1907, 193 ff.)

Mrs. Sype was a valued member of the conference ministerial team whose credentialing continued to be that of a licensed minister; and in Iowa, as in Oklahoma, the conference employed more licensed ministers than ordained.

Evangelist Sype moved on to other locations. At Winthrop for a short time she had the help of an ordained minister, Elder E. G. Olson; he spoke of himself as assisting Mrs. Sype.

When she went to visit her sons at Stuart Academy, Mrs. Sype was sometimes invited to conduct spiritual meetings for the students. One day the principal asked her to speak in chapel on the topic of pure, clean living. She didn't feel that she knew what to say to that challenging high-school-age audience. However, she prayed earnestly to

God to give her the needed message. He answered her prayers, she spoke freely, and a revival started among the students as a result.

Mrs. Sype could be used by God to reach diverse groups. Children, youth, and adults found her sermons powerful, dynamic, and captivating. People who knew her have fond memories of her person and preaching. (*Shown in letters to the writer from: W. A. Howe, Hendersonville, N.C., August 5, 1989 (See appendix A, 2.1); Mrs. Joseph S. (Lorene) Moore, Arlington, Washington, July 7, 1984 (See appendix A, 2.2); Dr. J. M. Sorenson, Riverside, California, July 15, 1984, See appendix A, 2.3.*)

Mrs. Sype attended the Union Conference Session held at Minneapolis in the spring of 1908, at which the Iowa Conference Committee voted to ask her to move to the northwest corner of the state. Logan's mother, for whom he had been caring, had recently died, leaving him free to move with Minnie.

The Sypes arrived in Hawarden the evening of May 13, 1908, and that same night Mrs. Sype attended a union prayer meeting sponsored by several denominations. She was concerned when she heard one of the four ministers thanking God that there would be a long period of peace before the end of time. Observing these influential-looking ministers, Minnie asked herself, "Who am I, and what can I do?" She was 39 years of age, without formal education, but on fire for God. As she asked what she could do among these ministers who had many advantages, the answer came to her clearly, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." (Zechariah 4:6.)

The next day while looking for a tent site, Minnie encountered the Baptist minister. He asked, "You make a distinction between the laws in the Bible, don't you?"

"We are only practicing what you Baptists preach on the law question," Minnie replied. "You preach the Ten Commandments; we keep them."

The preacher soon switched the topic to the weather, and the relationship remained friendly. Mrs. Sype was invited to speak at the Baptist missionary meeting.

After the Sypes had raised their small tents and were preparing to pitch the large one, a man claimed that he had permission to use that very ground to plant a garden and he wanted to plow it. The Sypes assured him that they had made proper arrangements to use the vacant lot. The disconcerting facts were that while the Sypes had made their agreement with one man, the gardener was dealing with someone else.

Faced with this unpleasant reality, the Sypes prayed earnestly. Then Mrs. Sype met with the real estate man from whom she had obtained permission to use the lot and offered to pay him 5 dollars for the use of the ground; that would pay for the gardener's trouble, she thought, in securing another plot. The real estate man said he would do what he could. A day or two later the Sypes thanked the Lord when they learned that they were to be allowed to use the lot. (*This incident illustrates Mrs. Sype's method in working with problems. She first asked the Lord for guidance and help; then she took such action as inspiration and ingenuity devised. Five dollars had greater significance in 1908 than now.*)

Before long, the big tent stood in place. Raising a large tent was a dramatic event that attracted the attention of the whole community. Alas, the night after the happy tent-raising

in Hawarden, a huge storm attacked the area and blew the large tent and one of the small ones to the ground.

The Sypes' attitude was that this was the Lord's work, and if He wanted it done all over again, that's what they would do. Between showers, sometimes working in the rain, they raised the tent again.

Mrs. Sype wrote, "We have been hindered by rains and storms, but have *improved the opportunities as they came along*, and the Lord is blessing us. We are of good courage. The way never looked brighter; and we know Jesus is soon coming." (*Taken from Field Reports. Hawarden,* "Iowa Workers' Bulletin, July 14, 1908: 2; *emphasis added.*)

In spite of opposition, Minnie Sype started Sabbath services. Her work in Hawarden grew to such an extent that when J. W. McComas, another licensed minister, closed his meetings because of minimal results, he was sent to assist Mrs. Sype for a time.

When the tent meetings closed, Minnie Sype could report nine adults keeping all the commandments of God. She and her assistants held Bible studies in the homes of 28 families weekly. Attendance at Sabbath worship services kept growing. A church was organized in Hawarden and then a church school.

Mrs. Sype baptized at least one candidate whom she prepared for church membership while in Hawarden, Thomas Durst has reported in a letter to the editor of *Insight* magazine and in correspondence with the writer. Thomas' mother, Lillian Durst, frequently spoke over the years about her baptism in a stock tank by Mrs. Minnie Sype, a full-time minister. (*Taken from Thomas E. Durst, "A Real Lady Preacher, Insight, May 7, 1974: 2-3 (see page 2 of this book); Also from a personal letter and a general letter sent to the writer by Thomas E. Durst, Colville, Washington, May 28, 1984. See appendix A, 2.4.)*

Possibly because Hawarden was remote from the conference office, located as it was far in the northwestern corner of the state on the South Dakota border, the conference leadership sometimes allowed Mrs. Sype to baptize the candidates whom she prepared, if no ordained minister could be scheduled.

When Mr. Sype's throat condition would no longer allow him to lead the singing for the meetings, he stayed with Minnie's sister on her farm in a neighboring state, taking along James, the second son. During this time Minnie was lonely and greatly missed her husband's assistance leading the singing for the meetings. After a short time she visited her husband and James and told them she thought she would live at the farm, too, in order to be with them. However, both husband and son strongly opposed her giving up her work. Her family, recognizing her gift, always wanted her to be active in evangelism.

Strengthened by her family's support, Minnie returned, determined to do her best. It was a challenge. Often she spent all day in the homes of interested people, believing as she did in the importance of one-to-one contact; but then she would return to her lonely home and cry herself to sleep at night.

By the time Mrs. Sype's work moved primarily to Cedar Rapids several months later, her husband was well enough to join her; James returned with him. Mrs. Sype served as

part of a large evangelistic team for a local effort. However, she sometimes traveled to the western part of the state to strengthen the work that she had begun there.

She had always been an effective book and magazine seller, seeking to spread present truth and sometimes to meet expenses. Because of her experience, Mrs. Sype was asked to spend a few days at the 1908 canvassers' institute. Her counsel, both spiritual and practical, concerning how to use Adventist literature in missionary work was much appreciated.

In Cedar Rapids James, whose behavior had given his parents some cause for concern, but who was a compassionate boy nevertheless, had a life-changing experience. He helped a family in which the husband was suffering from a terminal illness. When the man died, James was deeply affected. He told his mother that he wanted to live a better life—that no life except that of a Christian was worth living.

From this point on James held down a night job, and he took pains to repay his mother some borrowed money.

One night as James waited to board the local train, a man who had been drinking got into a fight with several men concerning baggage. In the process the drunken man dealt James a life-threatening blow. The boy lived a few days. On Sabbath in the hospital he asked his mother to pray for him. She did, and he prayed also. Not long afterward he died, on December 10, 1911. How his parents' hearts ached!

Soon after James' funeral, his father became ill and went to be with the Manfulls, Minnie's sister and her husband, in Canada; Elder Manfull thought the Canadian climate might be therapeutic for Mr. Sype. This was a testing time for Minnie.

She also had positive events in her life. Ross, the oldest son, graduated with the first class of Oak Park Academy, June 12, 1912. The Sypes were delighted with their son's scholarship and dependability. Anna was achieving, too, in academy.

The responsibility of providing all the financial support for the family, except for anything Ross and Anna might earn toward their school expenses, provided a constant challenge to Minnie. Now the unexpected addition of debt for a suitable burial for James put Mrs. Sype into a financial stress.

Just a matter of months before this, Mrs. Sype had returned from a trip to find her home and belongings destroyed by fire. While she gave thanks that her loved ones were unhurt, she had to deal with the fact that her wardrobe consisted only of the dress she was then wearing and the contents of her suitcase. Charred beyond usefulness were the new suit and other clothing she had purchased for a church conference.

Replacing wardrobe and other possessions lost in the fire contributed to the financial trauma; Minnie Sype's salary was small, while her expenses seemed mountainous. For a while she sewed and sold sunbonnets to augment her salary. However, she did not like spending time on projects that did not contribute to her work.

Someone suggested that if Mrs. Sype would write down her life experiences, pointing out the ways in which God had led her and had supported her through difficulties, the book could provide inspiration and support for others. After pondering the idea, she



decided to take on the assignment. This seemed a suitable way to meet some of her expenses while providing material that could be used by God to help others. Before the end of 1912 her book was ready to distribute. She wrote it while continuing all her regular work; she missed only one appointment because of it, when a deadline was pressing. The title of the book is *Life Sketches and Experiences in Missionary Work*. (Taken from Minnie Sype, *Life Sketches and Experiences in Missionary Work Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Torch Press, 1912*). Conference employees recommended it as an excellent means of teaching members how to do missionary work. The income from Mrs. Sype's book enabled Ross to take advanced work at South Lancaster Academy and Anna to study at Oak Park Academy again for the 1912-13 school year. In 1916 Mrs. Sype revised the book. (*Minnie Sype, Life Sketches in Missionary Work; Hutchinson, Minnesota: Seminary Press, 1916.*)

After the major effort in Cedar Rapids, Mrs. Sype was left in charge of the follow-up. She organized the staff and layworkers to distribute Christian literature, give Bible studies, and conduct medical work; baptisms resulted. J. W. McComas, who like Minnie Sype had been a licensed minister when he had assisted her in a series of meetings, by this time was ordained; he baptized the converts. Minnie Sype, being a woman, could not participate in the progression toward ordination as she engaged productively in God's service year after year.

The Iowa Workers' *Bulletin* for July 30, 1912, contains accounts of two funerals conducted by Minnie Sype. The obituaries that she sent to the *Bulletin* are well written. She had been called back to conduct the funeral for a Mr. Booton at Fairfield, where she had been pastor. The other person, Mary Greer, had been a convert in a series of meetings that the evangelist had conducted. Mrs. Sype's preaching these two funeral sermons indicates the general nature of her ministry in the conference.

As a result of simply having been given the name of an interested person in Marion, Iowa, Minnie Sype had a Sabbath school going there by October 1912. The way this came about was that as Mrs. Sype went weekly to give Bible studies, the interested woman invited in her neighbors and friends. A Sabbath school with 28 people present at its first meeting resulted. At the same time, Mrs. Sype was holding Sunday morning meetings in the Marion jail, providing articles for the daily papers in Cedar Rapids, and getting ready to launch the Harvest Ingathering campaign. Mrs. Sype made trips around the Iowa Conference, strengthening the churches.

When Elder Schopbach became ill, Mrs. Sype was sent across the state to Carroll, Iowa, to continue his series of meetings. Under her ministry a company of believers was formed at Carroll, and Mrs. Sype began working on providing a suitable place of worship. She helped the membership to institute local Home Missionary and Young People's Societies. By March 1914 a church was organized and a church building dedicated in Carroll.

Evelyn Robeson Faust, who as a child attended the meetings in Carroll, has written concerning the impact that Mrs. Sype's preaching had on her entire family. Her father not only accepted Adventism as a result of Mrs. Sype's preaching, but also became thor-



The evangelistic meetings were conducted in the large tent, while the smaller tents were for the family and sometimes book sales.



(From right) Evangelist Minni Sype, her husband, Logan, thier daughter, Anna, and a friend, in Iowa.

*Photos courtesy of Minita Sype-Brown.*

oughly convinced of the importance of Christian education. In three houses in which the family lived after that time, Mr. Robeson was willing to forego family use of a room so that a church school could be held in the home. He was committed to make it possible for not only his daughters but also all the other Adventist children in Carroll to have a Christian education. (*Taken from a letter to the writer, Evelyn Robeson Faust, Cerritos, California, July 27, 1984. See appendix A, 2.5.*)

During the summer of 1914, L. P. Sype was enough better physically to return from Canada to work with his wife in an evangelistic effort at Lake City, Iowa, in the central-western part of the state. Bessie Scism, a Bible worker, completed the team. The Sypes located a lot near the center of Lake City, a community of about 2,000 people. Nearby were other attractions: the moving picture theater, a chautauqua lecture hall, and traveling shows. But since Minnie Sype and her co-laborers believed that God had a work for them to do in Lake City, they trusted their heavenly Father to send people to them in spite of the strong competition.

Mrs. Sype's preaching generated a rewarding interest. The tent in Lake City was often completely filled, with as many as 250 people in attendance. The meetings were held every night of the week, including the fourth of July. Minnie had never commanded keener attention from her listeners than at Lake City, nor had the literature that she distributed on each topic found greater receptivity. As a result, Mrs. Sype and her helpers started a Sabbath school with 25 to 32 people in attendance.

Mrs. Sype was still in charge of the work in Carroll; Mr. Sype was there, distributing literature. A Bible worker conducted house-to-house visitation in Lake City. And now some members at Grant City implored Mrs. Sype to get the Adventist work revived in that village, near Lake City.

In Grant City Mrs. Sype held meetings in a church yard that adjoined the land of the Pelmulder family. Dorothy Pelmulder, a girl of 12 or 13, accepted the Seventh-day Adventist message in those meetings. She was baptized by Minnie Sype as part of the harvest from the Lake City and Grant City meetings. This baptism was held in the Raccoon River during 1914. Dorothy Pelmulder Blaine Kistler's daughter, Joy Estes, and daughter-in-law, Mariel Jean Blaine, have provided documentation. (*Mariel Jean Blaine, Redlands, California, letters to the writer July 28 and October 15, 1984 (see appendix A, 2.6); C. Joy Estes, Los Angeles, California, telephone conversation with the writer, January 16, 1989; see appendix A, 2.7.*) Besides the baptism, another memory that Mrs. Kistler enjoyed sharing was how Mrs. Sype, when she talked about Catholics, became rather vehement and stamped her foot.

Hazel Halverson, who also attended the meetings in Lake City and the river baptism, described Mrs. Sype as an interesting speaker with an arresting personality, a large and rather prestigious woman. (*From Hazel Halverson, telephone conversation with the writer, June 18, 1989.*)

By 1914 Ross Sype was a minister in the Iowa Conference in addition to his mother. The conference administration assigned him to work with his mother; the two of them

were put in charge of the work in Dennison, Carroll, Lake City, and Rinard, with each of them preaching at two of the churches every Sabbath. In July 1915 Minnie Sype reported an attendance of nearly 300 at the tent meeting she and her son were holding at Rinard.

People were coming to the meetings in automobiles now. At the 1915 Iowa camp meeting, large tents were pitched for the protection of the new vehicles. (*From Iowa Workers' Bulletin, May 18, 1915: 4.*)

In July 1915, Ellen Harmon White died in California at the age of 88. All of Minnie Sype's ministry up to this point had been concurrent with that of Mrs. White (*chapter 7*).

Mrs. Sype was not the only woman busy in the organized church work in Iowa at the time. When the election of conference officers took place in 1915, Mrs. Flora Dorcas was re-elected conference secretary, Meta Peterson became field missionary secretary, and the two of them jointly held the position of Sabbath school secretary. The Iowa Conference administrators were open to the use of women's talents in ministry.

Minnie Sype became home missionary secretary for the Iowa Conference in June 1916. Because she wanted to enable people to work for the Lord, she thanked God for the opportunity. In the churches of Iowa she found a willingness on the part of the people to be of service.

Elder W. A. Howe has told me how as a child he appreciated Mrs. Sype's visits to his home church in Des Moines during this period. Her being a woman didn't seem to disturb the congregation at all. She was recognized as someone with authority. (*From a letter to the writer by W. A. Howe, Hendersonville, N.C., August 5, 1985, See appendix 2.1.*)

After four successful years in the home missionary work in Iowa, Minnie Sype moved west to do similar work in Washington State and then the Upper Columbia Conference, 1920-26.

Mr. Sype, after years of ill health, died in 1925. His widow mourned the loss of her husband and dear friend. The two had shared many sweet experiences in ministry together, had weathered stiff storms of trouble, and had supported one another throughout.

Mrs. Sype moved east to conduct an evangelistic effort in the East Pennsylvania Conference, after which she traveled as circulation manager for the *Watchman* magazine (Southern Publishing Association, Nashville, Tennessee) during the years 1926-27. Then she returned to the Northwest and from 1927 until retirement in 1930 engaged in evangelism and district work in the Upper Columbia Conference. At the time of her retirement she was only 61 years of age and was pastoring four churches.

The minister's retirement was occasioned by her remarrying: on November 10, 1930, she married Mr. Atteberry. Apparently church administrators immediately asked for her to go on sustentation, because her application for sustentation is dated a month later, December 13, 1930. Minnie was a bit piqued and had every reason for being so. The following responses on her application form indicate that she needed her salary to continue, and considered herself still able to earn that income.



Minnie Sype, licensed minister 1902-1956 in widely scattered fields including the Oklahoma Territory, Iowa, Washington State, and the Bahamas. This photograph was taken after she had moved to the Northwest.

*Photo courtesy of Minita Sype-Brown.*

4. If your compensation was by salary, give last rate per week. \$25.00 When? *Now.* Where? *Upper Columbia.*
5. What is the highest rate of salary that you have received in this work? \$32.00 When? *Up to 3 years ago.* Where? *Washington & Upper Columbia.*
16. Do you own a home? *No, my husband has 40 acres but no improvements to speak of.*
17. State value of property. *I have nothing.*
18. Do you have an independent income, pension, etc.? *No.*
20. Miscellaneous Information or Suggestions. *Mr. Atteberry is 62. Has a car and 40 acres of land but no improvements to speak of. He loves the truth and is willing to spend his time helping me and selling books.*

In answer to the question, "To what extent are you still able to labor in the message?" she wrote, "I think I am quite capable yet."

Following is part of the section of the sustentation form filled out by the conference:

1. When did your Committee or Board conclude that applicant had become incapacitated for active labor? *December 9, 1930.*

There is no indication that the "applicant" had become "incapacitated for active labor" other than by marrying a husband who the brethren apparently thought should be able to support her. As in the case of Mrs. Williams (*chapter 1*), remuneration had to do with marital status and was not necessarily payment for the work done. Mrs. Sype-Atteberry, who had been a salaried licensed minister since 1902, was retired at the age of 61, still working and apparently in good health, although the couple did not have any dependable income apart from Mrs. Sype-Atteberry's work. Ten dollars a week was voted for her sustentation income. (*Taken from Sustentation Fund Application, Mrs. Minnie Sype-Atteberry, December 13, 1930. General Conference Archives.*)

Minnie Sype-Atteberry did not stop doing the Lord's work. Rich memories of her work persist from this period of her ministry in the Northwest, before and after the official retirement. (*Taken from a letter to the writer by Mrs. Hilda West, So. Cle Elum, Washington, 1984. See appendix A, 2.8.*) Continuing to be licensed as a minister, Mrs. Sype-Atteberry worked in Washington, Florida, and the Bahamas. (*Letter from Minita Sype-Brown, Key Largo, Florida, to the writer, October 29, 1984. See appendix A, 2.9.*)

Mr. Atteberry died, and later Minnie married again. One of her descendants remarked that her marriages later in life were entered into primarily to help the person married, and there is probably a strong element of truth in this. Her last ministerial licenses were issued in the name of Mrs. Minnie S. Crippin.

This pioneer minister and resourceful homemaker served her Lord as evangelist, pastor, departmental secretary, and publication circulation manager through 28 years of formal ministry preceded by years of active lay ministry and followed by years of active

### Farmer's Wife Becomes Evangelist

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retirement. She died June 23, 1956, in Portland, Oregon, at 87 years of age. At least ten churches were raised up as a result of her labors. (*From a letter from Anna Gregg Hamlin (Minnie Sype's daughter) to the writer July 2, 1984:*) "Mother raised up many churches...[In Oklahoma] there were at least 5...[In] Iowa ...I remember her raising up new churches in Carroll, Lake City, Calmar and Hawarden. ...She raised up the church at Denison, Iowa" *She was a licensed minister for 54 years (1902-1956).*

In the face of accusations, poverty, and the loss of dear family members, this faith-filled woman "improved the opportunities as they came along." A monumental life work is the result.





Ours is a civil and not a religious government. It is the world's greatest government since time began. Let there be no innovation upon our splendid system where in all men are free.

—Lulu Wightman, 1909



## Minister to Legislatures

Lulu Wightman

*Licensed minister 1897 to 1907, 1909 to 1910*

*Ordained minister in 1908*

The ministry seemed a proper calling for a young woman, Lulu Russell, whose two older brothers were outstanding Adventist ministers and administrators: Elder E. T. Russell, president of the Central Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and Elder K. C. Russell, first president of the Chesapeake Conference.

As a young married woman, Lulu Wightman experienced a call to evangelism. Her husband, John, consistently encouraged her. Church leaders discussed how Lulu Wightman might carry out her call.

Not everyone was enthusiastic about including this young woman in the ministry. In 1896 Elder J. W. Raymond, an established minister in the New York Conference, agreed when asked by the conference leadership to add Lulu Wightman to his evangelistic team in Cuba, New York. However, his written offer stated that while Lulu would receive a small income for her services, her husband would get none. (*Taken from a letter by J. W. Raymond, Cuba, Allegany Co., N.Y., to P. Hinne, June 16, 1896. See appendix A, 3.1.*)

Lulu promptly replied that she and her husband would be glad to join his tent company but could not afford to do so unless John Wightman could be paid for his work. He could not afford to be idle all summer, his wife pointed out; moreover, what she was offered would not board both of them. (*Elder J. W. Raymond quoted Lulu Wightman's letter to him in a letter that he wrote to Bro. Hinne [1896]. See appendix A, 3.2.*)

The previous Sunday night Lulu had launched an effort in Hornellsville, New York. John, formerly a newspaper editor, had advertised the series effectively in the local papers. Lulu and John welcomed several leading citizens to their first Sunday evening meeting. They decided to continue their effort in Hornellsville.

Elder Raymond wrote to the conference treasurer that he was averse to Lulu's entering the ministerial work. However, in the same letter he said that he thought the conference should bear the traveling expenses of Mrs. Stowe, a minister's wife, to and from evangelistic work; he thought that was only fair, as required by the golden rule.

That the golden rule might be applicable in the case of a husband whose wife was called to ministerial work did not seem to occur to him.

Meanwhile, Lulu Wightman preached in Hornellsville. (*Taken from John S. and Lulu Wightman, "Hornellsville," New York Indicator, August 12, 1896. (See appendix A, 3.3.)*) Much of the material for this chapter was gleaned from the church paper the *New York Indicator* and correspondence from the New York Conference, both available in the General Conference Archives.) This did not seem a particularly promising location for an effort. No Seventh-day Adventists lived there to help with the meetings, and the residents appeared rather apathetic religiously. Nevertheless, Lulu celebrated the good news of the gospel and set forth the Adventist world view while her husband publicized the effort. As weeks passed the attendance grew instead of dropping off until people were thronging into the hall. Three in attendance started keeping the Sabbath, while others showed interest.

At this point Elders Raymond and Stowe, with their tent company, were sent from Cuba to Hornellsville to continue the work. The Wightmans, being committed to spreading the gospel with the judgment hour message to unentered areas, moved to Gas Springs so that Lulu could begin meetings there on September 15, 1896. As a result of that series, the Wightmans could write to the *Indicator* that "fifteen of the best citizens here have taken a firm stand for the truth." (*Indicator*, November 4, 1896). They repeatedly demonstrated their ability to attract cultured, educated people to Adventism.

The young woman whom Elder Raymond had been hesitant to see entering the ministry was blessed by God with results, and before long Elder Raymond as an ordained minister was sent to organize a 26-member company at Gas Springs, New York, the fruitage of Lulu Wightman's preaching and her husband's willing assistance. Elder Raymond reported that the members were of good courage and all seemed strong in the faith. (*Indicator*, December 30, 1896).

During the summer of 1897 Lulu Wightman preached in an interdenominational church in Wallace. The meetings caused quite a stir in this village of 300 people. Local churches brought in an out-of-town antinomian preacher (who taught against the moral law on the grounds that faith is the means of salvation) to challenge the Adventists on the matter of the Sabbath. The Wightmans invited their conference president, Elder Place, to assist them in meeting this opposition.

At the time of the resultant debate, the interdenominational church—which held 350—was jammed with people while others stood eight to ten deep outside the windows. Excitement was intense. The Adventist presentation was well received. The Wightmans thanked God for this victory for truth and followed up the interest from the debate with energetic, effective work. A company of 14 believers was soon formed in Wallace. (*Indicator*, July 21 and 28, 1897).

Lulu and John Wightman showed a youthful exuberance and a relish for their work. They raised part of the money for Lulu's meetings during these early years with the blessing of the conference president, who commended their work.

Elder S. M. Cobb, one of the ministers in the New York Conference, let it be known that he appreciated the work accomplished by women in ministry. In a letter to the conference president, he praised the contribution of Bible workers, who were almost exclusively women, to the overall ministry of the church. He continued with a strong defense of the one woman evangelist in the conference, Lulu Wightman, as being a suitable instrument of God to use to present the truth. He asserted that a good woman worker could accomplish as much as the best male minister in the conference.

“Look at Sr. Lulu W.’s work,” he challenged.

She has accomplished more in the last two years than any minister in the state, and yet the conference has held her off at arms length, and refused to recognize her as a suitable person to present the truth: when in fact she was out of sight of the very ones that opposed her; in point of ability. (You know who I mean).

As a member of the conference executive committee, Elder Cobb evaluated three men being considered for credentials, approving two of the three. He added, “I am also in favor of giving license to Sr. Lulu Wightman to preach, and believe that there is no reason why she should not receive it.” He more tentatively suggested the possibility of licensing her husband as well, depending on whether or not the ministry was the life-work to which he considered himself to be called. (*Taken from letter by Elder S. M. Cobb, Lockport, N.Y., to Elder A. E. Place, Rome, N.Y., August 6, 1897.*)

In 1897 a healthy and attractive baby girl was born to the Wightmans, and the grateful parents named her Ruth. Lulu suffered a physical setback afterward, but prayers were offered, and soon she was fully active again.

The primary function that Lulu performed in the Wightman evangelistic team can be deduced from an account given at the thirty-sixth annual business session of the New York Conference, held in Syracuse during September 1897. When the new Gas Springs Church was presented to the constituents by the conference president, Elder Place, it was stated that this “strong body” of new believers “was raised up largely through the efforts of Sister Lulu Wightman and her husband.” (*Indicator*, October 6, 1897.)

The statement that the new group was raised up largely through Lulu’s efforts, with her husband mentioned in a secondary way, is no reflection on the character or abilities of John Wightman. He possessed among other gifts a special talent for preparing promotional material about the meetings and on doctrinal subjects and getting it into the newspapers. He had been a city editor of daily papers and a contributor to Sunday journals. His success as a writer continued throughout his wife’s and his own ministry.

In September 1897 Lulu Wightman was voted a ministerial license for the first time, at the same official meeting in which the Gas Springs company was accepted into the conference. John Wightman did not receive a license.

In November Mrs. Wightman began preaching in the village of Avoca. Throughout the series attendance was so high that every night, except one when the weather was particularly bad, from 50 to 100 people were unable to enter even for standing room.

Avoca was three miles from Wallace, where Lulu and John Wightman had formed a company of 14. Lulu continued devoting part of her energy to Wallace, where she conducted Sabbath services. She felt the spirit of the Lord, and the number attending on Sabbath increased to 42.

A Presbyterian minister who heard Lulu Wightman preach, Elder S. W. Pratt, wrote a letter to John Wightman objecting on Biblical grounds to a woman's being in the pulpit. In his reply Mr. Wightman looked at the circumstances under which 1 Corinthians 14:34—the verse to which the minister alluded—was written, noting the confusion that existed in the church at Corinth. To correct this abuse, Paul wrote particular recommendations for that time and place.

John Wightman went on to state that the Biblical essence of the male/female relationship is equality. Men and women in God's sight are equal, each in the sphere ordained by God. As for man's sphere, he was given "the rulership" (1 Timothy 2:12), so that women were not to usurp authority over men in teaching and ruling the church. John Wightman said that he had no problem with this principle. He did not find his wife taking authority over him or church leadership.

He then asked the minister why, considering his interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:34, were women allowed to speak in his own Presbyterian churches? John Wightman questioned the consistency of the attack on his wife's preaching while the good Presbyterian women were allowed to testify in church to the goodness and mercy of God.

Returning to a scriptural basis for his argument, Brother Wightman called attention to the Apostle Paul's instructions concerning the dress of women who pray and prophesy in public (1 Corinthians 11:5, 6, 13), evidence that women did both prophesy and pray in meetings. He pointed out the godly ministering women mentioned by Paul in Rom. 16:1-15. He noted that Priscilla seems to have instructed Apollos (Acts 18:24-26), and that Philip had four daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:9). He cited Acts 2:17, 18, where Joel's prophecy of the pouring out of the Spirit with no discrimination as to sex is quoted.

Obviously this matter of women in ministry was a subject to which John Wightman had given careful study. He celebrated the conversion of men and women to Christ through the preaching of women.

He concluded his letter by observing that at a time when ministers in the sacred desk—men receiving up to \$50,000 a year in salary—were failing to cry aloud to show people their sins and were neglecting to point to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world as the true remedy, it seemed high time for women to begin to preach the Word. "The fact that the Lord's presence infuses such dedicated women with power and might," John Wightman declared, "may be perceived by all who are not looking through smoked glass." (*Taken from a letter by John S. Wightman, Avoca, N.Y., to S. W. Pratt, Campbell, N.Y., December 15, 1897.*)

Although people were begging her and her husband to remain, Mrs. Wightman wrote to the conference president requesting him to send someone to Wallace to follow up the

interest that her meetings had created so that she could move on. She felt it best to hold meetings elsewhere in the general area while returning occasionally. An ordained minister was needed to establish the new church, anyway. Mrs. Wightman also wrote that she did not want the people “to think too much” of her, showing awareness of the perennial problem of idolization of evangelists. (*Taken from a letter by Mrs. Lulu Wightman, Wallace, N.Y., to Eld. A. E. Place, Rome, N.Y., January 31, 1898.*)

Soon four more people in Avoca accepted the Bible truths taught by Mrs. Wightman and were warmly welcomed into the Adventist fellowship. Two of them were retired farmers of means, well known in the community.

In 1899 an invitation from the Corning Company arrived with the force of a Macedonian call. The members implored Mrs. Wightman to come help them reach the people of their community with the gospel; apparently they believed the time was right. She asked to be excused because she was already working in two locations, Avoca and Wallace; accomplishing anything further at the time seemed out of the question.

Another letter came, more urgent than the first. The Corning believers would not accept “no” as the response. As the Holy Spirit impressed Lulu Wightman that she should go for a short time, she agreed to spend from Friday through Monday morning at Corning. She delivered four sermons during that brief period; the hall was crowded for each, and people packed in even around the pulpit.

In attendance were individuals whom local members had tried unsuccessfully to attract to their previous meetings. It was evident that the Spirit was at work.

Mrs. Wightman’s productive trip to Corning was made without cost to the conference. Lulu took up a collection that covered expenses plus \$3.02 that she sent in with her report.

Lulu urged the conference administration to send a minister to Corning to follow up the interest that her meetings had generated. She did not want to see the intelligent, interested converts drift away. (*Taken from a letter by Mrs. Lulu Wightman, Wallace, N.Y., to Eld. A. E. Place, February 7, 1898.*)

To care for little Ruth, Mrs. Wightman sometimes employed a resident of the town where she was living. She preferred, however, having a church member to travel with the family, giving her services in return for board and traveling expenses.

To the village of North Cohocton, to Brocton, and then to Sheridan, Lulu Wightman moved without complaint. “The last warning message” must be proclaimed everywhere.

Mrs. Wightman was next sent to Silver Creek, where she arranged to hold the effort in a commodious, carpeted hall in the center of town with heat and lights furnished for only two dollars a week. (*Indicator, October 12, 1898. See appendix A, 3.4.*)

She asked church members in the conference to send their church papers and tracts for her husband to distribute free as he sold religious literature. The budget obviously was limited.

Current events provided evangelists with powerful illustrations as they preached on religious intolerance and persecution predicted for earth's end time. Two Seventh-day Adventists in Maryland were imprisoned about this time for working in the cornfield on Sunday. (From A. E. Place, "In Jail with My Brethren," *Indicator*, December 14, 1898). Lulu Wightman no doubt called attention, as did her fellow evangelists, to the Sunday laws being enforced or considered around the nation.

During the conference session of 1898, the Wallace Company that had been established and nurtured by the Wightmans was recognized officially as a church with 14 members. During the business proceedings Lulu Wightman was again designated a licensed minister.

At Silver Creek the work flourished under Lulu Wightman's direction. Two men and two women began observing the seventh-day Sabbath while others seriously considered how they should respond to the new truths. (Lulu Wightman, "Silver Creek," *Indicator* November 16, 1898. See appendix A, 3.5.)

At this point several ministers of other denominations took on the combative mood characteristic of the period. On Sunday evening one of the ministers preached against the Sabbath at a combined meeting of the local churches in the community's largest sanctuary. Lulu Wightman attended the meeting. She was permitted to announce—also in the mode of that era—that she would review the discourse the following evening.

The hall the Adventists secured was crowded before the meeting began, and many were turned away. Once again the words of Bible truth as presented by Mrs. Wightman made a deep impression on the listeners. Afterward it was possible for her to resume her series, although she knew that preaching on "The State of the Dead" would draw further vigorous opposition. In the midst of this theological give-and-take, people accepted the Biblical teachings of the Adventists and changed their lifestyles accordingly. It was the consensus that Adventist Biblical teachings had gained another decisive victory.

The Wightmans moved to Geneva, a city of 12,000 in which Seventh-day Adventists had previously made little impact. They began making careful preparation for the anticipated effort by means of extensive newspaper and handbill advertising, John's forte.

One of the wealthiest and most influential merchants in Geneva provided space in a large store building in the heart of the city for two weeks free, and after that for a nominal rent.

Gas lights and steam heat in the auditorium made listeners comfortable. The seating capacity was 90. The Wightmans were grateful to the businessman and to God, for they found that the rent for other store buildings in the city ran from 75 to 100 dollars per month. The Geneva Opera House manager provided an organ for the series.

Nightly meetings began March 17, 1899. Attendance was not large at first but gradually increased. The Wightmans found rooms on the ground floor of a centrally located apartment house, a suitable place to receive interested people. Brother Erb, a canvasser, helped with the visitation in the mornings and sold from four to eight dollars worth of books daily in the afternoons. Lulu Wightman and her assistants were joyful to be sowing the seeds of salvation, trusting God to bring an appropriate harvest.

While in Geneva, Mrs. Wightman received letters from two women who had attended her meetings in Angola. They both said that they had accepted the truth and had joyfully begun keeping the Sabbath. (*Indicator*, May 3, 1899). God was using Lulu's preaching to bless people even after she had progressed to a new location.

A handbill prepared for Lulu Wightman's evangelizing during 1901 demonstrates one means that John Wightman used to draw people to the meetings. (*Handbill printed by Ontario Repository-Messenger Print, Canandaigua, N.Y., 1901. (General Conference Archives.) See last page of this chapter.*) This type of advertising, used successfully by many Seventh-day Adventist evangelists, brought curious people out to learn what the Bible teaches regarding the Sabbath.

In 1903 John Wightman was voted a ministerial license for the first time. Lulu Wightman for the seventh year was recognized as a licensed minister.

Together John and Lulu held an effort in Eden beginning on December 8, 1903. A blizzard replete with deep snow, freezing cold, and biting winds prevented people from coming out at all for a week. After that the Wightmans began again. A few attended, and the evangelists worked patiently hoping gradually to gain a better foothold. They prayed the Lord would lead souls in that area to look upon the Eden of eternity as a far better place in which to dwell than Eden, Erie County, New York. The work in Eden was difficult. People resisted taking a stand for the truth.

When a member, Edwin R. Darling, aged 52, died, Lulu Wightman conducted the funeral. She wrote the obituary, delivered the funeral discourse, and was assisted in the service by Elder J. W. Raymond. (*Indicator*, April 27, 1904).

The Wightmans moved to Avon in 1904 to evangelize and hold worship services. At one of the Sabbath services, when Lulu Wightman asked who of those present had decided to accept the truth fully and to keep the Sabbath, nine people rose to their feet in assent. Lulu and her husband gave thanks for each one.

A leading businessman in Avon who up to that time had not been a praying, Bible-studying Christian attended the meetings regularly, purchased a Bible, and set to work studying the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.

The conference president, Elder S. H. Lane, bought a large tent for 71 dollars for the Wightmans to use in their efforts; they liked it and found it easy to pitch.

The next tent pitching took place at the foot of beautiful lake Conesus. Unlike the blizzard that greeted the Wightmans when they started their December series in Eden, perfect weather accompanied the opening of their effort in Lakeville on Friday, June 24, 1904. Fifty people attended that night, and on Sunday evening the attendance swelled to 100.

A new and formidable challenge was posed when for three nights the Wightmans found themselves in face-to-face confrontation with a spiritualist medium. The attendance grew very large. God saw the Wightmans through this crisis victoriously.

In place after place the Wightmans left behind them a new company or church where none had existed before their coming. On August 21 a church with a membership of 14 was organized at Avon, where they had previously held meetings.

On September 2, 1904, about a month before the New York Conference proceedings at which credentialing decisions would be determined and workers' salaries audited, John Wightman wrote to Elder S. H. Lane, the conference president. In the letter John pointed out that Lulu's work had been "considered by three or four former committees as being that of an ordained minister unquestionably." (*From a letter by John S. Wightman, Avon, N.Y., to Eld. S. H. Lane, Rome, N.Y., September 2, 1904. Emphasis in the original. See appendix A 3.6*)

He specifically referred to the 1901 New York Conference meeting in Oswego, at which it had been determined to set Lulu's salary "as near the 'ordained' rate as possible." At that meeting Elder Underwood and others held the view that the ordination of an effective woman minister would not be inappropriate. Elder Underwood's status was comparable to that of an immediate past union president. However, those who objected to ordaining Lulu Wightman prevailed. In all the discussions, no question appears to have been raised concerning Lulu's ability to do the work of ministry.

John's letter did not affect his wife's credentialing. However, it documents the 1901 discussion concerning the possibility of ordaining Lulu Wightman to the ministry. (*Taken from Bert Haloviak, "Route to the Ordination of Women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church: Two Paths," March 18, 1985, unpublished paper.*)

About the time that John Wightman wrote the letter supporting his wife's fitness to be ordained to the ministry, Elder T. E. Bowen prepared a chart summarizing the number of sermons, Bible readings, families visited, baptisms, and other services or accomplishments for each of the ministers and Bible workers in the New York Conference. (*Chart made in 1904 by Elder T. E. Bowen of the New York Conference. Available in the General Conference Archives.*) Along one side are Elder Bowen's handwritten comments, "Thirty-four of the 65 added [are] the result of two licensed Ministers and one Bible Worker leaving 26 as the result of 10 workers for 1 year." From what follows it is clear that the two licensed ministers to whom he referred were the Wightmans.

Although there is a row of figures after each minister's name, under the column for "Added to Church" Elder Bowen has put a bracket and given one total for the two Wightmans. That number is 27, and significantly, he puts it on Lulu Wightman's line and circles it. Elder Bowen appreciated the fruitfulness of the Wightmans' work and considered Lulu the leading evangelist on the team.

The Wightmans moved from New York State to Reno, Nevada, which formed part of the California Conference. In the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* for 1908, Lulu Wightman is listed as an ordained minister of the California Conference, as is her husband, John Wightman. Just as no official records are found today of the 1901 meeting considering Lulu's possible ordination—the only account occurring in her husband's letter—likewise no official records seem to exist of a discussion or action underlying this listing. Nevertheless, given the background of the discussion of ordination for Mrs. Wightman in the New York Conference, it seems possible that the California Conference may have invited the Wightmans with the understanding that both would be ordained



ministers and may have turned in their names thus to the *Yearbook*, afterward being discouraged by church leadership from continuing Mrs. Wightman in that status.

As their ministry progressed, the Wightmans became much concerned about the religious liberty thrust of the Adventist movement. Back at Angola around 1898, Lulu Wightman had preached to a receptive audience on the subject of “Church and State in the United States.” As she studied and developed her presentations, she was a sought-after speaker on religious liberty issues.

On February 28, 1909, Lulu Wightman addressed a capacity crowd in a public auditorium in Lincoln, Nebraska, on the subject of religious liberty. Many congressmen and government officials were present. Since the Wightmans had recently accepted invitations to minister in the Central Union Conference, this meeting was in their territory. Sunday baseball was the hot issue that gave religious liberty leaders an entrée just then. Both Lulu Wightman and her brother, Elder E. T. Russell, made powerful presentations. The *Nebraska State Journal* carried an article of more than 20 column inches reporting the event.

Mrs. Wightman stressed principles characterizing the government of the United States. She cited cases in which courts had reversed decrees that the church had set up for control of Sunday entertainments. Religious legislation, she pointed out, “is not allowable in our state and national legislatures” by virtue of well established practice in this nation. She wrapped things up with an illustration and a patriotic appeal.

Ours is a civil and not a religious government. It is the world's greatest government since time began. A gentleman giving a toast at a grand diplomatic dinner in Paris said: “Here's to the United States of America. Bounded on the north by the aurora borealis, on the south by the procession of the equinoxes, on the east by primeval chaos, and on the west by the day of judgment.” Nothing short of the day of judgment can produce a better and a grander government. Let us take no new steps. Let there be no innovation upon our splendid system wherein all men are free.

—“Religious Liberty Meeting,” *Nebraska State Journal*, March 1, 1909, p. 3. (See appendix A, 3.7.)

Later in 1909, the House of Representatives for the state of Missouri invited Lulu Wightman to address them in their chamber on the topic, “The Rise of Religious Liberty in the United States.” John Wightman wrote, “I believe this action upon the part of the Missouri legislature is unprecedented in the history of our people.” (From John S. Wightman, “Sunday Legislation Defeated,” *Missouri Workers' Record*, April 28, 1909).

Clearly Lulu Wightman possessed extraordinary ability to address large crowds; both she and her husband could reach officials of high status and responsibility.

Along with the increasing religious liberty emphasis, Mrs. Wightman did not slight her customary evangelistic work. In Kansas City, Missouri, she conducted a successful

series during 1909-1910. For the Sunday evening lectures, which she started early in the winter, the attendance was encouraging from the beginning. After a time the interest was great enough that Mrs. Wightman decided to hold meetings every night.

This intensive part of the series ran for two weeks starting March 6. The last night about 400 were present, and 75 to 100 more could not enter even for standing room. Thirteen adults had accepted the truths presented when the series closed, and during the following month four others showed a strong interest. (*From Jas. Cochran, "Revival Meetings In Kansas City, Missouri," Advent Review and Sabbath Herald 87. April 7, 1910: 16.*)

About this time the Wightmans came to differ seriously with the denomination on the issue of religious liberty. The way the Wightmans understood various statements that Ellen G. White had made over a period of time caused them to believe that she was changing positions on religious liberty issues. While Lulu and John Wightman seemed to fit admirably in their roles as denominational evangelists, historian Bert Haloviak wrote that "Tragically, the Wightmans would come to a point where they no longer felt comfortable within the ministry and membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church." (*Haloviak, p. 14.*) In spite of this parting of the ways, based on how the stand on religious liberty should be defined, there is much about the Wightmans from which we can learn and take inspiration.

"Mrs. Lulu Wightman provided... tangible evidence of her 'call' to gospel ministry," Bert Haloviak observed. "Indeed, the results from her evangelism would rank her not only as the most outstanding evangelist in New York State during the time, but among the most successful within the denomination for any time period." (*Hakoviak, p. 10.*)

Summarizing the fruits of her ministry,

Between 1896 and 1905, Mrs. Wightman raised up churches in Hornellsville, Gas Springs, Wallace, Silver Creek, Geneva, Angola, Gorham, Fredonia, Avoca, Rushville, Canandaigua, and Penn Yan. After her husband was licensed in 1903, they jointly established churches in Avon, Lakeville, Hemlock, South Livonia and Bath.<sup>25</sup>

—*Hakoviak, p. 10*

From village to town to city, from tent to legislative hall to church, Lulu Wightman and her husband communicated the good news of salvation in Christ and the distinctive teachings of Adventism with tremendous energy and dedication. How many people will enjoy the kingdom of heaven because of their ministry only eternity can reveal.

# \$100 REWARD

Will be paid at the Gospel Meeting in the Town Hall, Thursday evening, January 3, 1901, to any person or persons, presenting one or more tests of Scripture that read or prove that the First Day of the week or Sunday, is the Sabbath, or that Christ or the Apostles ever observed it as such.

LULU WIGHTMAN

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Say! Which day is the Sabbath?

The *First Day* or the *Seventh Day* of the week?

Jesus said: "If you love me, keep my commandments,"

"If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."

CHRIST MADE THE SABBATH

Proof: Mark 2:27, 28; John 1:3; Col. 1:16; Eph. 3:9.

Inasmuch as the Fourth Commandment of the Decalogue enjoins the observance of the seventh day as the Sabbath, is it not a matter of vital importance whether we keep it or not?

A series of Bible Lectures upon this great question—for the Sabbath question is now one of world-wide agitation and importance—will begin in the Town Hall on Thursday evening.

Even a criminal is guaranteed the right of a trial by jury!

Why not give the TRUTH OF GOD a hearing?

(Romans 10:17.)

Do not fulfill Acts 28:27.

Remember 1 Thess. 5:21.

All are cordially invited to attend.

LULU WIGHTMAN,  
Bible Evangelist



“I prayed and worked on.”

—Anna Knight, 1952



## Innovative Administrator

### Anna Knight: 1874 to 1972

Anna Knight was a little girl with an amazing appetite for knowledge. She was born in 1874 to an emancipated slave in Mississippi, and she grew up moving to the rhythm of work.

Anna’s mother subsisted as a sharecropper in Jasper County. By energetic labor and disciplined frugality, Mrs. Knight managed to buy 80 acres of land. Later she and her children homesteaded another 80 acres adjoining. With a cow, horse, and a yoke of oxen, the multi-generational family grew all their own food as well as cotton for a cash crop. But the small amount of cash was never enough.

The Knights could not afford “extras” such as pens and paper, to say nothing of books or magazine subscriptions. Mrs. Knight and her brood did remarkably well to acquire their land and livestock. (*From Anna Knight, Mississippi Girl: An Autobiography (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1952). Material in this chapter not otherwise credited is based on Miss Knight’s Autobiography*). Without textbooks or writing materials, Anna sought through creative means to satisfy her seemingly insatiable desire to learn. In spite of the long hours of work, sometimes on Sunday Anna did get some free time. When this happened, she was able to slip away and visit a friend who was so fortunate as to own books. Anna would offer to help do the work if the friend would, in exchange, teach her to read.

Anna was eager to share with her siblings, nieces, and nephews what she learned. After nailing together boards, Anna blackened them with wet soot; when this hand-crafted blackboard had thoroughly dried, she wrote on it with natural chalk dug out of the mud bank. She set the other children to work copying in the sand the numbers and letters that she printed on the board.

For recreation Anna loved to participate in, and to help organize, the neighborhood spelling bees that were held on Sundays. She probably competed very well.

Reading virtually everything that she could get her hands on, Anna noticed an advertisement for a magazine for children of her own age. This she wanted more than anything else in the world. Some way she coaxed her mother into letting her have the dollar necessary to subscribe, but was firmly told *never* again to request a dollar for such a wasteful luxury.

From her magazine Anna learned how she could receive free samples of catalogs, papers, and even an occasional book. Delighted, she got a friend to write the necessary letter of request. Before long she was receiving a great deal of mail. When a catalog had some script print, Anna took it outside and earnestly practiced writing in the sand.

Anna received a sample copy of a little paper called *Comfort*. After reading it, she was eager to subscribe. She knew there was no point in asking her mother for the 25-cent subscription price, so she earned it by extra work picking cotton.

In one issue of *Comfort* Anna found a notice that seemed exactly to fit her needs. She copied it verbatim, except for the substitution of her own name. Her request read, “Will some of the cousins [readers] please send me some nice reading matter? I would like to correspond with those of my own age.” Now the mailbox was busier than ever—Anna received 40 responses.

Edith Embree, a Seventh-day Adventist young woman, saw Anna’s request. She belonged to the Young People’s Literature Correspondence Band. The Holy Spirit enabled Miss Embree to see in Anna’s notice an opportunity to bring someone to Christ. She worked for the *Signs of the Times* and sent Anna copies of that journal as well as various other tracts and doctrinal books. Over a period of time Edith not only sent literature but also wrote letters, asking Anna to respond to certain articles, which the girl was glad to do.

After Anna had been reading these Seventh-day Adventist publications and corresponding with Edith Embree for about six months, she decided she must live according to the truths found in the papers. She had no idea what group published the materials that she had been reading. Because the teachings were from the Bible, she complied.

Anna began to observe Saturday as the Sabbath, for that is what the Bible teaches. When she explained to her family that she was now resting on the seventh day rather than on the first, they were dreadfully upset. They suspected that much reading and study had driven her “out of her mind.”

Anna had a form of savings. She and her brother, as the result of much hard work, owned a bale of cotton between them. Anna used the proceeds from her half to move to Chattanooga for further instruction.

It might seem odd that she would go all the way from Mississippi to Tennessee to be taught. However, Seventh-day Adventist churches and members were few and widely scattered in the South at the end of the last century. There were no conferences; the entire area of the southern states was at that time designated a “mission field” by the denomination.

Miss Embree helped Anna make contact with a loving Seventh-day Adventist family with whom she could stay. The young convert received good instruction; she was baptized a Seventh-day Adventist while in Chattanooga.

Aglow with her commitment to follow Christ, Anna returned home to Mississippi. Immediately she ran into difficulties. For one thing, since Anna liked to guide the plow down the rows, for years the family had depended on her to do the plowing. Now believing that it was wrong to plow on Sabbath, Anna begged to be allowed to work on

Sunday. She tried to reason with her mother, explaining why her conscience would not allow her to work on Sabbath. Not being able to read seemed to compound Mrs. Knight's frustration. A strong-willed woman, she flew into a rage. She insisted that she was Anna's mammy, and that the girl could not teach her mother—Anna would have to give up this Saturday-for-Sunday foolishness or leave home.

Anna came to the painful decision that she must leave home. Friends in Chattanooga assisted her with expenses so that she could attend Mount Vernon Academy in Ohio for one school year. It was a good time for her to get away from home, and she treasured the opportunity to study.

The following year Anna found it possible to attend the new industrial school in Battle Creek, Michigan, the predecessor of Battle Creek College. Along with hard work, she exhibited strong faith and a tremendous spirit of vitality. In 1898 Anna Knight graduated from Battle Creek College, prepared to be a missionary nurse.

Dr. J. H. Kellogg, director of the Battle Creek Sanitarium (which was closely associated with the college), urged Anna's class to volunteer for self-supporting missionary work. Accepting that call, Anna decided that no other mission field had as great a need for her ministry as her home county in Mississippi.

When she returned home from college, Anna was greatly relieved to find that the family's ill feeling concerning her religious faith had disappeared. Her relatives received her gladly; they were willing to help create the school that Anna considered a necessity for Jasper County. The school was housed in a dilapidated log cabin. Anna taught for a dollar a week, plus labor that the parents and children could supply at odd times.

As the school was progressing admirably, the old building that housed it burned down. Anna was not deterred by this calamity; she stepped out by faith again to organize the construction of a new building.

Miss Knight had planted four acres in cotton; she dedicated the proceeds to this purpose. A friend solicited 50 dollars in Ohio. Patrons and friendly neighbors were asked to contribute money or labor. All promised to do what they could. The building, when finished, was so splendid that people came from 75 miles away to see it.

Miss Knight taught 24 pupils in eight grades, no small task for a second-year teacher. Yet she did not see her calling as limited to her teaching duties. Anna organized two classes on Sunday as a means of outreach, one in her school building and the other five miles distant. After the religious classes she taught adults how to read, write, and figure, how to cook and preserve food with healthful methods, and how to live according to the principles of temperance. The teacher's training for medical missionary work was put to practical use.

Anna's work in the temperance cause aroused the anger of some local "moonshiners" to the point that they came to the school expressly to pick a fight. After a struggle with Anna's relatives, the brewers decided they had met their match and left.

The fame of Miss Knight's intrepid missionary activities spread far beyond Jasper County. In May 1901 Anna was astonished to receive from Dr. J. H. Kellogg an invita-

tion to serve as a delegate to the General Conference Session to be held in Battle Creek. He was gratified that a former student had accepted his challenge to organize self-supporting missionary work and thought that she could articulately represent the self-supporting and medical missionary work of Battle Creek graduates.

At the age of 27 the country girl from Mississippi could give a good report at the General Conference Session from her slightly more than two years of missionary work. She had established a school of 24 pupils and built a comfortable, neat schoolhouse free of debt, was conducting two Sunday schools, had given scores of lectures on health and temperance, and regularly provided simple treatment for the sick. When praised concerning these impressive achievements, she humbly responded, "To God be the glory."

While attending General Conference, Miss Knight overheard some nurses discussing the critical need for people of their profession in India. Anna recalled that years earlier she had felt a sense of call to help the women of India. After seeking God's direction, she offered that if the General Conference would send a husband and wife team to continue the work she had initiated in Mississippi—she considered the work to be too heavy for one person—she would serve in India.

One of Anna's good friends, Mrs. Atwood, and her husband agreed to operate the school in Mississippi; and soon Miss Knight was one of seven missionaries bound for India.

Her first assignment was at the Karmatar Training School. She taught Bible and English, kept the mission accounts, upon occasion lanced boils and extracted teeth, and supervised the garden. And she was making history, for Anna Knight was the first black woman missionary sent to India from America. (*From H. D. Singleton, "Vanguard of Torchbearers," The North American Informant XXII. March-April, 1968: 1-2.*)

Her greatest challenge at Karmatar was neither academic nor medical, but concerned management of the garden. Though agriculture was a subject about which Anna Knight knew a great deal, when she tried to show her helpers how to prepare the soil for planting, they balked. They claimed it couldn't be done that way in India—after all, they were experienced, too.

One important project was the planting of sweet potato slips. From her background of farming in the South, Anna knew that sweet potatoes would not grow in the hard ground at the mission. Therefore she led workers to the river, supplied with gunny sacks and the bullock cart; they brought back sand for the garden. In addition to the sand, she instructed them to add barnyard manure to the soil. After they had mixed these components together with a mattock, the workers were asked to dig a trench. Up to this point Miss Knight had been able to enlist the villagers assigned to her to participate in this arduous work, although with an undercurrent of opposition.

However, when the garden director remembered having seen an American turnplow in the barn and told a laborer to fetch it, the workers protested openly.

"Might be all right in America, no good in India," one villager insisted. Thereupon Miss Knight had the plow brought to her and, drawing on her Mississippi years, she



hitched the bullocks to the plow and took its handles herself. Working as hard as she ever had worked in her life, she managed to prepare suitable rows and plant sweet potato slips in them, persisting even in the rain until she finished. She was so exhausted that after her bath and dinner she fainted and was weak for several days.

Using two girls as crutches, the determined missionary limped to a chair from which she supervised school boys while they planted tomatoes, cauliflower, turnips, and beets. Before long there was a vegetable harvest such as had never been seen at Karmatar. The laborers from the village spread the word that the missionary had herself operated the strange American plow and with it had worked wonders.

Of course the whole point of creating a successful garden, of being there at all, was to introduce the students to the joys of the kingdom of heaven. Miss Knight wished to hold up before them the future life while at the same time preparing them to share the good news of salvation with others. Anna was overjoyed when she saw the girls begin to take a deep interest in the Bible classes and nursing skills she taught them. The boys, who had caused some problems before, behaved better when fully occupied physically under Anna's direction, busily digging holes for new fruit trees.

There was important work beyond the campus as well. One day Miss Knight and Miss White is, another staff member, were traveling from the school to a neighboring village to visit a sick woman. On the way people ran to greet them with deep bows, urging the missionaries to help their sick friends. Anna Knight knew that she was following her call and was content. She sometimes expressed a wish for more workers as well as more of the Spirit's power.

At the school Miss Knight began taking up an offering in Sabbath school. She was delighted to see that the children cheerfully accepted the idea. Of course, the youngest children had no income. To rectify this, Anna Knight sent the five youngest students out to pick up manure to put under the new trees. They were paid one piece each. Thus they had income from which to give to the Lord. One little boy proclaimed with enthusiasm, "We will earn a hundred piece." (*Anna Knight, "Karmatar Training-School," Eastern Tidings. March, 1904: 10-11.*)

Anna believed the admonition, "Train up a child in the way he should go." Proverbs 22:6. In Mississippi first, and now in India, she had accepted this responsibility. She was in charge of training Indian workers to minister to their own people.

Community folk came to the campus for spiritual ministry. One Sabbath evening five lovely Bengali women attended worship. A student read a chapter from the Bengali Bible; prayers were offered in the native tongue as well as in English. At the close of the service, the visiting women expressed their appreciation. They urged Anna and others to visit them, to sing, and to tell them of Jesus; they promised to return.

"What more could we want?" Anna asked. Her long-time dream of ministering to the women of India was coming true. (*Anna Knight, "Karmatar," Eastern Tidings. November, 1904: 42-43.*)

Miss Knight helped her students in ways other than her formal work of teaching, important as that was. She wanted the students to learn ways to earn income; she knew

firsthand the importance of being able to work one's way through school. That is why she arranged to have the Watchman Press moved to Karmatar, enabling several young people to attend school who otherwise would not have had the opportunity.

During several summers Miss Knight worked in Simla, a resort community, holding meetings, conducting Bible studies, giving treatments, and teaching classes.

Early 1906 found Miss Knight and a companion, Miss Haegert, selling Christian books in Rajputana, where Advent-ists had not ministered for several years. Difficulties included sunstroke, going for uncomfortable periods without food and water, and being attacked. Amid such storms of adversity, Anna's lamp of faith appeared not even to flicker. "There are some clouds and barren places, to be sure," she acknowledged, "but my motto is,— 'On the victory side,' and I am not going to look on the dark side, for we *know this truth is going to triumph*, and I want to triumph with it!" (From Anna Knight, "A Word from the Out Posts," *Eastern Tidings* (February, 1906): 2-3, emphasis in the original.)

Meanwhile, tales of woe trickled in from Mississippi regarding the school she had founded. The moonshiners, she learned sadly, had renewed their harassment when the new teachers came. These enemies of the school finally resorted to the extreme measure of burning down the building. The school closed. The work in Jasper County seemed lost.

Anna wrote begging the General Conference leadership to send someone to Mississippi to teach her people. She added that if no one could be found, she would like a furlough to rebuild the work herself.

After several months of waiting and praying, Anna received a letter saying that she had been granted a furlough to return home to try to revive the work that had been stopped by violence in Mississippi. She departed, with the people in Mississippi and of India all on her heart. She left her trusted bicycle and other belongings in India for use on her return.

Arriving back home in Mississippi, Anna Knight received the welcome of a celebrity. Construction of a new school building had already started in anticipation of her return.

On her first Sunday back in the community, Anna and her supporters called a meeting in the new building. Many people attended. Some of the moonshiners, even though they had helped burn down the school that Miss Knight had built, now sat in the congregation or stood outside to listen. The returned missionary told thrilling stories of her experiences; she painted dramatic word pictures of faraway places.

Anna Knight then changed her topic and spoke, not as a world traveler, but as a hometown girl. She reminded her listeners that not one of them had been able to read or write until she, and after her the Atwoods, had taught them. She challenged the assembled community to cooperate with her to move toward a still brighter future.

The school organizer set forth a strong and specific program, including buying school books for each child and subscribing to *Our Little Friend* and the *Youth's Instructor* for the children's reading. Miss Knight set forth the school rules: no card parties, dances, or other inappropriate forms of recreation. School attendance must be regular. If they were ready to support such a program, Anna told her listeners, she would throw herself fully

into leading out. When she asked those to stand who would cooperate in the work she had set forth, all the patrons and many others stood. Seventh-day Adventist work in Jasper County was alive again.

The next day school started operation with 22 students. Construction on the building continued after school hours.

On weekends Anna conducted Sunday religious meetings in two locations, as had been her practice before leaving for India. Then several people offered to meet on Sabbath afternoon instead of Sunday. When the conference president visited six months later, he found nine candidates ready for baptism. Among them were Anna's mother, two of her sisters, other relatives, and community members.

During summer months when school was not in session, the conference employed Miss Knight to visit churches and companies of believers. She taught Bible lessons and prepared interested people for baptism. At a workers' meeting in Vicksburg attended by both black and white workers, she delivered lectures about mission work.

It was inevitable that Anna Knight would face a decision about whether she could make a greater contribution by returning to India than by remaining in the South. Some advisors did not see it as a difficult choice. Repeatedly Anna would hear one of her peers say something like, "If I had my way, I wouldn't let you go back to India. We need you here. Let the white folk go to India, but you stay here and work with us." It was true that workers for black people were scarce. Few had received adequate training or preparation.

Anna was puzzled. She was looking at two great needs. However, she was only one person. Fortunately, she had a mode of operation that could see her through this time of uncertainty over God's will for her life. She wrote, "While I could see that the colored work in America really did need workers, to me, the needs of India were greater by far. However, *I prayed and worked on.*" (From *Knight, Mississippi Girl*, p. 168, *emphasis supplied.*)

This was not the only time in her life that Anna Knight found it wise to pray for wisdom and, while waiting for God to answer, to work on. The puzzle eventually resolved, to the glory of God and to Anna's satisfaction.

Miss Knight received an unexpected invitation from the Southeastern Union Conference to help develop a new sanitarium for black people in Atlanta. This was in 1910, when she expected soon to be returning to India. Still longing to know the will of God, Anna took the letter of call to her room and spread it before the Lord, as King Hezekiah had done with a letter that caused him great concern. After praying fervently, she decided to find out who had extended the invitation to her. If they were people who did not know about her commitment to India or did not value her work there, she would not take the call seriously. However, if this invitation had been passed on to her by some of the General Conference leaders who knew of her dedicated work both at home and abroad, their guidance would be significant. She wrote to inquire. While waiting for a response, she prayed and kept working.

The letter of reply mentioned leaders who knew and valued her overseas mission service and had now approved her call to Atlanta. A check for transportation was

enclosed. Anna had been given the sign that she had requested. Soon she received a letter from church leadership requesting her to establish a strong work for black people in Atlanta. Finding trained people to lead out in the project seemed nearly impossible. In fact, church leaders thought that the vacancy in India could be filled more readily. After praying once more, Miss Knight sent word that she would accept the call to Atlanta. Within a few days' time, she was there.

As a result of her two years' work during furlough, Anna left a little company of Sabbath keepers in Jasper County. Some of these converts had been strongly opposed to her own Sabbath keeping at first.

When Anna arrived in Atlanta expecting to begin work at the new medical center, she found the sanitarium in an embryonic state—nothing more than an unfinished, unfurnished house. Furthermore, no one seemed to know where Miss Knight was supposed to live while organizing the new center.

Having been a self-supporting missionary during much of her life, Anna had not accumulated many tangible assets. Just how or where she was to live at this point she did not know. Therefore she prayed through this crisis, as she had others in the past. She decided to sleep in an empty room of the sanitarium. The enterprising project director found a few pieces of used furniture, gave them a healthy scrubbing, and moved in.

Just before Miss Knight's arrival, neighbors had circulated a petition and had obtained an injunction against the operation of a sanitarium in the house that the Adventists had secured. It took time to work around this blockade. Meanwhile, the responsibility of giving Bible studies in the area was turned over to her. She was also invited by many groups to recount her work in India. This helped break down prejudice toward Seventh-day Adventists.

When a sick neighbor failed to respond to all her doctor's efforts, Anna asked permission to administer water treatments. Since the doctor had exhausted all the possibilities he knew, he consented. In a few days the patient was sitting up, and before long she had fully recovered. Favorable relationships with several people in the community resulted.

Anna hoped to save enough money for a coat by the time winter weather arrived, because Atlanta would be colder than Mississippi had been. Meanwhile, she accepted chairmanship of the board of the two-teacher church school in Atlanta. Because of Miss Knight's own experience with a struggling school, she was a sympathetic listener as the school's problems were enumerated to her.

The larger room needed several desks immediately in order to seat the students. A more adequate stove was necessary to heat the room properly. Could the conference provide the equipment? Miss Knight wrote to inquire.

She was told that since this was a mission school, the conference already paid 50 percent of the teachers' salaries; the administrators did not think they could do more. Then Anna requested permission to buy the much-needed equipment on the installment plan and make payments from the tuition. This plan was approved.

In a sacrificial act, the board chairman used her savings, earmarked for a winter coat, as the down payments on the stove and school desks. Some members of the board,

while happy to see the stove and desks in place, were apprehensive about the debt. Anna assured them that the Lord, who had opened the door for securing the needed equipment to operate the school, would impress the patrons to pay their tuition; and that, indeed, happened.

However, the newcomer from Mississippi now had no funds for a winter coat to protect her from Atlanta's frosty winter.

Several weeks later while answering letters, Anna came upon one she had received from her friend Edith Embree Runnels. (Edith Embree was the young woman who wrote to Anna and sent her literature in response to her notice in the little magazine *Comfort*.) Over the years Anna had maintained contact with this kind friend who had been influential in her conversion. Now Anna wrote Edith a long letter describing the work in Atlanta. She mentioned buying the school supplies on credit, using her coat money for down payment on the heating stove and school desks. She told how happy she was that she had saved the money at just the right time to advance God's work.

Edith Runnels read the letter to the Missionary Volunteer Society at her church. The society members decided they would like to collect money to replace the coat. Then someone else who had known Anna at Battle Creek College said she had a coat to give away. Thus it was that Miss Knight received both the coat and the money. The handsome black broadcloth coat, well constructed and almost new, was better than anything Anna would have bought for herself. She wore it with a keen sense of satisfaction.

The money sent by the Missionary Volunteer Society was enough to pay off the indebtedness on the classroom stove. "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus," Anna remembered. From that time on Philippians 4:19 was one of her favorite Bible verses.

Another area of concern for Miss Knight was the fact that, although for black people there was a Young Men's Christian Association in Atlanta, there was no corresponding institution for women; she decided to do something about it. She asked representative women to meet with her, and they proceeded to set up a local Young Women's Christian Association for blacks. Women of several denominations worked together to accomplish this significant achievement.

The new YWCA held mass meetings to present truths concerning health, temperance, social purity, and personal hygiene. First aid and nursing classes were taught. The national YWCA parent organization commended the work being done but did not affiliate the Atlanta group just then because of its strong ties with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Miss Knight offered to resign as secretary, but the group preferred to continue operating as an independent local unit under her leadership.

In addition to all her other work, Miss Knight conducted an average of 500 Bible readings a year. During the last year she worked in Atlanta, as many new members were added through her ministry as there had been in the church when it was organized. Included among these converts whom Anna Knight won to the Lord were several prominent citizens of Atlanta. (*From a telephone conversation of the writer with Elder H. D. Singleton, Wheaton, Maryland, December 6, 1988.* )

Moreover, because of her example of sacrificial giving coupled with the sound Biblical instruction she gave on stewardship, each year while she was leader of the work there the tithes and offerings doubled.

Because of Anna Knight's spirituality, ability, and productivity, she advanced to larger responsibilities. In 1913 she was called to serve as associate home missionary secretary for the Southeastern Union Conference. This church administrative unit embraced the states of North and South Carolina, Georgia, and parts of Tennessee and Florida. Miss Knight was invited to take responsibility for overseeing the work in black churches and schools. (*From Singleton, "Vanguard of Torchbearers," 1.*) As the conference leadership pledged her their cooperation and support, she thought that the only appropriate response was to try.

Starting at the church in Atlanta, she organized the local membership for lay ministry. Then she moved on to other cities in her territory: St. Petersburg, Charleston, Jacksonville, Chattanooga, Nashville, Birmingham. In each place she trained and organized the members for ministry.

Never one to stop short of a strenuous work load, she voluntarily visited each church school in her territory to give the students the benefit of an annual physical examination.

As part of a routine report, Miss Knight once mentioned that in the course of discharging her responsibilities for that year she had written more than 1500 letters, all in longhand. The administrators were amazed. Elder C. B. Stephenson, the union president, recommended that each conference share in the expense of providing Miss Knight with a typewriter. As a result, the conferences presented this tireless worker with a Corona portable typewriter. Starting from hunt-and-peck, she gradually developed considerable skill as a typist. Thereafter many of her letters were written on the train while the busy home missionary secretary was on her way to meet an appointment.

Her lifestyle was shaped by her travels. She planned her work a month at a time and attempted to cover one entire conference before moving on to another. The itinerant life apparently bothered her not at all.

Other responsibilities were added until Miss Knight was serving as associate home missionary, educational, missionary volunteer, and Sabbath school secretary of the Southeastern Conference. She was not called a minister, and she was not ordained. Her authorization through her many years of ministry was variously called licensed missionary and credentialed missionary. However, any man carrying her responsibilities year after year would surely have been designated a minister and would have been ordained.

After she had cheerfully carried out her many and diverse responsibilities in the Southeastern Union Conference for six years, on December 17, 1919, the General Conference Committee concurred with the recommendation of the Southern Union Conference that Miss Anna Knight be called to direct the home missionary work for the colored people in that large field. (*From General Conference Committee Minutes, December 17, 1919, 11-2 p. 496.*) After earnestly requesting God's guidance, she chose to accept this challenge.



Anna Knight, who during her life spanning nearly a century (1874-1972) founded a school and church in Mississippi, journeyed as the first black woman missionary from America to India, and carried heavy departmental responsibilities in union conferences in the South.

*Photo used by permission of the Review and Herald Publishing Association.*

Her new territory included Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and the western parts of Florida and Tennessee. Not a person to linger at headquarters, Miss Knight traveled extensively among the churches and schools of her large field. “To take care of the work of all three of her departments, working among the churches and the schools, necessitated her living on the train and out of suitcases a great deal of the time,” Elder Singleton recalled later; “however, by thorough planning of her work she was able to give very effective leadership.” (*Taken from Harold R. Singleton, “Vanguard of Torchbearers,” The North American Informant (March-April, 1968), 2.*)

She ordinarily stayed from two days to a week in each place, using the time judiciously. In the area of lay ministry she organized bands for home missionary work and conducted weekend institutes.

The way Anna Knight integrated her labor with that of the local conference officials is impressive. Upon completing her tour of a field, she would always report to the local leadership—in person if possible; if not, in writing. By closely cooperating with many leaders and with God, she generated impressive results.

In 1932 the Southeastern and Southern unions were combined to become the present Southern Union Conference. Miss Anna Knight was asked to be the assistant secretary for the educational, young people’s missionary volunteer, and home missionary departments of the colored department of the newly-formed Southern Union Conference. To carry three departments for the black people of the entire South was a tremendous—challenge. But because of her long and demanding preparation, she was not threatened by the weight of her ever-growing responsibilities. Long before, she had learned to lean on the Lord.

Education was extremely important in Anna Knight’s values. The number of schools existing during her leadership exceeded what has been accomplished before or since. (*From H. D. Singleton in a telephone conversation with the writer, December 6, 1988.*)

As a speaker, Anna Knight was known for a powerful style of delivery. She could take a text and from it develop a forceful message. People would come to hear what she had to say. They trusted her to be forthright with them; she usually would “tell it like it is.” As for her stories of India, they held people spellbound.

Much of Anna Knight’s work was public, but she also took a great interest in individuals. One young man whom she took under her wing, encouraged, and helped to get an internship, later became well known as Elder H. D. Singleton of the General Conference.

Miss Knight, knowing she had a much greater opportunity than the young man to get around and meet people, even looked out for a wife for Pastor Singleton. Pleased with his mentor’s recommendation, the pastor invited the chosen young woman to teach school in his district. They married, and the Singletons blessed Miss Knight’s match-making as they pursued the Lord’s work together.

When the organizational structure of the church in the South was changed in 1945 to create black conferences, the colored department at the union level, in which Anna Knight had worked for 13 years, was automatically terminated. Although she was



invited to take departmental work in one of the local conferences, she preferred to retire, being past 70 years of age. However, she did agree to shoulder responsibility temporarily in two of the new conferences until her successors were in place. Thus she continued in the South Atlantic Conference until March 1946 and in the South Central Conference until November of that year.

In retirement Anna Knight lived at Oakwood College. There she influenced still another generation of emerging Adventist leaders.

During the last year of her life, when she was 98, she received the General Conference Department of Education Medallion of Merit Award on November 17, 1971. At that time only 12 such awards had been made. (From L. A. Paschal, "Woman Approaching 100th Birthday Given Merit Award," Review and Herald (June 15, 1972): 22.)

The next year on June 3, death claimed the pioneer missionary. She left behind an astonishing record. The Mississippi farm girl had emerged from poverty and illiteracy to become a powerful force for progress. Early dedicating her life to Christ, she lived by principle through her nearly one hundred years. Sometimes she struggled over decisions, not knowing which way to turn. At such times she chose to "pray and work on" until God made the next move clear.

She accomplished goals unthought of in her youth. Anna Knight conducted more than 9,000 meetings and traveled the equivalent of 23 trips around the world, Knight, *Mississippi Girl*, p.223. (See appendix A, 4.1.) not counting her trips to, from, and within India. "My work required the writing of 48,918 letters," she discovered upon totaling a lifetime's accumulation of monthly reports. Missionary visits numbered 11,744.

People whom she brought to Christ, students educated in schools established under her guidance, and men and women who heard her speak still fondly cherish the memory of this remarkable servant of God and leader of humankind. Particularly for many natives in India and for hundreds of black people in the South, Anna Knight showed repeatedly that one committed, consecrated Christian person can make a difference.



Stirred with the desire to give the gospel to the people,  
Miss Weiss secured a tent, and with the aid of two men  
pitched it on the C. A. Straw farm, and people are  
flocking by the hundreds to hear her.

—Hazleton, Pennsylvania, newspaper article, 1927



## Evangelist and Teacher of Ministers

Jessie Weiss Curtis: 1881 to 1972

*Licensed minister 1945 to 1972*

Something unusual was taking place in the country near the town of Drums, Pennsylvania, during the summer of 1927. A large tent had been pitched in a field, and what was going on in the tent was attracting a lot of attention.

A newspaper reporter counted 110 automobiles parked in the fields around the tent one evening, and ascertained that people were flocking in from a radius of 20 miles. In an article titled, "Kingston Girl Holding Services Near Drums," the reporter explained the attraction that was drawing the owners of these many automobiles: "Stirred with the desire to give the gospel to the people, Miss Weiss secured a tent, and with the aid of two men pitched it on the C. A. Straw farm and people are flocking by the hundreds to hear her." Night after night the crowds arrived in time to participate in the old-time congregational song service, and stayed until the sermon was finished.

"With the skill of a clergyman of long years experience," the article stated, "Miss Weiss declares that she will teach no doctrine but what she can substantiate from the Word of God. Her repertoire of subjects reaches out over a wide range." (From "Kingston Girl Holding Services Near Drums," article in a Hazleton, Pennsylvania, newspaper, 1927. See appendix A, 5.1.)

At the conclusion of her first evangelistic series, Jessie Weiss presented 80 converts ready for baptism. The Drums, Pennsylvania, Seventh-day Adventist Church was born. Mr. Straw, the farmer, donated the land on which the tent had been pitched, and on it an attractive church building was erected. Jessie Weiss and her brother contributed the beautiful amber stained-glass windows.

How did this woman, the daughter of a prominent merchant in Wilkes-Barre and herself a successful businesswoman, find her way into evangelism?

Jessie Weiss was born December 30, 1881, in Larksville, Pennsylvania. She had a sister, Olive, and a brother, Homer. Her father was a prosperous merchant and her



Jessie Weiss, the evangelist, beside the tent in which she conducted her first effort near Drums, Pennsylvania, in 1927. Eighty converts were baptized.



Evangelistic company that assisted Jessie Weiss in the Drums meetings.

*Photos courtesy of Jack and Joan Davis.*

mother, a homemaker. While Jessie was growing up in Wilkes-Barre, two Seventh-day Adventist colporteurs visited them. Selling books to earn a living, these men were even more eagerly seeking to win souls for the kingdom of heaven. At one house the woman whom they met did not buy their books but suggested they visit her cousin, Catherine Weiss, because she might be interested. Jessie's mother listened carefully to the book-sellers' presentation, and she bought their books. Later she provided them room and board when the Adventists held tent meetings in Wilkes-Barre. Catherine Weiss became the first Seventh-day Adventist in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. (*From Jack and Joan Davis, interview with the author at the Davis home in Monrovia, Maryland, August 24, 1984. (See appendix A, 5.2.)* Quotations in this chapter not otherwise credited are based on a transcription of this interview.)

Jessie Weiss, like Helen Stanton Williams (*chapter 1*) and Anna Knight (*chapter 4*) prepared for ministry at Battle Creek College. At the age of 14, Jessie was the youngest student ever to be accepted at the college, according to her family. No doubt her bright mind and earnest zeal contributed to her early admission. After starting college, Jessie switched her curriculum from nursing to the course preparing students to become Bible workers and ministers.

Her education completed, Jessie returned to Pennsylvania. As a means of earning a living, she entered the art glass business with her brother, Homer. He and his wife, Vanetta, as well as their sister, Olive, and Olive's husband, John Davis, were all Adventists. John became business manager of the Review and Herald Publishing Association at Battle Creek in 1893. Mr. Weiss, Jessie's father, became a Seventh-day Adventist at the very end of his life.

Jessie Weiss was a successful businesswoman, but at heart she was an evangelist. Every time a Seventh-day Adventist preacher was sent into her area to hold a series of meetings, Jessie offered to give Bible studies to interested people. She assisted Elder H. M. J. Richards and other established evangelists. Thus she added practical experience to her Biblical learning from college.

After a while Jessie Weiss felt called by the Lord to hold a series of evangelistic meetings herself. Consequently she asked for the use of a tent, and the East Pennsylvania Conference administrators granted her request. The other expenses and responsibilities she shouldered herself. She asked her nephew, Jack Davis, an accomplished singer, to assume responsibility for the music and arranged for two nurses to assist her in presenting the health message. Jessie prepared and presented the nightly sermons herself.

Although the newspaper article reporting the meetings is entitled, "Kingston Girl Holding Services Near Drums," Jessie Weiss was 45 years of age at the time of the effort. A woman of vitality and enthusiasm, she seemed a mere "girl."

As she prayed and worked, God blessed her effort in a remarkable way. One night just as she was preparing to preach, Jessie learned that a Jewish husband and wife were in the congregation. What should she do? Quickly she asked the Lord for wisdom. Jessie longed to say something to convict this handsome couple concerning the Messiahship of Christ.

She decided to switch topics and preach on the “seventy weeks” prophecy of Daniel 9. To her interested listeners Jessie Weiss demonstrated that Daniel, an Old Testament Hebrew prophet, foretold that the Messiah would be “cut off” just at the time that Christ was, in fact, crucified. (Daniel 9:26, 27.)

Jessie’s prayers were answered when the Jewish couple converted to Christianity and joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The new converts, Jay and Trudie Hoffman, later became well known for their work with Jewish people. Elder and Mrs. Hoffman directed the Times Square Center for evangelism in New York City for 20 years.

According to Elder Hoffman, Jessie Weiss was a dynamic preacher. He and his wife, Trudie, were baptized together as part of the Drums Church that Jessie Weiss established. (From a letter to the author by J. M. Hoffman, Valley Center, California, October 4, 1985. See appendix A, 5.3.)

God’s affirmation of Jessie’s sense of call was indicated by the 80 adults baptized as a result of those meetings. Jessie, like Jesus, “baptized not” (John 4:2.); an ordained minister was sent to conduct that rite for her converts.

After the effort in Drums with its outstanding results, Jessie Weiss was recognized as a member of the evangelistic and ministerial staff of the East Pennsylvania Conference. She conducted many evangelistic series, usually in tents, and founded one church after another in northeastern Pennsylvania. (From “Curtis, Jessie Weiss,” mimeographed life sketch.)

Jessie Weiss was effective in the pulpit before large groups, and an excellent personal worker, too. She was compassionate and attentive to the needs of individuals.

When Mrs. John Curtis became seriously ill, Miss Weiss befriended her. Before her illness, Mrs. Curtis and her husband had frequently assisted the minister in her evangelistic endeavors; Jessie and Mrs. Curtis had become good friends. Later, as Mrs. Curtis worsened physically, Miss Weiss ministered to her tenderly.

Surrounded by the love of her husband, pastor, and friends, Mrs. Curtis died. Mr. Curtis appreciated the way Jessie Weiss had befriended his wife during her final illness.

After a respectful period of waiting, John Curtis asked Jessie Weiss to marry him. She was a very attractive person. Jessie’s sense of humor and her balance appealed to people around her. Although she was self-disciplined, she also knew how to enjoy life. Mrs. Curtis dressed attractively; her suits, dresses, and hats were of excellent quality and in good taste. In the days of long hair the family children were fascinated to watch her brush her long, dark tresses that fell almost to the ground; then she coiled her hair around her head. Jessie was a distinguished-looking woman who stood out in a crowd. Moreover, she was physically strong and healthy.

Jessie thought it over, prayed about it, and decided to accept John’s proposal. She was now 50 years of age.

The marriage took place March 21, 1932. Afterward Mr. Curtis provided a maid and chauffeur for his minister wife, who never learned to drive a car. Far from opposing his wife’s being a minister, John Curtis, a successful Seventh-day Adventist contractor, fully encouraged Jessie to follow her calling.



Jessie Weiss with the two nurses who assisted her in giving the health aspects of her evangelistic series at Drums.



Jessie Weiss Curtis, founder of churches in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Young ministers interned under her guidance.

*Photos courtesy of Jack and Joan Davis.*

In Beaumont, Tunkhannock, and Montrose in northeastern Pennsylvania, Jessie Weiss Curtis was the Holy Spirit's instrument to raise up congregations. She preached in tents, at the same time conducting countless Bible studies. After groups were formed, she raised money for and supervised the building of houses of worship.

Mrs. Curtis officiated at the first quarterly meeting and communion service held in the Tunkhannock Seventh-day Adventist Church on April 10, 1943. (*From "Historical Sketch of Tunkhannock Seventh-day Adventist Church," in the program for the Dedication Services of the Tunkhannock Seventh-day Adventist Church on October 11, 1975.*)

Joan Davis with her parents accepted Adventism through Jessie Weiss Curtis' preaching in the community of Montrose. Mrs. Davis emphasized that Mrs. Curtis communicated the truths of salvation in words that were clear and easy to understand, even for a child.

Bible booksellers often passed on to Mrs. Curtis names of people willing to study the Bible; such interests she followed up faithfully. Often she was able to assemble such people to study the Bible in one of their homes. This could add stimulation for the participants as well as allow efficient use of time for the evangelist.

The church raised up in Montrose, like the others founded by Jessie Curtis, was thoroughly grounded in Adventist doctrine.

Even so, the legacy given to her converts went beyond what is commonly understood as doctrinal correctness. The evangelist-pastor taught love and compassion by her daily life. For one thing, she was always attuned to the members' needs. When she was evangelist-pastor at Montrose, her congregation consisted mainly of poor farm people. Sometimes as Mrs. Curtis shook hands at the door after the worship service, she unobtrusively slipped a 10- or 20-dollar bill into the hand of a member who was hanging by a thread of faith through a financial crisis. The person would marvel, "How did she know that's exactly what I needed to pay the bill?"

She was careful, though, to exercise her generosity in such a discreet way that it was not demeaning.

When nurturing people toward Adventist truth and practice, Jessie Curtis showed wisdom and caring. If she visited poor people's homes where meat and eggs were part of the diet, she did not immediately ask them to go to a strict vegetarian diet for which they did not have the resources. She made clear the distinctions between clean and unclean meats and spoke about the body as God's temple. However, she didn't say, "You have to give up beef now," or "You mustn't eat an egg." A very good and faithful Adventist, she did not exhibit extremism. Interview of Jack and Joan Davis with the writer, 1984.

Jessie's happy marriage to John Curtis ended after only five years when Mr. Curtis died. Later a union conference president who was a widower visited the home frequently and would have liked to marry Jessie, but she did not choose to marry again.

However, Jessie Weiss Curtis was no "loner." "I could never live alone," she said. Not beset with the financial problems that dogged some other women ministers, and men as well, Mrs. Curtis was able and willing to use her beautiful home in Lehman,



Pennsylvania, as a mission. Family members and others displaced by depression or misfortune found needed housing with this minister whose home and heart seemed large enough for all. In her home the motto, “The more, the merrier,” prevailed. Sometimes for those she took under her wing she not only provided housing but bought food and paid doctors’ and dentists’ bills as well. Many young people were assisted in obtaining a Christian education by this same generous pastor.

One of the young people blessed by Jessie’s love and generosity was Jack Davis, her great-nephew. She employed him to drive her to appointments and to take care of her equipment—to set up the stereopticon projector and hang the charts. Even though he aired out the car after taking a smoke while waiting for Mrs. Curtis to give a Bible study, she knew what was going on. During this period the prayers, love, and support she gave to Jack resulted in his conversion and ultimate dedication to the service of God in the Adventist church. He was won by her preaching in the pulpit and by the love in her life.

Still winning people to Christ in northeastern Pennsylvania, Mrs. Curtis held a tent effort in Kingston during September and October of 1964. The budget for the series was \$5,000, of which \$2,000 went for lot rental. Again Jessie Curtis was used by God to raise up a church.

There is no indication that the people served by Jessie Weiss Curtis thought it was inappropriate to have a woman minister. In fact, as the years went on, they practically revered her.

One of Jessie Weiss Curtis’ strengths was her gift for preaching. People who heard her recall specific features of her pulpit style. Margaret Potts says that Mrs. Curtis’ preaching was “dynamic—she knew her subject like nothing I ever heard.” At the East Pennsylvania camp meetings, Margaret and others experienced the inspiration of the evangelist’s life and preaching. Mrs. Curtis moved around the campground fraternizing with the people, many of whom were probably her converts. The fact that she was a strict Seventh-day Adventist did not seem to turn people away. Knowing her listeners doubtless helped to shape her messages. She was “somebody you wanted to hear. She just held you spellbound. When Jessie Weiss Curtis spoke,” Mrs. Potts said emphatically, “the children listened. They really listened.” (*From Margaret Potts, Hyattsville, Maryland, telephone conversation with the writer, June 22, 1985.*)

Many factors contributed to her effectiveness as a preacher and enabled her to hold children spellbound. Jack Davis recalls that his aunt never read a sermon. This extemporaneous delivery no doubt helped to hold attention. She also was eminently understandable; she never preached “over people’s heads” but directly to their hearts and minds.

Mr. Davis says that Mrs. Curtis held attention as she preached on last-day events. She would use newspaper clippings of earthquakes and hurricanes, train wrecks or airplane crashes, relating these events to the last days of earth’s history and the soon coming of the Lord.

Although she was not an overly emotional person, she would occasionally wipe a tear from her eye. Hearing her preach, her nephew Jack Davis thought the Lord might be coming the next day. He says, “I used to get goose pimples hearing her preach!”

Mrs. Curtis was well equipped for her work of evangelism. She used colorful, graphic, bedsheet-sized posters and charts to illustrate Biblical topics: the image of Daniel 2, the beasts of Daniel 7, the judgment, the sanctuary, the seven seals, the ten commandments, the Sabbath—42 charts in all. The woman preacher had paid struggling Adventist artists to create these striking visual aids to illustrate her sermons, and to put bread on their tables at the same time.

In addition to the charts, Mrs. Curtis assembled an extensive stereopticon and projector slide collection, along with the equipment to show them, that were the stock-in-trade of some of the most successful evangelists of her era.

After she had established a church and the baptisms had been counted, Jessie Curtis did not forget her converts. She visited them to monitor their progress and encouraged them to hold fast; or, if they had slipped away, she nurtured them back. When there was no pastor for churches she had previously established, she gladly agreed to pastor for a short time. Thus new members were added while others were sustained. These methods help explain why churches that she raised up still exist when other entire groups of converts have disappeared.

The more we learn, the more it becomes understandable that the East Pennsylvania Conference presidents sent their interns for training to this experienced, effective minister. Elder N. R. Dower, formerly ministerial director of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, recalls that he started his work under evangelist Curtis. (*From a conversation of Eld. N. R. Dower with the writer at the Potomac campgrounds, June 1973.*)

In addition, conference administrators made a practice of sending ministers to work with Mrs. Curtis when they appeared to be drifting away on some point of doctrine or church authority. Sometimes a rehabilitation was effected, and the worker found his footing again as he associated and counseled with this wise and godly woman minister.

Although Mrs. Curtis usually conducted her own evangelistic campaigns and developed churches virtually alone, she wasn't averse to assisting someone else when the need arose. She solicited building materials from contractors to help another minister to build the Scranton, Pennsylvania, Church. Being generous in giving herself, she was not embarrassed to ask others to contribute. She also worked to build the Wilkes-Barre Church. In fact, John Curtis gave the land for the building while Jessie Curtis and Homer Weiss donated the stained-glass windows.

Thus by widely diverse methods—evangelizing, pastoring, soliciting, donating—Jessie Weiss Curtis contributed constantly to the growth of the work in eastern Pennsylvania.

As a person Mrs. Curtis was well organized and an exceptionally strong leader. By character and personality she commanded attention and respect; when Mrs. Curtis spoke, people listened. Although she was not effusive emotionally, people around her sensed her warmth. Children loved her.

Jessie Curtis was a reasonable person who could keep priorities in mind. She read the papers, kept up with current events, and had her own library. She was constantly collecting sermon material.

Mrs. Curtis faithfully attended church meetings and business sessions, such as the Columbia Union Conference Session in Atlantic City in 1959, where she was photographed in the center of a group of her members.

Mrs. Curtis and Mary Walsh were good friends, both licensed ministers. Jessie had the privilege of meeting Ellen White in person.

There is an anecdote told by the family concerning an attempt to ordain Jessie Curtis at which she apparently dissented. (*From Vanetta Weiss and Janet and Charles McKee, interview with the author at the Drums, Pennsylvania, Seventh-day Adventist Church on July 27, 1985. See appendix A, 5.4.*)

Jessie Weiss Curtis served as a licensed minister in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination from 1945 until 1972, more than 25 years. After retirement she continued to be active in witnessing for her Lord. An illness finally slowed her down for the last year of her life, and she died at Mountain Top, Pennsylvania, September 6, 1972. She lived nearly 91 years, a unique blending of ministry, family love, and unfearing interaction with the public. She died in the hope of the resurrection, desiring above all else to meet her Lord at His return.

Mrs. Curtis left the world quite different from the way she found it. Her obituary states that "She held tent meetings and organized many churches in the East Pennsylvania Conference." (*From "Curtis, Jessie W.," Review and Herald, November 2, 1972.*)

Toward the end of her life Mrs. Curtis said that if she had her life to live over, she would do exactly the same work that she had done. What bigger thrill could there be than teaching people the Bible, bringing them to their Lord, and seeing them baptized and saved in the kingdom?



I ask the Lord to keep me living, and my mind clear, as long as I'm able to function and bring souls into the message. That's the only thing worth living for. Oh, it's the only thing!

—Mary Walsh, 1984



## That Little Black Book

Mary E. Walsh: 1892-1997

*Licensed minister 1921 to 1981*

In Europe, World War I was threatening. However, in New York City young people from around the world could find culture, excitement, and career opportunities. Mary Walsh, from Ireland, returned from nursing duty to her New York City apartment, slipped out of her uniform, and selected a smart dress for evening wear. Adding jewelry, she was soon ready for a night at the opera. Petite, trim, in her early twenties, Mary radiated the inner beauty of intelligence and a strong character.

Studying herself in the mirror, although she looked well groomed, Mary felt uncomfortable. She asked herself, “Would my blessed Lord do what I’m doing?” She decided that He would not. Consequently, she changed her clothes for an evening at home and never again attended the opera, the Hippodrome, or her dancing lessons; she just gave them all up. What occasioned her sudden change in standards for dress and entertainment that night in New York City? A look backward will indicate what had brought her to this point.

Mary Walsh was born a British subject in the northern part of Ireland in 1892. As a teenager she traveled to visit her aunt in New York City. Mary liked life in the United States well enough to remain to study nursing. Although she was far from home, her roots extended to New York City: she lived with her aunt and uncle, and she worshipped at the Roman Catholic Church just as she had in Ireland. Since her uncle was a cousin of Cardinal Farley, on Sunday Mary ordinarily attended the eleven o'clock mass at the cathedral with the cardinal officiating. (*Mary Walsh, Berrien Springs, Michigan, interview with the writer, July 13, 1984; Mary Walsh, Glendale, California, telephone interview with the writer, July 20, 1989. All quotations from Mary Walsh in this chapter not otherwise credited are taken from these interviews.*)

After finishing her training, Mary found nursing work that paid better than wages she would have earned in Ireland. She enjoyed living in a place of her own, buying elegant clothes, and taking advantage of the cultural opportunities in New York City. She attended the opera for entertainment, the lecture halls for enlightenment, and dancing lessons for personal development.

One Saturday evening a friend handed Mary an announcement for a lecture to be given the following night. After the friend left, Mary held the paper in her hand and repeatedly read the bold-type headline: **Will This Generation Pass Away Before We Witness the Second Coming of Christ?** The question had never occurred to her before, but now she was intrigued by it.

The lecture was scheduled in a theater in a section of the city unfamiliar to Miss Walsh. In order to be sure of arriving there on time the following evening, she set out right then, on Saturday night, to find the place. Consequently, on Sunday evening she arrived on time and located a seat near the front.

Mary supposed she would be hearing a chautauqua. (*An educational presentation. Often lectures and entertainment were combined in a series, modeled after summer schools established at Chautauqua, N.Y.*) lecture. When the speaker entered carrying “a little black book,” as she described it later, and knelt at center-stage to ask for God’s blessing, she was amazed. She had never seen a chautauqua lecturer pray.

The “little black book” turned out to be a Bible, to Mary’s disappointment, for that was a book that she conscientiously avoided. Her upbringing as a Roman Catholic had left her afraid of the Scriptures. She had been taught that the study of the Bible was especially dangerous for lay people. A friend who had brought a Bible to Miss Walsh’s apartment had been asked, kindly but firmly, to remove that little black book and never bring it again.

Mary remained in the theater, though, and soon the lecturer was making sense to her. He spoke of current events and historical data with which Mary was familiar, for she possessed a bright mind and read widely. Then he showed in the Bible clear predictions of the very events that he had cited from history and current events. Young Miss Walsh thought, “Nobody can predict the future like that! Yet there it is, all laid out centuries beforehand.” She left the theater that night convinced that the lecturer’s little black book contained, not heresy, but the very words of God.

Being a woman of action, Mary ventured out the very next morning as soon as the shops were open to buy a little black book of her own. She found a copy of the Douay Version of the Bible and began to read as eagerly as a thirsty traveler welcomes a large dipper of water.

Thursday night found Mary at the theater for the second lecture. A typical evangelist might not have been able to penetrate Mary Walsh’s prejudice against the Bible, but God in His love had brought her into contact with the right preacher to reach her. Professor C. T. Everson evinced sound scholarship. He was fluent and articulate; she said, admiringly, that he had a “liquid tongue.” Even with no electronic projection, his melodious voice carried to all parts of the theater. Mary Walsh respected Professor Everson as a competent, professional person.

Still, there was more. In Professor Everson, scholarship was paired with commitment to Christ. His main purpose was not to trace fulfilled prophecy, but to portray the Son of God vividly and believably. He drew appealing verbal pictures of “that meek and lowly Galilean.”

Gifted with a vivid imagination, Mary Walsh could picture just what Jesus looked like as Professor Everson spoke about Him repeatedly on Sunday and Thursday nights. Even though she had been a church-going person all her life, she was finding a new and living experience. “I’d found my Christ,” she recalled with gratitude. “I got a real glimpse.”

As she accepted Christ as her Saviour and invited Him daily to share her life, Mary noticed that her lifestyle was changing. That was how it came about that she stood before her mirror and asked whether or not her Lord would do what she was doing. Concluding that He would not, she changed her ways immediately. Before long she shopped for a different wardrobe—still good quality but more simple. She put her jewelry away.

No one suggested that she make these changes. On her own she read everything she could find, the Bible along with books and pamphlets published by the Seventh-day Adventists on various doctrines and church teachings.

In her precious new Bible, Miss Walsh read the second commandment again and again. Being a good Catholic, she was puzzled by the prohibition of image worship. She kept studying it for three weeks; then she took the icons that had been her objects of worship and destroyed them.

From her reading Miss Walsh concluded that Seventh-day Adventists neither ate meat of any kind nor drank tea or coffee. To someone whose coffee pot was always on the stove, this was startling. Nevertheless one Sunday morning, after she had worshiped on the seventh-day Sabbath the day before, she at one moment gave them all up—meat, tea, and the ever-present coffee.

Mary considered consulting with Cardinal Farley concerning the Biblical truths she was learning. However, she decided that she had been fully confirmed in the truth by the Holy Spirit, and that under those circumstances it might be insulting to God for her to discuss it with a human being. God’s Word had become her final court of appeal.

The Sabbath on which Mary Walsh was baptized into Christ as a Seventh-day Adventist by Professor Everson was a high day of celebration for both the convert and the evangelistic company.

Not everyone, to be sure, shared this positive reaction to choices the talented young nurse was making. Her aunt in New York City was dreadfully upset over Mary’s change in religious affiliation. No doubt feeling some responsibility to the rest of the family, she told Mary that she now wished the girl had never come across the ocean. The aunt wrote to Mary’s father, representing the group Mary had joined as a strange sect. The truth is that the family knew nothing about Seventh-day Adventists and did not care to learn.

At this point Mary felt that the Scripture text, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me,” (Matthew 10:37.) spoke quite clearly to the sacrifice that she was being called upon to make. The aunt dropped her, and other family members cut off contact. Mary had disgraced them, to their way of thinking. The least objectionable explanation they could conceive was that by her studies the poor girl had become unbalanced mentally.

This cross of separation from her family has never been removed from Mary Walsh's life, though she has never complained about it to her Lord. Not one of her people has joined her in her beloved faith. They are all in England now, she said, high up in the educational field, "and they think that I have just scandalized them."

To the separation from family were added other privations. The young convert, so excited about her new relationship with her Lord, was disappointed to find that changes in her values and behavior—what she ate and drank, her day of worship, her attire—separated her quickly from people to whom she had been close. Her old friends deserted her, and she was very much alone.

On the other hand, she found a whole new family in the church of Christ. And they encouraged Mary toward a surprising career change.

When Mary Walsh became a Seventh-day Adventist and heard about the denomination's colleges, she thought about attending one of them. Her savings could enable her to go back to school. However, almost as soon as she gave her heart to Christ through the work of an evangelistic team, she was urged to enter evangelism herself.

Her being invited to join an evangelistic team immediately after baptism, rather than being advised to prepare further and season for a while, was connected to the extraordinary circumstances of her conversion. Mary Walsh, for some reason, was not given any Bible studies; she read and reasoned herself into the various doctrines, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. When she saw something that she should do, she typically immediately did it. She was an exceptional convert. Therefore the conference president, the evangelist, and the two Bible workers urged Mary to enter evangelism directly.

In response to the clear invitation from church leaders who knew her and, quite evidently, to a call from God, the new Adventist moved to Maine in 1917 to join an evangelistic team headed by Elder A. E. Sanderson.

In contrast to nursing, for which she was professionally trained and well paid, evangelism required tasks some of which she had never seen performed, and for low wages.

Although she knew nothing about conducting an evangelistic effort or giving Bible studies aside from having attended one series of meetings, Elder Sanderson promised to train Miss Walsh "on the job." This promise he faithfully kept.

Starting out in a new calling, Miss Walsh was timid just ringing the bell of a home for the first time. She was careful to sit "just so," never crossing her legs, because of her very proper upbringing in Ireland. Her native British reserve was frequently misinterpreted as pride.

Applying her keen mind diligently under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Mary Walsh became equipped for her new ministry. She acquired *Bible Readings for the Home Circle* and all similarly useful material that she could find.

One of her duties was to teach people in their homes the truths of Scripture. She not only taught but also counseled, prayed, befriended. With the Holy Spirit's guidance she brought many converts into the church, making sure they understood clearly both doctrines and practice.



The Sanderson and Walsh evangelistic team moved from city to city. Working with very small budgets, they nevertheless produced many baptisms. When they were sent to evangelize New York City with a total budget of 1,000 dollars, they felt that amount was not adequate to enable them to reach the nation's largest city. Miss Walsh and her co-laborers held days of fasting, calling on the Lord to do something. And He did.

Miss Walsh gave Bible studies to two prosperous elderly women. They accepted the Bible message, joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and then gave generously to the cause of God. On one occasion they handed Mary, to put into the bank for the Lord's work, \$15,000. Others gave also, while Mary fasted, prayed, and worked. She saw how God in heaven accomplished His purposes as she depended on Him.

Miss Walsh moved to Boston, where she became part of an evangelistic team headed by Elder Robert S. Fries. As she grew in experience, her responsibilities increased and diversified considerably. For one thing, before the main lecture of the evening by Elder Fries, Miss Walsh always delivered a short presentation on a selected topic. This occurred early in the evening format but to a full house, for the people arrived promptly to hear her. One evening when she was descending from the platform as Elder Fries was coming on, the elder whispered, "My, my, you've stolen my thunder!"

She quietly retorted, "Well, I'm thankful that I did! You used to steal my thunder." It was an affirmation that she has never forgotten. The evangelist and his assistant shared a comfortable, complementary working relationship.

Mary Walsh respected Elder Fries, whom she considered to be a mighty evangelist. He had studied medicine at the University of Denver, (*From Robert S. Fries, obituary, Review and Herald (October 24, 1946): 20.*) and Miss Walsh appreciated the way he skillfully included health evangelism as part of their public efforts.

Miss Walsh's responsibilities included handling the question box. People were invited to drop their questions about Bible topics into a box before the meeting. Then at the close of the service, all those who had questions were asked to meet in another room where the box was opened for puzzling texts and problems to be addressed. It was a tremendous test of a minister's Bible knowledge, faith, and presence of mind to answer such inquiries "cold." Yet Mary Walsh was asked to take that risk.

Shortly before she became the "question answerer," Mary was actually terrified. She asked the Lord how she was ever going to be able to answer questions right on the spot without passing out. The night before her first question-and-answer session, she tumbled about sleeplessly in her bed. Finally she got down on her knees to seek help from the God who had called her into evangelistic work in the first place. Beside her bed she prayed for some kind of reassurance, a promise. Her prayer was that the God of heaven would stand by her side. Without His help, she couldn't do it.

On her knees she leafed through her Bible, and this promise came to her eyes: "Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." (Luke 21:14, 15). Believing that the Lord had given her the promise she had requested, Mary slid back into bed and slept.

With God's blessing, Mary Walsh's question box became an important part of the evangelistic series. It was advertised in the paper, "Bring your questions," and those attending brought them on every subject imaginable. The answers Miss Walsh gave not only blessed people spiritually but also boosted the attendance at the series.

In spite of all her continuing study and preparation, occasionally a question would pose a true surprise. There were suspenseful moments when she wondered whether or not she would be able to find relevant Biblical material on a subject quickly. But God had promised to give her "a mouth and wisdom" which all her adversaries could not gainsay or resist. God has never failed her.

Because of her effectiveness and skill, another challenging assignment came her way. The Boston Commons was a place where individuals or organizations could reserve space and speak on issues of their choice, and a great deal of discussion took place there. The Seventh-day Adventists were assigned a spot by a special tree at one end of the mall. The Catholics were at the other end. Various Protestant denominations ranged in between, each at its assigned concession. Often considerable bitterness was generated between Catholics and Protestants during this period of heated religious debate.

Every Sunday Elder Fries and Miss Walsh spoke and answered questions at the Commons. Many people would have avoided such direct confrontation. "But that put us on the map," Miss Walsh explained. "This is why we could get advertised."

According to Mary Walsh, Elder Fries was a master of the situation in the give-and-take on the Commons. "He was a military man before he became an Adventist," she explained. "And he had that military bearing, impeccably dressed and groomed. When he would get up, I was proud of him." (*From Walsh interview, July 13, 1984.*) Mary Walsh would also walk down the Commons flawlessly attired and cheerfully ready for the unexpected.

In the aggressive manner of the times, the pastor of one of the largest churches, a Baptist, advertised in the paper that he would speak against the doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventists. He was nationally known and drew a packed house. It seemed unbelievable to the Adventists that any preacher would rail against them and their teachings in the way this man did.

Accusations that she considered to be untrue and unfair did not set well with Mary Walsh. When she found Elder Fries with some of the other workers looking at the advertisement for the attacker's meeting, Miss Walsh exclaimed, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1 Samuel 17:26.)

The moment she said it, she sensed that she was doomed. Elder Fries insisted that Mary Walsh was the very person to answer the accusations—not only in the church, but also on the Boston Commons. Over her protests he proceeded to advertise that this would happen.

"Beg, and plead, and tease, and weep—no sir! I had to do it," she recalled. "He went ahead and put my name in the paper. I wish you could have seen that crowd on the Boston Commons!"

The prayer and fasting with which Miss Walsh and her co-laborers sought the Lord strengthened them to do battle for Him. Miss Walsh defended Bible truth admirably. She rejoiced when listeners made decisions to live according to the Biblical truths they heard. Some of them even defected from the challenger's church.

Mary Walsh did not resent the frequent moving required of evangelists. She was content to share a Christ-centered message taken from the little black book that has power to change lives.

She started out working for seven dollars a week. Young men who held the same credentials were paid more; in those days it was assumed that it cost a single man more to live than a single woman. However, Mary felt no bitterness. She depended on her God to supply all her needs. "Money, who cares about it?" was her attitude.

Because of her higher wages as a nurse, Miss Walsh had plenty of money for her clothes and other expenses at that stage in her life. When she entered evangelism, fortunately she already had assembled a classic wardrobe. Never able to tolerate wearing "cheap" things, she had always bought the best quality, and consequently her clothing lasted for years.

Miss Walsh was licensed as a minister early in her career because of the volume of public work she carried on. The presentations she made as part of the evangelistic series made her a familiar figure and facilitated her entry into people's homes later on.

Besides her ministerial license, Miss Walsh also carried a press card from the church, issued because she frequently wrote articles for denominational periodicals. Her press card once gained her entry into the House of Parliament in London.

Miss Walsh wrote a series of six articles on the topic "How to Reach the Catholic Mind." These helpful pieces appeared in the *Review and Herald* between April 3 and May 8, 1947. In the first article of the series, "Our Duty to the Roman Catholic," she wrote,

I once stood in the Basilica of Saint Peter's in Rome and watched men, women, and little children bow before the black figure of Peter; the supposed first pope. I saw many kiss the protruding toe with deep veneration; others, who were small of stature, extended the right hand, and after a gentle touch of the same toe, pressed their hand to their lips. Could anyone witnessing such idolatry and knowing this message, be indifferent to the needs of these people? No!

—Mary E. Walsh, "How to Reach the Catholic Mind: Our Duty to the Roman Catholic," *Review and Herald* (April 3, 1947): 7.

Mary Walsh felt welling up in her soul a fountain of sorrow for such people. She longed to be God's instrument to liberate them from the bondage of their idolatrous practices. She added that one doesn't have to go to Rome to feel this burden, and mentioned her concern at seeing people in a Catholic church in Baltimore prostrating themselves before a large crucifix and kissing it.

In work with Catholics, Miss Walsh recommended strengthening the listener's faith in the Bible and showing how the first advent of Christ had been chronicled beforehand by the prophets. One cannot help noticing that these are the very methods that Professor Everson employed to good effect when preaching to Mary Walsh. She pointed out that stressing the importance of Christ's miraculous birth, of living a pure and holy life, and of Christ's crucifixion, burial, and resurrection will have a strong appeal to a Catholic's mind.

Besides writing for the journals, Mary Walsh prepared two sets of study guides, (From *Mary Ellen Walsh*, "Bible Lessons for Catholics" (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1967), loose leaf, and "Doctrinal Bible Studies for the Layman.") *The Apocrypha*, (Mary E. Walsh, *The Apocrypha Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1968*). and *The Wine of Roman Babylon*. (Mary E. Walsh, *The Wine of Roman Babylon Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1945*). A descendant of many generations of faithful adherents to Catholicism, herself baptized into the Roman faith when she was only a day old, Mary Walsh was motivated to present what she considered to be a practical and candid treatment of the papacy and Catholic teachings. Her prayer in the final paragraph of *The Apocrypha* is, "May our Lord do for all of us, Protestant and Catholic alike, what He did for the disciples of old: 'Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.'" (*Ibid.*, 104.)

Besides all the public presentations, the question box, the article and book writing, Mary Walsh engaged in personal work with people in their homes. Many present church members can trace their roots in Adventism back to a parent's becoming an Adventist through Mary Walsh's ministry. (Example: *Dr. Valerie Landis*, of Beltsville, Maryland, whose mother was converted through Mary Walsh's work in the New York City effort at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 1939.)

Because of her expertise in giving Bible studies, Miss Walsh was asked to prepare others to pursue that kind of ministry. From 1943 to 1953 she was employed by the Columbia Union Conference to train lay people and church employees for evangelism. She inspired members of the local churches to work effectively as lay evangelists.

During her decade with the Columbia Union Conference, her co-workers recall that she seemed to work without ceasing, and that her whole life centered around the single focus of bringing people to Christ. (From a telephone conversation, *Zella Holbert and the writer*, Takoma Park, Maryland, 1989.) A colleague described Mary Walsh as an interesting speaker, a successful Bible worker, very much dedicated to freeing people from Catholic domination. (From a telephone conversation, *Elder M. E. Loewen and the writer*, Silver Spring, Maryland, 1989.)

Miss Walsh was called to the Pacific Union Conference to work in the home missionary department in 1953. In the 1960 *Yearbook* she is listed as the assistant secretary for the home missionary and civil defense department in the Pacific Union. Her designation was modified in the 1965 *Yearbook* to assistant departmental secretary for laymen's activities, civil defense, and Home Study Institute. One would find it difficult from her active life to



Mary E. Walsh (1892- ). Irish convert to Adventism, writer, speaker, personal worker, instructor of lay ministers. Licensed minister 1921-1981.

*Photo used by permission of Review and Herald Publishing Association.*

detect that she had applied for “retirement” in 1963 at the age of 70. (*Sustentation Fund Application Form, submitted January 28, 1963. General Conference Archives.*)

Mary Walsh was a licensed minister from 1921 to 1981. Then, after 60 years of being a licensed minister alongside the men, she was moved into a status created primarily for women in ministry and men in non-ministerial positions, that of a licensed commissioned minister. (*See footnote 2 on page 210 for a discussion of this change in credentialing.*) This did not disturb her. She remained consumed with her calling from the Lord to share the gospel.

Concerning her work after she had reached her 90s, compared with the heavy and wide-ranging responsibilities she had carried and the wide areas she had traveled in the past, Miss Walsh said,

I'm just in a little corner. But I ask the Lord to keep me living, and my mind clear, as long as I'm able to function and bring souls into the message. That's the only thing worth living for. What have I lived for all these years? For the work of God.

—Mary Walsh, Glendale, California, telephone conversation with the author, July 20, 1989.

The coming of the Lord has ever been central in her thinking. The message into which she has brought hundreds of converts will march on triumphant, victorious, to the end of time—never has there been a doubt in her mind. From the year of her own conversion she has consistently given her entire life to bring others to rejoice with her in worshiping the lovely Jesus. (Mary Walsh died in Glendale, California, September 21, 1997 at the age of 105.)

It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors of the flock of God.

—Ellen G. White, 1901



## Church Founder

Ellen Gould Harmon (Mrs. James)

White: 1827 to 1915

*Ordained minister 1884 to 1915*

It is difficult to believe that a woman who spoke effectively before audiences of 5,000 (From *Ellen G. White et al.*, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White (Mountain View, California, 1915)*, 221-22.) to 20,000 (“*White, Ellen Gould (Harmon)*,” *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, Commentary Reference Series, vol. 10 (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association), 1410.*) could earlier have been terrified at the thought of giving her testimony in the presence of 10 or 20 people. However, that was the experience of the woman who with her husband was cofounder of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, (*Ibid.*, 1406.) Ellen Harmon White.

A sensitive child, troubled about religion, Ellen struggled against fears of being unsaved. As a teenager she experienced a dream that left her in agony, sure that the Holy Spirit had departed from her. Then, soon afterward, she dreamed that she saw Jesus; and this dream gave her hope. With the hope came a strong sense of responsibility to share the love, peace, and understanding that God had given to her.

The early 1840s were the time of the Advent Movement, when the return of Christ was thought to be imminent. Ellen attended an advent meeting, as she had done often before. For the first time, when opportunity was given for Christ’s followers to share their testimony, Ellen was able to stand up and speak before the others present. She made no preparation beforehand but freely shared her experience of God’s reaching out to her in love.

Soon the Harmon family, including Ellen, were dropped from membership in their Methodist church because of involvement in the Advent Movement. While this was disappointing to the Harmons, it meant that Ellen’s full energies were thrown with the Advent believers.

After the great disappointment of 1844, when Jesus did not return to earth as expected, Ellen Harmon experienced her first vision, showing the spiritual journey of the Advent people and their ultimate union with Christ in heaven. About a week later, in

her second vision, Ellen had a view of the trials she must endure to relate to others the truths that God would share through her. She was assured that God's grace would sustain her throughout.

Ellen emerged from this vision in a troubled state of mind. Since childhood when her face had been struck with a rock hurled by an angry playmate, Ellen had been so frail that she could not attend school. Now, at 17, she was unaccustomed to society, so shy and retiring that meeting strangers was a painful experience. (*From White, Life Sketches, 69.*)

As she prayed for the burden to be removed from her young shoulders, Ellen sensed instead the repeated directive from God that she should share with others what He was revealing to her. So impossible did the challenge appear, so fraught with certain failure in her eyes, that she cringed in terror and would have welcomed death as a release.

Through a signal demonstration of divine power during a prayer session, (*Ibid., 69-71. See appendix A, 7.1.*) Ellen recovered her trust in God's leading. Then she was troubled for fear she might become proud when placed in a special role, even in a religious setting. She prayed that if she must go out to relate what God was showing her about salvation and truth, He would somehow protect her from self-exaltation. Satisfied that this request was granted, Ellen committed herself to follow God's leading wherever that might be.

Opportunities came for her to bear her testimony in Portland, Maine, 30 miles away, and then in eastern Maine. Her voice, hoarse and weak, became strong and clear as she spoke to the congregations that gathered.

Soon she traveled to New Hampshire to address people who were so bitter over the 1844 disappointment that they now denounced as a delusion the movement in which they had participated. Fanaticism of several sorts had set in. At Orrington through mutual friends she met Elder James White, a young minister who was doing a similar work to her own. James and Ellen together exposed incorrect practices and beliefs, calling their listeners back to the purity of Bible truth. While working together they developed a close relationship.

Ellen Harmon and James White united their lives in marriage on August 30, 1846. Their ministry for the Lord formed the focal point in their union. Together they traveled, seeking to bring souls into Christ's kingdom. Before long they were convinced that the seventh day was the Sabbath and incorporated that truth into their teaching and living.

Ellen gave birth to a son, Henry, on August 26, 1847. While James and Ellen traveled and moved frequently to share the good news of Adventism, for five years a family by the name of Holland cared for Henry. (*Ibid., 120. See appendix A, 7.2.*) Naturally it was painful to Ellen to leave her baby in someone else's care and see him only occasionally. But this was the way she understood her commitment to carry the message of truth wherever God called.

James and Ellen's second child, James Edson White, was born July 28, 1849. When he was six weeks old his parents took him to Paris, Maine, for a meeting at which the power of God was invoked against fanaticism.



The Whites set up housekeeping temporarily in Oswego, New York, with furniture borrowed from fellow believers. From this base James wrote, published, and preached, while Ellen shared with him in combating error and promoting truth.

When the Whites decided to visit Vermont and Maine in the spring of 1850, they left nine-month-old Edson in the care of Sister Bonfoey and followed God's leading, frequently enduring physical privations. As Ellen White in Vermont saw families comfortably settled in their homes, she thought of her two-year-old son in Maine and her nine-month-old baby in New York. An observer expressed the opinion that Ellen White's carefree traveling must be quite pleasant, but actually the young preacher's heart was longing for her children. She dreamed that an angel spoke of her children as a fragrant offering to her Lord, and encouraged her even in this sacrifice to follow the opening providences of God. (*Ibid.*, 131-32. See appendix A, 7.3.)

From Vermont the Whites crossed into eastern Canada. Ellen prayed that her throat, which was troubling her again, would allow her to carry God's message clearly, for many there who professed to believe in the return of Jesus were speaking disparagingly about the law of God. Her request was granted, and she spoke comfortably with a clear voice. The believers were strengthened.

Returning after five weeks to New York and little Edson, the Whites were distraught to find the infant "very feeble." At that point, Mrs. White wrote, "It was difficult to suppress murmuring thoughts." (*Ibid.*, 135.) James and Ellen prayed for their child; he improved and was able to go with them to a conference in Oswego.

In the midst of continuing moves and travels, Ellen White gave birth to Willie on August 29, 1854. She was glad that the baby to some extent took her mind off the crises with which she seemed surrounded, including a heretical publication *Messenger of Truth* which slandered her and her husband. (*Ibid.*, 155.) From time to time James and Ellen both suffered bouts with severe illnesses.

The Whites moved to Battle Creek, Michigan, in 1855 because the publishing work that James had started, with Ellen's strong encouragement, could be established there to advantage. Ellen could have all three children with her. Sometimes she feared that the boys might be left fatherless because of James' tendency, in spite of his poor health, to overwork. The demands of establishing a new denomination were very great.

Things turned for the better after the Whites moved to Michigan. At the conference in Battle Creek in November 1856, support was given to the publications that the Whites had ventured to start by faith. Soon afterward the competing *Messenger of Truth* folded, and the discordant voices that had spoken through it were scattered. James White was able to pay the debts he had incurred in order to publish, and his health recovered to the point that he could preach three times on a Sabbath with ease.

Battle Creek became headquarters for the denomination that was forming; in 1860 the name *Seventh-day Adventist* was chosen.

Ellen White incorporated parenting and ministry into a full and productive life. She divided her time among her developing family and the growing church. The heavy responsibility of her prophetic gift she carried with energy and reliance on God.

Ellen continued preaching, usually on trips accompanying her husband. She visited newly formed churches, giving counsel to the members and the leadership. Sometimes she experienced visions in which God revealed specific instruction for the growing church. She preached on the joys open to the Christian in this life and the next.

Little Herbert, a fourth son, was born September 20, 1860, but lived only until December 14 that year. Being parted from an infant with the promise of life before him was painful enough. Still more difficult to bear was the death December 8, 1863, of the oldest son, Henry, aged 16. (*From White, Life Sketches, 165-66.*) To Ellen and James this was a cruel loss, and Edson and Willie missed their older brother greatly. Yet the Whites pressed on in their work for God, cherishing the hope of meeting their children again in the resurrection and living with them in life free from sickness and death.

Public ministry was a role Ellen White accepted out of conscience in the beginning, for she was very shy. At the age of 41 she wrote,

Though I took the stand as a speaker timidly at first, yet as the providence of God opened the way before me, I had confidence to stand before large audiences. Together we [Elder and Mrs. White] attended our camp meetings and other large gatherings, from Maine to Dakota, from Michigan to Texas and California.

—*Ibid.*, 195.

The Whites spent time during the spring of 1877 in Battle Creek for James to attend board meetings for the Review and Herald Publishing Association, Battle Creek College, and the sanitarium. He preached, wrote, worked until late at night, and was thoroughly exhausted. The couple planned a trip to Colorado for rest afterward. However, Mrs. White was strongly impressed that she had work to do at Battle Creek first; therefore, they remained.

During the stay in Battle Creek, Mrs. White spent a week holding meetings every evening and on Sabbath and Sunday for the Battle Creek College students because of her great concern for their salvation. The meetings were well attended. Many students came forward for prayer when Mrs. White issued the invitation. A number of them committed to be baptized as a result of the meetings and the Holy Spirit's work.

Mrs. White then participated in a temperance mass meeting sponsored by the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Battle Creek Reform Club. She was gratified by the spiritual strength of many of the planners. Barnum's Circus was in town, and the temperance workers organized an ambitious food service in order to make it unnecessary for the circus attendees to frequent the saloons for nourishment. This temperance restaurant was housed in the Michigan Conference camp meeting tent.

Mrs. White was invited to speak in the large tent on Sunday evening, July 1, 1877. She addressed 5,000 or more listeners on the topic of Christian temperance. (*Ibid.*, 221.)

The next month Ellen White, accompanied by her daughter-in-law, Mary White, attended camp meeting at Kokomo, Indiana; James White remained in Battle Creek to

attend to responsibilities there. Mrs. White preached at the camp ground to the assembled Seventh-day Adventists and their guests. She noted with surprised joy how much the attendance had grown from the small, mostly poor and uneducated group she had addressed at the same place six years earlier.

Evidently the Sunday afternoon temperance meeting had been well advertised, for people poured out of three excursion trains onto the campground. Ellen White wrote about the large group that assembled and the message she presented to them:

The people here were very enthusiastic on the temperance question. At 2:30 p.m. I spoke to about eight thousand people on the subject of temperance viewed from a moral and Christian standpoint. I was blessed with remarkable clearness and liberty, and was heard with the best of attention from the large audience present.

We left the beaten track of the popular lecturer, and traced the origin of the prevailing intemperance to the home, the family board, and the indulgence of appetite in the child... The great work of temperance reform, to be thoroughly successful, must begin in the home.

—*ibid.*, 222-24.

The next night Ellen White appealed to her listeners to give their hearts to Christ. Around 50 came forward to request special prayer, and 15 were baptized as a result of the preaching by Ellen White and Elder Waggoner.

Mrs. White returned to Battle Creek and entered the Sanitarium for treatments. About the same time, Elder White was sick from exhaustion. However, they prayed and decided to venture on God's promises by faith to attend the camp meeting at Groveland, Massachusetts. Thousands of people came on Sunday by boats and trains. Again Ellen White accepted the privilege and responsibility of addressing a huge tent full of people with thousands more packed around the outside. At the beginning she experienced pain in her lungs and throat, but while speaking she forgot her discomfort and weariness. For more than an hour she spoke on Christian temperance.

One evening Mrs. White especially directed her remarks to sinners and backsliders; 200 listeners, from children to gray-haired seniors, came forward for special prayer. In the afternoon a baptism was conducted for 39 converts, and many others declared their intention to be baptized when they returned home.

On and on she went—to Oregon, Colorado, New England, the Midwest—considering this her only opportunity to call some of those listeners to prepare for the judgment at the end of the world.

As for her method of preparing sermons, it appears that often Ellen White thought and prayed about the subject matter needed for a particular time and place as she traveled. Upon occasion the Lord gave her specific instruction to relay to a particular group. (*Ibid.*, 111.) She usually spoke in an extemporaneous mode, looking directly at her listeners. As she grew older, when addressing business sessions she sometimes read

from a manuscript that she had written and then followed with impromptu comments. (*Ibid.*, 422.) She could project her voice to be heard by 5,000 to 8,000 people at a time; (*Ibid.*, 221-22.) news reports claim that the huge congregations Mrs. White addressed during the camp meetings of the 1870s numbered as many as 15,000 to 20,000. (*From "White, Ellen Gould (Harmon)," Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, 1410.*) Her strong voice, without benefit of amplification, carried clearly across open fields and through large buildings.

Not only was she a minister herself, but Ellen White also repeatedly encouraged other women to use their gifts in ministry for God and the church. She urged the male church administrators to remunerate the women for this work, even indicating that she would have to create a fund from her own tithe to use for that purpose if male administrators continued to be insensitive and unresponsive. (*Taken from a letter to Brethren Irwin, Evans, Smith, and Jones by Ellen White, April 21, 1898, 1191A, 1898. See appendix A, 7.4.*)

To Mrs. S.M.I. Henry, Mrs. White wrote,

You have many ways opened before you. Address the crowd whenever you can; hold every jot of influence you can by any association that can be made the means of introducing the leaven to the meal. Every man and every woman has a work to do for the Master. Personal consecration and sanctification to God will accomplish, through the most simple methods, more than the most imposing display.

—Letter from Ellen White to Mrs. S.M.I. Henry March 25, 1899; published in the *Review and Herald* (May 9, 1899).

Two years later she wrote in an article that appeared in the *Review*, "It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God." (*From Ellen White, Review and Herald, January 15, 1901.*)

In 1881 James and Ellen White, in their thirty-fifth year of marriage, spent some enjoyable weeks together during the summer in Battle Creek. James White entered his sixtieth year of life vigorous in mind and body in spite of previous illnesses. Then while on a journey with his wife, James White developed a severe chill; on Sabbath, August 6, he died. Thus ended a memorable joint ministry.

That fall Mrs. White resided with her son Willie (W. C. White) in Oakland, California. She spoke at a camp meeting in Sacramento and in the area churches. The next year when Healdsburg College opened, she purchased a home nearby. There she worked intensively at writing out her understanding of God's dealings with humanity as He had revealed this subject matter to her. She also traveled a great deal. In August 1883 she left California to preach in the large Tabernacle in Battle Creek, Michigan, and in various locations in the eastern United States.

After her husband's death, Ellen White received the credentials and pay of an ordained minister. Unless the denomination has two categories of ordained ministers, one for Ellen White and the second for all other ordained clergy, Ellen White was an

ordained minister. (Yearbooks, 1884-1915. See writer's note on Ellen White's credentialing in appendix A, 7.5; see listing of ministers in appendix B.)

In 1884 Mrs. White, her son W. C. White, and her secretary Miss Sara McEnterfer went to visit the Seventh-day Adventist work in Europe, which was then a mission field of the denomination. Ellen White immediately addressed companies of believers in the London area and spoke in public halls. She worked for most of two years in Europe. At the European Missionary Council in Switzerland during September 1885, she delivered a series of sermons in the early morning meetings. She also spoke in the business sessions. She urged continued efforts to sell Adventist literature, in spite of discouraging results. Inspired by Mrs. White's admonition, several young people committed to make another attempt to sell books on a self-supporting basis; training schools for colporteurs were held in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.

During an enjoyable visit to the Waldensian valleys in Italy, Mrs. White preached to a scattering of small congregations.

At the fourth European Missionary Council, held in Great Grimsby, England, in the fall of 1886, the difficulties of spreading Adventism in Europe became painfully apparent. Mrs. White encouraged moving forward. Some workers responded with determination and faith. Others thought that Mrs. White did not understand the difficulties peculiar to their area. Still others wanted to be hopeful for the future, and were looking for a basis for optimism.

Mrs. White forcefully related how the matter had been presented to her in vision: the world seemed to be enveloped in mists, clouds, and darkness; then she saw small jets of light appearing dimly through the darkness. Over time their light grew brighter and more light sources appeared, lit from those already existing.

She concluded by saying,

This is a picture of the work you are to do. "Ye are the light of the world." Matthew 5:14. Your work is to hold up the light to those around you. Hold it firmly. Hold it a little higher. Light other lights. Do not be discouraged if yours is not a great light. If it is only a penny taper, hold it up. Let it shine. Do your very best, and God will bless your efforts.

—Ellen White, *Life Sketches*, 295.

She visited Scandinavia, preaching and delivering temperance lectures. To small companies of believers in Germany she spoke through an interpreter. She covered a wide variety of topics, including self-culture of one's abilities, the importance of counseling together humbly, and living according to the golden rule.

Mrs. White encouraged the workers in Europe at a crucial time; this ministry was productive. She lived to see an encouraging growth in church membership in Europe and a great increase in the annual sale of Christian literature.

Mrs. White spent another period in the United States occupied with writing, preaching at conferences, and advising church councils. Then church leadership requested her to go overseas again, this time to Australia, to guide development of the educational work there. On November 12, 1891, Ellen White and her son W. C. White, along with four of her writing and personal assistants, boarded ship to travel halfway around the world. This move was occasioned by an action of the Mission Board, which in turn resulted from an appeal by Elder S. N. Haskell at the 1891 General Conference for a training school to be established in Australia to produce Christian workers for that part of the world.

In Honolulu during a 19-hour stopover, Mrs. White addressed a large audience in the Young Men's Christian Association hall. She spent her sixty-fourth birthday, November 26, 1891, on shipboard en route to Samoa, expressing gratitude to God and re-dedicating her life to His service. A week later she preached about the love of Jesus in the first Seventh-day Adventist meeting house to be constructed south of the equator at Auckland, New Zealand. A few days later she spoke twice to the church in Sydney, Australia.

At Melbourne Elder George Tenney, head of the publishing house, had moved out of his new home and insisted that Mrs. White and her helpers stay there. She immediately entered upon meetings to consider the establishment of a school. Ellen White preached from time to time on Sabbaths in the Melbourne Church. Sometimes she needed to be carried up the church stairs, and occasionally she sat in a chair while speaking.

The Bible training school opened in rented buildings in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, on August 24, 1892. The enrollment was 25 at the start; but by June, 56 were attending. Ellen White recommended the purchase of a site in the country, and a 1,450-acre estate was found at Cooranbong. Although some church leaders and agricultural experts reacted negatively to the location, Mrs. White believed that the Lord was leading in that direction. A decision was made in 1895 to locate the school there. (*From "Avondale College," Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, 91.*) Ellen White demonstrated her confidence in the college project on the Avondale estate at Cooranbong by purchasing property nearby and arranging for a home to be erected; she called it "Sunnyside." Immediately she instructed that some of her 66 acres be cleared and plowed for fruit trees to be planted. She was certain that fruit and vegetables could be grown there.

She further showed her interest by borrowing 5,000 dollars to be used in construction of the school. Mrs. White repeatedly expressed the view that financial assets are of value only as they are used to promote the work of the kingdom of God. "One soul saved in the kingdom of God is of more value than all earthly riches." (*From Ellen White, Life Sketches, 206.*) She committed future book royalties for the erection of a school to train workers in Australia. She laid the first brick in the foundation of Bethel Hall, the anticipated women's dormitory, in October 1896. The School for Christian Workers opened April 28, 1897, with two buildings partially completed and 10 students. It was a work of faith throughout. By the end of the term, the enrollment had multiplied to 60.

Ellen White allowed proceeds from the sale of her book *Christ's Object Lessons* to be applied toward reduction of the college indebtedness of \$23,000. More than \$20,000 of the debt was liquidated in this way.

For a time Ellen White “served, in a sense, as local pastor of the Kellyville, Prospect, and Parramatta, N.S.W., churches.” Bert Haloviak, “Route to the Ordination of Women,” p. 18. At the same time she was completing her book *The Desire of Ages* and sending out personal testimonies. In her pastoral role Mrs. White waged energetic warfare against economic hardships suffered by individuals and families during a severe depression in Australia.

During this period a non-Adventist who heard Mrs. White speak exclaimed, “I never heard such preaching as that woman gave us since I was born into the world. These people make Christ the complete center and system of truth.” (*Ellen White, letter to J. H. Kellogg, October 25, 1894; Ellen White, letter to O. A. Olsen, October 26, 1894.*)

Having preached, guided, and contributed financially, Ellen White left a solid basis for the educational work in Australia when she returned to the United States in 1900.

While returning to the 1901 General Conference in Battle Creek, Mrs. White traveled through the South of the United States. She urged that schools and medical work be established in that area and pointed out the need for suitable literature to be prepared for the new Southern Publishing Association.

The cover of this book shows Mrs. White speaking at the 1901 General Conference in the Battle Creek Tabernacle. At that time she advocated establishing training centers in Great Britain and other European countries as well as in the South in the United States.

At the 1903 General Conference Ellen White spoke persuasively in favor of moving the headquarters of the denomination from Battle Creek, following destruction by fire of the General Conference and Review and Herald buildings there. Later she encouraged careful consideration of the Washington, D.C., area for the church headquarters and publishing house.

The 1909 General Conference was the last at which Ellen White addressed the church leaders and members in person. Her sermons were packed with admonition for the church, Biblical teaching, and the essence of the gospel. Although she was 81 years of age and in poor health, she spoke 72 times in 27 places on the 8,000-mile trip from her home near St. Helena, California, to the meetings in Washington, D.C., and in return. (*White, Life Sketches, 416.*)

Back at her St. Helena home, “Elmshaven,” in the Napa Valley of northern California, Mrs. White busily pursued completion of writing the Conflict of the Ages series, which portrays God’s providence acting throughout earth’s history. She finished *The Acts of the Apostles* in 1911 and *Counsels to Teachers, Parents, and Students Regarding Christian Education* in 1913.

During her last years Ellen White continued to be cheerful. She loved to meditate on a passage of Scripture or to be taken for a ride through the changing attractions of

nature. In February 1915 she fell at her home in Elmshaven. An examination afterward revealed a broken hip. Whether it caused or resulted from the fall was not known.

Thereafter she spent much of her time resting in her comfortable second-story office room. She looked backward through church history with interested listeners, and she looked forward to seeing her Saviour at the resurrection.

Her last sermon preached, her last article written, Ellen White died July 16, 1915, at 87 years of age. As the decades pass, she remains a mighty role model for women who are called by God to minister in His church and to evangelize among the unsaved.



Brothers and sisters, God wants me.

—Hetty Hurd Haskell, 1884



## Other Women Ministers from the Past Short Sketches

The individuals presented in the first seven chapters by no means exhaust the list of women ministers in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In this chapter several additional examples are treated briefly.

This chapter is arranged alphabetically rather than chronologically. To provide some perspective as to time, note that among the first women ministers to be licensed were Sarah Lindsey (1872), Ellen Lane (1878), and Julia Owen (1878). In 1878 the General Conference adopted a resolution to issue a ministerial license to those competent and sound in doctrine; however, two of these women had received their licenses even sooner, from local conferences. (From Bert Haloviak, "Route to the Ordination of Women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church: Two Paths," unpublished paper, March 18, 1985.) They were at the forefront.

Still other women ministers who have enriched the past of their church appear in this book only by mention of their names in appendix B. There is ample room for further research.

### ***Hetty Hurd (Mrs. S. N.) Haskell: 1857 to 1919***

#### **Licensed minister 1901 to 1919**

The life sketch of Mrs. S. N. Haskell, written by Elder J. N. Loughborough at the time of her death, occupies nearly three columns in the *Review and Herald*, (From J. N. Loughborough, "Life Sketch of Mrs. S. N. Haskell," *Review and Herald*, November 20, 1919, the source for the material in this chapter, together with information provided by Bert Haloviak at the General Conference Archives.) indicating how highly Mrs. Haskell was esteemed by leaders of the denomination. For a number of years both she and Ellen White were listed in the *Yearbook* as ministers credentialed by the General Conference, Ellen White as ordained (See discussion of ordination in chapter 7 and appendix A, 7.5.) and Mrs. Haskell as licensed. Hetty Hurd Haskell's labors in the gospel spanned 34 years.

Before she became an Adventist, Hetty Hurd was a successful district school teacher in California for the unusually high salary of 75 dollars a month. Evidently a capable and

independent woman, she purchased her own horse and carriage to convey her to work. The school constituents were so pleased with her effectiveness that they offered her a contract for life.

In 1884 she agreed to visit the Oakland, California, Seventh-day Adventist camp meeting with her sister and brother-in-law's family, the Grays, but only because she enjoyed camping out; there was an understanding that she would not attend any meetings.

To her surprise, the music attracted Hetty. She stood outside the pavilion to listen. She heard not only beautiful music but also sermons on prophecy and Bible truths. Finally, when a minister spoke on the future inheritance of the saved, Hetty determined to herself, "I will be there." Miss Hurd enrolled in Bible studies, accepted the truths she heard, and joined the Adventist church in her home town, Lemoore, California.

After camp meeting, ministers Loughborough and Ings held a meeting at Lemoore inviting members to send out *Signs of the Times* accompanied by personal correspondence. Hetty Hurd ordered a club of ten subscriptions to mail out herself. Elder Loughborough could see that Miss Hurd was deeply moved. Her face flushed and then turned pale; she grasped the seat in front of her. Finally rising to her feet, she said in a voice so earnest that her words brought tears to the eyes of her listeners, "Brothers and sisters, God wants me." She did not explain further.

After the meeting the guest preachers came to have dinner with the Grays and Miss Hurd. Before the meal, Hetty walked up to Brother Ings and slipped into his hands her gold watch chains, some rings, and other jewelry. He thanked her and asked whether that was to pay for the papers she had ordered. She replied no, that she could pay for them otherwise; this was a contribution to the conference missionary society.

A training program to teach young women how to give Bible readings was about to commence in San Francisco. Miss Hurd decided to join the group. At the end of the spring term she gave up her teaching position and began her 34 years of service, much of which centered in giving Bible readings and teaching others how to carry out this ministry effectively. In addition, she built a reputation as a powerful preacher. She was called to train workers in England, Africa, and Australia.

While working in Australia, she met Elder Stephen N. Haskell. They were married in 1897. Thereafter they ministered together, first working at the Avondale school. After returning to the United States, they published the *Bible Training School* magazine to assist them in their work of educating workers for God.

Hetty Hurd Haskell as a licensed minister brought many people to her Lord; she also prepared countless others to do a similar work.

***Emma Songer (Mrs. G. R.) Hawkins: 1870 to 1926***  
**Licensed minister 1901 to 1911**

Emma Florence Songer, a native of Iowa, in 1893 married G. R. Hawkins. Together they engaged in evangelistic ministry in Iowa, where they established a number of churches.

The fact that she was licensed as a minister for over a decade by the Iowa Conference indicates that Mrs. Hawkins made an active contribution to the work of the denomination in her own right. Emma Hawkins and Minnie Sype (*chapter 2*) both served as licensed ministers for several years at the same time in the Iowa Conference.

Brother Hawkins wrote to the *Iowa Workers' Bulletin*, "The other night as Mrs. Hawkins spoke, he [a "well-to-do farmer"] was so moved that tears rolled down his cheek. He arose at the close of the meeting and declared his intention of keeping the Sabbath." (*From G. R. Hawkins, "Wapello," Iowa Workers' Bulletin, July 30, 1907*).

Mr. and Mrs. Hawkins held successful evangelistic meetings together. The Keokuk Church doubled in membership while they ministered there. (*From "Keokuk," Iowa Workers' Bulletin (April 16, 1907): 163.*) Mr. Hawkins was soon ordained.

After ministering in Iowa, the Hawkinses evangelized in Nebraska, Colorado, and Illinois. They raised up a large church in Danville, Illinois. Later they moved to Georgia.

As Mrs. Hawkins was busily preparing for the junior division at camp meeting as well as for a series to instruct mothers, she was struck by a truck while crossing the street; she died instantly. This sudden closing of her ministry came as a shock to her friends, family, and associates. They mourned Emma Hawkins personally and also deplored the loss to the denomination. (*From obituary, Mrs. Emma Florence Hawkins, Advent Review and Sabbath Herald (September 16, 1926): 22.*)

### ***Sarepta Irish (Mrs. S. M. I.) Henry: 1839-1900***

#### **Licensed as a minister 1898-1899**

As a child Sarepta Irish traveled through the frontier Illinois Territory with her loving and wise father, a pioneer Methodist minister. He taught her as she rode beside him in the wagon, using the Bible as the textbook whether the topic was religion, reading, or mathematics. In her late teens Sarepta attended Rock River Seminary. She was a committed Christian from childhood.

At the age of 22 she became Mrs. James Henry. When her husband died eight years later, Sarepta was left with three children between the ages of two and seven to raise. She managed this responsibility admirably, relying on God's promises as she worked diligently to support herself and her family.

Believing she was called to temperance work, Mrs. Henry advanced from a humble beginning to become national evangelist for the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Then illness gradually reduced this active woman to a complete invalid by 1895. The next year she recuperated at the Adventist-operated Battle Creek Sanitarium in Michigan. While there she accepted the Seventh-day Adventist teachings and, late in 1896, joined the church. During earnest prayer not long thereafter, she experienced healing. This enabled Mrs. Henry to resume her WCTU work.

Sarepta Henry instituted a Women's Ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. It was the first organized effort in the church to train parents and to aid them in meeting their particular problems. To assist her in her preaching and organizational

work, Mrs. Henry was issued a ministerial license by the Seventh-day Adventist denomination during the years 1898 and 1899.

Mrs. Henry frequently wrote for the *Review and Herald*. Titles of some of the books and pamphlets she authored will indicate the diversity of her topics: *The Abiding Spirit*, *Good Form and Christian Etiquette*, *The Marble Cross and Other Poems*, *Studies in Home and Child Life*, and *The Unanswered Prayer*.

The death of this gifted, active minister in the year 1900 brought sorrow to countless people whom she had served in various ways. Mourners filled the Battle Creek Tabernacle for her funeral service.

Afterward her influence lived on as other women were appointed to continue the work which she had established for mothers. (From a talk by Dr. E. D. Dick at Union College reunion held at the General Conference, June 30, 1985; "Sister S. M. I. Henry," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (January 30, 1900): 64-69.)

### ***Anna M. Johnson***

#### **Licensed minister 1881-1884**

We have a limited amount of information concerning a licensed minister by the name of Mrs. A. M. Johnson, through the Archives' list of women ministers and this letter from her granddaughter:

My grandmother was a licensed minister in the Minnesota Conference in 1881. I am enclosing a copy of her license. She held evangelistic meetings. My grandfather helped by leading the music and offering prayer, but Grandma did the preaching. She was still preaching now and then in her local church when I was a young woman, and I have heard her preach.

Sincerely your sister in Christ,

Queda B. Bahnsen

— Queda B. Bahnsen, Gresham, Oregon,  
letter to the author; August 1, 1984.

### ***Ellen S. Edmonds (Mrs. E. B.) Lane***

#### **Licensed minister 1878-1889**

While attending the State Normal School in Ypsilanti, Michigan, Ellen S. Edmonds and E. B. Lane became acquainted and were afterward married. This Seventh-day Adventist couple settled on a farm in Bedford Township, expecting to reside there for life. However, in the *Review and Herald* they read repeated urgent appeals for committed Adventists to enter the ministry to prepare people to meet their Lord. Praying earnestly for guidance from God, the Lanes put their little farm up for sale; within a week, they had a buyer. Still they would not decide until they had sought counsel from church leaders, particularly James and Ellen White. The Whites advised them to follow their

convictions. The Lanes sold their home and entered the ministry. Mr. Lane immediately received a license to preach.

After two years, the Lanes moved to the Indiana Mission. Their lives were not without pain. Their infant child died, and Mrs. Lane contracted a serious case of typhoid fever. Nevertheless, they continued in the ministry. They worked in several states and then returned to Michigan.

When the Michigan Conference issued a ministerial license to Mrs. Lane in 1878, she became one of the earliest Seventh-day Adventist women to receive such a license. Later that same year, on October 7, her preaching license was renewed during the Michigan Conference meetings. Since the General Conference Session was being held on the same grounds simultaneously, it cannot be said that this licensing of a woman to preach was carried out in a hidden corner of the young denomination. The wife of an ordained minister, Ellen Lane had given proof of her own distinctive calling to the ministry.

Sometimes Mrs. Lane held meetings on her own. At other times she assisted her husband. Just before Elder Lane was scheduled to start an evangelistic campaign in Bowling Green, Ohio, he suffered a severe attack of diphtheria and sent for his wife. Mrs. Lane opened the meetings; as her husband recovered, he spoke when he was able, and she preached at the other services.

The Lanes were each conducting an evangelistic series in different parts of Ohio when Mr. Lane became seriously ill. He was hesitant to let his wife know about his condition because he did not want to interrupt her meetings. Finally he did consent for the message to be sent. Unfortunately, he was more sick than he realized; he died almost immediately.

After Mrs. Lane had mourned the passing of her companion, she took up her ministerial duties alone. (“Notices—Eld. E.B. Lane,” *Review and Herald* (August 23, 1881); Bert Haloviak, “Route to the Ordination of Women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church: Two Paths,” *March 18, 1985, unpublished paper, p. 8.*)

### ***Sarah A. Hallock (Mrs. John) Lindsey***

**Licensed 1872**

A convert to Adventism, young Sarah Hallock wrote thoughtful theological questions to the *Review*. During the Civil War or immediately afterward she married a young Adventist lay minister, John Lindsey. The understanding that time was short brought urgent requests from denominational leaders for wider participation in the work by lay ministers. With this encouragement, Sarah Lindsey began preaching in 1867. Six people were baptized as a result of her first meetings. Early in 1869 Sarah and John began holding efforts together.

The Advent cause was beset with apostasy and moral problems during the late 1860s. However, new strength in the form of the dynamic husband and wife preaching team of Sarah and John Lindsey brought courage to church leadership.

Brian Strayer provides arresting detail in his article on Sarah Lindsey's ministry:

In January they teamed up with Nathan Fuller for a series of meetings in Wellsville, N.Y., for three Sabbaths "preaching the word" in the pulpit. Then they trudged on foot through 16-inch snowdrifts to Pleasant Valley, where Sarah preached 23 times on the signs of the times, Christ's second coming, and various prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. This spectacular public speaking itinerary was unrivaled by any other Adventist woman except Ellen White. In May Sarah spoke six times at West Union. Her husband John, who reported these meetings to the Review, neglected to mention whether he preached or not!

—Brian E. Strayer, "Sarah A. H. Lindsey: Advent Preacher on the Southern Tier," *Adventist Heritage* (Fall 1986): 16-25.

Traveling throughout western New York and Pennsylvania with her husband, Sarah preached, conducted funerals, gave Bible studies, and taught.

Ministers were scarce; therefore the Lindseys relentlessly pushed on through drifted snow during the winter of 1870-71 to carry the news of salvation and Jesus' expected return to settlements along the border between New York and Pennsylvania. The next summer Sarah and John preached in Hornby, Catlin, and Beaver Dam, New York, as well as Knoxville, Alva, Armenian Mountain, and Lawrenceville, Pennsylvania.

Letters of appreciation for the Lindseys' preaching were written to the Review by the postmaster at Beaver Dams, New York, and many other people. It is not surprising that the Lindseys' work was recognized by their both being licensed as ministers in August 1872. They continued their work in the area known as "The Southern Tier," and church leaders testified to a spirit of revival that they found when visiting there. (From Bert Haloviak, "Route to the Ordination of Women"; Review and Herald (November 14, 1878), 158; Review and Herald (January 3, 1899).

### **Julia (Mrs. G. K.) Owen: 1840-1898**

#### **Licensed 1878 to 1895**

Later during the same year that Ellen Lane was credentialed by the Michigan Conference, Julia Owen in 1878 received a similar preaching license from the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference. Thus in the first year that the licensing of ministers was practiced by the denomination with General Conference action, two women ministers were licensed.

Julia Owen was married to an ordained minister, Elder G. K. Owen. However, the church leadership recognized her as being called as an individual to ministry. She labored as a minister of the gospel for more than twenty years and was licensed from 1878 to 1895. She died in 1895. (Haloviak, 5.)

***L. Flora (Mrs. Frank) Plummer: 1862-1945***

**Licensed minister 1893**

Flora Plummer was a young married woman teaching high school in Nevada, Iowa, when she attended evangelistic meetings conducted by A. G. Daniells in the year 1885. The next year, after a spiritual struggle, she made her surrender to Christ and became a Seventh-day Adventist. As befit her dynamic nature, she immediately became an ardent worker for the church, mailing out literature and conducting Bible studies.

An active member of the Iowa Sabbath School Association, Flora Plummer became its president in 1891. Four years later she was chosen to read a paper before the General Sabbath School Council as it met in Battle Creek, Michigan. The Sabbath school work was gaining momentum; with her enthusiasm for this ministry, Flora Plummer was on the cutting edge.

Mrs. Plummer was elected secretary of the Iowa Conference in 1897. During part of the year 1900 she served as acting president of the Iowa Conference when the president left for California. This was a woman of no mean administrative ability. Later that year she became Sabbath school secretary for the Minnesota Conference.

As a delegate at large, Flora Plummer attended the 1901 General Conference. There the Sabbath school department of the General Conference was first organized, and Flora Plummer became its correspondence secretary.

When her office moved in 1905 to Washington, D.C., Mrs. Plummer's husband obligingly moved his business to that area. Although Frank Plummer was not a Seventh-day Adventist until the last few days of his life, this considerate man moved with his wife, following her career.

In 1905 the Plummers adopted two children. Now Flora enjoyed her own family in addition to her large Sabbath school family.

Mrs. Plummer became editor of the *Sabbath School Worker* in 1904 and carried that responsibility, except for a few months, through all the years until her retirement in 1936.

As a result of her outstanding work as the correspondence secretary, in 1913 Mrs. Plummer was elected secretary of the General Conference Sabbath school department, equivalent to the modern post of departmental director. She held this position for 23 years.

Elder H. D. Singleton said concerning Flora Plummer, "She was powerful in her day." He recalled her use of cards, banners, and ribbons to achieve goals such as getting people to Sabbath school on time. "During her reign," Elder Singleton recalled, "the Sabbath school was alive." (*From Elder H. D. Singleton, Wheaton, Maryland, telephone conversation with the author, December 6, 1988.*)

Mrs. Plummer conceived the Sabbath school as a soul winning agency. Herself a teacher, she promoted the training of Sabbath school instructors.

Sabbath school giving for missions rose from nearly \$22,000 a year in the first year of her association with the General Conference Sabbath school department, 1901, to \$2,000,000 a year before the end of her directorship.

Mrs. Plummer wrote extensively. In addition to thirty years of editorials for the *Worker*, she penned articles frequently for the *Review and Herald* and authored books including *The Soul-Winning Teacher*, *The Spirit of the Teacher*, *The Soul-Winning Sabbath School*, and a history of the Sabbath school from 1904 to 1936.

Even after health problems caused her retirement in 1936, she continued to be active. In spite of her weakness, she wrote camp meeting lessons for children and authored two sets of adult Sabbath school lessons, covering the book of Acts and the life of Christ.

For most of her 36 years of labor, Mrs. Plummer's credentialing was the missionary license. She was issued a ministerial license in 1893 from the Iowa Conference. Her pay as departmental director was that of an ordained minister.

Flora Plummer died on April 8, 1945. At her funeral, conducted by four General Conference leaders, high tribute was paid to her splendid work of directing and advancing the Sabbath school department over many years, leaving an influence that will last until the end of time. The work that she accomplished in the Sabbath schools profoundly affected the growth of the denomination during the first third of the twentieth century. (From the *Review and Herald* (May 24, 1945); R. A. Anderson, *Columbia Union Visitor* (August 9, 1945): 5; and a telephone conversation with H. D. Singleton.)

#### ***Ura Joy Spring: 1873-1971*** **Licensed 1910**

Ura Joy Spring, born in Indiana during 1873, married a young minister and with him served in the West Indies. This young wife and mother built up churches alongside her husband. After returning to the United States, Mrs. Spring developed a specialty of holding meetings particularly for children. She integrated ministry to her own family with ministry to the church community. Her work took her to Colorado, Arkansas, and Nebraska.

Mrs. Spring is listed in the *Yearbook* for 1910 as a licensed minister in the Nebraska Conference. She died March 1, 1971, as the result of injuries sustained in the California Sylmar earthquake. (From the *Review and Herald* (May 6, 1971): 46; *Pacific Union Recorder* (May 13, 1971): 7.)

#### ***Mabel Alice Vreeland: 1895-1985***

This well-known woman minister pastored the entire Adirondak District in New York State for many years, performing all the ministerial functions except to baptize. She preached, conducted board meetings, and helped pitch tents for camp meeting alongside her male counterparts.

Mabel Alice Vreeland was born in Massachusetts in 1895. After graduating from high school, she worked for a Unitarian minister, Miss Margaret Varnard, in Bernardston, Massachusetts. Among other responsibilities, she drove Miss Varnard to many appointments. Perhaps this early experience with a woman minister caused Mabel Vreeland to think of the ministry as an acceptable career for a woman. Herself a Seventh-day Adventist, Mabel for a time taught at the Baptist Sunday school in Bernardston.



She studied at Lancaster Junior College, today Atlantic Union College, in Massachusetts, graduating in 1920. While she was a student, Mabel and other committed young women from the college contributed volunteer work, sometimes around the clock, for victims of the dreadful flu epidemic that swept Clinton and Lancaster during World War I.

After graduation, Mabel began her lifelong work for the Seventh-day Adventist Church by serving as a Bible instructor in churches in Boston, Pittsfield, and Springfield.

In 1924 she moved to upstate New York and worked for the New York Conference until her retirement in 1960. As a Bible worker she prepared converts for church membership in Albany, Rochester, Buffalo, Elmira, Cortland, Syracuse, and Watertown.

While she was working in Watertown, Mabel Vreeland was asked by the conference administration to pastor that district. "Mabel's courage, stamina, and faith have always been strong," David Knott wrote, "but I believe those qualities were put to the test in this snow belt district of New York." Since there were no other women pastors in the conference, "Mabel was a pioneer in more than one sense." (*From "At Rest: Mabel Alice Vreeland," David W. Knott, AUC Accent (Summer, 1985): 26.*)

During 1951, because no male pastor appeared interested in pastoring the cold North Adirondack District around Saranac Lake, conference leaders asked Mabel whether she would take that assignment. She was willing to go. Her ingenuity and dedication were challenged by the many needs to be filled and the hazards and climate to be braved.

The district consisted of three churches 66 miles apart. Although Mabel was not mechanically inclined, with her used car and tire chains she risked deep snow drifts on isolated roads in winter weather that saw temperatures dip to 40 degrees below zero. She had adventures to relate from her journeys on those lonely, snow-packed roads, sometimes miles from any human habitation or help. Angels must have been her traveling companions.

Pastoring three congregations involved preaching and much more: holding bake sales to meet expenses, painting and doing repair work, while constantly visiting and ministering to the needs of the members.

Miss Vreeland continued this demanding pace until health problems with cancer led to her retirement in 1960. Then she worked actively to regain her health. She carefully built up soil and from it grew healthy plants for food. Her cheerful spirit and healthful diet resulted in a dramatic improvement in her physical condition. She enjoyed a quarter of a century of life after her health crisis, living on her farm.

After retirement Mabel Vreeland still participated in the work of the church. Until the age of 81 she cheerfully took charge of housing at the annual ten-day camp meeting held by the New York Conference in Union Springs, New York, where she could see many of her friends and converts.

An intensely active woman who exemplified love, faith, and joy in her life, this pioneer minister has left deeply etched memories in the minds of her former parish-

## Called By God

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ioners and friends. (*From Dr. Otilie Stafford, South Lancaster, Massachusetts, interview by the author; David W. Knott, South Lancaster, Massachusetts, and Betty Cooney, Manhasset, New York, letters to the author; David W. Knott, "At Rest."*)

“It was no human voice that gave me the most powerful call I have ever had—the call into ministry. It was the still, small voice of God in the events of my life and the meditations of my heart.”

—Penny Shell



## Active and Retired Women Ministers A Brief Sampler

The number of women serving in the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination has increased markedly since this book was first published in 1990. Dúane Schoonard, associate secretary of the North American Division (NAD) Ministerial Department, wrote in *Contact* for June-July-August 2003, “Currently there are 425 women clergy in the North American Division. Of these, 237 are employed by the denomination. Another 19 are serving in non-Adventist settings” including hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, hospices, and industry.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to these women workers in the NAD, around the world of Adventism there are other women evangelists, pastors, and administrators serving the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

As much as we might enjoy a report on each of these women ministers, that lies well beyond the scope of this book. I’m largely basing material for this chapter on women who attended the Second Conference for Seventh-day Adventist Women Clergy (held by the NAD Ministerial Association at the Cohutta Springs Conference Center Sept. 14-17, 2003), and who cooperatively filled out an information form which I distributed at that time.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Brillhart, Rebecca***

Rebecca says her call came gradually as she worked with women in ministry through TEAM<sup>4</sup> as project coordinator. “My colleagues ‘affirmed’ in me what God had been preparing me to do over 10 years’ time.” She is completing a Master of Divinity degree at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C.

Pastor Brillhart’s position, since 1997, is Pastor for Discipleship at Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church in Takoma Park, MD. Previously Becky had a lay ministry at Sligo in children’s work and discipleship.

She has baptized approximately 15 candidates whom she prepared for baptism.

Any frustrations? Yes, “programs, programs, programs! I prefer a one-on-one ministry emphasis.” It needs to be said, however, that Becky does excellent work planning programs for the blessing and enjoyment of Sligo members and their many visitors.

What does Pastor Brillhart find especially rewarding in her career? “Discipling others, pastoral care/counseling, and visitation. I’m working on a continuum of care for new members.”

***Bumgardner, Leslie Helfer***

Leslie Helfer converted to Adventism while in high school. Believing herself called to the ministry, she studied at Walla Walla College in Washington and graduated with a BA degree in religion. When it dawned on her that she might not find a ministerial position, she added a second major in home economics.

Leslie worked as a legislative aide and office manager for U.S. Congressman Thomas Foley, and was food service manager at Shady Grove Adventist Hospital in Maryland.

Leslie Bumgardner moved to Worthington, Ohio, where a conversation with the pastor rekindled Leslie's longing to enter the ministry. The only opening available, however, was as part-time secretary in the church office; she accepted the position. Leslie discussed her dream with the next senior pastor and was hired as a full-time Bible worker. A year later, in 1985, under a third pastor Leslie's calling took the form of associate pastor at the Worthington Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In 1990 Leslie, with a core group, planted a congregation in Dublin, Ohio.

She joined the Walla Walla College Church staff in 1994. One of five pastors, she oversees the parish nurse program and health ministries, along with other pastoral care services.

For some years Pastor Bumgardner has baptized candidates whom she prepares for church membership. She repeatedly sees evidence that God wants her in the ministry and has fitted her for that calling.

***Compton, Maggie M.***

Maggie says about her call, “From early childhood (around age 6 or 7), I felt the call of God to tell others about Jesus’ love. I became a nurse first, because there were no opportunities for women in ministry in the 1970’s. I provided spiritual care then, but in 1990 God opened the door to chaplaincy for me.”

Maggie prepared with a BA in Theology from Oakwood College in 1995 and the Master of Divinity in Pastoral Ministry from Andrews University. In 1998 she took a chaplain internship at Bronson Methodist Hospital in Kalazamoo, MI, followed in 1999 with the chaplain residency at St. Joseph’s Regional Medical Center in South Bend, IN.

Chaplain Compton is the Protestant Staff Chaplain for the Ann Arbor Veterans’ Administration Health Care System in Ann Arbor, MI. Previously she has held other chaplain and hospice care positions in Louisiana and Texas.

A cause of frustration to Maggie Compton is the disrespect and disregard for women in ministry that she encounters. However, God “continues to affirm my ministry by placing me in honorable opportunities to share His love with the sick and discouraged.” Chaplain Compton finds hospital ministry and palliative care rewarding.

When she was nursing in 1983 at a Veteran's Administration hospital in Alexandria, LA, Maggie had this experience, which she shares:

One night the Lord led me to the bedside of a man who had never experienced the saving grace of Jesus Christ. I, in obedience to God's prompting, extended an invitation for him to accept the plan of salvation. He accepted, and 20 minutes later he was found dead in his room. We were unable to resuscitate him. When his family arrived, they were elated to know that he had accepted Jesus as his personal Savior.

When I began my ministerial training at Oakwood College in 1990, I had actually forgotten that experience, but the Holy Spirit brought it back to my remembrance. He spoke to me saying, "This is what I want you to do. This is why I brought you to Oakwood College."

### ***Farley, Linda***

Linda Farley's preparation for her present work includes a BA in Religion and a Masters in Specialized Ministry (Pastoral Care and Counseling). She has been a staff chaplain at Kettering Medical Center, and is now Manager of Pastoral Services there.

She has baptized one person, while preparing many others for that sacred rite.

What is a source of frustration to her? It is to hear someone deny that the Seventh-day Adventist denomination has women pastors. Pastor Farley says she may no longer remain silent when such an assertion is made.

This pastor enjoys visitation and providing nurturing. She says, "I love working with people of different faiths."

### ***Ferreras, Marlene Mayra***

Marlene Mayra Ferreras is dynamically involved as youth pastor of a spirited congregation, the Campus Hill Church in Loma Linda, CA. She graduated in June 2003 from La Sierra University with majors in Religious Studies and Spanish and a minor in Biblical languages. In July 2003 Marlene was elated to be hired full-time by Southeastern California Conference for her position at Campus Hill Church. She is on an "ordination track" with Southeastern, for the ordained-commissioned credential awarded alike by that conference to men and women candidates when they are shown proven and ready. (See p. 166)

Marlene showed gifts for the Lord's work early, evidenced by her being ordained as a deacon at the age of 16 and as an elder at 18. She says, "The only consistent thing in my life has been God. To think He was calling me was frightening because I knew it would consume all that I am. But God has been faithful to me and I will follow His leading through it all."

Her greatest frustration arises from wanting to preach in Spanish (she's Hispanic), yet encountering strong rejection in that culture. To deal with this, she relies on God for "strength to endure, words to speak, and comfort to heal."

What does this pastor enjoy best? She wrote, "I enjoy preaching and sharing with people the power of God. Watching God work in and through people is humbling and

exciting. To see the gospel transform lives, transforms my own in the process.” She also wrote, “Life is wonderful and the ministry is even better!”

Ms. Ferreras has witnessed God’s power in her ministry. Conducting an anointing service for a man losing his sight, Marlene says she “felt God place His hand on us.” Two weeks later the man found Marlene at church and looked at her with tears in his eyes, exclaiming, “I can see!”

### ***Gober, Carla***

While traveling in Germany, looking at a statue of Martin Luther, Carla Gober sensed that the God who had chosen Luther was also calling her to speak for Him. She was 18.

How did she get started in the ministry? While working as a nurse, at one point Carla definitely felt God calling her to speak, yet she wouldn’t volunteer for the opportunity. However, within a week Pastor Clarence Schilt called and said to Carla, “I want you to preach at my church.”

Astonished, Carla asked, “Why me? I’m only a nurse on a unit.”

“Well,” Pastor Schilt said after a moment’s thought, “Let’s say I felt impressed by God.”

After she had spoken for Pastor Clarence a couple of times, Carla, at the request of friends, attended a women’s retreat at which Kay Kuzma was the speaker. Near the end Kay said that if anyone there felt called to speak, to come up and Kay would let her give her testimony. When Carla went up to Kay to say something about the retreat, Kay told her, “I’d like to invite you to speak at my next retreat.” “Do you know me?” Carla asked. “Have you heard me speak?”

Kay answered “No” to both questions. Then to the puzzled young woman Kay said simply, “I trust God.” The next year Carla and another young woman did the whole retreat, with Kay Kuzma present. In Clarence Schilt and Kay Kuzma, Carla Gober found willing, able mentors to advance her in God’s calling. Carla was so moved by Kay Kuzma’s actions toward her that ever since, Carla has made room for other people to speak in her own programs.

Carla’s education includes bachelor’s degrees in Religion and in Nursing from Southern Adventist University and master’s degrees in Health Education and in Marriage, Family, and Child Counseling from Loma Linda University. She took sabbatical leave from Loma Linda University to pursue a PhD in Religious Studies at Emory University, expecting in the fall of 2004 to return to Loma Linda University to teach on the faculty of religion.

Carla has baptized candidates whom she has prepared for church membership.

### ***Haloviak, Kendra***

After graduating from Takoma Academy in Maryland, Kendra Haloviak received a BA from Columbia Union College in 1989 with majors in both theology and English.

Kendra next spent a year as an intern pastor at the Kettering Seventh-day Adventist

Church in Ohio. Her responsibilities included ministry to students at Kettering College of Medical Arts. In 1990 she began work on an MA in religion from Andrews University Theological Seminary. During her year at Andrews, Kendra was associate pastor for the All Nations Seventh-day Adventist Church in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

In 1991 Kendra was invited to join the pastoral staff of the Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church in Takoma Park, Maryland. Her specific responsibilities included young adult ministries and worship planning. In January 1993 Kendra joined the Religion Department at Columbia Union College, teaching courses to students preparing for Adventist ministry and to those taking general education credits.

Experiences in both congregational and classroom ministry influenced Kendra's interest in the book of Revelation. She pursued these interests in a doctoral program at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, producing a dissertation entitled *Worlds at War, Nations in Song: Dialogic Imagination and Moral Vision in the Hymns of the Book of Revelation*.

Following the completion of her doctoral degree, Kendra went to teach at La Sierra University in Riverside, CA, in 2002.

A sixth-generation Adventist who cherishes her heritage, Kendra's motivation and hope for ministry are captured in Scripture's final invitation: "The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.' And let everyone who hears say, 'Come.' And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift" (Revelation 22:17, NRSV).

### ***Ibanez, Carmen***

Carmen says, "I felt called to the ministry when I was about 15 years old."

Her position is associate pastor at Azure Hills Church in California. In the past Carmen has served as associate pastor at the Inland Spanish, Riverside Spanish, and Loma Linda Spanish churches.

Carmen has baptized at least six candidates.

She is richly rewarded for her efforts in organizing Young Adult Church and Children's Church, as well as through one-to-one interactions.

A trial for Pastor Ibanez is lack of support and undermining by some Hispanic members and pastors. How is God helping her to deal with this? For one thing, by calling her to an "Anglo" church. "Besides, I have received much support from the young adults that I was pastoring. Friends are God's way of keeping me sane."

### ***Johnson, Brenda***

Brenda Rogers was a student at Boston University who had "everything" in life except peace and satisfaction when a young woman from Campus Crusade for Christ shared about her own joyous relationship with Christ. Brenda that night welcomed the invitation to accept the Savior into her own life.

"Almost immediately," she says, "the only thing I wanted was to serve God in full time ministry for the rest of my life whatever the cost." She became a Campus Crusade

leader at Boston University, then joined a coffee house evangelistic team. She led young people involved in drugs and the occult to the Lord.

One evening she witnessed to a young seminarian. The only theology she knew was that one must ask Jesus Christ into his/her heart and be born again. The young man was willing to repeat after her a simple sinner's prayer, accepting Jesus as his personal Savior. Three months later he asked Brenda to marry him. She was going to be a minister's wife! To her, this was a "calling."

Brenda was married to Philip Johnson in 1972. Although she could not attend seminary—Brenda worked as a maid to put Phil through—he brought home to her what he was learning. When he finished at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and they needed to choose a denomination in which to minister, they were in trouble. The Baptists were not interested in the Johnsons because they spoke in tongues, but the Assemblies of God were not interested either because, while the couple spoke in tongues, they did not believe that speaking in tongues was normative for all Spirit-filled Christians. So they decided to become home missionaries and plant their own charismatic church in the beautiful state of Maine.

They were in Maine only a few weeks when they found themselves on their knees pleading to the Lord for sound doctrine. That very day, Phil met his first Seventh-day Adventist. To him and Brenda the seventh-day Sabbath made total sense, and they saw no choice but to believe the fourth commandment as it was written. The Adventist teachings on death, hell, health, and the second coming also made sense. They became Seventh-day Adventists in the fall of 1974. Their greatest disappointment was that they would be expected to wait several years to "settle into the truth" before they could be considered for the Adventist ministry.

After settling in for three years the Johnsons, with two little boys, headed for the SDA Theological Seminary. They had no sponsorship.

It took just six months, financially difficult but spiritually stimulating, for them to receive a call to the ministry in North Dakota. Both Phil and Brenda loved the ministry and put their energy fully into their two-church district. After four years, Phil was ordained. "At that point," Brenda says, "being a pastor's wife working with Phil was the greatest calling I could imagine."

After Phil's ordination they were called to West Lebanon, New Hampshire. The boys entered school, and it was time for Brenda to think about employment.

Nothing interested her except the ministry. "I began to sense that this was a calling and that I could not be happy doing anything else." Her husband wondered, from a practical standpoint, whether she could earn enough to help educate their children.

She decided to finish a college degree through the Adult Degree Program of Atlantic Union College with a theology major. Graduating from AUC with a BA in Personal Ministries, she immediately was hired as a stipend Bible worker. When the couple moved to New York City in 1990, Brenda was picked up by the conference through a special program with the General Conference which paid half of her salary with the stip-



ulation that she receive a full ministerial salary, which was rare for a woman in those days. In two years ministering there, they baptized 50 people, more than half of whom had studied with Brenda.

At the 1990 General Conference, Brenda was present to hear the discussion about women's ordination. It was not a topic she had considered before. But when the vote came, uncontrollable tears came, and she "got in touch with the fact that in the deepest recesses of my soul I wanted to be recognized as a minister of the Lord—I wanted to be ordained." However, Brenda realized that the church had spoken and decided to put that painful moment out of her mind. The discussion at GC of 1995 brought it all back, "only by that time I was even surer of my call."

The Johnsons moved to Livingston, NY, where Brenda worked as a part-time chaplain, part-time Bible worker. She has been Women's Ministry Director for the Greater New York Conference.

She moved into full-time chaplaincy. Her husband requested that she begin preaching twice a month in their two-church district. She has continued that schedule for ten years.

Brenda has taken a residency in Clinical Pastoral Education, a Master of Divinity degree from Northern Baptist Seminary, and hours toward a doctorate.

Presently Brenda divides her time between Hospice Chaplaincy and Team Pastoral Ministry with her husband, still preaching twice a month. The churches the Johnsons pastor are Glen Ellyn and Northbrook, Illinois.

Brenda expects to be board certified in the spring of 2005. She says that without any question, Phil is now happy and grateful that she pursued the degree she did.

### ***Knott, Esther Ramharacksingh***

At the age of three, Esther began sharing her love for Jesus. She gave her first Bible studies after her first year in college. When people with whom she had studied chose to follow Jesus, Esther was thrilled. During her third summer of college she worked with an evangelistic team. Again she was awed that through her people could form a clearer picture of God and come to love Him.

Those who observed her witnessing activities mistakenly supposed that Esther was a theology major. She says she fought against her call to the ministry. However, during her senior year she finally changed her major to religion. She found peace of mind when she said "yes" to God's calling for her life.

To her major in religion Esther added minors in physical education and health; she has used this adjunct training in ministries leading to Bible studies and baptisms.

Esther served as campus chaplain at Broadview Academy 1980-83 and as assistant chaplain at Andrews University 1985-87. She has worked in the North American Division office of education, led Bible camps and leadership retreats, and conducted a week of prayer at Valley Grande Academy in Texas.

Esther Ramharacksingh joined the pastoral staff of Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1990. After marriage to Ron Knott, she continued her career in ministry. She transferred to Pioneer Memorial Church on the campus of Andrews University in 1997, where her assignments are in pastoral care and training, small groups, and discipling.

It is of interest that in 1996 Esther was approved for ordination by the Potomac Conference as well as by the Columbia Union, and it is so recorded. At the annual ordination service at Potomac camp meeting everything was the same for Esther as for her male peers, only she “received a different piece of paper.” Therefore if or when ordination of women is approved by the denomination, Esther says she will not need to go through another ordination service.

### ***Kretschmar, Juanita***

For years Juanita presided over the New York City Van Ministries, a work of faith involving many volunteers and voluntary contributions. Juanita was director of the health and temperance, community services, and inner city departments of the Greater New York Conference. She preached in local churches and at camp meetings and retreats. Juanita and her husband, Merlin Kretschmar (president of Greater New York Conference), together conducted prayer retreats.

Upon retirement, Merlin and Juanita moved to the Florida Keys and set up a unique ministry, *A Key Encounter* Nature Theater and Planetarium. As tourists from around the world, as well as local visitors, come in, they are offered *Power to Cope* and other literature as appropriate, including Bible studies, and may be visited with and prayed for as the situation indicates.

### ***Losey, Tammy***

The call to ministry that Tammy felt at the age of 18 she has found to be affirmed repeatedly “by those I have served and by our faithful God!”

Immediately after receiving her BA in Theology from La Sierra University, Tammy gave birth to twins and stayed home with them until they were in school. Then she returned to her educational and professional goals. She has an MA in Pastoral Ministry and is working on a program equivalent to the M Div in preparation for entering a doctoral program.

Tammy Losey is executive pastor at Mountain View Church in Las Vegas, Nevada. Previously she has held responsibilities as a Bible worker, pastor of church growth and evangelism, pastor of women’s ministries, youth pastor, and associate pastor. She has had the privilege of baptizing around 30 candidates whom she has prepared.

Asked about causes of annoyance, she replies, “Although I have had many frustrations as a woman in ministry, they all pale into insignificance compared to the joy of serving our Lord in full-time ministry. With God’s help I try to keep perspective in relation to eternity.”

While Tammy enjoys preaching and teaching, she also finds satisfaction in encouraging, equipping, and empowering others for their paths of service. She offers a healing ministry to people with damaged emotions, broken spiritually and physically.

Pastor Losey appreciates deeply the contributions of women and men who have sacrificed to open doors for male and female pastors to serve side by side in clergy roles.

***Neall, Beatrice Short***

Though Beatrice Neall took a modified theology major, she saw no way open to enter the ministry other than the route which she followed, which was to marry a minister. She and her minister husband served in Cambodia, Vietnam, and Singapore. Beatrice taught Bible to nurses, conducted ministerial training in Vietnam, and from 1971 to 1974 was a Bible teacher at Southeast Asia Union College. On furloughs she completed MA and PhD degrees in religious education at Andrews University while taking the opportunity to enroll in many seminary courses.

Dr. Neall's book, *The Prince and the Rebel*, alludes to a struggle in Cambodia while portraying the Great Controversy story; it has been translated into 12 languages, and an estimated 50,000 copies were distributed to Cambodian refugees in camps.

Dr. Neall began her tenure at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska as a theology and biblical languages professor in 1977.

She was honored as a Woman of the Year by the Association of Adventist Women in 2003 with the Spiritual Leadership Award.

***Oberg, Chris***

Pastor Oberg has accepted a call to become the senior pastor of the Calimesa Church in the Southeastern California Conference in April 2005. The church has 1200 members. She has been associate pastor at the La Sierra University Church for four years.

***Osborn, Norma Keough***

A church school teacher and mother, Norma Osborn had previously completed bachelor's and master's degrees in education when, because of her evident abilities and experience in education, she was invited to join the Sligo SDA Church staff as associate pastor for children's ministries. Beginning in 1989 Pastor Osborn became able to baptize candidates she prepared, including her daughter.

In the 3,000-member Sligo congregation in Takoma Park, Maryland, Norma thoroughly enjoyed her ministry and felt supported and encouraged. Nevertheless, she sometimes wished there were more women in similar positions so that when she encountered disillusionment along with the joys, she would have understanding listeners; and when an idea worked especially well, she could share it. We are glad that during the 15 years since Norma expressed that wish and this book was first published, many more women have been called into the Adventist ministry.

After helping with a church plant in Hoboken, N.J., Norma moved to Community Praise Center SDA Church in Alexandria, VA. In this dynamic African-American

church she enjoyed “wonderful preaching by Henry Wright and vibrant music.”

The Osborns moved in 2001 to Pacific Union College, where Pastor Osborn assumed duties in the college church as Pastor for Family Ministries as her husband became college president.

Norma’s comment concerning her position: “I believe with all my heart, and I am always totally amazed, that the Lord wants me here. His will for me is my priority.”

### ***Ripley, Heather***

Heather fought against the call to ministry, then made a deal that she would follow God’s leading into that field if she didn’t have to speak. “In God’s sense of humor,” she acknowledges, “I now have a passion for even preaching.”

Her preparation has included her experiences of pastoring while a student, and as an intern for the Texas Conference, along with her “book learning” that contributed to a BA in Theology from Southwestern Adventist University and the M Div from Andrews University. She is currently working on a doctorate from George Fox Evangelical Seminary in Leadership and Spiritual Formation. Heather has also learned much from her parents, both of whom are pastors (see LYNN RIPLEY in this chapter).

Heather’s present responsibilities are as senior pastor for a two-church district in Brownwood and Coleman Counties in Texas. Studying an atlas, one can see that Coleman County includes a large square of Texas land with a modest population of 9,710. This is farm and ranch country, the setting in which Heather has been nicknamed the “cow pastor.” She explains that a woman to whom she was giving Bible studies told about having donated a goose and turkey as tithe. Now she has shown Heather “my tithe cow.”

Ms. Ripley’s frustration arises out of “not enough time to do it all!” God enables her to deal with this problem by helping her to set boundaries.

What rewards this young pastor? Making spirituality real to a person, something that affects every part of his/her life; speaking, visitation, young adults’ worship, reaching people with secular orientation, children’s church, and contemporary evangelism. She has been privileged to baptize about ten converts.

### ***Ripley, Lynn***

Lynn Ripley is associate pastor of the Saint Paul First Church and serves as Women’s Ministries Director for the Minnesota Conference. Her husband, David, is the conference Ministerial Director.

Lynn received her undergraduate degree in Theology and Biblical Languages from Southwestern Adventist University; her Masters Degree is in Pastoral Ministry from Andrews University. Lynn once served unpaid as an associate pastor, and this act of faith led to her being hired by the Texas Conference as associate pastor of the North West Houston Church.

The Ripleys formerly ministered in the British Columbia Conference in Canada, where Lynn was chaplain for a K-10 school and Director of Women's Ministries while David served as Ministerial Director.

Ms. Ripley has baptized approximately 15 people and is preparing another for that sacred ceremony. She finds herself rewarded by mentoring women, families, and youth into active ministry.

***Roberts, Sandra***

Sandra Roberts has ministered many years in youth and summer-camp ministry, starting when she was a student. For five years she was copastor/associate pastor of the Corona, California, SDA church. In 2000 she became associate youth director in the Southeastern California Conference.

Ms. Roberts was elected Nov. 7, 2004, as executive secretary for the Southeastern California Conference. She is the first woman to be elected as an officer in any conference of the Pacific Union.

***Salcedo-Gonzales, Myriam***

Myriam says, "All in all, it took me 22 years to come full circle to my true vocation and calling." She is an associate pastor of the White Memorial church in Los Angeles, California. Since 2000 she has been specifically the Pastor for Nurture and Evangelism.

What has been the route by which Myriam came to this position? When she was eight years of age, her father became a pastor. The child accompanied her father to visit and give Bible studies, watched and heard him preach, and even then felt God calling her to do the same. Besides her parents, another inspirational role model was Ana Rosa Alvarado, a Bible worker who served as a pastor without having the title.

Being sure what she was going to study, Myriam in 1985 became the first female student of Antillian College (in Puerto Rico) to graduate with a BA in Theology. Later she attended a field program that Andrews University offered in Puerto Rico, and graduated in 1988 with the MA in Religion. She also has an MA in Counseling and School Leadership and Administration.

Pastor Salcedo-Gonzales says her passion is evangelism, or more specifically to present the amazing grace of Jesus to all who are needing it. She likes preaching, giving Bible studies, and organizing evangelistic programs such as needs-based seminars, Servant Evangelism, and Socials-to-Save. She also feels rewarded when she visits church members. Myriam enjoys speaking at women's retreats.

At the time of this writing, Myriam has baptized 15 people.

***Schoonard, Dúane***

After the 1995 General Conference session, President of the North American Division A.C. McClure called for a NAD President's Commission on Women in Ministry. Chaired by Harold Baptiste, division secretary, the commission made comprehensive recommendations to the NAD Year-End Meetings in 1997, among them that a

woman be added to the staff of the NAD Ministerial Association. Dúane Schoonard was selected to be one of three associate directors of the NAD Ministerial Association.

Dúane has served as pastor of spiritual nurture at the Collegedale SDA Church in Tennessee since August 1998. Previously she pastored in the Florida Conference and served as chaplain at Florida Hospital for seven years. She has a BA in theology from Atlantic Union College and an MA in Mental Health counseling. Pastor Schoonard has a married adult son and daughter.

Pastor Schoonard looks after women ministers with care and creative thought. She has organized two national conferences for them, and just now is arranging for NAD women ministers to meet at the 2005 General Conference.

### ***Sheldon, Jean***

Jean Sheldon recalls that as a sophomore at Pacific Union College while in her dormitory room she perceived that God was calling her to be a theologian. She writes, "I sensed the presence of all three members of the Godhead as they anointed me in a manner similar to the Levitical priests for the task."

She prepared for her work with a BA in religion, Andrews University, 1982; an MA in Religion (Biblical Studies) at Loma Linda University in 1984; and a PhD in Near Eastern Religions issued jointly by University of California, Berkeley, and the Graduate Theological Union, 2002.

Dr. Sheldon is carrying out her calling in the position of associate professor of religion at Pacific Union College. She enjoys teaching and mentoring students; writing for general and scholarly audiences; speaking for seminars, and sermons; teaching a Sabbath School class week by week; and leading groups through the Bible.

She has been an instructor in religion at Hong Kong Adventist College, 1984-87.

### ***Shell, Penny***

Through Penny's contact with Valerie Phillips, a woman chaplain at Battle Creek Sanitarium, Penny realized that a woman could be a chaplain and that she and Valerie had similar gifts. As Penny cared for her parents, both of whom died of cancer within a year's time, she heard God's quiet call to her for ministry.

By way of preparation, Penny took an MA in religion and an Ed D in religious education at Andrews University. She became certified as a fellow in the College of Chaplains.

Penny was the first chaplain and the director of pastoral care for Thorek Hospital and Medical Center in Chicago. She moved to chaplaincy of the Shady Grove Adventist Hospital in Maryland, where she became Director of Pastoral Care and had a large department working with her. Penny conducted funerals and weddings in addition to her bedside services. Seeing the results of her ministry allowed her to believe, "Yes, I am a minister."

After 11 years at Shady Grove, In 1999 Penny moved to La Sierra's Women's Resource Center as assistant director, becoming director in 2002. She also works a few hours a week as pastor of visitation for the La Sierra University Church

***Small, Heather-Dawn***

Heather-Dawn Small has worked in the Women's Ministries Department of the General Conference since 2001; as assistant director she has traveled to many of the world divisions of the church. Presently she is acting director of the department, serving until a director will be chosen at the 2005 General Conference. Leadership training for women has been an important part of her work.

Heather-Dawn, a native of Trinidad and Tobago, served for five years as Women's and Children's Ministries director of the Caribbean Union Conference.

***Stenbakken, Ardis***

As director of Women's Ministries for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ardis Stenbakken has literally preached around the world. Moreover, God has given her administrative abilities to enable other women to preach around the world, too! Under Pastor Stenbakken's leadership during the year 2003, Women's Ministries conducted 100,385 series of evangelistic meetings; baptisms numbering 96,288 came as a direct result from ministry by women.

Pastor Stenbakken especially requests prayer for women who minister among Muslim women, because their isolation and ostracism can be heart-breaking.

As Stenbakken retires from directorship of Women's Ministries, her husband, Dick Stenbakken, retires as director of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries. That they will continue to minister we have no doubt, as they return to their much-loved Colorado.

***Strykowski, Carolyn J. H.***

Carolyn first experienced her calling when as a 10-year-old Catholic girl "I was one day changing the tabernacle curtains in the empty, hushed church. In a precious moment I wanted others to know the joy of a close relationship with God, and I longed to 'help make God happen' in the lives of others, so they would know God's love as fully as I did."

Although Carolyn grew up in St. Joseph, Michigan, 13 miles from Andrews University, years passed before she came into contact with the Adventist presence in Berrien Springs. When she did, the Holy Spirit used beautiful services conducted by young people to touch her heart. Pastor Dwight Nelson of Pioneer Memorial Church and his wife, Karen, patiently nurtured her and answered her many questions. This previously active member of the Catholic church was baptized as a Seventh-day Adventist on Easter Sabbath in 1990. Afterward her father wouldn't talk to her for nine months.

Carolyn followed God's leading over a road that included volunteering, an MA in Pastoral Ministry, and clinical pastoral education. She has been director of pastoral care at Lakeland in St. Joseph, Michigan, a program which she started; chaplain at Florida Hospital, Orlando; and on-call chaplain in Mishawaka, Indiana. She is presently Chaplain for Adventist Health Midwest in the Chicago area. Carolyn loves to lead weekly spiritual growth groups in a psych unit, on maternity wards for mothers of premie babies, and for cardiac patients.

She has been head elder of the large Pioneer Memorial Church.

Experiences that seem forbidding to many are where Carolyn finds her calling—she loves “to walk with people through grief and loss, illness,” the tragedies of life. She wakens them to “WHO they are in God’s eyes, no matter the circumstance.”

***Vincross, Tara Vinyard***

Tara writes this about her call: “As I was involved in a youth and young adult summer ministry as assistant director, I felt God calling me to full-time ministry. I felt a burning passion in my soul to share the joy, peace, love, and wholeness that can be found only in Jesus. I knew I could do nothing else. This calling was recognized and affirmed by my mentors and leaders.”

Tara graduated from Southwestern University with a BA in Theology in 2002. She is serving as Associate Youth and Young Adult Director for the Washington Conference, using her creative energy to help engineer a successful youth-reaching-youth doctrinal series. Tara is excited about preparing to preach her own first full evangelistic series. She has been blessed to baptize eight people whom she has prepared.

The Washington Conference plans to sponsor Ms. VinCross to the seminary in 2005.

Tara represents scores of young women at our colleges and seminaries around the world and out in the field being mentored to use their gifts effectively for Jesus in the ministry.

***Watts, Kit***

Kit Watts broke ground by joining the pastoral staff of Sligo SDA Church in 1973 as minister of publications. She found that her gifts were well suited to the position.

However, because she was pioneering, she found that a great deal of her energy was consumed with defending a place for women. This reduced the opportunity for engaging in ministry itself. In addition, there was no similar position to which she could expect to move when she left Sligo.

Therefore Kit acquired a Master of Library Science degree and spent eight years as periodical librarian at Andrews University. While there she acquired the educational preparation of an MA in religion.

In 1987 Kit went to the *Adventist Review* as assistant editor. She felt a call “in the sense that I want to help God's voice, His concerns, His assurance be better heard in the world. The gifts I've come to identify in myself are for words—sometimes writing, sometimes speaking, sometimes for programming and structure.”

After a decade at the *Review* Kit left to become director of the Women’s Resource Center located at La Sierra University (half-time), the other half of her employment being head of the Department of Communication for the Southeastern California Conference. In 2002 she moved to full-time employment for the conference, where she is Assistant to the President for Communication. She still remains Special Projects Coordinator for the Women’s Resource Center.



Kit is the only woman to have been a member of all the official Seventh-day Adventist commissions set up to study the women's ordination issue in 1973, 1985, 1988, and 1989. Looking beyond herself, she is greatly concerned that other women's gifts be used fully in the Lord's work.

### ***White, Jan***

Jan White is Associate Pastor for Nurture and Outreach in the Calhoun, Georgia, Seventh-day Adventist Church. She was the first woman to be commissioned as a minister in the Georgia-Cumberland Conference, in 2003. Her husband, Phil White, is the senior pastor in Calhoun, making theirs a team ministry.

Previously Pastor White has served as Women's Ministries Director and Family Ministries Director for the Washington Conference and has been associate pastor in North Cascade and Auburn Adventist Academy churches.

"Since a child I have had a passion for Jesus," Jan recalls, "and when teaching after graduating from college I had the privilege of preparing my first person for baptism."

Jan has a BA in Religion from Walla Walla College and an MA in Religion from Andrews University.

Pastor Jan White enjoys many aspects of ministerial work, including visitation of both active and inactive members, small group Bible study, preaching, and prayer groups.

She has spoken for Jesus around the world, including holding an evangelistic series in the Philippines with a women's ministries team. What a thrill when more than 400 were baptized! Jan modestly shares credit with the local people, saying that they did most of the preparation work for the series.

In the United States Jan's influence is experienced widely as she speaks at women's retreats.

At time of this writing, Pastor White has baptized more than 20 candidates.

### ***Williams, Hyveth***

Hyveth Williams has been senior pastor of the Loma Linda Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church in Loma Linda, California since 1996. Five associate pastors work with her in a comprehensive, energetic program.

Previously Ms. Williams pastored the Boston Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church. It was a challenging assignment. The historic structure had fallen into such deplorable disrepair that the conference was thinking about selling it. Attendance had dropped to around 50. There had been no pastor for 18 months when Hyveth, after praying earnestly, in 1989 accepted the challenge to minister to the declining church.

Pastor Williams set to work with characteristic energy and asked for prayers. People came back to church; students from colleges and universities in the area attended. Hyveth loved and inspired them for Jesus. Members and friends donated and labored to repair the broken pews and the leaking roof, replace the aging carpet, and paint walls.

Elder William G. Johnsson, editor of the *Adventist Review*, preached at the rededication of the sanctuary. Concerning that event he wrote that the mood was one of “Thanksgiving, rejoicing, wonder, a sense of being part of a miracle.”<sup>5</sup>

In Hyveth’s autobiography, *Will I Ever Learn?*<sup>6</sup> she writes frankly about life prior to her conversion; she experienced struggles common to many converts. She was baptized a Seventh-day Adventist in 1979. As she studied at Columbia Union College (and her son, Stephen, at Takoma Academy), Hyveth believed she was called to the ministry. She served as a student ministerial intern at Pennsylvania Avenue SDA Church and graduated from CUC in 1985.

Hyveth was one of seven women and 450 men who began classes in the fall of 1985 at the SDA Theological Seminary in Michigan. She was accepted at the seminary provisionally, without any conference sponsorship. She wondered whether she would receive a call to ministry.

Hyveth did receive a call to serve on the staff of the large Sligo SDA Church in Takoma Park, Maryland, as coordinator for evangelism, with alternating time to attend seminary. From Sligo Hyveth was called to the Boston Temple and then the Campus Hill Church, as indicated above.

Another book from Hyveth has recently been published, *Secrets of a Happy Heart: A Fresh Look at the Sermon on the Mount*.<sup>7</sup>

- 1 The distribution includes 73 pastors, 47 Bible instructors, 43 chaplains in medical institutions, 11 pastors’ wives serving as associates, 39 graduate students, 26 Bible teachers, theology professors, campus chaplains, and others.
- 2 For more information about these around-the-world workers, see copies of *Mosaic* from the General Conference Department of Women’s Ministries.
- 3 You may learn of other SDA women ministers by looking in the current *Seventh-day Adventist Church Yearbook*.
- 4 Time for Equality in Adventist Ministry (TEAM).
- 5 William G. Johnsson, “Born to Grow,” *Adventist Review* (22 March 1990): 4.
- 6 Hyveth Williams, *Will I Ever Learn?* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1996).
- 7 Hyveth Williams, *Secrets of a Happy Heart: A Fresh Look at the Sermon on the Mount* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2004).

“Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”

—Acts 10:47, RSV

# 10 "Can Any One Forbid?"

## A Biblical Analogy

After speaking with the voice of a storyteller, I cannot resist turning “preacher” in this last chapter and the conclusion. Review with me, if you will, the account recorded in Acts 10 and 11 and reflect on its relevance to the present situation. This segment of early church history gave me courage as I entered the ministry in 1973.

Peter, waiting for lunch on the housetop in Caesarea, fell into a trance. He saw a great sheet of sailcloth being lowered from heaven by the corners; in it he saw beasts, reptiles, and birds excluded from the diet according to Biblical laws. At the same time a voice instructed, “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.” (Acts 10:13, RSV. *Scripture quotations in the remainder of the chapter are from Acts 10 and 11, the RSV, unless otherwise indicated*).

Peter protested, “No, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.”

“What God has cleansed,” came the immediate response, “you must not call common.” The exchange was repeated three times; then the sheet with animals was lifted into the sky.

While Peter puzzled over the meaning of the vision, men sent to him from a Gentile centurion by the name of Cornelius knocked at the gate of the house. They requested that Peter visit the centurion, who they assured him was a man of exceptional character. Considering the message of the trance to be relevant to this unusual invitation, Peter accompanied the messengers to the Gentile's home.

To Cornelius and those whom he had assembled Peter stated, “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit any one of another nation.” So strong was the prohibition against this kind of mixing of Jew with Gentile that Peter had considered it to be *unlawful*.

Convinced as he was now of the Spirit's direction, Peter nevertheless anticipated problems with church leadership when he returned; for this reason he had brought along peers to witness whatever might take place.

As Peter told of Christ's teachings and works—attested to as well by his companions—and preached of judgment and remission from sins, he was astonished to see the Holy Spirit falling upon his listeners. They were eagerly accepting his words, and God was visibly accepting them.

Peter and his companions consulted together briefly. They could hear these Gentile converts speaking in tongues and magnifying the true God. “Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” (Acts 10:47). Peter asked. Thereupon he took responsibility for the baptism of the Gentile converts in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. *A time-established barrier had been broken.*

After establishing their converts in the faith, Peter and his companions returned to Jerusalem, overjoyed because they had been instruments of the Holy Spirit.

Soon Peter found himself under interrogation by the apostles. Why, they wanted to know, had Peter unlawfully accepted uncircumcised people into the church?

Church policymakers were told how the Holy Spirit had affirmed those Gentile converts. For this reason, Peter explained, he did not feel free to bar from baptism into Christ the Gentiles who had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit “just as we.”

The Jerusalem church leaders accepted this evidence. They not only ceased their opposition but actually glorified God. They rejoiced that their Lord wanted Gentiles as well as themselves.

This story highlights a dramatic turn-around in early church policy.

When I assumed the duties of an associate pastor in the 1970s, I thought, If God is pleased to call women into the ministry and to bless them with a portion of His Holy Spirit, then this action on God's part will soon become evident. At that point surely the church will cease considering ordination of women to the ministry to be inappropriate, (*Actually, a resolution favoring ordination of women to the ministry was made as early as 1881; See Appendix C, p. 235.*) just as the early church ceased to consider the acceptance of Gentiles into the faith to be unlawful.

However, as Annual Councils and General Conference Sessions followed one another for years with the results of repeated “further study” never resulting in full acceptance, other women ministers and I were puzzled. After a growing number of us had spent years of service in the ministry without seeing a move toward ordination, I thought at first that my hope deriving from that Biblical model was not going to materialize.

Still later I realized that the analogy did hold, but in a different way from what I had expected. The denomination now is much larger than the early church, both geographically and numerically, and so progress on women's ministry to this point has been local rather than global in scope. Where there has been opportunity for women to accept God's call, a demonstration of the presence of the Holy Spirit has occurred, and in many such cases leadership has been more than willing for women to be fully accepted into ministry. The Potomac and Southeastern California Conferences, in which a growing group of women have been ministering during the last two decades, officially support their women ministers; Ohio is also affirmative. During 1989 two union conferences (the Columbia Union Conference Executive Committee on May 4 and the Pacific Union Conference on June 7) voted actions approving ordination of qualified women, either in general or specifically. These church entities agreed to delay ordination until after the General Conference Session of July 1990 (*See appendix C for relevant actions taken at the*

1990 General Conference). The Biblical analogy does hold true that as women are called into ministry and blessed by the Holy Spirit, recognition of God's acceptance is followed in many cases by acceptance of church leadership.

Until the denomination decides to accept its women ministers fully, there will still be women called by God to carry as many of the responsibilities of evangelistic, pastoral, counseling, and Bible teaching work as they are allowed to shoulder.

However, they look for the time when convicted church leaders will ask, "Can any one forbid" that these women should be accorded full participation in ministry, inasmuch as they "have received the Holy Spirit just as we?"



For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of  
power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

—2 Timothy 1:7



## ***Concluding Thoughts*** The Spirit of the Future

We are looking at the future by way of the past, at the same time attempting to maintain a firm hold on the present. This book is about women who have experienced a calling to the ministry, a phenomenon that has been recognized by the body of Christ, at least the part immediately surrounding the ministering women—the conference and the local church unit.

There have been superficial differences in the circumstances of these various women ministers: Evangelist Minnie Sype grappled with poverty frequently during her more than forty years in the ministry, while Pastor Jessie Weiss Curtis could comfortably give financial assistance to church members in need. Yet the similarity between these women was far more significant than the differences: both felt called—compelled—to share the good news of the gospel. Many other women have been and are similarly called; the ministries of a few have been noted in the chapters of this book.

Study of the individual cases indicates that for years the licensing of women was closely tied to remuneration; and remuneration for women, unlike that of the men, during much of the period studied was a spigot turned off or on according to perceived “need” or marital status. The treatment of women in ministry has improved in significant ways as the denomination has matured. Women pastors, evangelists, chaplains, and Bible teachers are now paid a regular salary whether they are single, married, widowed, or divorced. A 1989 Annual Council action, approved by a vote of 190-46 and effective immediately, allows “female ministers, like their male counterparts in ministry, to baptize and to perform marriages in states that permit unordained ministers to perform marriages.” (*Taken from Carlos Medley, “Role of Women, Sports Top Annual Council Discussion,” Adventist Review (November 9, 1989): 6.*) These are marvelous steps forward.

In one respect, the status of women in ministry has deteriorated. Not only are they not ordained; but now, except in a few cases, women are no longer licensed as ministers. (*Because of Internal Revenue Service requirements current in the U.S. in the 1970s, the Seventh-day Adventist Church redefined the status of licensed minister to include baptizing and to be definitely a step toward ordination. Since the church has not been willing in most cases for its women ministers to be thus designated, few women have been licensed to the*

ministry since that time. (Many were previously; see appendix B.) It seems unfortunate that in order to keep the status of licensed minister financially viable for men, retaining the highly desirable parsonage allowance, the denomination chose to take away from women the highest position in ministry that they had been able to attain in most cases. Licensing to the ministry had been available to women since the denomination began licensing ministers (see chapter 8) 100 years earlier.) Minnie Sype was one of 18 licensed ministers in a conference that employed only eight ordained ministers. She thus functioned more centrally in the mainstream of ministry than a woman minister who today is classified in a non-specific category as a credentialed or licensed commissioned minister, set apart from her male peers in pastoral and evangelistic work.

Being a woman and at the same time being called to fill a ministerial role in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination today is at once rewarding and frustrating. The work is rewarding because what God calls a person to do, the Holy Spirit enables her or him to accomplish; and cooperating with the Spirit is an unsurpassed privilege. A bond strengthens between the minister and God, the members served, and one's peers and superiors. The frustrations grow out of the opposition shown by some church administrators, pastors, seminary students, and members toward these ministering women.

Let me address the women ministers for a moment. I believe the message of 2 Timothy 1:6, 7 can with profit be called to your attention, as well as to that of the male ministry. "Rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands," (2 Timothy 1:6, RSV). Timothy was admonished. Woman minister, the laying on of hands may be that accorded to a local elder only; nevertheless, it is sufficient in the Spirit to fuel within your being a living flame.

When, humanly speaking, the future appears bleak or impossible, read the glorious assurance of verse 7: "For God did not give us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:7.)

The Greek word σωφρονισμός, appearing as "a sound mind" in the King James Version, is rendered "self-control" in the Revised Standard. This word packs a lot of meaning: it could be translated "sober good sense," as well as "temperance."

What a triad of characteristics to mark the woman minister as she faces an uncertain professional future (and the words are certainly no less applicable to her male counterpart). God will provide *power*, shown by boldness in contrast to timidity, an intensity of living and serving; *love*, the prime characteristic of God, the warm caring of self-giving that can include "tough love" when needed; and *a sound mind*, characterized by temperance and self-control. Fred Gealy comments, "The Christian minister requires boldness and courage, the power which derives from a confident faith; yet the exercise of power is Christian only when fully joined with love, and these two with self-control." (Taken from Fred D. Gealy, "Exegesis," 2 Timothy, The Interpreter's Bible, on 2 Timothy 1:7.)

Anna Knight summoned power to combat ignorance and poverty by starting an educational institution, evangelistic Bible schools, and adult classes in Mississippi; to venture afar as a pioneer missionary to India; to carry the responsibilities of a depart-



## Concluding Thoughts

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mental secretary alone among an otherwise all-male cast. The fruitage of her long and dedicated life is incalculable.

Jessie Weiss Curtis experienced power to secure the use of a tent, with the aid of two men to pitch it, and in it to preach the gospel that she had studied at Battle Creek College and heard preached by Elder H. M. J. Richards. As a result the Drums, Pennsylvania, Seventh-day Adventist Church exists today.

When challenged, because of their womanhood, about their preaching, early Adventist women ministers and their defenders quoted Joel 2:28-31: "I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy... Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days... before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." (NIV) If in the 1890s, then surely in the 1990s this promise can be claimed.

Where today are the women ministers filled with the courage and boldness of the Spirit, exercising power in the fullness of love under the restrictions of self-control? Look around you, and you will see them. Do not ask them to deny the gift that is within them. Rather pray the Lord of harvest that He will bring into His service *more* dedicated ministers, *women and men*, to do His work and to hasten His coming!





# Appendix A

## Documents and Notes

Some letters have been edited slightly, as for spelling and punctuation. However, the greatest care has been exerted not to distort the thesis of any material by this editing.

### *Documents Concerning the Life and Work of Helen Williams (chapter 1)*

#### **1.1 Excerpts from the taped memories of Elder Hugh Williams (Helen Williams' son)**

My father, Eugene Williams, ... was a young minister when I was born. He married a young lady by the name of Helen May Stanton. Both of them had gone to Battle Creek College.

Helen May Stanton, my mother, was very talented in speech. She gave readings from memory and was entertaining. Those days they didn't have TV and other sources of easy entertainment like they do today, and so they were not much more talented but made more use of their talents.

Mother also aspired, because of being so successful in entertaining, to be a speaker, a minister. She's told me that that was one reason she wanted to marry a minister, because it would more easily open the doors for her to be in the ministry. This she was successful in accomplishing to the point that she had a ministerial license, which was given to very few at the time she was living...

So my father and mother built their life around the ministry... It happened that I was born while they were having some meetings in a nice little place called Bell's Corners...

It was early in 1897 that we moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan... My memory begins here... My father supervised the building of a church while we were at Grand Rapids...

We went to the Sabbath school, of course... I listened to the sermons. I must have had a clear conception of the Saviour because one night I dreamed about Him... Jesus said, "Hugh, I see you there." ... I never forgot the beautiful feeling that came over me to be remembered by Him...

My father and mother both were in ministerial work, and so when we were young we always had a baby sitter in our home...

It wasn't long before my father was sent to be a superintendent of what was a mission field in those days—it wasn't part of the conference—he was sent to supervise the work in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Some work had been started in Sault Ste. Marie.

In the year 1906, my father was called and also my mother... They were called to Chicago to take over a couple of churches there...

While we were living on the west side of Chicago, we went to a church school that was mostly Scandinavian... We never got tired of going to Lincoln Park. It had one of the best zoos at the time...

Also, we enjoyed Humble Park. We were able to find turtles there and snakes even. One time we had as many as seven snakes. Our poor mother...

**1.2 Excerpts from a taped letter made by Phyllis Vineyard for the writer, July 22, 1985**

Greetings! This is Phyllis, Hugh's daughter, Helen Williams' granddaughter...

Grandmother wasn't the demonstrative, huggy type, but she bathed you with her warmth and beauty, and she completely enjoyed people and made you very comfortable in her presence. Her laughter was so musical, and her charm was scintillating...

Dad has told me things about Grandmother Williams in her gift of speaking and her colorful way of delivery. She was always in demand because she could speak, but ... she was very humble and not aggressive, but very gracious and wanted to serve. I remember her telling me ... , "You see, your grandfather was so busy with his other duties, and people used to like to hear me speak and would just as soon hear me as your grandpa. If he couldn't meet the obligation, why I would speak in his stead, and they were just as happy, and that was that, you see." She was quite used to picking up where he left off, or if he couldn't make an appointment, she filled it. She was very comfortable in speaking and not at a loss for words...

Something about her personality was unique. She made you feel that she knew the Shepherd; she was aware of His presence and loving care. She was a very self-contained person...

She wasn't afraid. She had been through a lot of adventure; she had lost a husband in South Africa, and she knew what it was to walk alone...

In her sermons, she didn't use the same humdrum thing; she would be quite unique in her delivery. I think she liked to be, not shocking, but liked to capture the attention of the people.

She said, "You know, the battle's not yours, it's God's." She set people to thinking and wanted to help them establish a relationship with the Master, a one-to-one relationship, for no organization can possibly carry us to the kingdom...

Grandma cried for a couple of days because of the loss of her husband. But she tells of one of the natives' just crying and crying, and saying, "Missie, Missie, please don't leave." That's what turned the tide, and Grandma stayed and finished her tour of duty...

You just wanted to sit at Grandma's feet. You knew that she had the joy of the Lord. Children, young people, anyone enjoyed her presence. That's what I prefer to remember about Grandmother.

**1.3 Helen Williams' handwritten notes for a sermon**

**Humility**

1. Where does God dwell? Isaiah 57:15
2. Is it natural for us to be humble? Romans 8:7
3. Why? Genesis 2:17, 3:6
4. Is it reasonable that we should be humble? Romans 12:1
5. Why? Genesis 3:15
6. When J. was here, whose life did He live? John 14:8, 9, 1:14
7. Out of what are we made? Genesis 2:7
8. What is all flesh? Isaiah 40:6-8
9. God never forgets it. Psalms 103:13, 14
10. When must all seek the Lord? Isaiah 55:6, 7
11. If we fulfill this condition & confess our sins, what will He do for us?  
I John 1:9
12. How great is God's mercy and what will He do with our sins?  
Psalms 103:11, 12
13. After we have found the Lord how long will He remain with us?  
II Chronicles 15:2
14. What is now our relation with the Lord? Hosea 2:19, 20
15. What is our work henceforth to be? Isaiah 40:9
16. If we live this beautiful life will we ever be exalted? I Peter 5:6, 7
17. When? Isaiah 40:10, 11, Revelation 22:12

**1.4 Letter from Katherine Williams, August 3, 1985**

Dear Dr. Benton:

I am delighted that you are researching the full and active life of my mother-in-law, Helen Stanton Williams, as a pioneer woman preacher and teacher... .

She was the daughter of a prosperous farmer who was somewhat of a community leader, wrestling champion(!), and church elder, so Helen Mae Stanton was raised as a more privileged young lady than many at the time. She had two sisters and two brothers... .

Helen Stanton was a little taller than average, full-figured, a commanding personality, who used to recall her younger days as "that beautiful, golden-haired Helen Mae." She had a full and difficult life but never lacked for self-assurance, and this aura no doubt contributed to her success as a preacher, a vocation rarely allowed a woman in those days... .

In about 1907 the family was appointed to missionary work in South Africa. There the head of the household suffered sunstroke on a trip among the villages, leaving his widow, three teen-age sons, and a young brother not much more than an infant. Helen Mae took up the burden gallantly, teaching, preaching, consigning her boys to boarding school and the toddler to the care of a Zulu girl. . . .

By 1914 when war seemed inevitable, the family returned to the States. . . .

As a new bride, I was decidedly an amateur in the kitchen, and my husband [Lewis] used to wonder why I worried so about planning menus and preparing meals. Eventually I learned that his mother had a set formula for food: she knew how best to shop for and cook certain foods, and she stuck to these dishes! . . .

Very few women could have lived and worked as she did. . . .

Much success in your enterprise!

Katherine D. Williams

St. Joseph, MI

***Documents Concerning the Life and Work of Minnie Sype (chapter 2)***  
**2.1 Letter from Elder W. A. Howe, Hendersonville, N.C., to the writer, August 5, 1989**

Dear friend Josephine:

. . . About Mrs. Sype, I had to have been somewhere between six and 10 years old when I well remember her visiting the Des Moines, Iowa, church on several occasions and doing the speaking. She was—even to me a child—a very interesting and pleasant speaker. She smiled a great deal and was always treated like one of the family by the Des Moines church members. . . .

I went back to Iowa as an intern, and I remember old time workers at that time who had worked with her saying she had been voted ordination by the Iowa Conference but had refused it. I don't ever recall having heard her rationale. . . .

Rather than being considered unusual to have a woman preacher, we kids were always tickled to death to have her. She was very interesting and seemed to love people, kids in particular. I recall no fuss about her being a woman; she just took the pulpit like any of the male preachers and always gave a good message. . . .

I never heard what her official capacity was in the conference, but she was indeed recognized as someone from the power structure. (*Minnie Sype was home missionary secretary for the Iowa Conference.*)

Very best to you,

Walt

W. A. Howe

**2.2 Letter from Lorene Moore**

Arlington, Washington

July 7, 1984

Dear Josephine,

... To my great surprise in the Bulletin Board of the Pacific Union Recorder was an article wanting information about a woman minister we had when I was around 10 years old, Minnie Sype. Our church then was renting a Lutheran church at Ellensberg, Washington. I'll always remember her for the watch she had fastened to her dress. She would pull it out on a chain and look at it so she wouldn't run over-time, and it fascinated me. Not only her watch fascinated me. She did also. Though I was a child, she kept my interest and could preach as good a sermon as any man I've ever heard...

It was between 1926 and 1929 that Minnie Sype was at Ellensberg...

Mrs. Joseph S. (Lorene) Moore

**2.3 Letter from Dr. M. J. Sorenson, Riverside, California, to the writer, July 15, 1984**

Dear Mrs. Benton:

Your notice in the *Recorder* and the name Mrs. Minnie Sype brought forth many pleasant boyhood memories from my childhood in Iowa. Mrs. Minnie Sype was an active preacher in the conference as far back as I can remember. She was always busy visiting churches, having revival meetings, and adding members by baptism...

In recent years there has been a great deal of discussion about the ordination of women to the ministry. To me, it seems that this type of controversy is entirely uncalled for. Dedicated service, whether by men or women, is the real test of individual ministry...

Very respectfully yours,

Dr. M. J. Sorenson

Riverside, CA

**2.4 General letter from Thomas E. Durst, Colville, Washington, sent to the writer May 28, 1984**

To Whom It May Concern:

My mother, Mrs. Lillian Durst, often mentioned to me over the years about her having been baptized as a child in about the year 1908 or 1909 by Mrs. Minnie Sype, a full time Seventh-day Adventist minister. The baptism took place in a stock tank; and I believe this was South Dakota, where my mother spent her earlier childhood years. (*Hawarden, Iowa, is on the South Dakota border.*)

I would like to add that I can surely vouch for the authenticity of my mother's testimony regarding her childhood baptism. My mother had a remarkable memory for small details like dates, places, etc. I can remember as a child how my mother could remember birthdays and anniversaries of all our friends and neighbors. She

could remember the smallest details of things like this. It was truly amazing. So I know that she spoke accurately about being baptized by Mrs. Sype. She recalled how Mr. Sype stayed home and did the housework and Mrs. Sype did the preaching and the ministerial duties. . . .

Sincerely yours,

Thomas E. Durst

**2.5 Letter from Evelyn Robeson Faust, Cerritos, California, to the writer, July 27, 1984**

Dear Josephine Benton,

About 1914 when I was a little girl about seven years old and lived in Carroll, Iowa, Mrs. Minnie Sype came to Carroll to hold a series of meetings.

My father, Oscar W. Robeson, took his three girls Genevieve, Vivian, and Evelyn—I am Evelyn—to the meetings every night (my mother was deceased), and at the close of her meetings he accepted the Adventist message. He was an Adventist until his death, and we girls have stayed in the truth all our lives. . . .

Sincerely,

Evelyn Robeson Faust

**2.6 Letter from Mariel Jean Blaine, Redlands, California, to the writer, July 28, 1984**

Dear Dr. Benton:

. . . My mother-in-law, Dorothy Pelmulder Blaine Kistler, was baptized by Minnie Sype in Lake City, Iowa, in the Raccoon River, at age 12 or 13, in 1913 or 1914.

“Grandma” remembers Minnie Sype holding tent meetings in a church yard which adjoined her family’s back yard in Grant City, Iowa. . . .

Yours sincerely,

Mariel Jean Blaine

(Mrs. Cyril Blaine)

**2.7 Excerpt from a telephone conversation between C. Joy Estes, Los Angeles, California, and the writer, January 16, 1989**

BENTON: How are you related to Mrs. Kistler?

ESTES: I’m Dorothy’s daughter.

BENTON: It’s your impression that your mother was baptized by Minnie Sype?

ESTES: Yes, she was. Mrs. Sype was an unusual person. She definitely baptized my mother.

BENTON: What was your mother’s name?

ESTES: My mother’s name was Dorothy Pelmulder, and she came from a little town called Grant City, Iowa. . . .

**2.8 Letter from Mrs. Hilda West, So. Cle Elum, Washington, to the writer, 1984**

. . . Sr. Sype was our dear pastor over 50 years ago in Cle Elum. We loved her very dearly; also she was a worker like you never saw. . . . As you might well remember our pastors’ salary was very very small. So she would go out and sell our



books—she had no car so she would walk for miles and at Ingathering would walk or, yes, hitchhike to take our papers for miles. She was very pleasant... She was a minister that could do credit to any church... I understood when she left Cle Elum she was married to a Mr. Atteberry.

Your sister in the faith,  
Mrs. Hilda West

**2.9 Letter from Minita Sype-Brown, Key Largo, Florida, to the writer, October 29, 1984**

... Jack and I are children of Ross and Gertrude Hunt Sype... .

Grandma was a very powerful and dynamic speaker... .

Even in her retirement, Grandma always had to be doing something to spread the truth she loved. While living in St. Cloud, Florida, she organized a small company in Kissimmee, which was about nine miles away. First they met in someone's house on Sabbath afternoons. Then I can remember clearing out an old store where the company met. Today there is a lovely church in Kissimmee... .

Jack said he remembers her illustration about the Sabbath. It is like a plate. If the edge gets broken the plate is broken... .

Sincerely,  
Minita Sype-Brown

***Documents Concerning the Life and Work of  
Lulu Wightman (chapter 3)***

**3.1 Letter from J. W. Raymond to P. Hinne, conference treasurer,  
concerning employment of Lulu Wightman**

Cuba, Allegany Co., N.Y.

6/16 '96

Dear Bro. Hinne:—

The hardest part of this letter is to say that I'd like to have \$10. And if it is any more against the grain to let me have it, or to spare it, perhaps I ought to say, than it is for me to ask for it—well, then I pity you... .

I have written Lula [*sic*] (she and her husband are now in Hornellsville) the situation, giving her as terms that she will receive some remuneration for her service, if she goes with us, but that she will be expected to abide by the action of the Auditing Committee as to amount, and that in case her husband comes he will be expected to do so without any expense to the conference... .

Much love,  
J. W. Raymond

**3.2 Letter from J. W. Raymond to P. Hinne quoting letter from Lulu Wightman**

Rome, N.Y.

*[Following is a letter FROM LULU WIGHTMAN to J. W. Raymond, QUOTED in his letter to P. Hinne:]*

Dear Bro. Raymond:—Your letter is rec'd. Will reply at once. We should be very glad to go with your tent, but could not consent for a moment to go unless my husband could go. And of course he could not afford to be idle all summer and board himself. What I would get would not board us.

We had a meeting here Sunday evening. Some of the leading ones in the place were present. We have it put in the daily papers; it's well advertised.

We should be pleased to go with your tent company could we make a living out of it. But we are having grand opening here for our work.

*[End of quotation; letter from J. W. Raymond to P. Hinne continues:]*

So it would seem that she has gone into ministerial work. But somehow I feel a proclivity of adverseness to such procedure.

*[An earlier part of the same letter:]*

Sr. Stowe is expected here tomorrow. As to the conference bearing her traveling expenses to and from tent work, for one I am in favor of it; I think it only just that such be the case. And where it is considered necessary for a minister's wife to accompany him in the interest of the work, I think the conference ought to at least defray their traveling expenses. The "golden rule" would demand that much. . . .

*[This letter, undated, followed the June 16, 1896, letter above.]*

**3.3 Article in the New York Indicator, August 12, 1896, about the Wightmans' effort in Hornellsville**

Hornellsville

We arrived here June 4, and began to labor for the truth in a field that at first seemed far from promising. There was not a single Seventh-day Adventist in the city. The people appeared to be listless and satisfied with the paths in which they are dwelling; nevertheless we continued in faith and labored earnestly. Mrs. Wightman spoke to the people on 20 different occasions, and at last the interest became so great that the halls we secured were thronged. Three honest souls have begun to keep the Sabbath and others are in a very promising condition. . . .

John S. and Lulu Wightman.

**3.4. News note from Lulu Wightman in the Indicator, October 12, 1898**

We begin a new effort this week in the town of Silver Creek, in G.A.R. [Grand Army of the Republic] Hall, in the center of the place. It is a commodious, nicely carpeted hall, heat and light included, for \$2 per week. While conducting the work here, my husband will do colporteur work. Any of the brethren who will send our denominational papers

and tracts to him by mail, for free distribution to interested ones, will assist in the promulgation of truth here, and the same will be thankfully received.

Brethren and sisters, in your prayers remember the work here.

Lulu Wightman.

**3.5 Article in the Indicator, November 16, 1898.**

Resulting from the giving of the message at Silver Creek, four souls—two brothers and two sisters—have begun the observance of the Sabbath, and a number of the others are in a promising condition. A union meeting was held in the largest church on Sunday evening, and the Methodist man preached against the Sabbath. I attended, and announced by permission, that I would review the discourse the following evening. Our hall was crowded and many turned away, and it was the consensus of opinion expressed by those present that the truth had gained a decided victory. Shall now present the “State of the Dead,” which, it is clear to be seen will also receive vigorous opposition, as it already has. May the Lord grant that those who are almost persuaded may quickly become fully persuaded that this is the good way and to walk therein.

Mrs. Lulu Wightman.

**3.6 Letter from John Wightman, Avon, N.Y., to Eld. S. H. Lane, conference president, Rome, N.Y., September 2, 1904**

(Emphasis in the original)

Dear Brother:

When you were at Eden Center you suggested to Mrs. Wightman that she voluntarily lower her salary from \$9 per week to \$7 per week, not because she was any the less entitled to the \$9 per month but for the reason as you stated that I was also receiving \$7 per week from the conference, and we were of one family, or related. Not knowing but what some person on the auditing committee of 1903 not particularly acquainted with the circumstances might feel justified in suggesting a still further lowering of our wages because we are so unfortunate (?) as to be related to one another, I desire to call your attention to a few facts so that at the time if any objections are made, and I do not feel that there will be, that you can put the matter before them in a proper light.

Mrs. Wightman’s personal work was considered by three or four former committees as being that of an ordained minister *unquestionably*; and yet, at Oswego, they felt (Brother Daniels and Thompson, to which opinion Elder Underwood and others strongly demurred) that a woman could not properly be ordained—just now at least—and so they fixed her compensation as near the “ordained” rate as possible. As her capability was recognized and general fitness known to all, and work continued, the \$9 is still as fitting under the circumstances as before, so taking this into consideration you will perceive that I am in reality receiving but \$5 per week for my services, upon the former basis.

I do not think that any will deny that we are doing the work of two ordained ministers. Certainly we bring the people fully into the truth and can do everything except that which *man* sees fit not to privilege—the right to organize churches. . . . We have secured the following churches: Gorham, Fredonia, Gas Springs, Wallace, Canandaigua and Avon, and opened the work in Hornellsville in 1896. . . . In one year alone besides all other offerings and donations we sent \$600 at one time for home and foreign work. . . .

Mrs. Wightman's labors are recognized as worth \$9 per week as a licentiate, and the work itself equivalent to that of an *ordained minister*. . . .

I am certain *you will do right in the matter*. For you *appreciate* what is being done—God bless you.

Your brother

John S. Wightman

**3.7 Selections from an article in the *Nebraska State Journal*, March 1, 1909, p. 3.**

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY MEETING

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Large Crowd Heard Speakers at the Auditorium

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TALK ON SUNDAY BASEBALL

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Mrs. Lulu Wightman of Kansas City  
and E. T. Russell Talk at  
Length on Religious Freedom

---

A crowd which tested the capacity of the auditorium gathered to hear prominent speakers from the ranks of the religious liberty organizations of the country last night at which time Mrs. Lulu Wightman of Kansas City, public advocate for religious liberty and E. T. Russell, president of the Central States Religious Liberty Association, spoke on matters relating to religious liberty. . . .

Mrs. Wightman dealt with the principles of government which characterized the United States. She referred in particular to the many instances where the courts had reversed the decrees which the church had set for the government of certain Sunday entertainments. . . . She said that the church should spend more time in teaching right doing and not spend its entire time in the simple observances of Sunday. . . .

***Document Concerning the Life and Work of Anna Knight (chapter 4)***  
**4.1 Quotation from her book, *Mississippi Girl*, p. 223.**

Since 1911 I have kept an itemized record of the work that I have done. I had to make monthly reports to the conference; therefore, I formed the habit of keeping a daily record. Thinking it might add interest in reporting, I am giving a summary of

four items herewith: I have held 9,388 meetings and have made 11,744 missionary visits. My work required the writing of 48,918 letters, and in getting to my appointments I have traveled 554,439 miles. This report does not include mileage to or from my mission field, India, nor does it include any miles covered in my travel there.

***Documents Concerning the Life and Work of Jessie Weiss Curtis (chapter 5)***

**5.1 Article from a Hazleton, Pennsylvania, newspaper, 1927**

**Kingston Girl Holding Services Near Drums**

Miss Jessie M. Weiss, of Kingston, daughter of a well-known merchant of Wilkes-Barre, is stirring the countryside in the vicinity of Drums in Luzerne County with an evangelistic campaign in which she is doing most of the preaching.

Stirred with the desire to give the gospel to the people, Miss Weiss secured a tent, and with the aid of two men pitched it on the C. A. Straw farm, and people are flocking by the hundreds to hear her. Coming from a radius of twenty miles, there have been as many as 110 automobile loads at a single service.

It is the first evangelistic campaign that Miss Weiss has ever conducted, and her success is very apparent from the way in which the crowds come night after night, arriving in time to join in the old-time song-service, and remaining until the preaching service is concluded.

With the skill of a clergyman of long years experience, Miss Weiss declares that she will teach no doctrine but what she can substantiate from the Word of God. Her repertoire of subjects reaches out over a wide range.

Methodists, Baptists and Lutherans, who have churches in the community are regular attendants.

**5.2 Excerpts from an interview with Jack and Joan Davis by the writer in their home in Monrovia, Maryland, Aug. 26, 1984. (Mrs. Curtis was Jack's great aunt.)**

**BENTON:** How did Mrs. Curtis, nee Jessie Weiss, prepare for ministerial work?

**JACK DAVIS:** She went to Battle Creek. She was the youngest they had ever accepted. But they were impressed with her sincerity, and so they accepted her. At 14 years of age. She was going to be a nurse, at that time, but later she changed to be a ministerial worker, a Bible worker, they called it at that time.

**BENTON:** I had wondered about money, whether the church paid her very well. I imagine it was a close budget.

**JACK DAVIS:** At first the church didn't pay her anything because she financed everything herself. She had an effort back in 1927. When she held the effort in Drums, Pennsylvania, the farmer who let them pitch the tent on his property donated the property, and they build the church on the same place where they had the tent. That's where the church is located today, the Drums Church in Drums, Pennsylvania.

- BENTON: How did she come to think of holding efforts? Do you know how she got started in the ministry?
- JACK DAVIS: She enjoyed Bible work, working with people, and bringing them in. She just came up with the idea that she would like to hold an effort, and so she prayed about it and worked and worked, and then it just worked out beautifully.
- BENTON: That was her first effort, there in Drums?
- JACK DAVIS: Yes. She brought 80 people in.
- JOAN DAVIS: She was well organized, an extremely strong leader, so that when she spoke, people listened. She was convincing, and she commanded your attention and respect.
- JACK DAVIS: She was a stately type.
- BENTON: You didn't think there was anything strange about your aunt's being a minister?
- JACK DAVIS: I thought that was as normal as anything.
- BENTON: People accepted—
- JOAN DAVIS: Oh, my, yes! I mean, people almost revered her.
- JACK DAVIS: I used to chauffeur for my aunt. I'd hang the charts up, or I'd run the stereoptican or the other type of slide machine when we would go to the home or the hall.
- BENTON: This was different places in Pennsylvania? What were some of the places?
- JACK DAVIS: There were Tunkhannock, Hazleton, and Burwick. She worked with the building up of the Beaumont Church and the Montrose Church, went over to Wilkes-Barre, and helped with Scranton.
- JOAN DAVIS: Look there [in Mrs. Curtis' Bible]—this is in her writing. "September-October, 1964. Tent effort costs \$5,000. Lot costs \$2,000." Oh, that's Kingston!
- BENTON: You came into the church under Mrs. Curtis?
- JOAN DAVIS: Yes. I was 12 years old when my parents and I became Adventists. The other minister started us with Bible studies, and then she finished up. She would come to our home, and *she was very clear*. It was very easy to understand what she was explaining.
- BENTON: Where were those meetings?
- JOAN DAVIS: In Montrose.
- JACK DAVIS: She raised up that church.
- BENTON: Where was her home?
- JACK DAVIS: Nine miles northwest of Wilkes-Barre, a little town called Lehman.
- BENTON: So if she moved around in the work, she kept her basic home?
- JACK DAVIS: Yes.
- JOAN DAVIS: It was always within driving range from her home. She traveled long miles, but she could always go home at night.

Appendix A

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BENTON: She never learned to drive herself?

JACK DAVIS: No, she never learned to drive. Well, she had a maid and a chauffeur when she married Mr. Curtis at age 50.

BENTON: And that was the first marriage?

JACK DAVIS: Her first and only marriage. She was only married about five years, and he died.

JOAN DAVIS: She used to stay in people's homes in Montrose. It was about 50 miles, and she would ride the bus. Then one of the families that lived in town would pick her up and keep her at their house. The children loved her.

JACK DAVIS: I used to get goose pimples hearing her preach. She did a lot of her preaching on last-day events. She would get newspaper clippings of earthquakes, hurricanes, or different things that were taking place—train wrecks or airplane wrecks, and she spoke a lot about the things that were happening in the last days—the soon coming of the Lord. I thought the Lord was coming the next day. She never read a sermon.

BENTON: I heard that young interns started with her. In fact, I believe Elder Dower, who was head of the ministerial department of the General Conference—

JACK DAVIS: Yes, I remember Elder Dower! He was young, and handsome. I remember Kay, his wife. Very nice. Oh, there's a lot of them that interned under my aunt's leadership. Ministers drifting away on some point of doctrine or Sister White's writings would be sent to my aunt to be rehabilitated. Some she won and some she didn't.

JOAN DAVIS: She always wanted people around, the more, the merrier. And she had a good sense of humor.

BENTON: Sounds as if she was very balanced.

JOAN DAVIS: Yes, that's a good description of her.

JACK DAVIS: She dressed fine, always wore nice suits and clothes and hats; but she leaned toward working with people.

JOAN DAVIS: She was a handsome woman. She stood out in a crowd.

JACK DAVIS: She was physically strong.

BENTON: Sounds as if she knew how to enjoy life. Now tell me a little more about this preaching that thrilled you.

JACK DAVIS: She didn't preach over anyone's head. She just preached to the heart of people and made them see the closeness of the hour in which we're living. That changed their lives. My aunt reached everybody.

**5.3 Letter from Jay Milton Hoffman, Valley Center, California, to the writer, October 4, 1989**

Dear Dr. Benton:

Yes, I am the man who knew Jessie Weiss before she became Jessie Weiss Curtis. She was quite a preacher, and the first time I went into church someone told her that a Jewish man was in the church with his wife. She changed her subject and preached on the 70 weeks. Jessie Weiss Curtis was a terrific preacher and she raised up the church in Drums, Pennsylvania, where I first became a member. My wife, Trudie, and I were both baptized at the same time.

Very cordially yours,

J. M. Hoffman, Ph.D.

P.S. I was the director and evangelist of the Times Square Center in New York for 20 years.

**5.4 Anecdote of attempted ordination, reported by Vanetta Weiss, interview with the writer, Drums, Pennsylvania, July 27, 1985.**

[The writer's summary] Vanetta Weiss, Jessie Weiss Curtis' sister-in-law, told about being at the East Pennsylvania camp meeting one year when it was time for the annual ordination of ministers and hearing an urgent request being broadcast over the loud speakers for Jessie Curtis to come at once to the ministers' tent. Since Mrs. Curtis did not appear, Vanetta Weiss was sent to look for her. Vanetta was told that the brethren wanted to ordain Jessie, but that she was resisting. The search for Jessie proved unsuccessful, and the service went on without her.

Later, when she appeared again, Jessie told Vanetta that she did not care to be ordained nor to have any greater responsibilities than she already had. She said she was content to prepare people for baptism and to let the male ministers come to baptize them.

***Documents Concerning the Life and Work of Ellen G. White (chapter 7)***

**7.1 A remarkable spiritual experience: selections from Ellen White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1915), 69-71.**

It seemed impossible for me to perform this work that was presented before me; to attempt it seemed certain failure. . . .

I coveted death as a release from the responsibilities that were crowding upon me. . . .

At length I was induced to be present at one of the meetings in my own home. . . .

While prayer was offered for me, that the Lord would give me strength and courage to bear the message, the thick darkness that had encompassed me rolled back, and a sudden light came upon me. Something that seemed to me like a ball of fire struck me right over the heart. . . . I seemed to be in the presence of the angels. One of these holy beings again repeated the words, "Make known to others what I have revealed to you."



Father Pearson, who could not kneel on account of his rheumatism, witnessed this occurrence. . . . He rose from his chair and said, "I have seen a sight such as I never expected to see. A ball of fire came down from heaven, and struck Sister Ellen Harmon right on the heart. *I saw it! I saw it!* . . . We will help you henceforth, and not discourage you."

**7.2 Having to leave little Henry in the care of friends, *Life Sketches*, 120.**

Again I was called to deny self for the good of souls. We must sacrifice the company of our little Henry, and go forth to give ourselves unreservedly to the work. My health was very poor. . . .

We left Henry in Brother Howland's family, in whom we had the utmost confidence. They were willing to bear burdens, in order that we might be left as free as possible to labor in the cause of God. . . .

It was hard to part with my child. . . .

For five years Brother Howland's family had the whole charge of Henry. They cared for him without any recompense, providing all his clothing, except a present that I brought him once a year, as Hannah did Samuel.

**7.3 The sacrifice of having to leave two children temporarily for the work, *Life Sketches*, 131-32.**

The first night after reaching the place of meeting, despondency pressed upon me. My little ones burdened my mind. We had left one in the state of Maine two years and eight months old, and another babe in New York nine months old. We had just performed a tedious journey in great suffering, and I thought of those who were enjoying the society of their children in their own quiet homes. I reviewed our past life, calling to mind expressions which had been made by a sister only a few days before, who thought it must be very pleasant to be riding through the country without anything to trouble me. It was just such a life as she should delight in. At that very time my heart was yearning for my children, especially my babe in New York. . . .

In this state of mind I fell asleep, and dreamed that a tall angel stood by my side and asked me why I was sad. I related to him the thoughts that had troubled me, and said, "I can do so little good, why may we not be with our children, and enjoy their society?" Said he: "You have given to the Lord two beautiful flowers, the fragrance of which is as sweet incense before Him, and is more precious in His sight than gold or silver, for it is a heart gift."

**7.4 Excerpt from a letter from Ellen White to "Brothers Irwin, Evans, Smith, and Jones," April 21, 1898**

These women give their whole time, and are told that they receive nothing for their labors because their husbands receive their wages. I tell them to go forward and all such decisions will be revised. The Word says, "The laborer is worthy of his hire." When any such decision as this is made, I will in the name of the Lord, protest. I will feel it my duty to create a fund from my tithing money, to pay these women who are accomplishing just as essential work as the ministers are doing,

and this tithing I will reserve for work in the same line as that of the ministers, hunting for souls, fishing for souls. I know that the faithful women should be paid wages as is considered proportionate to the pay received by ministers. They carry the burden of souls, and should not be treated unjustly. . . .

#### **7.5 Author's note on Ellen White's credentialing**

From the time the *Yearbooks* began to be published with their lists of credentialed ministers in 1884 until Ellen White's life ended in 1915, she was listed as an ordained minister.

In conversations several years ago leading up to the writing of this book, some church administrators explained that while Ellen White was credentialed as an ordained minister, there was never an ordination service at which she was set apart for the ministry because the church leadership believed that she had been ordained by God and did not need the earthly affirmation in the form of the laying on of hands. It was suggested that she was credentialed as an ordained minister in order to allow her to be paid the salary of an ordained clergyman.

However that may be, her status was for years that of an ordained minister. Her ministerial license for 1885 has the word "ordained" lightly marked through, but the license for 1887 states, "This is to Certify, that *Mrs. E. G. White* at *Healdsburg California* is an Ordained Minister in good standing in the *General Conference* of Seventh-day Adventists."



# Appendix B

## Partial List of Seventh-day Adventist Women Ministers

1884 to 1975

Compiled by the Archives of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and Josephine Benton

### 1884<sup>1</sup>

#### *General Conference*

Ordained<sup>2</sup> Mrs. E.G. White

#### *Kansas*

Licensed<sup>2</sup> Mrs. R. Hill  
Mrs. H. Enoch

#### *Michigan*

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White  
Licensed Mrs. E.B. Lane  
Mrs. G.K. Owen

#### *Minnesota*

Licensed Anna M. Johnson  
Libbie Collins

### 1885

#### *General Conference*

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

#### *Kansas*

Licensed Mrs. H. Enoch

#### *Michigan*

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White  
Licensed Mrs. E.S. Lane  
Mrs. G.K. Owen

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1. There were Seventh-day Adventist women ministers before 1884. For example, Sara A. Hallock Lindsey (see chapter 9) was licensed in 1872. However, the lists of ministers available to the General Conference Archives from which to compile this list begin with 1884. Previous ministers, men and women, must be researched individually.

2. The terminology used in the early official lists was “Ministers” for those who carried ordained ministers’ credentials and “Licentiates” for those who had been issued ministerial licenses; later the corresponding categories in the *Yearbooks* became “Ordained Ministers” and “Licensed Ministers.” The latter headings are used in these lists to indicate the categories under which the women ministers’ names appeared.

**1886**

**General Conference**

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

**Illinois**

Licensed Ida. W. Hibben

**Kansas**

Licensed Hattie Enoch

**Michigan**

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

Licensed Mrs. E.B. Lane  
Mrs. G.K. Owen

**1887**

**General Conference**

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

**Kansas**

Licensed Hattie Enoch  
Ruie Hill

**Michigan**

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

Licensed Mrs. E.B. Lane  
Mrs. G.K. Owen

**Vermont**

Licensed Mrs. S.E. Pierce

**1888**

**Alabama/Mississippi**

Licensed Mrs. Ruie Hill

**California**

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

Licensed Mrs. G.K. Owen

**Kansas**

Licensed Hattie Enoch

**Michigan**

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

Licensed Mrs. E.S. Lane  
Mrs. G.K. Owen

**Wisconsin**

Licensed Hattie Enoch

**General Field**

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

**1889**

**General Conference**

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

**Alabama/Mississippi**

Licensed Mrs. Ruie Hill

**California**

Licensed Mrs. G.K. Owen

**Michigan**

Licensed Mrs. E.S. Lane

**1890**

**General Conference**

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

**California**

Licensed Mrs. G.K. Owen

**Kansas**

Licensed Mrs. Ruie Hill

**1891**

**General Conference**

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

**California**

Licensed Mrs. G.K. Owen

**Kansas**

Licensed Mrs. Ruie Hill

**1892**  
*General Conference*

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

**California**

Licensed Mrs. J.A. Owen

**Kansas**

Licensed Mrs. Ruie Hill

**1893**  
*General Conference*

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

**California**

Licensed Mrs. J.A. Owen

**Iowa**

Licensed Mrs. Flora Plummer

**Kansas**

Licensed Mrs. Ruie Hill

**1894**  
*General Conference*

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

**California**

Licensed Mrs. J.A. Owen

**Kansas**

Licensed Mrs. Ruie Hill

**New Zealand**

Licensed Mrs. Margaret Caro

**1895**  
*General Conference*

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

**California**

Licensed Mrs. J.A. Owen

**New York**

Licensed Mrs. S.A. Lindsay

**Upper Columbia**

Licensed Mrs. Ruie Hill

**New Zealand**

Licensed Mrs. Margaret Caro

**1896**  
*General Conference*

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

**California**

Licensed Mrs. J.A. Owen

**New York**

Licensed Mrs. S.A. Lindsay

**Upper Columbia**

Licensed Mrs. Ruie Hill

**New Zealand**

Licensed Mrs. Margaret Caro

**1897**  
*Gen. Conf & Australasian U.*

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

**California**

Licensed Mrs. J.A. Owen

**Upper Columbia**

Licensed Mrs. Ruie Hill

**New Zealand**

Licensed Mrs. Margaret Caro

**1898**  
*Gen. Conf. & Australasian U.*

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

Licensed Mrs. S.M.I Henry

**California**

Licensed Mrs. J.A. Owen

**New Zealand**

Licensed Mrs. Margaret Caro

**New York**

Licensed Mrs. Lulu Wightman

**Upper Columbia**

Licensed Mrs. Ruie Hill

**1899**

**General Conference**

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

Licensed Mrs. S.M.I. Henry

**New York**

Licensed Mrs. Lulu Wightman

**Upper Columbia**

Licensed Mrs. Ruie Hill

**British Conference**

Licensed Mrs. Edith Bartlett

**New Zealand**

Licensed Mrs. M. Caro

**1900**

**Gen. Conf. & Australasian U.**

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

Licensed Mrs. Hetty H. Haskell

**New York**

Licensed Mrs. Lulu Wightman

**Upper Columbia**

Licensed Mrs. R. Hill

**British Conference**

Licensed Mini Robinson

**New Zealand**

Licensed Mrs. M. Caro

**1901**

**General Conference**

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

Licensed Mrs. H.H. Haskell

**Iowa**

Licensed Mrs. G.R. Hawkins

**Michigan**

Licensed Mrs. E.R. Williams

**New York**

Licensed Mrs. Lulu Wightman

**Utah**

Licensed Mrs. Carrie V. Hansen

**1902**

**General Conference**

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

Licensed Mrs. H.H. Haskell

**Greater New York**

Licensed Mrs. S.N. Haskell

**Iowa**

Licensed Mrs. G.R. Hawkins

**(Mich.) Superior Mission**

Licensed Mrs. E.R. Williams

**New York**

Licensed Mrs. Lulu Wightman

**Oklahoma**

Licensed Mrs. Minnie Syp<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>The family name spelling was later changed to Sype.

**1904**

***General Conference***

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White  
 Licensed Mrs. H.H. Haskell

***Arizona***

Licensed Mrs. J.E. Bond

***Iowa***

Licensed Mrs. G.R. Hawkins

***(Mich.) Superior Mission***

Licensed Mrs. E.R. Williams

***New York***

Licensed Mrs. Lulu Wightman

***Oklahoma***

Licensed Minnie Syp

***South Dakota***

Licensed Bertha E. Jorgensen

***Finland Mission***

Licensed Alma Bjdigg

**1905**

***General Conference***

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White  
 Licensed Mrs. H.H. Haskell

***Lake Union***

Licensed Mrs. E.R. Williams

***Arizona***

Licensed Mrs. J.E. Bond

***Iowa***

Licensed Mrs. G.R. Hawkins

***New York***

Licensed Mrs. Lulu Wightman

***Oklahoma***

Licensed Mrs. Minnie Syp

***South Dakota***

Licensed Bertha E. Jorgensen

***Finland***

Licensed Alma Bjdigg

**1906**

***General Conference***

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

Licensed Mrs. H.H. Haskell

***Lake Union***

Licensed Mrs. E.R. Williams

***Arizona***

Licensed Mrs. J.E. Bond

***New York***

Licensed Mrs. Lulu Wightman

***Oklahoma***

Licensed Mrs. Minnie Syp

***Wyoming***

Licensed Mrs. G.R. Hawkins

**1907**

***General Conference***

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

Licensed Mrs. H.H. Haskell

***Iowa***

Licensed Mrs. Minnie Syp

Mrs. Emma Hawkins

***New York***

Licensed Mrs. Lulu Wightman

**1908**

***General Conference***

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

Licensed Mrs. H.H. Haskell

**California**

Ordained Mrs. J.S. Wightman

**Iowa**

Licensed Mrs. G.R. Hawkins

Mrs. Minnie Syp

**North Dakota**

Licensed Mrs. Bertha Jorgensen

**1909**

**General Conference**

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

Licensed Mrs. H.H. Haskell

**Central Union**

Licensed Mrs. Lulu Wightman

**Iowa**

Licensed Mrs. G.R. Hawkins

Mrs. Minnie Syp

**North Dakota**

Licensed Mrs. Bertha Jorgensen

**1910**

**General Conference**

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

Licensed Mrs. H.H. Haskell

**Central Union**

Licensed Mrs. Lulu Wightman

**California**

Licensed Mrs. S.N. Haskell

**Iowa**

Licensed Mrs. G.R. Hawkins

Mrs. Minnie Syp

**Nebraska**

Licensed Mrs. Ura Spring

Pearl Field

**North Dakota**

Licensed Mrs. Bertha Jorgensen

**1911**

**General Conference**

Ordained Mrs. E.G. White

Licensed Mrs. H.H. Haskell

**California**

Licensed Mrs. S.N. Haskell

**Iowa**

Licensed Mrs. Emma Hawkins

Mrs. Minnie Sype

**North Dakota**

Licensed Mrs. Bertha Jorgensen

**Cape Colony**

Licensed Mrs. E.R. Williams

**1915**

**General Conference**

Licensed Mrs. H.H. Haskell

**Iowa**

Licensed Mrs. Minnie Sype

**1920**

**Greater New York**

Licensed Emme Wells

**Iowa**

Licensed Mrs. Minnie Sype

**Missouri**

Licensed Mrs. E.F. Hawkins

**North Dakota**

Licensed Mina Panasuk

**Northern California**

Licensed Mrs. Ella H. Osborne



**1925**

***Illinois***

Licensed Mrs. E. Flo Hawkins

***Northern California***

Licensed Mrs. Ella H. Osborne

***Western Washington***

Licensed Mrs. Minnie Sype

***East China Union Mission***

Licensed Mrs. B. Miller

**1930**

***Northern California***

Licensed Mrs. Ella H. Osborne

***Oregon***

Licensed Pearl Stafford

***Northern Texas***

Licensed Mrs. Beulah Langdon

Mrs. H. Eder

**1935**

***East China Union Mission***

Licensed Mrs. B. Miller

***Hopei Mission (China)***

Licensed Lucy Andrus

**1940**

***Southern Union***

Licensed Mrs. M. Sype-Atteberry

**1945**

***Southern Union***

Licensed Mrs. M. Sype-Atteberry

***East Pennsylvania***

Licensed Mrs. Jessie Curtis

**1950**

***East Pennsylvania***

Licensed Mrs. Jessie W. Curtis

**1955**

***North Pacific Union***

Licensed Mrs. Minnie Sype Crippin

***East Pennsylvania***

Licensed Mrs. Jessie W. Curtis

**1960**

***Central Union Conference***

Licensed Mrs. W.H. Andersen

***Pacific Union***

Licensed Mary E. Walsh

***Georgia-Cumberland***

Licensed Mrs. Marye Burdick

Mrs. Lucia H. Lee

***Kentucky-Tennessee***

Licensed Mrs. Freda Ford

Mrs. Emma Phillips

Mrs. J.W. Wilhelm

***Potomac***

Licensed Mrs. Edna J. Cardey

Mary Saxton

**1965**

***Central Union***

Licensed Mrs. W.H. Anderson

***Pacific Union***

Licensed Mary E. Walsh

***Potomac***

Licensed Mrs. Edna J. Cardey

Mrs. Lois Mays

Mrs. Julia Ross

**1970**

***Columbia Union***

Licensed Mrs. Edna J. Cardey

Mrs. Jessie Curtis

***Kentucky-Tennessee***

Licensed Mrs. Harry Weckham

Mrs. Phil Neal

***Potomac***

Licensed Mrs. Lois Mays

**1975<sup>4</sup>**

***Central Union***

Licensed Mrs. W.H. Anderson

***Pacific Union***

Licensed Mary E. Walsh

***Potomac***

Licensed Mrs. Josephine Benton

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<sup>4</sup> There is currently (1990) no listing of women ministers in the Yearbooks that allows them to be distinguished from people in numerous other occupations, except for the few who are still licensed. Therefore this list has not been updated since 1975.



## Appendix C

### ACTIONS CONCERNING THE ISSUE OF ORDINATION OF WOMEN TO MINISTRY IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST DENOMINATION SINCE 1990

General Conference Resolution approving ordination of women to the ministry  
discussed in 1881

#### *The Review and Herald*

Battle Creek, Michigan, December 20, 1881

U. Smith, Resident Editor

J. N. Andrews, Associate Editor

#### ***General Conference Business Proceedings (continued)***

FIFTH MEETING, DECEMBER 5, 10 A.M.—Prayer by Eld. Loughborough.  
Minutes of last meeting read and approved.

*Resolved*, That females possessing the necessary qualifications to fill that position, may, with perfect propriety, be set apart by ordination to the work of the Christian ministry.

This was discussed by J. O. Corliss, A. C. Bourdeau, E. R. Jones, D. H. Lamson, W. H. Littlejohn, A. S. Hutchins, D. M. Canright, and J. N. Loughborough, and referred to the General Conference Committee. (*The General Conference Committee has never reported back concerning this resolution.*)

#### ***Fifty-fifth General Conference Session 1990***

##### **Ordination of women to the gospel ministry not approved**

*Voted*, to accept the following report and recommendations of the Role of Women Commission as recommended by the 1989 Annual Council: ...

I. While the commission does not have a consensus as to whether or not the Scriptures and the writings of Ellen G. White explicitly advocate or deny the ordination of women to pastoral ministry, it concludes unanimously that these sources affirm a significant, wide-ranging, and continuing ministry for women, which is being expressed

and will be evidenced in the varied and expanding gifts according to the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

2. Further; in view of the widespread lack of support for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry in the world church and in view of the possible risk of disunity, dissension, and diversion from the mission of the church, we do not approve ordination of women to the gospel ministry. *(The vote was 1,173 supporting the action with 377 against.)*

—*Adventist Review*, July 13, 1990, p. 15.

***Performing marriages allowed to certain licensed and commissioned ministers in approving divisions only***

Voted, to amend *Church Manual*, page 59, The Marriage Ceremony, to read as follows:

The Marriage Ceremony.—In the marriage ceremony the charge, vows, and declaration of marriage are given only by an ordained minister except in those areas where division committees have taken action to approve that selected licensed or commissioned ministers who have been ordained as local elders may perform the marriage ceremony.

—*Adventist Review*, July 19, 1990, p. 10. (The 1989 Annual Council action re women ministers' baptizing stands unchanged. See p. 135.)

***Proposal at 1995 General Conference Defeated***

In the business sessions of the 1995 General Conference in Utrecht, the Netherlands, a proposal was brought by the North American Division that each division be allowed to decide for its own territory whether ordination to the gospel ministry could include people of both genders. On July 5 the motion was defeated.

Elder Alfred C. McClure, North American Division president, wrote, "Although I was praying for a positive outcome, the motion was defeated." In a letter sent out to all NAD pastors and administrators on Aug. 3, 1995, he appealed "that you join me in praying that God will help us through this very delicate time. As painful as this issue is to many, we must not allow it to splinter our unity or divert our mission."

***Columbia Union Conference in 2004 requests General Conference again to consider issue of ordination of women***

The Columbia Union Conference voted on May 17, 2004, to ask the General Conference again to consider the issue of extending full ordination to women in ministry. A resolution was unanimously voted acknowledging the need for change on this issue.

### ***Credentialing of the women ministers presented in chapter 9***

The credentialing of most of the women ministers presented in chapter 9 is the Commissioned Minister Credential, issued by the employing local conference or union and listed in the Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook.

An endorsed chaplain of the North American Division also may receive the Commissioned Minister Credential.

Several women ministers in chapter 9 have been participants in special ordination services in local churches and ordination-commissioning services in local conferences (see below).

### ***Special ordination and ordination-commissioning services conducted by local churches and conferences***

#### **Ordination services at local churches**

After the General Conference in business session in Utrecht on July 5, 1995, voted not to allow the North American Division to authorize ordination of women to the ministry, local congregations with conference approval did ordain several women to the ministry, the ordination being understood to affect the women's service only in that particular church.

#### **Ordination at Sligo SDA Church on Sept. 23, 1995**

On Sept. 23, 1995, three women were in this manner ordained to the ministry at Sligo SDA Church, part of the Potomac Conference. They were Kendra Haloviak (see p. 118), Norma Osborn (see p. 123), and Penny Shell (see p. 126).

#### **Ordinations at Loma Linda Victoria Church and at La Sierra University Church on Dec. 2, 1995**

(Both churches are part of the Southeastern California Conference.)

Sheryll McMillan, the sole pastor of the Loma Linda Victoria Church of around 200 members, was ordained on Dec. 2, 1995, at the 11 a.m. worship service of the church where she pastored.

At 4:00 p.m. the same day in the La Sierra University Church the ordination of Madelynn Haldemann and Halcyon Wilson took place. Elder Dan Smith, pastor of the La Sierra University Church at that time, said his staff members believed they should all serve as equals, and Halcyon Wilson by then had been a member of the La Sierra pastoral staff for 15 years. Those present responded with a standing ovation.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Lawrence Geraty presented Madelynn Jones-Haldeman for ordination. He pointed out that Madelynn had been a member of the La Sierra University religion faculty for more than 30 years. She was in 1980 the second woman to receive the Doctor of Theology degree

from the SDA Theological Seminary in Michigan. Ordained ministers and congregation members streamed down the aisles to participate in the ordination prayer:<sup>2</sup>

**Ordination at Garden Grove, California Church in 1996**

Associate pastors Margo Pitrone and Jared Fulton were ordained to ministry at the Garden Grove, California, church in July 1996.

Ordination at Loma Linda University Church in 1997

Margaret (Peg) Hempe was a pioneer woman pastor at Loma Linda University Church in the 1970s under Pastor Bill Loveless. Peg served as associate pastor there for many years, and was ordained to the gospel ministry in the Loma Linda University Church in 1997. Able with God's help to endure the uncertain fortunes of a woman in ministry, Pastor Hempe has served as a role model for younger women called to follow her footsteps.

***Equal credential for men and women pastors  
adopted by Conferences***

After studying the subject for several years, the Southeastern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in March 2002 adopted an equal credential for men and women pastors, the ordination-commissioning credential. Soon afterward the Arizona Conference adopted the same credential. The Northern California Conference Constituency in May 2002 passed a motion requesting the General Conference to reconsider ordaining women to the ministry, with an amendment calling for NCC to adopt an equal credential for its women and men pastors.

Women have been recipients of the Ordination-Commissioning Credential, along with men in ministry in their conference. The men have declared that they do not want a status that the women who minister alongside them cannot have. Several women ministers included in chapter 9 (working in one of the conferences named above) have the Ordination-Commissioning Credential.

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<sup>1</sup> Hallie Wilson is officially retired, but still works part time as Assistant to the President for Women Pastors in the Southeastern California Conference.

<sup>2</sup> Madelynn Jones-Haldeman passed away on January 28, 2005.