

Readings & *Stewpot* posted on: www.imsda.org/resources

February 2, 2019 – Local Church Budget

Groundhog Day. Even Punxsutawney Phil has his day in the sun! As we consider this whimsical, legendary creature that supposedly makes his appearance each February and predicts the soon advent of spring, we know that in some minds the groundhog or woodchuck is a nuisance, raiding gardens and leaving big holes in the ground. On the plus side, however, their abandoned dens provide homes for foxes and skunks that in turn eat mice and destructive field insects. Groundhogs are even used in biomedical research. Their susceptibility to a virus similar to human hepatitis B has made them valuable to researchers in finding a cure for the human affliction. Who would have thought?!

But then, who would have thought that a church organization that began with a handful of believers in the mid-1800s would now number well over 20 million! This is all because of our wonderful Adventist message and our deep devotion to evangelism, both public and personal. And it is no doubt also due to our faithfulness in tithes and offerings, which fund the mission.

When you think about it, however, the early Christians in Acts 2 had no organizational infrastructure, but what they did have was lots of love for one another. They provided strongly for the needy among them, and they went forth preaching the Word in great faith.

Let us today demonstrate great faith and love as we return a faithful tithe and give liberally to the needs of our congregation.

February 9 – Adventist Television Ministries

Back to “normal.” On February 14, 1991, a pastor received a phone call from another pastor inviting him to go as a translator on a mission trip to build a church in the Dominican Republic. Their other translator had had a change of plans, so he was asked to go with only two days’ notice.

After a week away from home living in rather primitive conditions, how good it felt to take a nice hot shower and crawl into one’s own clean bed! How nice to get back to “normal”!

However, “normal” for millions of the people of the world means living constantly on the edge of starvation; barely surviving, scraping by on only a few dollars per **year**; living in a tiny structure, eight or more people to a family; walls covered with newspaper; carrying water from the community faucet or nearby river; washing “clothes” (maybe more like rags) by hand at the same faucet or river.

And yet . . . one member of the mission group commented, “How can they be so happy?”

I encourage you today to support the World Budget, which includes Adventist Television Ministries such as *Hope TV*, *Faith for Today*, *Breath of Life*, *It is Written*, and others. These ministries help spread the Gospel around the world. Let’s help these joyful people come to know the Source of their joy!

February 16, 2019 – Local Church Budget

Christian Parenting Day. While we have been called to go out into the world and make disciples for Jesus, we can't forget that we have a mission field inside the walls of our own home. Ellen G. White wrote in the book, *The Adventist Home*, "Our work for Christ is to begin with the family, in the home.... There is no missionary field more important than this" (p. 35).

As parents, we play the most important role in the life of our children as we disciple them to be followers of Jesus and accept His free gift of forgiveness and eternal life. While we may teach them, it is much more important that we *show* them what it means to be a disciple.

When you set aside God's tithe and your offerings, write a check and put it inside the envelope, or when you go online to do the same, invite your child to sit by you and explain to them what you're doing and why. Your example of gratitude for God's goodness, of joyfully giving, and financial support of the ministry of the church is critically important as they develop these same traits.

Today is Christian Parenting Day. Give your child the tithes and offerings you have brought and let them place them in the offering plate. Since today's offerings are for the local church budget, take the time to explain to your child what that means and what the funds will be used for. You will be planting in their minds the importance of supporting the ministry of your local church.

—Claudio Consuegra, NAD Family Ministries.

February 23 – Combined Youth Ministries (Conference Advance)

President's Day. George Washington, the first U.S. President and "father of our country," was highly respected for his integrity, leadership, and strong character. While the story of his chopping down the cherry tree may be apocryphal, it does portray his honesty. His humility is shown in his reluctance to serve as President, despite having led his troops to victory in the Revolutionary War. And his true heart showed up in the fact that he was the only president to completely free his slaves at his death. He was the only President to enter office upon the unanimous vote of his electors.

Abraham Lincoln, also known as "honest Abe," towered over his people not only physically, but morally. He was a six-foot four-inch man of prayer. Stories of his honesty include the one about when he was a store clerk, and accidentally overcharged a customer by six cents. As the store was closing for the evening he discovered his mistake, and walked three miles to the customer's house to return the money.

Are we people of honesty and integrity? An "**integer**" is a whole number, as opposed to a fraction like one-half; so "**integrity**" can be said of one who "has it all together." Do these values show up in our stewardship of God's tithe and our offerings?

Our local conference is well deserving of our support, as it ministers to us through youth camps, camp meetings, church building programs, etc. Give generously today.