

Newsletter Gets in Touch With Former Church Members

ReconnectNow, the Voice of Prophecy initiative to locate and reach out to inactive and former Adventists across the U.S. and Canada, launched its "Getting in Touch" e-mail newsletter last fall. The quarterly publication presents inspirational articles and stories of persons who have returned to church.

Features in the current issue of the newsletter include "How Can We Help You?" by Lonnie Melashenko, "I'm Glad I Came Back" by VOP Bible School instructor Denise Johnson, and "Beating Depression" and "Saving Blood" by Mike Jones, who directs the project.

Why People Leave

Pastor Melashenko says he meets many former members who tell him, "I still believe, but . . ." Often what follows is either that they have made poor choices in their personal lives or they have had a devastating disappointment in their spiritual journey.

Jones notes that most people who leave Christian churches every year don't disappear because they disagree with doctrines. "Much more often," he explains, "they cite unfulfilling worship services, perceived impersonalness of church leaders, divorce, lack of love, lack of fellowship, not feeling they're part of the family, and lifestyle issues."

Jones knows from first-hand

experience. He resigned his membership in the Adventist Church in 1983 following his divorce. And for 15 years, no one was inviting him to return—not until longtime evangelist Don Gray began calling on him about six years ago.

"There are a lot of heartaches out there," says Pastor Melashenko. "In our increasingly isolated society, many people just need a warm smile and a great big bear hug. They need the opportunity to open their hearts and share a few tears as we suffer with them over their painful experiences."

After coming back to the church in 1999, Jones developed a keen interest in helping pastors and members reach out to others who had left.

Resources Available

A 30-minute video, *The Fine Art of Connecting*, features Lonnie and Jeannie Melashenko presenting eight simple rules for making friends with visitors. It is available for \$9.95 (U.S. funds), postpaid in North America, by phoning (805) 955-7667.

A DVD and 96-page manual, *You Are My Witness*, developed by Don and Marge Gray, features

methods to reach out to former and missing members. This training tool is available at \$19.95 (plus shipping) from Seminars Unlimited (800-982-3344).

Names, addresses, and e-mail addresses of former members may be submitted online at www.reconnectnow.org or by mail: Operation Reconnect, Voice of Prophecy, Box 2525, Newbury Park, CA 91319.



Thousands Respond to Bible Study Invitations

The worldwide Sow 1 Billion project is generating strong response from people who want to study the Bible by mail, online, or in small groups. Before the end of this year, church members plan to distribute a billion invitations in scores of languages. All carry the theme of



hope in an uncertain world.

Across North America, 25.9 million Bible course enrollment cards are being mailed or delivered in

person. More than half will use the Voice of Prophecy's address in Los Angeles along with a VOP phone number.

During March alone, more than 2,340 responses came by mail to VOP and another 568 by phone. These numbers are expected to increase significantly in coming months as more areas of North America are blanketed with cards.

A new website, www.hopetalk.org, offers online Bible studies in English from several radio and television ministries, including the Voice of Prophecy. It also offers links to courses in nearly 40 other languages, with more being planned.

Much of the initial funding for Sow 1 Billion came from ASI (Adventist-Laymen's Services and Industries) members, including an offering of \$1 million during their convention in Albuquerque last August.



Are Your Investments on a Roller Coaster?

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Time to Plan for Fair Booths

It's time to order supplies if your church or school is planning a fair booth or an exhibit at your local mall. Among the items available from the Voice of Prophecy are enrollment cards, sample Bible lessons, "God Loves You" pins, and leaflets on Bible topics.

Enrollment cards for the Discover Bible Guides or the Focus on Prophecy Guides will generate applications for your local Discover Bible School. If you don't yet have a school, the VOP can help you start one. Or the national headquarters school will gladly accept enrollments from your area. For information or to place an order, phone 805-955-7652.

An inexpensive item loved by all ages is the "God Loves You" pin, available exclusively from the Voice of Prophecy. These are \$10.00 for a packet of 35.

Contemporary artwork illustrates three full-color leaflets: "God. What's He Like?" "Suffering. War. Death. Why?" and "The Bible. What's It Say to Me?" These 12-page tracts are available at \$8 per hundred, while quantities last.

To order leaflets or pins, send your check, money order, or credit card authorization to: Fair Booths, Voice of Prophecy, 101 W. Cochran St., Simi Valley, CA 93065. (Prices include postage in the U.S.; please add 20% for shipping to Canada. Add 7.25% sales tax for California orders. Outside North America, please request shipping costs by sending an e-mail to: gospel@vop.com.)



Weekends Inspire VisionBuilders



Voice of Prophecy VisionBuilders are invited each year to spend a quiet and deeply spiritual weekend with the ministry team. Guest speaker at most locations this spring was James Gilley (far left), chairman of the VOP Executive Committee. The worship hour message was presented by Lonnie Melashenko (left), and the study hour (below) featured program producers Ken Wade and David B. Smith.



Musicians included (above, from left) Jennifer LaMountain, Del Delker, Adrian Westney, and Connie Vandeman Jeffery. Participants at the Northern California weekend also included saxophonists Steve Peterson, M.D., and his son, Scott. Kurt Johnson (below), VOP Bible School director, interviewed persons who have taught or studied the Discover Bible Guides.



Sculptor Victor Issa's presentation on Saturday evening, "Testimony in Clay," was a unique and powerful portrayal of the life of Christ.



PHOTOS BY GLEN SAWYER