

March 2008

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Editorial Note: My apologies are offered for being late in getting this issue of the Currents to you. The flu bug was just too appealing to ignore. And an early venturing out to the Union Executive Committee late last week accomplished little more than a relapse for me – RV.

We are sad to report that earlier this month Harriet Goss, long-time member of the Glen Burnie church, passed to her rest from complications following a massive stroke. Harriet had served as Community Service Leader, Treasurer and a Children's Sabbath School teacher for many of her 87 years.

We are sad to say farewell to George Wennerberg, an associate pastor at the Frederick church, as he has accepted a call from the Carolina Conference to pastor a district in Wilmington, NC. George has been a pastor in Chesapeake since the mid 1980s, having served in districts on the Eastern Shore and the western region. He has also been an associate at both the Frederick and Hagerstown churches. George's strong spiritual focus and his compassionate pastoral and encouraging nature will serve him well in his new responsibility. He and his wife, Brenda, look forward to being closer to at least one of their children as a result of this move. We will miss them and wish them God's best in their new ministry. They will take up their new duties as of May 1.

The Baltimore White Marsh church will celebrate their 10th Anniversary in their new location this coming weekend, March 14-15. Renowned author and surgeon, Dr. Benjamin Carson, will be the featured speaker for the Sabbath morning worship hour. Former pastors, Tom LeBlanc and Dick Thomas, will also assist in the weekend celebration (Friday evening vespers and the General Sabbath School Lesson, respectively). Following the planned fellowship dinner, a program of remembrances will wrap up the day by 4:00 p.m.

The Pathfinder Bible Achievement conference level finals are being held at the Atholton church this Sabbath afternoon, March 15 at 3:00 p.m. Eighteen teams advanced to the conference finals – nine 1st Place teams and nine Wildcard teams. Here are the teams to be congratulated: 1st Place – Balt Korean, Balt White Marsh #1 and #2, Pikesville, Spencerville #1, Triadelphia, Waldorf #1, West Wilmington, Williamsport; Wildcard – Atholton #1 and #2, Frederick #1, Hagerstown, New Hope, Spencerville #2, Waldorf #2, Wash/Spencerville Korean and Wash/Spencerville Spanish.

A Groundbreaking Service for the new Baltimore Korean church will be held this coming Sunday, March 16 at 11:00 a.m. at their new location at 7410 Grace Drive in Columbia/Clarksville just off Route 32 and Cedar Lane.

The Triadelphia church will host a short series of Vegetarian/Vegan Cooking and Nutrition Instruction Classes beginning March 16 and continuing March 23, 30 and April 6. The classes will be held from 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. in the church's Fellowship Hall. No advanced registration is necessary and there is no fee for the classes. Current information on diet and nutritional issues will be provided by Sylvia Fagal, a Licensed Dietician and American Dietetics Association member.

The Highland View Academy and conference leadership teams have been working the last several months to prepare a proposal for a corporate foundation to secure a significant grant for doing major renovation work in the dormitories (remodeled bathrooms, new windows, new HVAC units in each room, etc.) The proposal calls for significant financial involvement from the conference, the academy (and its donor base) and the corporate foundation. The Conference Executive Committee will give consideration next week as to how the conference will assist with this unique opportunity. In addition to what this partnership would accomplish for the dormitories, there are also many other deferred maintenance issues needing to be addressed. The leadership team recently set up a small committee of three board members – Gayle Boyer, Andrew Choi and Charles Griffin – to prioritize and oversee the accomplishment of these deferred maintenance issues. While the academy continues to foster a strong academic and spiritual climate and has made great strides in rebuilding their finances and the enrollment, the fact remains that there has been little attention paid or support given (academy, conference or constituency) over the

past twenty plus years to the ongoing capital maintenance needs of the school. The foundation we are working with has been involved similarly with Mt Vernon Academy (Ohio), Blue Mountain Academy (PA), Fletcher Adventist Academy (NC) and Shenandoah Valley Academy (Potomac). It is quite understandable that the foundation's leadership expects a partnership to develop in addressing HVA's needs. The same has been true with each of the other academies. The HVA board is committed to putting in place protocols that will guarantee the future conservation of any work done to enhance the academy's physical plant. The academy has already received several significant contributions from donors and expects to begin some aspects of the renovation work even before the school year is finished.

“Rumor has it” – that is a phrase that is used altogether too often in correspondence that comes addressed to my attention or forwarded in e-mails. Some of the rumors are plainly false – some are inaccurate or distorted.

~ One rumor has to do with secret meetings being held by political and religious leaders to secure passage of a National Sunday Law. The rumor has also grown to suggest that the Pope plans to urge passage of a Sunday law when he visits Washington, D.C. in April. The General Conference Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty monitors such issues and has researched these rumors and their sources and has yet to find evidence to substantiate the claims. Attached to this issue of the *Currents* is a letter from James Standish, associate director of PARL and the Church's liaison on Capitol Hill, which would be helpful for our members to read in order to understand the diligence with which PARL addresses such rumors. Of course, we know that someday in the near future these scenarios could well develop and quickly. Regardless of the veracity of the current rumor we would all do well to remember that we are living in the closing days of earth's history and the need of personal preparation for and public proclamation of the nearness of Christ's return.

~ Another rumor has to do with “canceling” Camp Meeting. This one is typical of the second type of rumor – which is based somewhat in fact but is not totally accurate. Given the opportunity to do significant renovation work in the academy dormitories this summer and given recent decisions by the Executive Committee about trying new approaches to minister to more of our constituents, the conference administrative team moved to put in place a plan to down scale Camp Meeting to either a weekend celebration or a one-day convocation. The option considered most feasible included moving the spiritual convocation to a new venue so as to allow HVA the opportunity to commence renovation work immediately following graduation. A tentative arrangement was made with the Hagerstown Community College to use their gymnasium on June 7 – as the normal Camp Meeting Sabbath (14th) wasn't unavailable. Complications have now developed with the June 7 date and have threatened the quality of the planned programming. Efforts to reschedule speakers, musicians and the venues are also being met with frustration. Next Tuesday, March 18, the Conference Executive Committee will address the situation and make a decision as to whether to move forward with a weekend program or a one-day event or to postpone it entirely until the fall. If the original plans become reality, consideration will then be given to hold additional convocations in the northeast corner of the conference and somewhere in the Baltimore/Columbia area as well as the usual fall gathering at ESJA in October. Rumor has it that the conference is moving this direction to save costs. Not true! The move would be based on the attempt to reach more of our people with inspirational/training events that would bring them the best in Adventist preaching and music. We expect to spend the same amount of money to accomplish this as for the traditional program. The development of the FLAG Camp ministry would be covered out of the same budget and provide some measure of replacement for the camp meeting dynamic that our young people enjoy (see below). The Committee members, as well as the conference administrators, are aware that any tampering with Camp Meeting in its traditional form will be met with concern by many and with deep disappointment by the faithful (100-200) who attended during the days Wednesday through Friday. The final decision will be published in *Currents*.

Youth Ministries Development~ Flowing out of recent Executive Committee discussions is the development of a FLAG Camp ministry (Fun Learning About God camp) where a team of a half dozen young adults would take a roving day camp program out to various areas of the conference. While our traditional summer camp program ministers to more than 500 young people, it is obvious that the majority of our young people do not get to experience a week at camp. Local churches could use the FLAG Camp not only as a ministry to their own children but as a great opportunity to reach out into the community. A bus will be purchased so that the FLAG Camp staff is able to transport the children to various activities. The children would pay a fee for the five-day program and provide their own sack lunch.