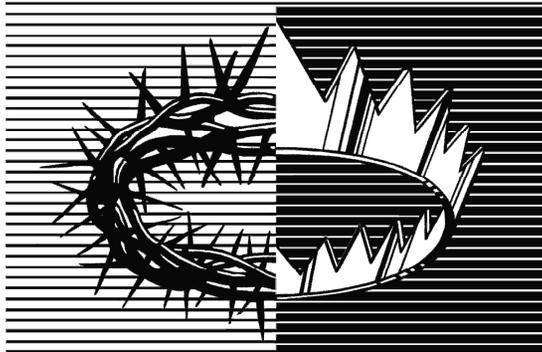


## TITHE AND OFFERING READINGS



### **ATTENTION!**

Dated material to be adapted,  
translated and distributed to  
Seventh-day Adventist churches  
**before** December 2005.

**2006**

# Stewardship Messages From the Old Testament

By Erika Puni

The offering readings for this year have been written by Dr. Erika Puni. Dr. Puni is the director for Stewardship, Sabbath School, and Personal Ministries at the South Pacific Division with its headquarters in Sydney, Australia. Before his current responsibilities, Erika's service included time in pastoral ministry, youth and administrative roles at the Conference level, and college lecturer. Erika is an experienced evangelist with a passion to empower God's people for ministry. He is married to Maxine. We look forward to receiving these messages from the Old Testament!

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We welcome your comments and suggestions for future authors and themes for the **Tithe and Offering Readings.**

(For your convenience, pages i-v are repeated at the end of the readings.)

## SABBATHS WITHOUT DESIGNATED OFFERINGS

There are **six Sabbaths** in 2006 that do not have designated offerings. Each Division Committee is to designate these offerings for use in their Division, Conference or Union. The Sabbaths are: January 7, February 11, June 10, August 12, October 7, and December 9.

The titles of the readings of these non-designated offerings are noted as "**Scheduled Offering: Division.**"

## THIRTEENTH SABBATH OFFERINGS FOR 2006

Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division . . . . .	March 25
South American Division . . . . .	June 24
South Pacific Division . . . . .	September 23
East-Central Africa Division . . . . .	December 23

# Special Offerings

RECOMMENDED, To adopt the Calendar of Special Offerings—World 2006,  
as follows:

## JANUARY

7 ..... Outreach/Church Budget  
14 ..... Division  
21 ..... Church Budget  
28 ..... Conference/Union

## FEBRUARY

4 ..... Outreach/Church Budget  
11 ..... Division  
18 ..... Church Budget  
25 ..... Conference/Union

## MARCH

4 ..... Outreach/Church Budget  
11\*+ ..... Adventist World Radio\* +  
18 ..... Church Budget  
25 ..... Conference/Union

## APRIL

1 ..... Outreach/Church Budget  
8+ ..... World Mission Budget+  
15 ..... Church Budget  
22 ..... Conference/Union  
29 ..... Church Budget

## MAY

6 ..... Outreach/Church Budget  
13\*+ ..... Disaster and Famine Relief\* +  
20 ..... Church Budget  
27 ..... Conference/Union

## JUNE

3 ..... Outreach/Church Budget  
10 ..... Division  
17 ..... Church Budget  
24 ..... Conference/Union

## JULY

1 ..... Outreach/Church Budget  
8+ ..... World Mission+  
15 ..... Church Budget  
22 ..... Conference/Union  
29 ..... Church Budget

## AUGUST

5 ..... Outreach/Church Budget  
12 ..... Division  
19 ..... Church Budget  
26 ..... Conference/Union

## SEPTEMBER

2 ..... Outreach/Church Budget  
9+ ..... World Mission Budget+  
(Special Opportunities)  
16 ..... Church Budget  
23 ..... Conference/Union  
30 ..... Church Budget

## OCTOBER

7 ..... Outreach/Church Budget  
14 ..... Division  
21 ..... Church Budget  
28 ..... Conference/Union

## NOVEMBER

4 ..... Outreach/Church Budget  
11\* + ..... Annual Sacrifice (Global Mission)\*+  
18 ..... Church Budget  
25 ..... Conference/Union

## DECEMBER

2 ..... Outreach/Church Budget  
9 ..... Division  
16 ..... Church Budget  
23 ..... Conference/Union  
30 ..... Church Budget

\*Reading provided by corresponding entity  
+Worldwide Offering

## SCHEDULED SPECIAL OFFERINGS

SABBATH	TITLE	DATE
10 <sup>th</sup>	Adventist World Radio	March 11
14 <sup>th</sup>	World Mission Budget	April 8
19 <sup>th</sup>	Disaster and Famine Relief	May 13
27 <sup>th</sup>	World Mission	July 8
36 <sup>th</sup>	World Mission (Special Opportunities)	September 9
45 <sup>th</sup>	Annual Sacrifice (Global Mission)	November 11

### Sabbath 1

January 7, 2006

Offering: Outreach/Church Budget

The issue was faith—absolute trust in God. But would Abraham, whom God had called to be the father of a great nation and who was blessed with material wealth and a son, trust Him this time? Yes, he did. In fact, Abraham passed the “test.” But this test was personal, and it was heart wrenching because it called for the surrender of the one gift given by God as the initial fulfillment of the promise of nationhood—his only son.

The Bible does not say much about Abraham’s reaction or emotions, but simply states that “he set out for the place God had told him about” (Gen 22:3). Abraham’s action in response to God’s command is an illustration of real faith—absolute trust in God—in spite of the outcome.

God had always provided for Abraham and Sarah on their faith journey, and Abraham believed that God would come through this time as well. “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering” (Gen 22:8). For Abraham, this test was a call for personal “sacrifice”—withholding nothing from God even when it hurts (Gen 22:12). Abraham lived his faith in trusting God absolutely, and he lived his worship of God by giving the most precious gift he treasured, his son, Isaac.

### Appeal:

Your giving today is an expression of your faith in God, and the worship of Him as one you trust absolutely.

### Prayer

Teach us O God, to trust you more!

**Sabbath 2**  
**January 14, 2006**  
**Offering: Division**

The call of God to Abraham was specific: "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen 12:2, 3). It was God's will that through Abraham, He would bless the world. Fundamental to Abraham's call is the biblical idea that God is a God of blessings and that He showers His people with blessings, even before they are able to do anything for Him.

The call of Abraham illustrates another spiritual reality: that God works through people to achieve His purpose in the world. Being called to be His church, His people, is a divine privilege. But with this call comes responsibility and accountability. He does not want His blessings to end with us, for blessings are meant to be shared. And because He has already blessed us with good health, family, friends, special abilities, and resources; the question that needs to be asked is this: "Will I allow myself and my blessings to be the means of blessings others?"

**Appeal:**

Your giving today is an act of spiritual responsibility, sharing the blessings of God in support of ministry in your home division.

**Prayer**

Contextualize your prayer to correspond with the specific ministry needs of your area.

**Sabbath 3**  
**January 21, 2006**  
**Offering: Church Budget**

From the very start of the journey to the Promised Land, Abraham trusted God. In fact, not only did Abraham trust Him, but he worshiped God faithfully, for he built an altar to Him wherever he pitched his tent (Gen 12:8; 13: 3-4, 18). For Abraham, God was number one, and his worship of God was a natural expression of his relationship to Him. God was his priority and worship was part of his life.

The biblical account also depicts Abraham as a responsible person, as one who thought of the welfare of others who were under his leadership and sphere of influence. For example, his party of travelers that left Haran included Sarai his wife, Lot his nephew, and many servants who were part of his household (Gen 12:5). He didn't travel alone; he traveled with his community. And if God was going to bless him, He would bless his people as well.

Abraham's unselfish leadership was further demonstrated when he gave Lot the opportunity to be first to choose the land for his herds. Unselfish leadership means giving options, opportunities, and sharing the decision-making process with others.

**Appeal:**

Your giving today demonstrates your commitment to the ministry of your local church, and is an expression of responsible membership.

**Prayer**

**Sabbath 4**  
**January 28, 2006**  
**Offering: Conference/Union**

Abraham's unselfish leadership included his attack on Kedorlaomer and his allies (Gen 14:17) and the rescue of Lot and his possessions. On his return from this victory, Abraham was met by Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God. "Blessed be Abram by God most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand (Gen 14:17-18). With this blessing, Abraham returned to Melchizedek a tenth of everything.

While nothing is said of tithe in Scripture until this passage, the following theological observations can be made:

1. Abraham returned tithe after his victory from God and after he was blessed by Melchizedek. In this story, the returning of tithe is done because God has blessed already. It was not done in order that God may bless.
2. Abraham was able to return tithe because God had saved him first from Kedorlaomer and his forces. In this case, salvation comes first and the returning of tithe is a response of the saved.
3. Tithe is part of God's blessings and it is returned to Him because it came from Him in the first place. In this context, tithe is returned, not paid to God.

**Appeal:**

Your return of tithe this morning acknowledges God as Giver of life's blessings and Savior of your family.

**Prayer**

**Sabbath 5**  
**February 4, 2006**  
**Offering: Outreach/Church Budget**

The birth of Cain was a blessing from God. In fact, His mother Eve acknowledged this gift. "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man" (Gen 4:1). Eve's response was an appropriate introduction to the offerings of her two sons, Cain and Abel. Offerings must be given as an expression of gratitude and thanksgiving to God. In this context, Eve knew God as the Giver of all blessings.

In presenting their gifts to the Lord, the Bible notes that Cain took "some of the fruits of the soil." Abel, on the other hand, offered "fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock" (Gen 4:3, 4). The difference is obvious. Abel gave an offering from the "firstborn" of his flock—the very first and best; but Cain gave "fruits," not necessarily the "first fruits." He settled for the ordinary. God not only requires obedience, but He expects the first and best from us.

With offerings, God is looking for a positive attitude. "Cain brought his offering unto the Lord with murmuring and infidelity in his heart" (*Spiritual Gifts*, Vol 3, p.47).

**Appeal:**

Your giving to outreach today must reflect a heart that turns toward God in gratitude and love.

**Prayer**

Teach me your way, O God!

**Sabbath 6**  
**February 11, 2006**  
**Offering: Division**

The Lord said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and stay here and I will give you the tablets of stone with the law and commands I have written for their instruction” (Ex 24:12). At the end of this experience, Moses receives further directives, only this time it is a call for offerings: “Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give” (Ex 25:2).

There are three important observations in regard to this offering passage of the Old Testament:

1. The call to present offerings to God was made in the context of community. God called Israel as a people.
2. The call for offerings was an invitation for each individual to make a personal commitment to God. Giving an offering is a personal matter—a heartfelt response from the offering giver to the Life Giver.
3. The offering was to be given willingly. Attitude and motive matter. God looked for willingly partners in this spiritual experience. The setting, of course, was the sanctuary. “Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them” (Ex 25:8).

**Appeal:**

God calls His people today to be partners with Him in mission to this division. Will you help Him with your free will offerings?

**Prayer**

Lord, grant me the heart to give in love.

**Sabbath 7**  
**February 18, 2006**  
**Offering: Church Budget**

When Aaron and his sons were ordained to the service of the tabernacle, God called for a consecration offering that included a bull and two rams. While God was very specific about how Aaron and his sons were to be dressed for the occasion, He was also particular with how the animals were to be prepared. “But burn the bull's flesh and its hide and its offal outside the camp. It is a sin offering” (Ex 29:14). “Then burn the entire ram on the altar. It is a burnt offering to the LORD, a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the LORD by fire” (Ex 29:18).

This passage shows that spiritual cleansing from sin is necessary in order to serve Him, and that giving offerings is something God expects from the leaders of His people. Offerings belong to God, and when presented in the context of the church and its ministries, these offerings belong to the Lord. When given in the right spirit, in the right place, and to God, such offerings are like a sweet aroma that ascends to the very presence of God.

**Appeal:**

You give today because you recognize God's call for you as a leader of your family and church.

**Prayer**

Please accept our freewill offerings, a humble expression of our dedication to your service.

**Sabbath 8**  
**February 25, 2006**  
**Offering: Conference/Union**

The Israelites were instructed by God, through Moses, on what to do when they arrived to settle in Canaan—their inheritance from God and the land promised to Abraham their father. “A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord” (Lev 27:30).

So when they harvested their gardens and when they received the fruits of their labour, they were expected to return to God His portion of these blessings—tithe. Returning tithe was in recognition of God's blessings and in remembrance of God as the absolute Owner of the land.

Today we return tithe to God because He has already blessed us. We return tithe to recognize Him as Owner of the universe, the earth that we inhabit, the country that we live in, and the home we occupy. As the Creator God, He has the right to call for this portion of our income. Everything we are and have belongs to Him. More importantly, tithe is holy. Holy means that something is set aside for God. In this sense, what we return to Him is holy.

**Appeal:**

The returning of tithe is not an option. It is what God's people do because it belongs to Him.

**Prayer**

We thank you God for your many blessings this week, and we return to you this tithe in recognition of your creatorship and ownership in our lives.

**Sabbath 9**  
**March 4, 2006**  
**Offering: Outreach/Church Budget**

The building of the sanctuary in the wilderness was God's plan. It was His purpose to be with His people, both physically within the tent at the center of the camp, but also spiritually, within the heart of every person. In the preparation phase of the building project, the invitation was made for individuals to present an offering for the work of the tabernacle. “Then the whole Israelite community withdrew from Moses' presence, and everyone who was willing and whose heart moved him came and brought an offering to the Lord for the work on the Tent of Meeting, for all its service, and for the sacred garments” (Ex 35:20, 21.)

Surely the God who provided manna for His people on this journey, and water when they were thirsty, could easily supply the material for the sanctuary. But why should he be asking for their help? God's intention, it would seem, was to call people into partnership with Him. It was an opportunity for the Israelites to work together with God in building His place for the benefit of the community. It was a spiritual partnership. But it was also a call to focus on Him. This was a matter of worship.

**Appeal:**

Today God invites you into partnership with Him. He is calling for your financial support for the ministries of your local congregation.

**Prayer**

Thank you, Lord, for the privilege of giving.

**Sabbath 10**  
**March 11, 2006**  
**Offering: Adventist World Radio**

Recently Adventist World Radio received an e-mail from a young man in North Africa. Anouar wrote to say he had become a Christian after listening to the AWR broadcast in his area. But it is illegal to be a Christian there, and his family was making life difficult.

“Please don’t think that I’m sad for what happened,” Anouar wrote. “I’m very happy because the Lord is with me.” Later, Anouar wrote: “I love Jesus Christ. I’m ready to die for Him. After my father tore up my Christian books, I read the Bible on my computer, but now I’m not allowed to use it. I must ... go to the cyber café.

“Yesterday, two policemen came to our home. One of them said, ‘I think you were playing with this Christian thing, right? If you don’t stop this game, we’ll bury you alive. We’ll consider you as a terrorist.... Prison will welcome you forever.’”

“I’m sure I’ll be taken to prison soon. I’m just writing to let you know. Please do not ask anyone to help me. I know that no one can help me but the Lord. Maybe this e-mail will be the last one.”

**Appeal:**

Adventist World Radio’s ministry reaches into places where missionaries cannot go. Radio waves have no walls, no borders, no limits. AWR broadcasts in over 65 languages to hard-to-reach people all over the world. By giving to AWR today, you will give millions of people what could be their only chance to hear about Jesus.

**Sabbath 11**  
**March 18, 2006**  
**Offering: Church Budget**

Men and women in Bible times, even today, make special vows to dedicate themselves to the service of God. In Numbers 6, we find God’s instructions for anyone who wants to separate him or herself for Him.

In Scripture this person was known as a Nazarite. For the full time of their vow of separation, they were consecrated to God. They lived by high standards of ethical behaviour, which in some areas exceeded those demanded of priests. For example, they were not to be near a dead corpse, and this included the bodies of their parents, should they die during the period of the Nazarite vow (Num 6:6, 7). The vow, of course, was voluntary.

The sanctity of the Nazarite vow was so sacred that the offerings God required to be presented at the end of the consecration period were very specific. “There he is to present his offerings to the Lord: a year-old male lamb without defect for a burnt offering, a year-old ewe lamb without defect for a sin offering, a ram without defect for a fellowship offering” (Num 6:14). The point is simply: offer God the best—“without defect.”

**Appeal:**

God expects from us, His people, the very best of our giving. Give Him the best, according to His blessings for this week.

**Prayer**

Lord, forgive us where we have failed you by giving our second best.

## **Sabbath 12**

**March 25, 2006**

**Offering: Conference/Union**

Deuteronomy 14 starts with the assertion that the nation of Israel is made up of God's children—His treasured possession (6:1, 2). What follows in the first half of the chapter are regulations relating to diet, primarily the kinds of clean animals that can use for food (vs 3-21). The latter half of the chapter deals with the subject of tithe, one tenth of one's increase (vs 22-29). "Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year" (Deut 14:22).

What is interesting with the above verse is that the command to return tithe relates to "all" that the field produces in a given agricultural cycle. In today's context, tithe is to be returned for all of the increase that we receive, whether the income comes from wages, welfare benefits, gifts, etc. The tithe principle applies to the sum total of God's blessings.

For Israel, the command to tithe was based on the fact that they were God's special people. In effect, this practice was part of being in relationship with Him. They were His community. Returning the tithe was also an educational tool for teaching reverence and fear of God (Deut 14:23).

### **Appeal:**

You return God's tithe today because you recognize His call for you to be His special people, the church of Christ.

### **Prayer**

## **Sabbath 13**

**April 1, 2006**

**Offering: Outreach/Church Budget**

In spite of his sin, when he deceived his father, Isaac, and took the birthright of his brother, Esau, God was always willing and ready to forgive Jacob. Alone, away from home and running from Esau, God extended to Jacob the blessings He had already promised his grandfather Abraham. "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying" (Gen 28:13). In addition to the blessing of the land, God also promised Jacob that "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring" (Gen 28:14).

What is central in this story is the faithfulness of God to Abraham and his family. And that faithfulness continued even to generations after him. God is trust worthy. But this story also highlights the importance of obedience on the part of Abraham who believed God. Actually, the blessing now promised to Jacob is made on the basis that God remembered His servant Abraham. Here's a thought to ponder: Could it be that the blessings that you and I enjoy today are those given to us by God's grace because of our loved ones' faithfulness and obedience to Him in the past?

### **Appeal:**

God is faithful, and He has blessed you. Will you be faithful to Him in your giving today?

### **Prayer**

Thank you, Lord, for your faithfulness to our families, and thank you for all your blessings.

**Sabbath 14**  
**April 8, 2006**  
**Offering: World Mission Budget**

Thanks to your generous mission offerings, prayers, and personal involvement, the Seventh-day Adventist Church shares the love of Jesus in more than 200 countries around the world. Each day it feeds the hungry, cares for the sick, leads people to Jesus, and establishes more than six new churches and many more congregations. It's love in action.

As well as funding many frontline projects, your mission offerings make possible every mission endeavor of the church.

**Appeal:**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church faces huge mission challenges around the world. Thank you for your generosity in bringing the life-changing good news about Jesus to a world in need.

**Prayer**

**Sabbath 15**  
**April 15, 2006**  
**Offering: Church Budget**

Jacob ran away from his family, but not from the presence of God. In fact, the land where he was sleeping belonged to God. "Surely the Lord is in this place and I was not aware of it." He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven." (Gen 28:16-17). While Jacob may have known of God's omnipresence, this incident brought him face to face with God.

Key to biblical stewardship is the realization that everything in this world belongs to God, and Jacob acknowledged this fact. But just as important to Jacob's journey was his *personal* awareness of God's presence, even while he was running away. God is a God of people and a forgiving God. He initiates relationships and His mercy follows us.

God said to Jacob, "I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you" (Gen 28:15).

You too can have a relationship with God. You too can acknowledge His leading in your life!

**Appeal:**

In giving your offerings today to support the budget of the local church, you acknowledge God's ownership and blessings to you this week.

**Prayer**

Please accept our offerings of praise and thanksgiving.

**Sabbath 16****April 22, 2006****Offering: Conference/Union**

Up to this point in Jacob's sojourn, it was God who initiated the relationship. But God's grace stirs something in the human heart that makes it possible for individuals to respond to Him. So Jacob set up the pillar of stone and consecrated the place where God revealed Himself to him.

Jacob also made this vow: "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey ... and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's house, then the Lord will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth" (Gen 28:20-22).

Jacob's vow was a personal expression of his free and full acceptance of the Lord as his God. This was a worshipful act of acknowledging God's sovereignty and divine assurance. Interestingly, Jacob's vow included a promise of returning tithe to God. This change in Jacob's heart was contrary to the old Jacob who deceitfully took away the blessings of the birthright from his brother Esau. What brought about this change in behaviour? He met God!

**Appeal:**

By returning tithe, you acknowledge God's rulership over your life, and it is your spiritual worship.

**Prayer**

Please accept our giving today as an expression of our worship and thankfulness to you, O God.

**Sabbath 17****April 29, 2006****Offering: Church Budget**

With the passing of years and after working for his father-in-law, Laban, Jacob received word from the Lord to return to the land of his fathers (Gen 31:3). Returning home, however, meant meeting up with Esau. But God was with Jacob. On his own and fearful of his brother, God revealed Himself again to Jacob with the blessing of a new name, "Israel." "You have struggled with God and with men and have over-come" (Gen 32:28). This blessing was repeated to Jacob when he finally arrived at Bethel where he built an altar for worship and thanksgiving to God (Gen 35:9-10).

For Jacob, his journey was a blend of deceit, personal struggles, hard work and disappointments, fear and uncertainty, joy, wrestling with God, family prosperity and loss, and even worship. But in spite of the changing circumstances, Jacob remembered God. When he met Esau he testified, "God has been gracious to me" (Gen 33:10). And now back at Bethel, the place which marked the beginning of a new partnership with God, he offered God a "drink offering." Jacob's offerings to God were always a heartfelt response to God's grace and blessings. At the end of his life, Jacob had twelve sons!

**Appeal:**

Your giving today is an acknowledgment of God's grace and blessings to you and your family. Today you can say, "God has been gracious to me."

**Prayer**

Our God, we thank you for the way in which you have lead in our lives; please accept our love offerings of gratitude.

**Sabbath 18****May 6, 2006****Offering: Outreach/Church Budget**

Joseph, the second youngest son of Jacob, was a gift from God. He was born to Jacob in his old age. For Rachel, his mother, this boy was an answer to her distress and shame. "God has taken away my disgrace" (Gen 30:23). With regard to the birth of Joseph, the Bible makes this interesting point: God remembered Rachel and He listened to her (Gen 30:22). After her death, Jacob was drawn to his son Joseph, and he loved him more than his other sons. In fact, he made a rich, ornate robe for Joseph—perhaps from the material of one of Rachel's special dresses, to remind him of his favorite wife. This robe did not contribute to good family relations between Joseph and the rest of his brothers.

As a teenager, Joseph helped his older brothers care for the flocks, but very often he would return home to Jacob with bad reports of the boys. And to complicate matters further, Joseph shared his dreams with his family—dreams that seemed to suggest that he was better than them. From this point onward, Joseph's life went from bad to worse. He was stripped of his robe, thrown into the pit, and was sold to foreign traders. Yet God was with him.

**Appeal:**

Your free will offerings today can be an expression of thanksgiving to God for a special blessing received this week. Would you remember Him with your possessions?

**Prayer**

We thank you God for the privilege of giving back to You in remembrance of your goodness to us your people.

**Sabbath 19****May 13, 2006****Offering: Disaster and Famine Relief**

We often think of disaster and famine in biblical terms, but they are as much a reality today as they were during the time of Joseph and others.

Although there is enough food produced globally to feed everyone on the planet, 840 million people struggle daily just to get the food they and their families need to survive. Many of those affected are children. Every year, 6 million children under the age of five die as a result of hunger. We can change that!

Last year we watched the Asian tsunami devastate millions of lives in Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and India. Thousands are impacted by disasters every year which leave them homeless, without food, water, clothing, or other necessities. We can change that!

The Adventist church responds to disaster and famine around the world through the compassionate ministry of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency or ADRA. Many of us remember with pride the incredible way ADRA responded to the Asian tsunami. That response would not have been possible without your support and the help provided by the Disaster and Famine Relief Offering.

**Appeal:**

Today, I ask that you prayerfully consider helping to relieve the suffering of those affected such disasters and famine around the world. Through ADRA, you can wrap your arms around these sufferers to extend a hand of hope and love. Please give generously to today's Disaster and Famine Relief Offering.

**Sabbath 20**  
**May 20, 2006**  
**Offering: Church Budget**

After Joseph was sold to slave traders, the direction of Joseph's life journey was "down." In Egypt, he was a total stranger, a foreigner, but the "Lord was with Joseph and he prospered" (Gen 39:2). The presence of God in Joseph's life was noticeable, even to his new master Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard.

For Potiphar Joseph's success came from the Lord, and he entrusted him with the care of his household. "From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field" (Gen 39:5). What a witness to the greatness of God!

Biblical stewardship is the understanding that life may not always be "safe sailing" because of the wrong decisions we make and circumstances beyond our control. Nevertheless, there is a God who cares and who is in control of all the affairs of humans on earth. God is sovereign! Additionally, God is still able to bless us as He did with Joseph in foreign situations, and His blessings can overflow to people around us.

**Appeal:**

Your monetary giving today will help the local church provide ministries that can bless this community. Please give generously as God has blessed you this week.

**Prayer**

Our God we thank you for your protection and blessings each day. We acknowledge your lordship in our lives and in the world, and we give you our offerings of thanksgiving.

**Sabbath 21**  
**May 27, 2006**  
**Offering: Conference/Union**

God's command to the Israelites to tithe was first applied to all the produce of the land, including animals. They were to return a tithe of their corn, wine, oil, herds, and flocks (Deut 14:23).

However, when they were not able to return these blessings to the assigned places because of distance, they were instructed to convert these gifts into money. "Then exchange your tithe for silver, and take the silver with you and go to the place the Lord your God will choose" (Deut 14:25). In this context, tithe was not limited only to crop and flock. The biblical principle in this agricultural setting included the responsibility of converting tithe to some other form so that the value was preserved.

Another tithe principle which is worth noting was the instruction to the Israelites that the tithe was to provide for the support for the Levites. "And do not neglect the Levites living in your towns, for they have no allotment or inheritance of their own" (Deut 14:27). In these few verses, God has already specified for us the "what, how, and who" to benefit from tithe.

**Appeal:**

The returning of tithe this morning will enable the church to provide pastoral leadership for your local congregation.

**Prayer**

Thank you Lord, for the privilege of returning tithes to your house; and thank you for your people's faithfulness.

**Sabbath 22****June 3, 2006****Offering: Outreach/Church Budget**

Stewardship for Joseph started very early in his life. His mother, for example, told him of God's grace and how the Lord had blessed her with his birth. Joseph would have seen his father building an altar of worship to God and making sacrifices to Him. Even when Joseph helped his older brothers in the fields there were lessons in stewardship. And while Joseph had a new kind of life in the house of Potiphar, we know that he was a trusted steward and manager (Gen 39:6).

The discipline that Joseph exercised in performing his leadership role was grounded in his family training and his fear of God. Therefore, when he was tested and tempted by Potiphar's wife, he was able to resist and remove himself from the situation. His response reflected a heart that was tuned to the heart of God. "How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God" (Gen 39:9)? For Joseph, victory was possible because he relied on the power of God. In the same way, our ability to overcome the wiles of the devil is dependent on our willingness to let Jesus take control.

**Appeal:**

Your giving is an indication of your willingness to submit all that you have to God's rule and will. And you can let God take care of your worries and life today.

**Prayer**

Lord we give you, not only our offerings in support of outreach ministries for your church, but our whole being.

**Sabbath 23****June 10, 2006****Offering: Division**

The giving of offerings in the Old Testament was done in the context of thankfulness to the Lord for His mercy, blessings, protection, and worship. This was the case with Noah who, at the end of the flood, built an altar to offer sacrifices to God his provider. For him, the burnt offerings were a celebration of his deliverance and an expression of his faith in God's saving power. It is important to note that Noah's action to give every clean and fit animal for this offering was symbolic of God's complete deliverance for his family and all the animals that were in the ark. This decision was an act of good stewardship.

But behind the ritual of burnt offerings by Noah and his family lies the biblical truth that salvation comes from the Lord alone. The ark was God's plan. The material used for building the ark was from God. The receding of the flood waters was an act of God, and Noah came out of the ark by the command of God. Even the sacrificed animals were from the Lord. And while this offering was given first for thanksgiving, it also provided forgiveness and cleansing for Noah and his household; and God accepted his sacrifice.

**Appeal:**

Your offering today will support your home division in fulfilling the mission of God to make disciples of all nations.

**Prayer**

Dear God, we give you our offerings of thanksgiving in recognition of your saving grace in our lives. But we also ask for your forgiveness for us, your church.

**Sabbath 24**  
**June 17, 2006**  
**Offering: Church Budget**

Wrongly accused by Potiphar's wife, Joseph was thrown into prison. But the Lord was with him. This young Hebrew man was willing to suffer prison life rather than compromise his values of respect for his Egyptian master and faithfulness to his God. And because Joseph honoured his Lord, God honoured him in return. "The Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden" (Gen 39:20-21).

Again, as it was in the house of Potiphar, by the grace of God Joseph was given the privilege of leadership and he supervised his inmates. In fact, the prison warden trusted him fully and gave little supervision to his work, "because the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did" (Gen 39:23).

Whether he was in prison or in the presence of Pharaoh, Joseph made God number one in his life. When asked if he was able to interpret the king's dream, Joseph demonstrated his reliance on God when he replied "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires" (Gen 41:16). True stewardship is acknowledging God at all times, and in all things—in spite of the situation.

**Appeal:**

The Lord has granted you success and many blessings in life; would you remember Him as your Lord as you give your offerings of thanksgiving today?

**Prayer**

Bless, O God, our freewill offerings given in support of your work and ministries here in our local congregation.

**Sabbath 25**  
**June 24, 2006**  
**Offering: Conference/Union**

It was God's plan that the children of Levi were not to receive the land promised to their fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as an inheritance. Their portion for living, however, was to come from the people. The Levites were specifically called by God to serve Him in the tabernacle by conducting the ministry of intercession for the sinner and the nation (Num 18:23). But while the Levites were sustained by the tithe returned by the people to God, they were not exempt from the spiritual obligation of returning a tithe from tithes. "The Lord said to Moses, 'Speak to the Levites and say to them: 'When you receive from the Israelites the tithe I give you as your inheritance, you must present a tenth of that tithe as the Lord's offering'" (Num 18:25-26).

As far as the Israelites were concerned, the returning of tithe was a spiritual matter. It had everything to do with their worship of God and their status as the people of the promise. While they knew the Levites were receiving the benefits of the tithe, they also understood that ultimately tithe belongs to God. And the Lord reminded the Levites of this reality.

**Appeal:**

When you return your tithe, you are acknowledging God as the focus of your worship. You give in recognition of your relationship to Him as Lord and Provider.

**Prayer**

We thank you, God, for the faithfulness of your people in returning to you their tithes and offerings. Please accept these tokens of our worship to you today.

## **Sabbath 26**

**July 1, 2006**

**Offering: Outreach/Church Budget**

Joseph's life was like a roller coaster of unexpected highs and disappointing lows. From the time he was sold to the Ishmaelites until his advancement in the courts of Pharaoh, his journey was full of challenges and trials. He was like a little sailing boat tossed about in the open seas by gale winds and high swells, but was now safe in the sheltered waters of the harbour. So what sustained him over these rough patches on the way? Pharaoh's question to his officials provides the answer. "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God" (Gen 41:38)? As far as the king was concerned, Joseph had a direct connection to God. He was no ordinary man.

The following observations from the story are worth noting:

1. Joseph's spirituality was noticeable to Pharaoh.
2. God intervened for Joseph's sake, in His own time.
3. God honoured Joseph as Joseph honoured Him.
4. God used a young adult in the person of Joseph.
5. Joseph's faithfulness in the little things paid off.

Biblical stewardship is living the life that God expects of us, even if no one is looking; and Joseph did exactly that.

Furthermore, God added more leadership responsibility as Joseph demonstrated spiritual maturity and accountability.

### **Appeal:**

The giving of offerings is an expression of spiritual maturity and responsibility, and we give because we believe in the mission of the church.

### **Prayer**

Thank you, Lord, for the privilege of contributing to your work.

## **Sabbath 27**

**July 8, 2006**

**Offering: World Mission**

At one time, Seventh-day Adventists in the United States thought the Gospel commission extended no further than the Atlantic Ocean in the East, and the Pacific Ocean in the West.

But that soon changed, and Adventist missionaries crossed the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and began establishing the church in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Pacific. An urgent belief that Jesus was coming soon fueled their mission fervor.

Today, the Adventist Church has become a worldwide denomination of 14 million members. But huge challenges remain. Your mission offerings each week help your church show and share the love of Jesus to a world in need.

### **Appeal:**

A worldwide mission work requires financial support and prayer. Thank you so much for your generous contribution to changing lives and bringing hope in Jesus to millions around the world.

### **Prayer**

**Sabbath 28**  
**July 15, 2006**  
**Offering: Church Budget**

God blessed Joseph with all things, including a family. In addition to being the governor of Egypt, Pharaoh also gave Joseph Asenath, daughter of Potiphera, as his wife. Joseph and Asenath had two sons. Their first boy was Manasseh, and his name means “God has made me forget all my trouble” (Gen 41:51). For Joseph, God was the constant Presence who helped him deal with unfortunate circumstances beyond his control, and who helped him make right decisions at the right time. Their second son was named Ephraim, meaning “God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering” (Gen 41:52). With Ephraim’s birth, Joseph acknowledges the blessings of God in spite of the hard times he went through in Egypt.

What this story illustrates is the fact that God’s blessings to His people goes beyond monetary benefit. For example, He gives us peace and contentment in the midst of chaotic situations. He gives us strength and patience to wait out the testing times of life. And He will supply the needs of His people according to His good will. Stewardship is acknowledging all blessings as gifts from God.

**Appeal:**

God has blessed you with a family. God has blessed you with a good education. God has blessed you with a healthy body and mind. Will you acknowledge His blessings today by giving Him an offering of thanksgiving?

**Prayer**

Dear Lord, please accept our humble giving this morning as an act of gratitude for your many blessings to us.

**Sabbath 29**  
**July 22, 2006**  
**Offering: Conference/Union**

Included in the instructions for settling the land of Canaan were specific commands regarding where the Israelites were to take their gifts. “Then to the place the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name — there you are to bring everything I command you: your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, and all the choice possessions you have vowed to the Lord.” (Deut 12:11). God was very particular. “Be careful not to sacrifice your burnt offerings anywhere you please. Offer them only at the place the Lord will choose in one of your tribes, and there observe everything I command you” (Deut 12:13-14).

In Christian worship, God specifies not only what we are to give Him, but where these offerings and tithes are to be returned. Because God is the owner of all that we have, He make’s the choice and we follow. There was no option for Israel, and there is none for us. There is no room for human rationalization. Our responsibility as faithful stewards is to return tithe to the place God set aside for His purposes, and this is the church.

**Appeal:**

God requires complete obedience from His people when they come to Him in worship. As you return your tithe today, you are demonstrating the full surrender of your heart to His will.

**Prayer**

Thank you, Lord, for the privilege of returning to You your tithe and offerings. Please accept our hearts as well.

**Sabbath 30**  
**July 29, 2006**  
**Offering: Church Budget**

Joseph the dreamer, now governor of Egypt, could see the fulfillment of his dreams when his brothers came to Egypt to buy food. More importantly, he could clearly see the saving hand of God at work in a way he did not understand at first. So when he finally revealed his true identity to his siblings, he said “But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance” (Gen 45:7). Salvation comes from the Lord, and God used Joseph as the means for saving his family and the people of Egypt.

Two other significant aspects of this story are noted in Joseph’s ability to forgive his brothers for their evil doing and his unwavering love for his family. From a human perspective, Joseph could have exercised his authority and power to punish his brothers. He could have denied them access to buy food from Egypt’s storehouses, but none of these carnal thoughts took control of his mind. This is because for Joseph, all of the blessings bestowed on him were given by God to help and save others. Stewardship is being available for the service of God.

**Appeal:**

You have been placed by God in this church so that you can be a blessing to others, and part of our service to Him includes the giving of our offerings in support of our local churches’ needs.

**Prayer**

Thank you, God, for giving us the spirit of forgiveness and service. Please accept our freewill offerings today.

**Sabbath 31**  
**August 5, 2006**  
**Offering: Outreach/Church Budget**

After Joseph died another Pharaoh occupied the Egyptian throne. This new Pharaoh did not remember Joseph’s contribution to the life of Egypt and was ruthless and oppressive toward the children of Israel. But God remembered His people and raised Moses to take them from bondage into the land He promised Abraham and Jacob. The birth and preservation of Moses’ life was in itself a miracle. Even his adoption and training within Pharaoh’s palace were providential acts of God, and these were necessary preparation for the task of leading God’s people to freedom.

It is interesting to note that one of the first lessons God wanted Moses to learn as a leader was stewardship, trusting Him. And to help Moses learn this lesson, God started with an ordinary tool—the shepherd’s staff—to illustrate His power to do the impossible (Ex 4:2-4). What is significant with this leadership experience was how God used something as simple as a staff to perform miracles, thus giving Moses assurance of His presence. However, God was only able to do what He did with the staff because Moses was willing to release ownership to Him. The staff that once belonged to Moses was now the property of God (Ex 4:20).

**Appeal:**

Your giving today toward the outreach of the local church will enable God to do what we can’t do as human beings.

**Prayer**

Dear Father, please bless our offerings to help extend the boundaries of your kingdom in our local community.

**Sabbath 32**  
**August 12, 2006**  
**Offering: Division**

Moses and his family left the wilderness of Midian where he had been trained and went to the mountain of God to meet his brother and spokesperson, Aaron. Back in Egypt, the elders were called together and were told everything the Lord had said to Moses. To validate their story, Moses performed signs and the people believed them (Ex 4:31). From here on the rest of the story is about God's demonstration of His power over the land of Egypt and His message to Pharaoh to let His people go. But Pharaoh did not listen and God brought on the last of the plagues and the beginning of the Exodus.

The Israelites were to paint the doorpost of their homes with the blood of the lamb that was slain for the Passover meal. The blood was God's sign between Him and His people. When He saw this sign He would pass over their homes (Ex 12:13). Salvation for Israel from beginning to end was all of God, but His people had to trust and obey Him. Stewardship is obeying and trusting God, even when we don't fully understand His plan.

**Appeal:**

God invites you to bring your offering of thanksgiving to Him as a token of your love and appreciation of salvation that is free.

**Prayer**

(Contextualize the prayer to suit the specific needs and assigned projects for your division.)

**Sabbath 33**  
**August 19, 2006**  
**Offering: Church Budget**

In the wilderness and on the way to Canaan, Moses continued to learn lessons of leadership, particularly in the area of organization. This time the lesson was from his father-in-law, Jethro—priest of Midian. When Jethro met up with Moses he was told how God had rescued Israel from the Egyptians and how He provided for their needs when they faced hardships on the journey. Jethro was delighted with this news and praised God for His goodness. He acknowledged the Lord God of Israel as being greater than the gods of Egypt and presented Him with burnt offerings and other sacrifices (Ex 18:12).

The next day Jethro watched Moses at work all day long as he judged the people. Jethro was concerned that Moses would wear himself out by not sharing the responsibility of leadership. So Jethro advised Moses to appoint men who feared God and were trustworthy to judge over the minor cases, while Moses dealt with the major ones. In essence, Jethro promoted the principle of delegation for the benefit of Moses and the people (Ex 18:17-23). Delegation involves sharing the task and the authority to perform that task. This practice is good stewardship.

**Appeal:**

As stewards of God's resources, it is your responsibility to share your blessings for the benefit of His church.

**Prayer**

Thank you, Lord, for the opportunity to contribute to the ministry of your church. Please bless our offerings today.

## **Sabbath 34**

**August 26, 2006**

**Offering: Conference/Union**

Under the rule of King Hezekiah, God's people were again reminded of their spiritual obligation to the Levites and temple priests. "As soon as the order went out, the Israelites generously gave the firstfruits of their grain, new wine, oil and honey, and all that the fields produced. They brought ... a tithe of everything" (2 Chr 31:4-5). The response was overwhelming. There was more than enough food to eat. Hezekiah ordered the surplus tithes and offerings to be stored in the temple storehouses, and he blessed the people (2 Chr 31: 8-12).

There are a number of important tithe principles from this passage that are worthy of our consideration today:

1. Leaders must be responsible to remind members of their duty in tithes and offerings.
2. Leaders must acknowledge and affirm people for their faithfulness to God in their giving.
3. Tithe is to be given first, not last.
4. Tithe is returned to God's storehouse in the temple, and not given directly to Levites or priests.
5. Tithe is returned for every blessing of God.

### **Appeal:**

Tithe is returned because God has already blessed you and because you choose to declare Him as Lord of your life.

### **Prayer**

Our God, we confess that we have not always been faithful in returning your tithes; please forgive us for our sin. But for what we bring to you in worship, we ask that you will accept it as the expression of our love and commitment.

## **Sabbath 35**

**September 2, 2006**

**Offering: Outreach/Church Budget**

The most detestable sin to God is idolatry, when one declares his worship and loyalty to some other god or thing instead of Jehovah. As far as God was concerned, His covenant with His people dictated that He alone was to be worshipped. "You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God" (Ex 20: 3-5).

But with Moses away from the camp, Aaron yielded to the demands of the people for a god like the Egyptians, and he encouraged them to build an idol shaped like a calf. God was displeased and promised to destroy Israel for committing this sin (Ex 32:1-10). He even swore to fulfill His promise to Abraham through Moses and his seed.

Returning from the mountain, Moses called for those who wanted to follow God, and all the Levites responded (Ex 32:26). But so severe was the offense against God that Moses chose to offer his own life as atonement for Israel (Ex 32:32). This was true leadership.

### **Appeal:**

The issue is loyalty to God. And in giving your offerings today for outreach, you are saying that you are on the Lord's side.

### **Prayer**

Lord, forgive us from our sin of idolatry and accept our love offerings in support of mission in our local church.

**Sabbath 36**  
**September 9, 2006**  
**Offering: World Mission Budget**  
**Special Opportunities**

Not so long ago, Soviet Union Communism fell quickly—seemingly overnight. Suddenly new opportunities arose to share the Good News about Jesus in areas that were closed for so many years. Today changing political situations, natural disasters, and crises of various sorts can provide windows of opportunity for the church to quickly provide needed resources and to be a Christian witness.

Today's mission offering will be kept in reserve for future use when unique opportunities arise for the church to do its work—times when needed funds might not be available otherwise.

**Appeal:**

In a rapidly changing world, the church needs flexibility to respond when special mission opportunities arrive. Thank you for your generosity in supporting this initiative to better share God's love to a world in need.

**Prayer**

**Sabbath 37**  
**September 16, 2006**  
**Offering: Church Budget**

As the Israelites neared the border of Canaan, Moses saw that by the will of God his leadership was coming to an end. Once more, he reminded Israel of the consequences of failing to live up to their calling and relationship with God. "But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess" (Deut 30:17-18). The issue for them was worship, making God first and foremost in their planning, living, traveling, and settling in Canaan.

For the people, this was a time to renew their commitment to God, to recognize that whatever decision they made would have lasting consequences for them and their children. "For I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands ... then you will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess" (Gen 30:16). Prosperity and blessings for Israel were conditional, according to their love and loyalty to God.

**Appeal:**

God has been faithful to you and your family; will you be faithful to Him in your worship and giving today?

**Prayer**

Lord, we thank you for the way you have led and blessed us in the past. And today, we want to recommit ourselves to you through worship and love offerings.

**Sabbath 38**  
**September 23, 2006**  
**Offering: Conference/Union**

Israel understood that tithe was holy to God. “And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord” (Lev 27:30). And regarding livestock, the command was the same. “The entire tithe of the herd and flock—every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod—will be holy to the Lord” (Lev 27:32).

Consider why tithe is holy in the context of this passage:

1. Tithe is holy because it belongs to God. The very use of the title “Lord” underscores the ownership of God. As owner, He has the right to claim one tenth of all His blessings to us. Lordship, however, includes our hearts and lives in addition to our wealth and treasures.
2. Tithe is holy because this portion of our blessings has already been set aside by God for Himself. Thus the very act of appropriating or sanctifying this amount of money or increase to God makes it holy.
3. There is also the physical association between tithe and God's holy place, the sanctuary or temple. When tithe is returned to God's holy site, it then becomes holy in God's treasury.

**Appeal:**

When you return your tithe to God, you are acknowledging His Lordship over your life.

**Prayer**

Thank you, Lord, for reminding us that tithe is holy. Please accept these funds for service and use in gospel ministry.

**Sabbath 39**  
**September 30, 2006**  
**Offering: Church Budget**

Moses, leader and prophet to Israel during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, died when he was one-hundred twenty years of age. With his death, God called Joshua to finish the task and take the people into Canaan. “Now Joshua, son of Nun, was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him” (Deut 34:9). This transition was easily made because of the public acknowledgment of Joshua as the new leader from God. And this move demonstrated good leadership practice on the part of Moses.

To encourage his heart on the job, God gave Joshua this message. “Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them (Josh 1:6). To ensure leadership success, Joshua was reminded of the importance of the “Book of the Law.” “Meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful” (Josh 1:8). God's promise of success and prosperity for Joshua was dependent on his commitment to the Word of the Lord. This promise of God can be ours as well, if we so choose.

**Appeal:**

You can experience success when you make the Word of God your guide in life. In your giving today, think of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ who gave all for you.

**Prayer**

We thank you God for our church leaders and for the promise of success. Bless these offerings of thanksgiving.

**Sabbath 40****October 7, 2006****Offering: Outreach/Church Budget**

The spies had just come back after a final look at Jericho, and now Joshua and the people were ready to enter the Promised Land. The preparation for this phase of the journey included the following instructions. First, every person must consecrate him or herself before crossing the Jordan. Second, the priests are to carry the ark of God and lead out in the procession. Third, twelve men—one from each tribe to be chosen by Joshua—will carry a stone from the middle of the river and plant it on the Western side of the Jordan as a memorial to this event (Josh 3). The miracle Israel was to experience had two purposes: to build faith in God, and to affirm Joshua's leadership. "Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses" (Josh 3:7).

The crossing went without a hindrance, according to God's plan. For example, the flow of the river ceased from the moment the priest's feet touched the water's edge until the whole nation was safe on the other side. God is trustworthy. Not only was Joshua's leadership exalted, but the people revered him as they did Moses (Josh 4:14).

**Appeal:**

Christian living is a matter of trust and faith in God. Would you, like Joshua, trust Him with your life, position, and possessions and give Him your offerings today as sign of your commitment to Him and His rule?

**Prayer**

We remember your mercy and salvation as we give freely to the ministry of your church.

**Sabbath 41****October 14, 2006****Offering: Division**

The drying up of the river Jordan for Israel to cross, and the memorial to this event were to show the heathens in Canaan that God is powerful. At the same time, it reminded God's people to fear Him (Josh 4:23). But now it was time to take the city of Jericho. Again, God provided the strategy for the attack. Jericho was to be taken without a fight. Joshua, however, made it very clear to Israel to keep away from the devoted things of God. "All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the Lord and must go into his treasury" (Josh 6:19). But Achan, of the tribe of Judah, was unfaithful and took for himself some of the spoils of the city (Josh 7:1, 20-21). Because of his sin, the whole nation suffered (Josh 7:2-5).

The above stories are recorded in Scripture to teach us the following lessons:

1. Everything in this world belongs to God.
2. He is particular with things set aside for Him.
3. No one can steal from God and live.
4. One person's sin can bring disaster to a people.
5. Victory can only come when one's relationship with God is right.

**Appeal:**

It is your privilege to give to God today what He has blessed you with this week. Please give willingly for God's mission in this division.

**Prayer**

Lord, we give you our all this morning through tithes and offerings. Please accept it for your work on earth.

**Sabbath 42**  
**October 21, 2006**  
**Offering: Church Budget**

She is introduced as the prostitute who provided accommodations for Joshua's men who were spying on Jericho. But her fear of God gave Rahab the courage to hide the spies from the city. "I know that the Lord has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you" (Josh 2:9). But more importantly, Rahab testified to the sovereignty of God by saying: "The Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below" (Josh 2:11). This simple expression of faith saved her and her family.

The story of Rahab illustrates God's mercy and kindness to those who show compassion and kindness to others. This is stewardship in action. The story also shows that trust is reciprocal. Its value benefits both the giver and receiver, as expressed in the spies' response to Rahab's request. "If you don't tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly and faithfully when the Lord gives us the land" (Josh 2:14). This promise to Rahab was kept when God gave the Israelites the city.

**Appeal:**

God knows you by name, and He knows your situation in life. God has shown mercy to you and has blessed you abundantly. Will you bless the ministry of your local church today with your offerings?

**Prayer**

Dear Lord, accept our giving in support of your work locally.

**Sabbath 43**  
**October 28, 2006**  
**Offering: Conference/Union**

Nehemiah's work of restoring Jerusalem and the temple, and the spiritual reformation he set in place for the people, included the work of reminding them about the sacredness of God's place of worship and the sacredness of tithes.

With the cessation of the temple services and with Nehemiah's absence from the city, Eliashib the priest allowed certain people to take up residence in the temple chambers. Thus, he allowed a holy place set aside for God and His treasures to be the home for his visiting guests. This misuse of sacred property and Eliashib's alliance with Tobiah angered Nehemiah so that he ordered Tobiah's personal effects to be thrown out of the temple (Neh 13:4-8). After clearing the chambers and restoring the vessels to their rightful place in the temple, Nehemiah called the people to return God's tithe for the benefit of the Levites. "Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries" (Neh 13:12).

Any spiritual renewal must include a call for faithfulness to God in all things. Additionally, Nehemiah's example of challenging leaders when misusing their spiritual role for personal gain is commendable.

**Appeal:**

God calls you today to restore your worship of Him by returning to Him tithes and offerings.

**Prayer**

Merciful God, we pray for forgiveness where we have failed you by neglecting our spiritual duty in matters of worship.

**Sabbath 44****November 4, 2006****Offering: Outreach/Church Budget**

With the death of her husband and sons, Naomi felt forsaken and neglected. Her experience was so painful that she insisted people call her “Mara” because God has made her life bitter (Ruth 1:20). “I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. The Lord has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me” (Ruth 1:21). But blessing and redemption for Naomi were to come to her through her daughter-in-law, Ruth, and from Boaz, her kinsman-redeemer.

Ruth’s dedication to Naomi is summed up well in her response to Naomi when Naomi asked her to return to Moab: “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God” (Ruth 1:16). Ruth’s commitment and love for Naomi went beyond any cultural expectations of personal duty to her mother-in-law. In fact, her commitment was to a new God. And through Ruth, God showed His mercy to Naomi with the birth of Obed. When the women of the town said to Naomi, “Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer,” they, in fact, acknowledged the grace of God to the afflicted.

**Appeal:**

The God of heaven is gracious and merciful. He provided for Naomi, and He will provide for you. Today, you may show Him your love through your giving in worship.

**Prayer**

Bless, dear Lord, our offerings of thanksgiving for mission and outreach.

**Sabbath 45****November 11, 2006****Offering: Annual Sacrifice—Global Mission**

The Gospel commission calls on God’s Church to go unto all the world. Not some of the world. Not the easy parts of the world. But to *all* the world.

Since 1990 Global Mission has been charged with taking the Gospel to the unreached areas of the world. Often these include the most difficult areas—the areas where progress seems slow and there is opposition on every corner. These are the places where Global Mission pioneers are threatened and beaten. These are the places where meetings are closed down. These are the places where one person accepting Jesus is cause for great rejoicing.

**Appeal:**

Each year, Global Mission receives only one offering—the Annual Sacrifice Offering. Every cent of this offering goes directly to front-line projects to reach the unreached with hope. Thank you for your support.

**Prayer**

**Sabbath 46**  
**November 18, 2006**  
**Offering: Church Budget**

Though he was a mere shepherd boy and the youngest of eight brothers, David was the one chosen by the Lord. In the search for a new king, God's will was made clear to Samuel in these words: "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Sam 16:7). And now with God's anointing, David went forth empowered by the Spirit of God (1 Sam 16:13).

When the opportunity came, David was ready for the task because the Lord was with him. When he was told of Goliath's challenge and defiance of Saul's army, David responded with this question: "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1 Sam 17:26). Assuring Saul of victory he said, "The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine" (1 Sam 17:37).

The slaying of Goliath and the defeat of the Philistines were acts of God. But these victories were a testimony to the faith of David who said to Goliath, "I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty" (1 Sam 17:45).

**Appeal:**

God works through ordinary people with extraordinary faith, and He can work through you. Would you be willing to be used of Him today?

**Prayer**

Lord, take our offerings and use them for your purposes. Please accept the gifts of our lives and skills, as well.

**Sabbath 47**  
**November 25, 2006**  
**Offering: Conference/Union**

Judah was settled and enriched from the proceeds of the land God had given her, but Judah had completely turned away from the Lord. The nation had forsaken the laws and decrees of God: "Judah has broken faith. A detestable thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: Judah has desecrated the sanctuary the Lord loves by marrying the daughter of a foreign god" (Mal 2:11).

In the language of lovers and marriage, Malachi the prophet shows that the people have deserted the God of their fathers: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David. This was a spiritual problem which was clearly manifested in people's unfaithfulness to God, the giver of all blessings. God required healthy animals for sacrifices, but the people brought the rejects of their flock—the sick and diseased (Mal 1:13). Thus, when the call was made for Judah to return to Him, the message was also made for a return of God's money—the tithes (Mal 3:7-8).

When individuals withhold God's tithe, they are in fact robbing Him. And when people exchange God's tenth with another portion of their goods and wealth, they are cheating Him. Both practices are sin, and Judah knew the consequences of such behaviour—the curse of God.

**Appeal:**

God invites His people to a new relationship with Him based on faith, and faith calls for a return of God's tithes.

**Prayer**

Please forgive us for our unfaithfulness in the past, but accept our worship today in tithes and offerings.

**Sabbath 48****December 2, 2006****Offering: Outreach/Church Budget**

After the death of Joshua, the people of Israel did what was right in their own eyes. A young generation grew up without an understanding or appreciation of what God had done for their fathers, and they chose to serve other gods. "In his anger against Israel the Lord handed them over to raiders who plundered them" (Judges 2:14). It was during these times of oppression and affliction that God raised up judges to save His people. Deborah was one of these leaders (Judges 4:4).

The Bible refers to Deborah as a "prophetess" and "wife." At a time when women were not regarded as important persons, this call by God for Deborah to lead and save Israel from her enemies was unprecedented. But God's choice of Deborah as a leader reveals something about His will to choose and His desire to use all people for His purposes.

Deborah believed God and ruled Israel for forty years. Her wisdom and courage is noted in the way she dealt with Barak, in the death of Sisera, and in the ultimate defeat of Jabin, (Judge 4:4-24). In her song with Barak, Deborah praised the Lord (Judges 5).

**Appeal:**

If God can raise up a wife and prophetess like Deborah to lead for His people, He can use you too.

**Prayer**

Lord, we worship you today with our offerings of thanksgiving and praise.

**Sabbath 49****December 9, 2006****Offering: Division**

Eli mistakenly thought Hannah was drunk when, in fact, she was praying. With a heavy heart she poured out her desire for a child: "O Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and ... give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life" (1 Sam 1:11). God answers the prayers of His people. "So in the course of time, Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the Lord for him" (1 Sam 1:20).

After the child was weaned, Hannah made the trip to the temple to present Samuel to God as she had promised. Together with her husband, Elkanah, they took a bull, flour, and wine as offerings of thanksgiving (1 Sam 1:24-25). At the temple she said to Eli: "I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord (1 Sam 1:27-28). As she did before the birth of her son, Hannah again prayed and praised God for His sovereignty (1 Sam 2:1-10).

**Appeal:**

God can answer your prayers when asked in faith, and He will not withhold anything good from His children.

**Prayer**

Father, we pray that you will accept our giving today in thankfulness for all that you have done for us and our families. Teach us to wait on you.

**Sabbath 50**  
**December 16, 2006**  
**Offering: Church Budget**

Mordecai and his young orphaned cousin Esther were among the many Jews taken into captivity from Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzar (Esther 2:5-7). By the grace of God, Mordecai found work in the courts of King Xerxes but was disliked by Haman, an honoured nobleman of the king. Haman's dislike was rooted in his desire to be worshipped by the king's servants, but he was not getting this respect from Mordecai. In his hate for the man, Haman drew up a plan to destroy Mordecai and all the Jews in Xerxes' kingdom. But, unfortunately, if this plan were to be carried out, it could mean the death of Esther, who was now queen.

When the plan was sealed by the king's authority, Jews all over the kingdom mourned their fate, fasted, and prayed to God for deliverance. Mordecai believed the only way out of the problem was for Esther to intervene, but this approach had serious risks. Esther, for example, may be forced to declare her nationality. The situation was so severe that Mordecai challenged Esther with the thought that she may have been placed in the palace by God for this very purpose—to be the saviour of her people (Esther 4:14). God came through, and the Jews were saved.

**Appeal:**

Who knows but you may have been placed in your current position of leadership and influence for God's purposes?

**Prayer**

Thank you, Lord, for the privilege of giving toward the work and ministry of the local congregation.

**Sabbath 51**  
**December 23, 2006**  
**Offering: Conference/Union**

God's will for His people was for them to experience material prosperity in their land and for them to be a blessing to other nations (Mal 3:10-12). The condition, however, was that Judah return to God and reestablish a new relationship with Him based on love and worship. Fundamental to a return to God was the reminder to return all tithes to the temple storehouses. "Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it" (Mal 3:10).

For Judah, this call meant they should start right there and then. They were to test the faithfulness of God. With the test comes the promise that all the storage space available would not be enough to contain these blessings! It is interesting to note in this passage that God is not speaking of a gradual increase in wealth. Rather, He speaks of an instant surge of blessings, like the rush of flood water when released from a dam's floodgates. These gifts of God, however, will come to the believer in many different ways and forms as he or she continues to trust the Lord.

**Appeal:**

Have you tested God with this promise? Do you trust Him? Would you like to start a new relationship with Him today?

**Prayer**

Lord we honour you by returning your tithe, and we ask that you accept this expression of our worship. Thank you for your continual blessings every day.

**Sabbath 52****December 30, 2006****Offering: Church Budget**

Job “was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. He had seven sons and three daughters, and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East” (Job 1:1-3). Job’s uprightness of character and material wealth was known to Satan as well. Satan claimed that Job’s faithfulness to his Maker was dependent on God’s ability to protect him, along with his earthly possessions (Job 1:9-11). This assumption, however, was proven wrong when Job was put to the test. Yes, he experienced personal loss and hardship, and he felt the ridicule of his friends; but he never gave up his faith in God nor did he blame Him for his misfortune. More importantly, Job recognized the overall ownership and sovereignty of God (Job 1:21).

This story of personal faith and perseverance concludes in this way. “The Lord blessed the latter part of Job’s life more than the first. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand donkeys. And he also had seven sons and three daughters” (Job 42:12-13).

**Appeal:**

You have been tested and tried through trauma and personal tragedy, but God has been with you. Through trials you have learned to trust Him more.

**Prayer**

Lord, we give you our praises and offerings of gratitude.