

Village  
Voice



February  
2026



## Purpose

by Carolyn Karlstrom



“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3, 4 NJKV).



A few days ago I got into my car for a mile and a half trip to an appointment. My radio came on and, though I didn’t have time to listen for long, I heard this—an author, being interviewed about a new book of essays she’s got coming out, was speaking of regret. Zadie Smith said she’d just turned 50, and was now in possession of some life experiences that have changed her over the years, actually quite dramatically. It was fascinating.

She said that when she was in her twenties and thirties she was baffled and repulsed by the impulses so many of her acquaintances had, impulses that caused them to give themselves in service to others. She simply hadn’t understood their attendance at and devotion to religious enterprises; volunteer endeavors; and giving of time, effort, and money to what they considered to be worthy causes.

*Serving*



OTHERS

Ah, but now. Now . . . she does. As she aged, and gained some perspective on her own needs and also on the needs of others, her very narrow vision enlarged quite remarkably. She began to be able to see how interest in others, and their interest in her and other things outside themselves, might represent something different than she’d previously thought. She realized it might reflect strength rather than weakness. At least that



seems to be where she was headed. I never heard the remainder of the interview since I arrived at my appointment. I may have to get my hands on her book to understand the point to which she's come and exactly how she got here.

But it was enough to generate some thoughts in my own head about my relationships with others and even my responsibilities toward them. It also occurred to me how very fortunate I am for the grounding I received via early in-home training and the other-centered perspective imparted through the church and school attendance I've enjoyed through the years. There has never been a time in my life when service hasn't been on high focus along with involvement in church and church-related activities, when a relationship with God and the need to share with others that their God-need can also be met wasn't to be considered first and foremost.



Have I always been true to my belief in the perspective voiced above? I have not, it must be said. As an extreme introvert, I can say it has taken and does take an effort to put myself out there. To be available, present, and ready. To act when action is called for. And some of you undoubtedly find the same to be true. Others come to other-centeredness



a bit more easily, it seems, though it's probably safe to say that most, if not all, of us would, at base, prefer to please ourselves before concerning ourselves with anyone else's needs. Something similar to what it sounded like Zadie Smith was confessing to.

Our job is not to take it easy. Not to stay to ourselves. Not to leave others to themselves. Our job is to interact with others, do with them, do for them. To mirror Jesus, offer Him up to those who don't know Him, or know Him and are still unable, somehow, to avail themselves fully of what's on offer.

Our purpose is to soften others' lives as much as we can, and to give hope. We are meant to be God's messengers of hope. May we be so.

**Carolyn K.**





## New Year's Eve by Elizabeth Travis

People have all sorts of traditions for celebrating New Year's Eve—throwing parties, playing games, setting off fireworks, or staying up till midnight to greet the new year. But here at the College Place Village Church, we decided to start a new



tradition—wrapping up 2025 and preparing for 2026 with a New Year's Eve Worship and Prayer Service.

People started filtering into the Fellowship Hall around 5 o'clock, bringing with them plenty of good food and treats for everyone to share during potluck. People had time to talk and catch up a bit, but before the meal could begin, there was one important thing that needed to be done first. As soon as everyone arrived, we all formed a circle in the Fellowship Hall and joined hands, singing a verse of *Nearer My God, to Thee* before Pastor Reasor said the blessing and the potluck began.

At 7 o'clock, as the delicious meal came to an end and dishes were being cleared away, people gathered in small groups around their tables and took part in the





weekly prayer meeting that is typically held in the chapel. This Wednesday, the prayer meeting was specifically meant to focus on the church's ministries, how we at Village Church can help those around us to get a clearer view of God in the coming year.

After the prayer meeting came a small concert. A number of church members had volunteered to share their musical gifts during the service, and each song they presented was a blessing and a treat to hear. We began with a gentlemen's quartet and a song from Beth Travis, followed by a number of duets from



the Ratcliff, Bryant, and Duffield families. Lillian Hayes enchanted the audience with her unique instrument, a hammer dulcimer, and the concert ended with a lovely solo from Lauren Ellis. Jan Roberts provided accompaniment on the piano, and every performance brought a smile to those who listened.



For some, the evening might have wound down there, but there were many who still wanted to share in praise and music and were prepared to ring in the new year at midnight. As the crowd began to thin around 9:30, the group in the Fellowship Hall took the time to

join in worship music and share some stories about all God has done for them in the past year.

When the clock struck 10:30, the little group moved from the Fellowship Hall and began their prayer walk through the church. Led by Trina McCoon, the Forsyths, the Staffords, and Duane Anderson, they went through every room in the church, praying that the Sabbath Schools and ministries that take place there might be able to serve people and draw them closer to God in the coming year. Bill Parson gave one last closing prayer and the faithful little group headed home soon after midnight.

What a blessing it's been to share 2025 with all of you. May 2026 be a year of prayer for Village Church and may God watch over you all in the days to come.

**Beth Travis**



## Prayer Ministries Weekend

Pastor Kevin Wilfley will be speaking at the Village Church the weekend of March 6-7, focusing on the principles of prayer. The Prayer Ministry team hopes to create a weekend that demonstrates:

- ◆ God is real
- ◆ God is powerful
- ◆ God answers prayer
- ◆ Obstacles can be overcome through prayer



Kevin Wilfley recently retired from his position as pastor of the Upper Columbia Academy Seventh-day Adventist Church after 44 years of dedicated service in various churches across the Oregon, Upper Columbia, and Washington conferences. One of the ministries he emphasizes is prayer, and he was a keynote speaker at the recent Prayer Summit organized by the Upper Columbia Conference.

**Trina McCoon**



## Meeting My Angel

by Eric Kreye, retired pastor, Oregon Conference

As told to daughter Linda Cowles

**I**t all began in Sunnyvale, California. One day after church I spoke with pastor Marvin Seibel, “I’m thinking of becoming a Bible instructor.”

“I think you should explore that possibility,” he replied.



My wife, Arbie, and I decided to move to Berrien Springs, Michigan, letting the Lord lead in our decision to study at Andrews University. Professor Carl Coffman agreed to work with me in developing a Bible Study outline. As I studied with Elder Coffman, I also worked part time in the campus Plant Services. I trusted

God to lead me to a Bible instructor opening.

One day something unexpected happened! That afternoon I returned home as usual from my job at Plant Services. My walk across campus took about 10 minutes. A young man crossed my path several times with no words spoken. The last time he appeared, he spoke a few words and then he unexpectedly said, “You will do a good job.”



I continued my walk home, wondering about the young man. I had never met him before. How had he appeared several times from nowhere? Why did he say “You will do a good job?”

A few weeks later, my wife, Arbie, invited a few students to our home for fellowship. As we sat around having conversation, an uninvited young man walked into our home. He was pleased to meet everyone. Without introductions, he spoke to each student using their first name. How did he know their names? He was the same young man I had encountered several times on campus as I had walked home from work. He was the same young man who had said to me unexpectedly, “You will do a good job.”



After visiting with the students for a short time, he left our home, with each person feeling like he knew them. Yet no one had met him before.

Who was this person? I went to the men's residence hall and described this young man, but no one knew a person with that description. I never saw him again even though I searched the university campus.

Several days later I was fasting, praying for God to open a door for me to work as a Bible instructor. The very day of fasting, I received a call from pastor Sunny Liu inviting me to be a Bible instructor in his congregation in Beaverton, Oregon. Sunny Liu had become aware of me through a conversation with my previous Sunnyvale pastor, Marvin Seibel. God was working behind the scenes.



I served Him 15 years in the Oregon Conference. Being retired, I invite people to connect with Jesus. Even now I tell the story of my angel who appeared in human form to reassure me.

Visit Pastor Kreye's website at: [AmazingJoy.com](http://AmazingJoy.com)

## Prison Ministry

by Patricia Williams

Many people don't realize that Prison Ministry in Walla Walla has been around for about 50 years. It began with a small core of volunteers from the Stateline church in the mid-to-late 70s. These included Paul Massey who led the program for over 30 years, Glenn and Delores Blackwood, and Cecil and Magene Borden. Soon Leo and Arline Finkbiner from the Village church joined them. Paul worked at the penitentiary as a paid chaplain and recruited a volunteer base of over 50 people. Some of you who will read this have been a part of Prison Ministry under Paul's leadership.

Prison Ministry in those early days was a lot different than it is today. We held picnics on the lawn outside the "walls" with the men on Sundays. Walla Walla College students played basketball



with some of the incarcerated men inside the penitentiary. One woman volunteer remembers bringing her handbag into the penitentiary with her once, with no adverse consequences, either from the staff or from the men. All of that is very much changed these days. I've only been involved since 2011, and the difference in security measures just since that time is quite remarkable.

The Village Church has had a presence among the volunteers since the beginning. And, as fewer and fewer Stateline Church members continued with Prison Ministries, the treasury funds for the ministry were transferred to the Village church, as was the leadership—first under Arline Finkbner, then Dan Preas, and now myself.



The penitentiary is made up of six custody level units. (Most other prisons are single-custody level institutions). We hold Bible studies in four of those units and Sabbath services in 3 units. We are currently negotiating for a Bible study in a fifth unit. We have had baptisms regularly over the years, and at the last one in November, we baptized six men.



I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our volunteers, past and present.

Currently, the Village Church members who volunteer are Carl Brenneise, Jim Forsyth, Carolyn and Rick Karlstrom, Larry Moore, Rita Schroeder (on break for the winter), Nancy Teale, Jon and Patty Travis, and myself. Pastor Steve Reasor has also volunteered and will hopefully be getting his “red badge” soon.

New volunteers are always welcome, and I am easy to find in the church directory or through the church office. I will close with a poem that was written by an incarcerated man when he heard of Leo Finkbner's death. It will touch your heart, and will give you a glimpse into the hearts of the men we serve at Washington State Penitentiary.

**Pat Williams**



## YOU CAME TO VISIT ME IN PRISON

1) Locked up in an empty cell, my spirits low,  
my hopes have failed, my dreams are gone.

Thinking how it used to be, before my friends forsaken me,  
'cuz I went wrong.

Doin' time with other men, hangin' on the best I can,  
then you came along.

You gave me hope I can't explain, helped me start all over  
again—by singin' your song.

Chorus:

And I was locked up in prison, doin' the best I can,  
Then the Lord sent you to visit me, not knowing who I am,  
You sang your songs, you spoke His word I needed to  
hear,

They touched my heart and cleared my mind,  
When you brought Jesus here.

2) I thank you for your ministry of mending lives and fixing  
dreams,

And you don't know how it touches lives and changes men,  
Fills that void deep within, and makes us proud to know  
That Jesus Christ, our Lord, has not forgotten any boys,  
who's failed Him so,

To give us another chance to live,  
and now our lives we fully give to Him—we owe.

3) You came to visit me in prison, without knowing why.

I'm a face among a hundred, lonesome and weary guys,

You brought the word of Jesus, sparked a fire within.

The lives you've changed you may not know, but thank  
you, O my friend.

The lives you've changed you may not know, but thank  
you, O my friend!

Dorcy Long 3/13/05 Washington State Penitentiary  
Written to honor Leo Finkbiner, Prison Ministry Volunteer for 30  
years, at his death.

## Family Matters—by Bev Donahey

### What Do Your Kids Think About Their Heavenly Father?

God is our heavenly father. So, is He like an earthly father? Some earthly fathers are caring, fun, and helpful. Others are absent, aloof, and harsh. So we can't always compare God to earthly fathers. However, children often tend to view God like they view their own fathers. If they are comfortable with their fathers, they are most likely comfortable with God.



If children have been told that God loves them, made the beautiful earth for them, and wants them to be safe and happy, they will feel good about Him. But if they have been told that He is watching to punish them for their mistakes, they might fear Him rather than ask for His forgiveness and help. The right message is that He loves them. He's sad when they do wrong things, rather than angry at them. He wants to help them. Children have peace when they know that God loves them dearly. They feel confident when they know He made them in His image and has good plans for their lives.

Children can hear the song “Jesus Loves Me” before birth. It's good for them to also hear parents singing about Jesus while they work and when they put the kids to bed. Paraphrase it sometimes: “Jesus loves you, this I know...” Parents' kindness shows kids what real love is. Tell your children that you love them, no matter how old they are. We all need to show God's love and sympathy within our families and communities.



By the way, what do you think about your heavenly Father? Are you aware that He also loves you? He sympathizes with your weariness and concerns. Talk to Him. He'll help you succeed and be peaceful because He loves you very much.



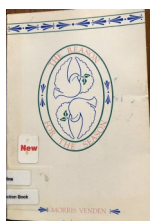
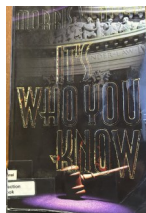
Bev Donahey has degrees in psychology and Applied Behavioral Science and shares tips she picks up from her experiences, friends and research.

## From the Library—by Marcel Grondahl



Many Adventists have read books written by Morris Venden. I became acquainted with his work when I was teaching at the Adventist School in Paradise, California. I attended Pacific Union College in the summers and Venden was pastoring the PUC church. This was during the time Desmond Ford was teaching at PUC and promoting his view of Righteous by Faith. I was confused by all the different voices offering their views until I began reading and listening to Pastor Venden. His parables and clear concise common-sense approach to the controversy convinced me that our traditional approach was correct, so I offer four books by Venden for you to enjoy as well!

“It’s Who You Know” was written by Venden in 1996. One quote from the book really hits at the center of Righteousness by Faith. It is this. “You can memorize every verse in the Bible, study every day of the week, underline every key text- BUT it’s not what you do, It’s Who You Know.” This book reveals why money, power, and prestige are but band aids to cover a void that can only be filled by a relationship with Jesus Christ.

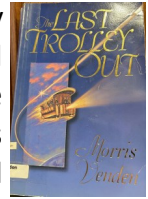


“The Reason For The Season” by Venden in 1986. We hear these words often and they become a cliché that loses impact as we hear it over and over. In this book Venden gives honest answers to what Christmas means to a Christian and how to renew that love for Jesus and His teachings.

“Love God and Do as You Please” by Venden in 1992. Now that is a title that many would view as heresy. In defense Venden says this, “As you read this book, you’ll discover the importance of church standards and a life of obedience. You will come away with the assurance that those who truly love God and accept His righteousness will say as David did...O how I love thy Law.”



“The Last Trolley Out” by Venden in 1995. This is my favorite Venden book. It is a parable about a stalled trolley that had not moved for years. Upon reading the book you will discover very quickly that the Trolley is code for our church. It is humorous, but sad, to read the attempts the passengers in the Trolley use to get to the destination. Even though this book was written 30 years ago it offers real insight as to why our church is still at the station and not moving toward the destination of heaven.



## The Sewing Machine in Storage

written by Irene Bennett; submitted by Terry Koch

When my mom died, I was left with the quiet work of going through her house—drawer by drawer, box by box, the physical evidence of a life lived for other people. I don't know what I expected to keep. But I know what I grabbed quickly.



Her electric sewing machine. It's still in



its box. Unopened. In storage. And yet I can't part with it.

To most people, it's just a tool. To me, it's a symbol—of my mother's careful love, the kind you don't post online and don't announce to anyone. The kind that shows up in the way a curtain hangs straight, the way a hem is finished properly, the way a child walks into school covered and cared for.

My first grade uniform was sewn by her. At the time, I didn't appreciate it. Most of my classmates had mall-bought, ready-to-wear uniforms, and mine looked a little different. Not bad—just different. I noticed. Children always do.

But now, that difference feels like a gift.

My mom sewed so much when I was a kid—our uniforms, my brother's uniforms, curtains for the house. Before the electric machine, she had the big one—the kind you run with your feet. I remember wanting to learn, but the threading intimidated me. I

loved the finished product, but I didn't have the passion to push through the details. Later she upgraded to a more mobile electric version, and I even tried sewing classes for a while... but it didn't pan out. Life filled up. Time got crowded. The interest never bloomed into a craft.



And still—when she died, I kept the machine. Because it holds the memory of a mother who made a home with her hands.

Lately I've been thinking about why that object has stayed with me. Why it matters that it's still boxed. Why I can't let it go even though I'm not using it.



And then it hit me: that sewing machine is the way I hold a legacy. It's how I keep love close—even love expressed through repetitive, ordinary work.

That's also what hymns are.

A hymn is not just a song. It's a piece of faith that someone stitched together—line by line, Scripture by Scripture, prayer by prayer—so the church could be covered with truth.

Hymns are often the handmade uniforms of worship. Sometimes they don't look like what's "trending." Sometimes they feel a little different from what everyone else is wearing. But they last. They carry a story. And they fit deeper than we realize.

Most of the worship that forms us isn't loud. It's quiet repetition. It's a chorus we sing until it becomes comfort. It's a stanza we learned as a child that rises up again in grief. It's a familiar melody that steadies the heart when we don't know what to pray.

Just like sewing, hymn ministry is full of unseen labor. Someone chooses the song. Someone finds the key. Someone practices the introduction. Someone teaches the congregation patiently—again and again—until the hymn becomes theirs. Much of it happens behind the scenes, but it shapes the whole room.



And maybe that's why my mom's sewing machine speaks to me so loudly now: because hymns are also a kind of careful love. Not flashy. Not always "mall-bought." But faithful.

There's one more detail I can't ignore: the machine is still in its box.

Which means I've preserved it... but I haven't used it.

And if I'm honest, we can do that with hymns too.

We keep them in memory. We keep them in tradition. We keep them in a hymnal on the shelf. We keep them as "the songs my parents sang." And sometimes we preserve them so well they never get touched—never opened, never practiced, never returned to daily life.

So here's my small invitation for this week: open the box.

Not literally, unless you want to. But spiritually—open one hymn you've "kept" but haven't used lately. Choose a hymn that has history in your family. Or choose one you don't know yet. Read the words slowly like you're tracing a pattern. Notice where Scripture is stitched into the lines. Sing one stanza at home—especially as the Sabbath approaches—and let that hymn do what it was made to do: cover you with truth.

At Hymns for Worship, that's what we're trying to help you do—not simply collect hymns, but use them. Learn them. Understand them. Bring them into your home. Pass them on.

Because the church doesn't just inherit songs—we inherit a way of believing.

My mother stitched fabric. The church stitched faith into melody.

And some legacies aren't meant to stay boxed forever.



Permission to reprint essay and photo granted by Irene Bennett, a Seventh-day Adventist music educator, pianist, and organist and who authors the website, "Hymns for Worship" [hymnsforworship.org](http://hymnsforworship.org)



*"I have loved you with an everlasting love;  
Therefore with lovingkindness I have  
drawn you." —Jeremiah 31:3*

# SHABBAT

February 2026

Even for a group of people who keep the Sabbath, maybe even especially for us, the busyness of life and the good work, even the Lord's work, that is in front of us, too often leaves us exhausted and overwhelmed. This February, join Pastor Steve Reasor as he encounters anew the call to rest that is founded in creation, given new purpose by Jesus' resurrection, and continues to anchor us in holy time. Shabbat. February, 2026.

## The Village Pantry—hosted by Pattie Reasor

Corn tortillas offer the health benefits of being a whole grain and they are rich in fiber and lower in calories/fat than a typical flour tortilla. They also have the benefit of being gluten free which makes them an excellent option for those with celiac disease or a gluten sensitivity. Foods that are high in fiber help to slow sugar absorption which prevents spikes.

The resistant starch feeds good gut bacteria.

It is also simple to customize tacos. If someone in your house doesn't enjoy corn tortillas, it's easy to open a bag of flour tortillas and keep everyone happy!



### Crispy Tofu with Cabbage and Lime Soft Tacos

#### Ingredients:

- 1 block extra-firm tofu
- ¼ cup cornstarch
- 1 tsp. smoked paprika
- 1 tsp. cumin
- 1 tsp. onion powder
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- ½ tsp. crushed red peppers
- Salt to taste
- 2 Tbsp. of olive oil
- 2 cups of finely shredded cabbage
- Juice of 2 limes
- ¼ red onion, thinly sliced
- Sliced avocado
- Hard or soft tacos



Press the tofu to remove excess water (I press it for 30 minutes). Cube the tofu into bite-sized pieces.

In a bowl or ziploc bag, mix cornstarch, paprika, garlic powder, onion powder, cumin, crushed red peppers and salt. Toss the tofu in the mixture.

Preheat the pan with oil and cook the tofu until crispy. Drain on a plate with a paper towel to remove the excess oil.

Make a slaw with cabbage, lime juice, and red onion. Heat the taco shells according to the packaged instructions. Assemble the tacos with the slaw and tofu. Top with avocado and your favorite hot sauce or salsa, if you please.



Pattie Reesor



The Reesor family loves tacos! There is a funny saying "seven days without tacos makes one weak" so give these tacos a try!

## Valued Volunteers The Calling and Caring Committee

by Karen Ekkens

The Village Church is a vibrant community of believers, each contributing his or her unique set of skills and talents. Some of these are more visible than others, but each is valued and vital to the life of the church. One of the many behind-the-scenes entities is the Calling and Caring Committee.

Pastor Steve Reesor explained, "The Calling and Caring Committee is the front line ministry team that looks after those church members who are unable to attend church in person. This dedicated group of volunteers works with the pastoral staff, deaconesses, and elders to keep track of our members at home or in care facilities, and regularly connect with them."

In addition to working full time, Hildred Davis leads out in this ministry. She has a heart of compassion for those who can't



come to church and strives to make sure each one feels like part of the church family. Speaking of how the committee maintains the list of people to visit, Hildred said, “The list is a moving target, but Connie, Jody, and Pastor Steve all let us know when names need to be added or removed for whatever reason.”

During visits, committee members assess the needs of the individual. They learn if the person needs a Sabbath School quarterly, weekly church bulletin, Village Voice, or other materials, they pray with the person, and spend a little time chatting. “I have mixed emotions about it.” Hildred said. “When I see lonely people with no family members nearby or older folks who need a little help with food and household chores, I just wish I could fix all the problems. But it brings me great joy to visit the people. I can’t begin to describe how much it fills my



heart and gives me a wonderful Sabbath blessing.”



Often with this population brief, frequent visits work better than lengthy, infrequent ones. While the focus is on Village Church members, sometimes in the care facilities there might be a request from a non-member for a visit and the committee members try to accommodate

these when possible. Deaconesses will send birthday cards as a way to keep in touch and share a little love. This kind of personalized, outside-the-box outreach like Hildred and her team provide, takes time. It is helpful when the committee is made aware of other Village Church members who are reaching out. For example, one person helps an elderly woman on a daily basis. Another cooks a weekly meal for a couple and delivers it.



Others take an instrument to the care facility and share songs in the dining area.

If you or someone you know makes regular contact with a shut-in, Hildred would love to know about it. Contact the church office to get in touch with her.

Regarding this committee Pastor Steve commented, “The genuine care and concern that these members show is an inspiration and their work will pay rewards throughout eternity.”

Dear Village Voice readers,

I’ve been pondering the beauty and depth of I John 4:10. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” We often hear about humans loving God, but that is only in response to His amazing love demonstrated in this: “While we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

Whatever may try to take the upper hand in your life, let the reality of God’s love sink in again and again. God bless you!

*Karen Ekkens, editor*



## Village Voice

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