



Home Church Herald

“...To the church in thy house:” Philemon 1:2 “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” Psalms 133:1

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Seven Churches or One?

by Thomas Akens

In Revelation chapters 2 & 3 are seven short epistles/letters addressed to seven churches. We (SDA's) regard these, like other lines of prophecy in this book, as prophetic, covering the whole Gospel dispensation. Why do we so regard them? Some of the reasons why are briefly outlined below:

1. There were more churches in Asia than seven. Even if we were to confine ourselves to that western division of Asia known as Asia Minor, or to that small fraction of Western Asia Minor where the seven churches were situated which are addressed, even so there were other equally important churches in this same territory: Colosse was but a short distance from Laodicea, Miletus was nearer than any of the seven to Patmos, where John had his vision, and Troas, where Paul spent a season with the disciples, was not far from Pergamos.

2. The question arises as to why just seven churches were selected from among them all to be addressed, if what is said pertained only to the Christians of John's time? Why, too, was there not a greeting like that of Peter, “to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,” or that of James “to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.” Why not a general address to the believers abroad, if the letters were only for those then living? The only logical and consistent answer is, that those seven literal churches (to whom the whole book of Revelation was written) were representative of the church as a whole throughout its entire history; for the prophecies of this book were no more applicable to those seven churches named, than to other Christians in Asia Minor, such as those in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, and Bithynia, nor even to the churches in our day. To this we would add that only a minute portion of the prophecies of the Revelation



could have any direct concern for those seven local churches, or any of the Christians of John's day; for the events they bring to view were for the most part so distant to them as to be wholly beyond the life-time and concern of that generation.

3. The seven stars which the Son of man held in his right hand are declared to be the angels of the seven churches. These denote the ministers/shepherds of the churches. Their being held in his right hand must denote his upholding, guiding, and protecting power over them. But were there only seven local and long dead churches for which the Master cared and tended? May we not reason that all true ministers of the whole gospel age are thus represented as upheld and supported by him?

4. The great purpose of God's Revelation to man was to reveal the course of the church's history, and its attending circumstances from the days of John to the close of time. And he (John), being given a revelation of the Christian dispensation,

Continued on page 3

You will find in this issue:

Waldensian Center Trip to Canada	P. 2
God's Wellness Part 2	P. 4
Announcements	P. 4
Becoming a Princess (Part 3 of 3)	P. 5
Answer to Bible Challenge	P. 6
Waldensian Center Report	P. 7

Waldensian Center Trip to Canada

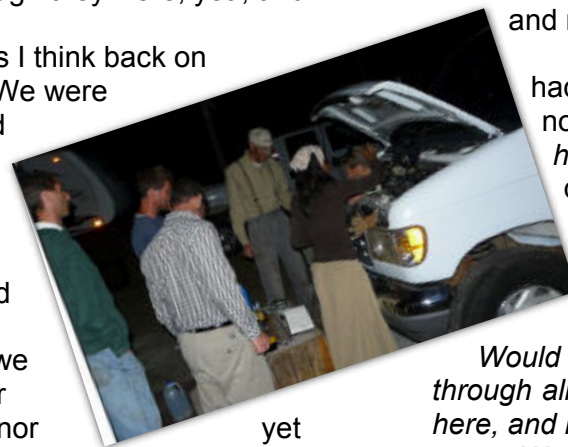
by Raquel Akens

It isn't your typical adventure story, with wild, hungry animals in our journey's way or angry cannibals seeking to eat us. No, our trip was to the neighboring country of Canada; about fourteen hours away by car. The Waldensian Center had made plans to hold meetings there during its most recent session. Its purpose was to exhort, edify, and encourage the brethren in Canada, but most of all, it was to show them that we care.

The Waldensian Center staff and students numbered thirteen people total: Pastor David Sims, Elyssa Sims, Morgan Polsky, Zachary Corklin, Elaine Nailing, Rupert Pietersz, the Brown family, and my husband Thomas Akens and I. During the first part of our term we were very busy with classes, such as, Hydrotherapy, The Sanctuary, Industrial arts, and some Agriculture. And through the press of all our duties and work we still kept the Canada trip in mind. Plans needed to be completed for its preparation, and though our obstacles were not ravenous beasts, we still needed God's helping hand just as much as though they were, yea, and even more.

I smile and marvel, as I think back on God's leading in our trip. We were tempted to doubt his hand in the plans at times; for we had received no confirmation from most of the brethren that they would attend, obstacles hindered us in finding a venue and lodging, and worst of all, we had no vehicle in proper shape to get us all there, nor the necessary means to fund

This trip taught me many lessons, especially to go forward by faith, trusting in God. One by one our prayers were answered, although to me at times it seemed that the answers were not arriving fast enough; yet it had all been in God's perfect timing.



yet
us.

God provided the venue, lodging, and the needed funds. When we found this out, I thought, *Surely this is a sign that it's God's will for us to be there*, and we were all greatly encouraged by this. Then, just one week before we needed to leave for the

meetings, another prayer was answered. God provided a vehicle! A fifteen passenger van was donated to the Waldensian Center, which has since acquired the affectionate name, WC Cruiser. The arrangements were quickly made to have Morgan and Rupert fly to Georgia, get the van, and drive it to the WC. We were thankful when they arrived back in California. But, it was one test after another to our faith and patience, as we endeavored to get the van ready for the trip. At times I felt tempted to question whether it was God's will that we go. My husband read my worried face, and would encourage me to be patient, and tell me that it was all in God's hands. The men worked long, hard days and nights on that van.

It was Wednesday, past the time that we had planned to leave, and the van was still not ready. *Should we leave the van behind? Should we rent a vehicle?* These questions were passed around among us. I thought that they were good ideas. *Sure, let's forget about the van*, were my thoughts. Then I heard Pastor David reason with words similar to these:

Would God provide this van for us, and let us go through all the trouble and expense of getting it here, and have it be for nothing? That was a rebuke to me. We had to have faith that God was leading in this, God had given us the van and he would take care of it. Back to work the men went. We had to leave by 1:00 A.M. on Thursday to make it in time for the Friday evening meeting. Finally, after working long into then night, the van was ready about an

hour before our deadline. Praise God! We were driving out the driveway shortly after at 1:00 A.M. on our way to Canada.

We arrived safely in Okanagan falls, British Columbia, only a few minutes late for the first meeting. (The theme of the meetings was entitled "Come out of her my people"). We were glad to see all the brethren there, waiting for our arrival. We received a warm welcome, and were blessed by the message that evening. The following days went by quickly, too quickly for me. We all enjoyed a sweet fellowship with one another, and I could see that the brethren from Canada were having a blessed time, and were encouraged and refreshed by our fellowship. I had heard that many of them had not met together like this in years. On Sabbath we had a beautiful service. The music was uplifting, and the songs were joyful and spirit-filled; everyone's participation made it a very special time. We were blessed by several good messages and testimonies. Some of the messages dealt with reforms needed in our lives as Christians, and our need to separate mind and body from great Babylon. Pastor David gave a message on coming out of the confusion of Babylon, and the need of Church organization, because we, as a people, are so scattered and too independent. It is true, we often want the fellowship, the friendships, the blessings, but yet not the commitment or responsibility. God is a God of order, can we accomplish his will in disorder?

On Sunday, our last day, we partook of the Lord's supper. For some, it was the first time in a decade or more. There was a spirit of humility, and I felt a bit saddened that we would be parting soon. Two short meetings followed our communion service, and our time together had officially ended. *Was it all worth it?* I mused over the long hours in the van, the times of discomfort and pain, the lack of sleep, etc., and I know I can safely respond to that question for everyone who went with the Waldensian Center. Yes it was all worth it!

It is an even greater encouragement for me to know that the brethren in Canada were not just blessed, but have been moved to act upon the conviction which God has impressed upon their hearts, as a result of our ministering. They have expressed to us their desire to make the commitment to work and fellowship together as brethren in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are in return a blessing to us in being a good example, and I can't help but think of that hymn:

*"Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above."*

Seven Churches or One?

Continued from page 1

saw only seven candlesticks; a representation of the whole church throughout its entire New Testament history. In the midst of the church sits the Son of man; this position among them must denote his continual presence with them, his sleepless watch over them, and his all-seeing scrutiny of their works from beginning to end. Ought we to conclude from such a representation that he had regard for only seven individual and ancient churches in this dispensation? Is it beyond reason to conclude that such a description properly represents the position which Christ bears to all the churches during the whole Christian age?

5. It is proper to ask, Why were only seven churches chosen? Why not four, eight, twelve or some other number? To which we answer, For the reason that the names of these churches are significant of the seven distinct ages to which each belonged, and reveal to us their peculiar religious features and history.

For these and other equally significant reasons we understand the seven churches to apply to seven distinct periods of the Gospel age, from the days of John to the end of time.

"The names of the seven churches are symbolic of the church in different periods of the Christian Era. The number 7 indicates completeness, and is symbolic of the fact that the messages extend to the end of time, while the symbols used reveal the condition of the church at different periods in the history of the world." (Acts of the Apostles, p. 585).

We are currently living in the last period of the Gospel age, and thus, logically, our era corresponds with the last church mentioned, Laodicea. Those who trace their spiritual heritage back through 1844 recognize that we are living in the time of the Investigative Judgment, and by definition, the word Laodicea implies the people of the judgment. We should earnestly covet and have the good qualities of each of the other churches, but it is no more possible for us to consider ourselves as being in one of the other churches as it would be to change the era in which we live.

The message to Laodicea is the message Jesus reserved in love for us today; it is the message we need, at the very time we need it. May the Lord grant us a spirit of humility and repentance; for "as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." (Revelation 3:19, 22).

God's Ways to Wellness

- Part 2

by Todd Brown

In part one we saw two of the ways that God deals with sickness. God sometimes performs an instant miracle, and sometimes he works through natural remedies. In part 2 of this study we will look at a third way God deals with illness.

God deals with illness by giving us grace to bear it. This is how God dealt with Paul in what he called his "thorn in the flesh".

And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

God saw fit not to take this illness from Paul, but to give him grace to bear it. God had a purpose in dealing with him in this way that would ultimately be a blessing to Paul. He trusted in God's love and omniscience, and accepted his lot cheerfully.

As a parent, how many of you have taken your child to the bank with you to cash a check, and when you get your money there is also a candy sucker. Then your child's eyes get big and a smile comes across their face, but then you flush it down the potty so they aren't tempted to dig it out of the trash. As a parent, you see the danger in giving your child this poison, but how about the child's perspective? At that moment it is very hard for them to believe father knows best. How often are we this way with God?

Sometimes God's answer to our fervent prayer for healing and recovery is not what we may think is best. It may be, "My grace is suffi-

cient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

"When you pray for temporal blessings, remember that the Lord may see that it is not for your good or for His glory to give you just what you desire. But He will answer your prayer, giving you just what is best for you.

"When Paul prayed that the thorn in his flesh might be removed, the Lord answered his prayer, not by removing the thorn, but by giving him grace to bear the trial. "My grace," He said, "is sufficient for thee." Paul rejoiced at this answer to his prayer, declaring, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9). When the sick pray for the recovery of health, the Lord does not always answer their prayer in just the way they desire. But even though they may not be immediately healed, He will give them that which is of far more value -- grace to bear their sickness." (In Heavenly Places, p. 82).

Announcements!

We are excited to announce that **Waldensian Center will be starting its next online session** beginning on the 22nd of January. The classes available this term will be: Bible Prophecy and Beginner's Spanish. Please check the school website for more updates and details on enrollment.
www.waldensiancenter.org

Pacific Virtual Fellowship invites you to join us in a series of **Bible Studies on the original principles of faith of Seventh-day Adventists**. Starting Sabbath, the 10th of December at 4:00 P.M. Pacific Time. Visit: www.seventhdayhomechurchfellowships.org for details on how to participate by telephone or internet. This may also serve as a baptismal class for those who would like to prepare for baptism.

Becoming a Princess

Part 3 of 3

by Emily Walker

Learning Firmness yet teachableness

In the previous two articles, I shared some of the things that I am having to learn as I am studying godly principles for young Christian girls.

There is yet one more thing I would like to share with you that I have been learning as I choose to pattern my life after God's principles: I must cultivate firmness and resolve, and yet I must retain a teachable heart that is subject unto the leadership of my godly parents.

In another of my favourite books on becoming a young lady, *Beautiful Girlhood*, on page 198, I read; "She who is indecisive never gets far. The girl who has acquired this habit of halting between opinions, of never making up her mind on anything, needs to take herself in hand sternly, look problems in the face, march right out and fight her own battles through. To the one who is *determined* to win, victory *will* come."

While it's vital that I learn to be firm and decisive, it is also very important that I remain open to my parents and teachable.

Too many of my peers are trying to manage this thing called "growing up" all on their own. They are uncomfortable communicating openly with their parents, they are inclined to think that their parents wisdom is outdated! They end up seeking the advice of their friends who are totally unqualified to offer guidance, because they have no more experience than each other. This is one of Satan's most masterful deceptions for youth.

Messages to Young People says;

"Children who are Christians will prefer the love and approbation of their God-fearing parents above every earthly blessing. They will love and honor their parents." (MYP, p. 335)

Facebook

Just to share with you quickly what I mean by maintaining a teachable heart, let me tell you another little story:

I was enjoying spending some time with my friends, when they got to talking very enthusiastically

about their various friends and all the fun they were having staying in touch on *facebook*, who posted what on somebody's wall, and what so-and-so was doing etc. It all sounded very interesting and I began to feel a little out of date.

Actually, by the end of the afternoon I was beginning to think I was waaaaay behind the times, and that I was *really* missing out on something special by not having a facebook profile!

So, on our way home I asked my parents if it would be OK if I were to open a facebook account, and while I was at it, I thought it'd be fun to have my own email address too . . . Silence . . .

The moments felt like hours as my parents considered their response, and I became uncomfortable. What was taking them so long? Why couldn't they see the *obvious* advantages of facebook? Besides, what could *possibly* be wrong with it? Most of the people we had just spent time with were using it!

I wasn't happy about the length of time it took my parents to respond, or their lack of enthusiasm to what I thought was a *wonderful* idea. (I now know that they were praying, but at the time I was tempted to think that they were just not moving with technology!)

Was I remaining open and teachable? Was I really asking my parents? Or was I just telling them what I'd like to do?

With my heart busily justifying my way, how do you think our communication went? It was a *struggle* for each of us. But, as I examined my heart, and brought it back into captivity (which is really free-

dom, because I had already sold myself into slavery to my desires.) I found that I was able to hear their cautions. When I made this surrender of my will to theirs, I found peace as I chose to see it through their eyes that day. I resolved by faith (not feeling) to share their conviction.

And then, months later, I began to hear many things that strengthened my conviction. Today I stand in full agreement with my parents, and I have many reasons of my own as to why I don't want a *facebook* account or my own email address.

In my experience, it really *is* a blessing to remain teachable and to heed instruction.

Here are some of my reasons why I have decided that my parents were right and I should not have a *facebook* account.

- Massive time waster
- Massive invasion of privacy
- It could draw my heart away from my first priorities
 - People could post things on my wall that I'd rather not have there
 - Lots of trivial things discussed that really don't glorify God
 - Lots of foolishness
 - Often becomes a peer oriented form of communication, without the guidance of others with more experience
 - Can draw others with experience into that empty mode of communication
 - Even if I were to keep my whole *facebook* space exalting God, my connection with *facebook* could influence others to think that I think it is a good place to spend time, and they could be lead astray
 - You learn things about people that you'd be better off not knowing
 - It brings other peoples' issues right into our lounge room whether we are ready or not
- But you say, "it's a great way to stay in touch"
 - I've got email
 - Those I know who have closed their *facebook* accounts have told me that they were hardly missed.
 - Someone I know, who had over 200 friends on *facebook*, was convicted to close her account, and she has only had a couple of her friends contact her to ask where she had gone!
 - And since she has closed her account, she has had more meaningful communication with those who have stayed in touch with her via email
 - There are more personal and uplifting ways of staying in touch

Why not have my own email?

- There is an element of accountability when others know that whatever they send me comes into our family mailbox
 - How many mailboxes do you have in front of your house
 - I like to share things with my family
 - I don't want anything that could cultivate an independent spirit
 - I could be tempted to become secretive about some communication
 - I might get too involved in the computer. "Of all the talents God has given us, we will have to give the strictest account of how we spent our time." Christ Object Lessons
- What about privacy?
 - We don't open each other's emails
 - If that's an issue you might want to ask yourself why you don't want your family to see your emails

Answer to Bible Challenge

In our last issue, we asked a question, why was a burnt offering necessary to make atonement, immediately after the "final atonement" had been made?

We received some good responses, but they did not seem to address the real issue at hand, so we did not print those responses, but are sharing some of our thoughts below.

Lets consider the burnt offering.

It was a burnt offering required of Abraham when asked to offer Isaac. In Israel, "every morning and evening a lamb of a year old was burned upon the altar, with its appropriate meat offering, thus symbolizing the daily consecration of the nation to Jehovah, and their constant dependence upon the atoning blood of Christ." PP 352 This also was a burnt offering. The burnt offering was not for a specific sin or sins, yet it made an atonement.

"And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. And he shall kill the bullock before the LORD: and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." (Leviticus 1:4-5)

It's flesh and blood were entirely disposed of in the courtyard, and symbolized God's gift to man of His Son, dying for the sins of the world, and reconciling the world unto himself. The death of Christ gave all mankind a probation, a second chance. It

Continued on page 8

WALDENSIAN CENTER REPORT

Cooperation and eagerness to learn characterized the most recent Waldensian Center term, as the distinction between students and teachers did not exist, because the teachers became students themselves in the classes they were not teaching. Everyone was anxious to learn all they could to be better fitted to serve. The group included: Zachary Corklin, Morgan Polsky, Elaine Nailing, Thomas and Raquel Akens, the Brown family, the Sims family, and Rupert Pietersz, from the island of Curacao; thirteen in all.

Our mornings at Waldensian Center were blessed by worship at 6:30 A.M, with each student alternating in leading out. Each shared from the book Ministry of Healing, and all received a rich blessing from each other's insight. After worship we would have a delicious meal prepared by Elyssa, Raquel, Elaine, and Rhonda. Breakfast was followed by exercises and stretching, directed by Thomas and Rupert, and a study hall, followed by classes.

Hydrotherapy, Industrial Arts, Agriculture, Food Preservation, and a Bible class on the Sanctuary were taught by Pastor David Sims. In Hydrotherapy we studied the physics of water, its physiological effects, and learned to design appropriate treatments for the individual case as well as how to apply treatments effectively. Industrial Arts involved the safe use of the table saw, router, power planer, sander, drill, and other power tools. The projects included hat racks, chopping boards, and bed frames. Mechanics necessarily became a part of our Industrial Arts class, when, in answer to prayer, a van was donated to our school, and needed maintenance to be prepared for a missionary trip to Canada. Agriculture class included tending the plants in the greenhouse, irrigating, and caring for and harvesting the plants in the garden. For some it was their first time digging potatoes. Picking raspberries and strawber-



ries seemed to be the favorite job of some. (Needless to say, some of the berries did not make it to the table.) Sanctuary class was very instructive, revealing some of the finer details concerning the plan of redemption, its major events, and the time of those events as portrayed in the types and ceremonies, and fulfilled in history; all shedding greater light on future events in the plan of redemption. Raquel Akens taught Environmental Factors on Health, and many of

our eyes were opened regarding the health effects of some of the more dangerous chemicals in many products which we use on an everyday basis. To each student was given the task of creating a healthy non-toxic alternative to the common over-



the-counter home and body products. She also demonstrated how to prepare healthy, tasty granola. Elyssa demonstrated soap making, and bread making, and shared other valu-

able baking and cooking skills. Morgan taught a class on Colporteur Evangelism; encouraging the students to make use of this important branch of the work, and everyone had the opportunity to get a practical experience in door to door canvassing. Todd taught Health Evangelism, and demonstrated the setting up of a health expo. The men learned to mend and patch their jeans from Rhonda.

To describe all the things that we learned from our time together, in studying and working, would be difficult to put into words.

The session ended with a relaxing weekend camping trip in beautiful Lassen National Park. We enjoyed a blessed Sabbath service, and a wonderful communion with our Father and His Son in their creation. Praise the Lord for true education!



Answer to Bible Challenge

Continued from Page 6

gave us a temporary life here on this earth in which we have time to see our specific sins and repent of them, just as the burnt offering sufficed until the sins came to the knowledge of the sinner; at which time he was to bring a personal sin offering. In contrast to the disposing of the flesh and blood of the burnt offerings, was the disposing of the flesh and blood of the sin offerings. The flesh or blood of the sin offerings was carried by the priest into the holy places (Lev 4; 6:24-30), thus showing how Christ bears our humanity and sins into the holy places in heaven.

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat. v. 3 Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering.” (Leviticus 16:2-3)

(No part of this burnt offering was taken into the tabernacle, as was the case with all burnt offerings. [See Lev 16:24; 6:10-12; 1:1-9])

The court symbolized the earth, while the tabernacle symbolized heaven. The burnt offering signified the atonement made by God in Christ coming to earth, restoring communication between earth and heaven, and bringing a divine power within our reach, so that we might have power to overcome.

“This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee.” (Exodus 29:42)

Those that put away their specific sins, and are thus sanctified, are fitted to enter the holy places of heaven; there to meet God in heaven, which was symbolized by the disposing of the sin offerings.

After the blood of the burnt offerings was placed upon the horns of the altar of burnt offering, the remainder of the blood was poured out on the sides of the altar and at the base of the altar on the ground; thus symbolizing the redemption of the earth itself. Not only that, but the ashes were to be taken without the camp, and disposed of in a clean place; thus showing the final cleansing of the earth by fire, by removing the last trace of the curse of sin, and redeeming the earth. Then this earth will once more become the habitation of the Father and the Son.

One final thought – Noah offered burnt offerings of all the clean beasts when he came out of the ark. The record tells us that it resulted in a blessing to the earth and animals.

“And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart *is* evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” (Genesis 8:20-22)

The true offering that the burnt offerings signified resulted in the redemption of the earth from being destroyed, or further cursed.

So back to our question, why was the burnt offering required just after the atonement? Because the earth had not been cleansed by fire, recreated or physically redeemed yet. It will not be until the end of the millennium, after the seven thousandth year, the beginning of the eighth millennium of this earth's history. The sacrifice to redeem the earth has been made, but the type did not end with the slaying of the beast, the disposing of the blood, nor even with the burning of the body. It was not complete until the ashes were removed from the altar, taken outside the camp, and placed in a clean place; signifying the earth being recreated a clean place, and the Righteous walking upon the ashes of the wicked and the purified earth.

Seventh Day Home Church Fellowships is an association of Sabbath-keeping groups. Through teleconferencing, it provides possibility for study, fellowship, and jointly organizing missionary projects.

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