

Passport

First Quarter 2009

A newsletter for the
Regional Conference Retirees
of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

The First Black American President

Like many of you **November 4, 2008** will have a special place in our hearts for as long as time lasts. Yes, it was the day that the people of the United States elected its first admittedly “sho nuf” President from the Black community. The next milestone is the Inauguration Date just a few days ahead – **January 20, 2009**. It will be an enormous historic occasion.

The election of Barack Hussein Obama, 44th President of the United States of America signals that the American nation is moving in a steady pace toward pushing color further down its list of priorities and prerequisites for evaluating people and abilities. No, it does not end racism but it is the latest signal that the majority of Americans want to give everyone a fair chance at success.

The one very special best signal that it sends is that there are strong families in our community and that they exist in the real world, outside of the television sound stages of the bygone Bill Cosby Show. One of the strong points made by, I believe, Michelle Obama’s mother was that the



Obama’s were not the exception in their community but the rule. It is consistent with what one noted Ph.D. in Economics told me years ago – the largest single group in the Black community is the Black middle class.

President-Elect Obama’s path to the presidency is marked by a unique blend of a strong sense of family and grounding. He fully employed his intelligence, and teamed with people of vision and ability without regard to race. He exhibited concern for his community and was dedicated to change in that community without

becoming a one-issue, one-note

Johnny-come-lately candidate. This distinguished him from other candidates for high office defying the seeming tradition of the recent past. Anger and frustration were absent from his demeanor and his rhetoric. His successful effort signals that you may not be lucky all the time but you can be smart everyday.

I have listened as some commentators suggested that now that we have a Black president we have to





tighten up our collective acts and recognize that when we now walk the streets of this nation we are representing the President of the United States. I posit that we have long passed the time when we must wear our race on our sleeves as a burden to bear a trumpet to sound or a badge of success to decorate our garments. We have had enough successes and failures to signal that a single person cannot tie the outcome and destiny of an entire race of people to his or her success or failure. The Black community has matured beyond that point in its aspirations and expectations, and so have our fellow-citizens in the majority community across the aisle and across the tracks .

When I was a boy coming along the path that led to manhood one could hear it all the time. From inside the Black community it was “You cannot embarrass our people” and from outside our community it was

“He is a credit to his race.” I do not hear such statements anymore and that is refreshing.

Here is something to think about in our nations future. Just as in the Seventh-day Adventist church of today it no longer makes headlines when a

Black person assumes a “high” leadership position, the day will come sooner than you think when the second President of the United States



from the Black community will be met with almost ho-hum inattention. It has happened already in city, state and congressional elections in various parts of our nation without making waves. And since it has happened there it will surely happen for the highest office in the land.

So with that expectation and promise for the future we say:

**Congratulations Barack Hussein Obama!
 Congratulations Michelle Robinson Obama!
 Congratulations Malia and Sasha! 44th
 President, 44th First Lady and 44th First Family
 of the United States of America!**

We celebrate and appreciate all the people in your past who have worked and sacrificed to make you who you are. We commend you for climbing the rough side of the mountain in your personal pursuits that positioned you so perfectly for this historic moment. As Christians we are thankful and grateful to God for your success. As Americans we are just proud.



HAIL TO THE CHIEF!

The Road Untraveled

The current economic crisis facing our nation and the world seems to have everyone more than a little unsettled. Even the economic historians who view the situation through Macro-Economic lenses are not sure if the past methods of evaluating and forecasting the length and depth of recessions are applicable to this recession. According to the pundits this is not a “road less traveled,” it is a road untraveled.

The current recession is unlike any of the others. The confluence of crisis’ in the banking, housing, automobile, and environmental arenas have the so-called wise men of finance shaking their heads. “I don’t know” seems to be the most frequent response to questions regarding the world economy. Our retirees are part of the world economy and they listen to and watch the daily news where they

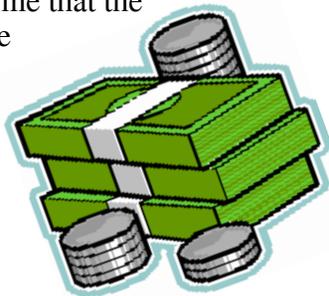


hear conflicting opinions from “experts” (ex-has been; spurt-a drip under pressure) on the economy. Consequently there is a fair amount of concern about how the financial crisis is affecting our fund.

Here is the good news. Short of a complete collapse of the world monetary system in the foreseeable future, we may have need for concern but certainly not for worry. Part of what gives us relative peace is that the difference between our annual expenses and the total value of our fund is considerable.

Here is some better news. We are all aware that our Plan is funded by 10.25% of the Holy Tithes garnered by the Regional Conferences. Tithes are returned by the faithful members of our congregations. In many instances they are faced with the threat of staff cutbacks by the businesses that employ them but God is faithful to His promises.

During last month’s Evangelism Council some local church pastors told me that the economic crisis had come home to them in their churches and that their members were beginning to lose jobs. My response was to ask them were their **faithful members** losing jobs.



When they could not answer that question with certainty, I crawled out on a limb and told them that I was willing to guarantee that the faithful were not losing their jobs.

We must remember that in the tough times God still takes care of his people. By extension in these tough times God will take care of our Retirement Plan. He cares for his people. His people take care to be faithful. Those “faithful laden” funds are sent to the conferences. The conferences send the 10.25% to us. Wherever we send them the blessing of faithfulness goes with them and never leaves. “This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that he hears us, **whatever we ask**, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him” (1 John 5: 14-15). Let us continue to be faithful and continually ask God to bless our Retirement Plan. Now for us that is a road **well** traveled.

*Joseph W. McCoy
Executive Director*

Something to Tell Your Children

The Lord has blessed us to have a retirement plan that pays us enough to stay out of the “soup line” clutching food stamps. We ought to praise Him everyday for that blessing and the peace and happiness it brings to us. But here is something to tell your children. **You cannot have too much money set aside for retirement.**



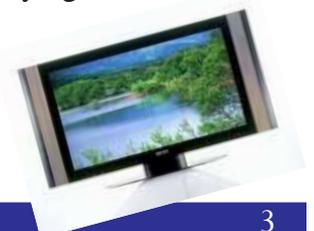
Several noted economists and groups report:

- Forty-nine percent of workers report less than \$50,000 in savings and investments, not counting the value in their home or a traditional pension plan
- 22 percent of workers and 28 percent of retirees report no savings at all
- They need to become self-educated about retirement issues even if they have a financial planner
- They should save at least 10% of their income if they work for a government entity. 15-20% if they work elsewhere
- Many financial planners will tell you to try to have \$1 million in retirement savings. The only problem with that is \$1 million 20-30 years from now will not have today’s buying power
- Inflation plays a significant role in your retirement future
- A worker who retired in 1965 experienced an annual 6.3% rate of inflation in the first 20 years of retirement
- Annual inflation for a 1948 retiree was 4.3% in the first 20 years of retirement



If some of the above is accurate, and we have no reason to doubt it, tell your children they may need to seriously consider delaying the purchase of flat-screen TV’s, luxury automobiles and dining out frequently.

Looking at the current crisis, the trend may have





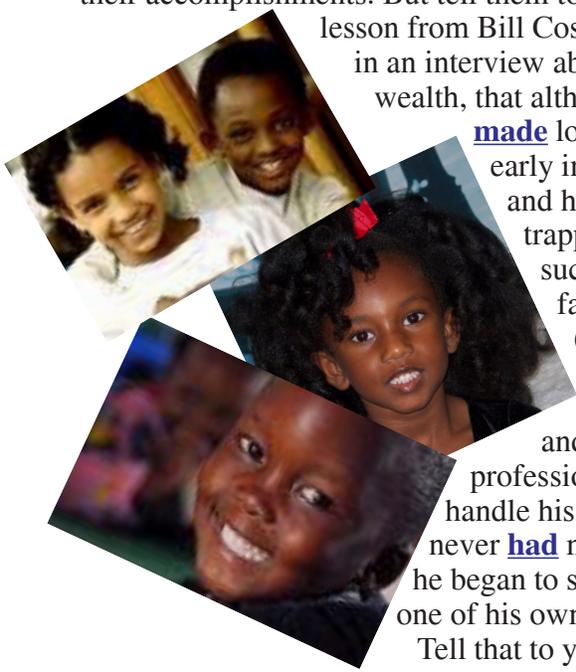
already begun. Listening to one report on the BBC recently, the commentator reported that high income earners were responsible in large part for an 18% business increase by Domino's Pizza in

Britain. Tracking by postal code (zip codes in USA) they were able to certify that the increase was coming from the upscale parts of the cities. Conversely, high end restaurants were reporting a substantial decline in business.

Consequently, economists and financial planners are beginning to tell us that to expect only a 3% annual inflation rate may not be realistic. So tell your children to be faithful to the Lord in the "Stewardship of Time" (time devoted to spiritual things). Tell them to be faithful to the Lord in the "Stewardship of Talent (money put into the Lord's work). But tell them to also **educate themselves** about matters of retirement even if they have a good job, a good pension plan on their current job and even a financial planner. In other words tell them to get their own answers.

Many of your children are well-educated and very well employed. You worked hard to get them positioned for success and surely you are proud of their accomplishments. But tell them to take a

lesson from Bill Cosby. He said in an interview about his wealth, that although he **made** lots of money early in his career and had all the trappings of success and fame (managers and advisors and other professionals to handle his affairs), he never **had** money until he began to sign every one of his own checks. Tell that to your children.



Laugh Out Loud (LOL)

Grandparents



Question:

What is a Grandparent?

(Taken from papers written by a class of 8-year-olds)

- Grandparents are a lady and a man who have no little children of their own. They like other people's.
- A grandfather is a old man & a grandmother is a old lady!
- Grandparents don't have to do anything except be there when we come to see them. They are so old they shouldn't play hard or run. It is good if they drive us to the shops and give us money.
- When they take us for walks, they slow down past things like pretty leaves and caterpillars.
- They show us and talk to us about the colors of the flowers and also why we shouldn't step on 'cracks.'
- They don't say, 'Come on, hurry up.'
- Usually grandmothers are fat but not too fat to tie your shoes.
- They wear glasses and funny underwear.
- They can take their teeth and gums out.
- Grandparents don't have to be smart.
- It's funny when they bend over, you hear gas leaks and they blame their dog.
- They have to answer questions like 'Why isn't God married?' and 'How come dogs chase cats?'
- When they read to us, they don't skip. And they don't mind if we ask for the same story over again.
- Everybody should try to have a grandmother, especially if you don't have television because they are the only grownups who like to spend time with us.
- They know we should have snack time before bedtime and they say prayers with us and kiss us even when we've acted bad.
- A 6-year-old was asked where his grandmother lived. "Oh," he said, "She lives at the airport and when we want her we just go get her. Then when we're done having her visit, we take her back to the airport."
- Grandpa is the smartest man in on Earth! He teaches me good things but I don't get to see him enough to get as smart as him!

For More Information Contact:

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