

the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him” (Genesis 2:18, *NIV*). With His creation of Eve, God established a pattern of interdependence for all future mankind.

It is also God’s intention for all Christians to practice intentional interdependence. After Jesus ascended to heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to believers. The indwelling Spirit bestows gifts on each believer so that the body of Christ will forever function as an interdependent unit. “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ... [Y]ou are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it” (1 Corinthians 12:7, 27, *NIV*).

Webster defines *interdependence* as “a relationship in which each member is mutually dependent on the others.” This is precisely what the Apostle Paul tells us: “For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (Romans 12:4-5, *NASB*).

When I was in Israel last year, I observed an elevated aqueduct, consisting of many stone arches that had been built by the Romans years before the Apostle Paul wrote the above words to the Christians in Rome. Those arches, made up of dozens of individual stones, each resting upon the other without the need of any mortar, still stand after more than two millennia of wars, earthquakes, fires, and storms, demonstrating the strength that can be achieved from interdependence.

And so it is in our interdependence, and not our independence, that our Church finds its greatest strength. We can only recover from these losses that will become more frequent in these last days if our cry is not “I can do it!” but “Together, we can do it!”

We practice interdependence when we ...

... see everybody as important, recognizing that everyone has something to offer to the kingdom of God;

... accept the fact that God has gifted everyone to serve and that everyone has been given specific gifts from God to serve in some capacity;

... embrace a common mission, coming together to accomplish something much bigger than any one of us could ever do on our own;

... join together in the yoke with our Savior to finish the saving work that our God has called us to do.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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# The STEWPOT

A POTPOURRI OF PRACTICAL IDEAS to help you become a better steward

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## A DECLARATION OF INTERDEPENDENCE

BY RICHARD MAGNUSON

*“Share each other’s burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2, NLT).*

As the proud grandparents of a two-and-a-half-year-old, my wife and I share the joy of witnessing her development as she progresses through the toddler stage. Anyone who has raised children can attest to the excitement that kids experience as they learn how to do things all by themselves. Whether it’s putting on her own shoes or cracking the eggs to help make waffles with PaPa, “I can do it!” has become our granddaughter’s personal declaration of independence. At the same time, she recognizes that there are many things that she cannot yet do on her own, and she is quick to cry out “Grandma, help!” when she needs assistance.

Since creation, mankind has carried two conflicting needs. We have the need to be free, independent, and able to do things on our own. We also have the need to be dependent, to put ourselves in the hands of others when our own resources are



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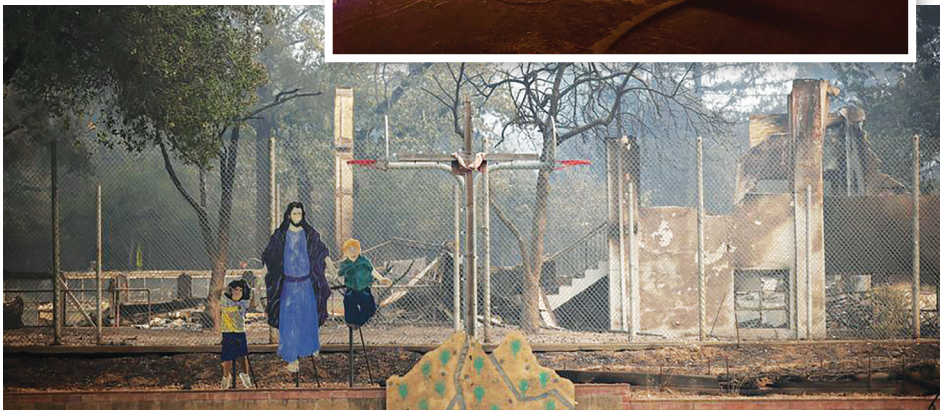
insufficient – without feeling like we are a failure or fearing that others will think so.

In our culture we struggle to balance these needs. Often we revere successful “self-made” men and women while feeling less admiration for those who occasionally need our help. Our reverence for independence in the face of God’s call for us to be interdependent is one of the many examples of His ways being radically different from human ways. During times of crisis that overwhelm our individual abilities to cope, we are reminded that God’s design for healthy families, churches, and communities has always included interdependence.

In late September, during my family’s Sunday morning ritual of waffle making, a text message flashed on my phone. Just before 4 a.m., a fire had broken out in Napa County near the place Ellen White had lived from 1900 until her death in 1915 – a home she named Elmshaven. Throughout the morning and into the afternoon, the reports came in, sketchy, sometimes conflicting as to the scope of the disaster. What was apparent was that the Glass Fire, pushed by strong winds, was quickly sweeping up toward the Adventist Health St. Helena hospital and the surrounding Deer Park community, devouring homes and forcing thousands of residents to flee to safety.

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Park had been lost and that the main building at Foothills Adventist Elementary School had completely burned, along with The Haven church’s community hall nearby. Although the fire had raged all around Ellen White’s beloved “haven in the elms,” with firefighters unable to reach the home through the advancing flames, we were amazed to discover that it still stood undamaged on its green hill. Spared too were the hospital and the neighboring church, The Haven. The fire had grown to over 50,000 acres, crossed the Napa Valley, and pushed its way into Santa Rosa. Miraculously, there was no loss of life.

Once the area was reopened, I drove up Deer Park Road as I had at least a hundred times before, but this time the lush forest on either side was now reduced to cinder and ash. I pulled into the gravel parking lot across from the Foothills campus as my mind struggled to grasp the scope of the destruction. On either side of the road, I saw only the charred remains of cars and chimneys rising from the foundations of homes. In front of me stood rose-colored block walls, all that remained of The Haven Thrift and Community Service Center.

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PASTOR  
JOSIE ASENCIO

In addition to my work in planned giving, I also serve as the conference property manager, and I had recently come across a history of the center, written by Lois Woods, the Dorcas leader in 1976. Built in 1962, largely with a generous gift from the estate of a church member, this center had served the Napa Valley for nearly six decades, providing food, clothing, and furniture to those in need. Even in the years before this center was built, members at The Haven church had been putting into practice Ellen White’s admonition: “First meet the temporal necessities of the needy and relieve their physical wants and sufferings, and you will then find an open avenue to the heart, where you may plant the good seeds of virtue and religion” (*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 4, p. 227).

Many members of The Haven church – who had for years served others in times of hardship – lost their homes in the Glass Fire. Reflecting on the impact of the fire on her church members, Pastor Josie Asencio said: “Our church membership has people who like to be independent. This experience is reminding us of the importance of our interdependence. We cannot only be givers; we must also practice the art of receiving. It is the interaction between both that helps us to be better givers and better receivers and to understand grace and salvation.”

It was God’s plan from the very beginning to create humans for relationships and interdependence. Yes, Adam had a close relationship with his Creator, but God knew that he did not have a companion who was like him. “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for