

### **A Message from Pastor Travis Dean**

We recently planned a birthday party for our two children, Elijah and Abigail. Their birthdays are only six days apart, so we combined the celebrations of their births into one special event. Some of Elijah and Abigail's favorite snack foods were provided. A delicious ice cream cake from Dairy Queen was served. And yet, their interest in the food was minimal. Several different gifts were presented for their pleasure and enjoyment. And yet, when their friends had all left, their interest in the new toys was abated.

Their experience reminds me of a story recorded in Genesis chapter 3. According to Genesis 3:8 it was the Lord's custom to walk with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden each evening. The flowers were radiant in their multi-colored beauty. The animals offered endless topics of conversation. And yet one evening the Lord came down for their usual stroll, and Adam and Eve were nowhere to be found. They had eaten the forbidden fruit of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:17; 3:6). As a result of their sin, they had become afraid of God and had hidden from Him. Genesis 3:22-24 describes how Adam and Eve had to leave the beautiful Garden of Eden. And even though the flowers and animals were still there, the Lord's enjoyment in walking through the garden was diminished. It just wasn't the same without Adam and Eve.

The Bible is one long story about how God works to get Adam and Eve (with all their descendants) back in the garden. Finally, in Revelation 21:1-3, God is re-united with His people in a newly created world. A loud voice from heaven proclaims, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God."

As Elijah and Abigail know, the friends make the party. And as God Himself has experienced, fellowship with His people is the ultimate meaning in life. So even though, beginning in April 2011, I will no longer be the pastor of the Lancaster SDA Church, my family's interest in our church remains. We anticipate continuing the friendships that have resulted from our time here.

One day, God Himself will declare, "Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5). May we all be there to experience fellowship with God and each other in a world made new.