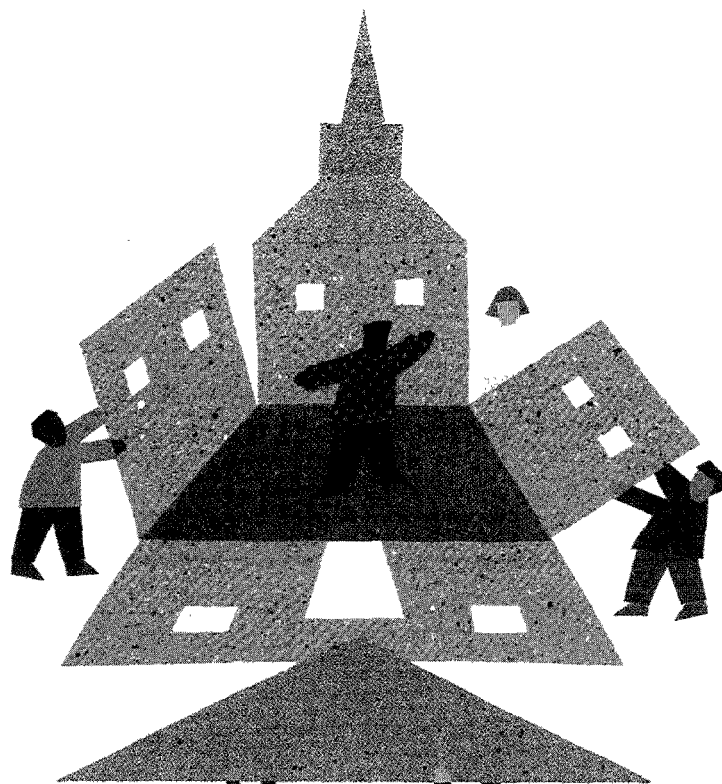


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5 **Fellowship, our greatest witness**
It is the welcoming and embracing spirit and action of a local congregation that does as much as anything to win people's hearts to Christ
James Coffin

10 **Seventh-day Adventists and the Lord's Supper**
A discussion of the unique Seventh-day Adventist belief in the Lord's Supper and foot washing
Ekkehardt Mueller

14 **Controversies great and small: Seventh-day Adventists and conflict management**
Principles for handling conflict in the local church and elsewhere
Helen Pearson

18 **Church planting as growth strategy: Is it effective?**
An investigation of the relationship between church planting and kingdom growth in the churches in the New York Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Skip Bell and Rod Davis

24 **Sunday-morning evangelism: A case study**
A candid report by a local pastor of the pros and cons of running a Sunday-morning evangelistic outreach
Dave Gemmell

27 **Encounters with Adventist women planting churches**
The historic and contemporary evangelistic contribution of women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church
Douglas Tilstra

30 **My covenant with God: Seminary student in front-line evangelism**
A special inspirational feature with the "Year of World Evangelism 2004" emphasis in mind
Mark L. Lastimoso

IN

Editorial

4

Pastor's Pastor

22

HOW WE ALL LONG FOR A CHURCH WHERE WE CAN BE OPEN TO SHARE OUR FEARS AND OUR SHORTCOMINGS WITHOUT FEAR OF DENOMINATIONAL RECRIMINATION.

Displaying the Commandments

I have been enjoying your publication for several years. While I don't always agree with everything, it is thought-out, researched, interesting, and thought-provoking.

I was interested in your comments printed in the November issue concerning the situation in Alabama [U.S.A.] and the display of the Ten Commandments (see James Cress, "Displaying the Commandments," November 2003). In September 2003, I preached a sermon on the same subject and found our views to be startlingly similar.

Keep up the good work.

—Herbert Freitag, pastor, Chapel-by-the-Sea, Clearwater Beach, Florida.

They say that when you begin to talk to yourself, signs of mental challenge are beginning. Well, I confess I found myself having a bit of a jovial conversation with myself over Jim Cress's comments on Judge Roy Moore's monumental blunder. I have seen and heard several commentaries upon Moore's misdirected crusade, but Jim's has been the most original and best expressed, especially his point about how God tucked away the stone slabs under layers of curtains and metal

in the earthly sanctuary. This itself sends a loud and clear message about the Decalogue's expression for the Christian individual and community of faith. God's law was never meant to be on display in granite or any other rock type, but upon the hearts and minds of those who love Him. In fact, the true original copy of the Ten is not found on earth, but in heaven, of which the earthly was but a type. Speaking of hidden!

If only the energy expended in the "faithful" who prostrated and wept at Moore's version of obedience to conscience could be spent through Christian acts of love, compassion, and service, what a different [world] we'd have. My hope and prayer is that all ministers who read *Ministry* will take to heart Jim's fine display of the real issues over that outlawed Ten.

—Kevin James, pastor, Ogden, Utah.

Bible flameout

Thank you so much for the article "Bible Flameout" (January 2004). Something that I know has happened to many of us throughout the years. I was, however, sorry to see it written pseudonymously, a telling fact in itself. How we all long for a church where we can be open to share our fears and our

shortcomings without fear of denominational recrimination. Such a forum for this level of honesty would have made a good article even better. All the best, "Jon Christian," and to all the other "Jons" out there.

—Rev. Dr. Bill Jackson, Condon, Queensland, Australia.

Appreciation

I am writing to inform you that I am growing spiritually in my ministry as a pastor as a result of reading *Ministry*.

May my sweet and only Friend Jesus continue to help you to forge ahead. ■

—Austin Okpatah, pastor, Ilaro, Nigeria.

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Subtly double-minded

Many of us feel overworked—and at times overproud in our abilities to multitask. We have our careers, job responsibilities, coworkers, civic duties, responsibilities to care for those less fortunate, and extended families. We have church duties, community concerns, and financial worries. Then there is terrorism, crime, war—the issues are overwhelming.

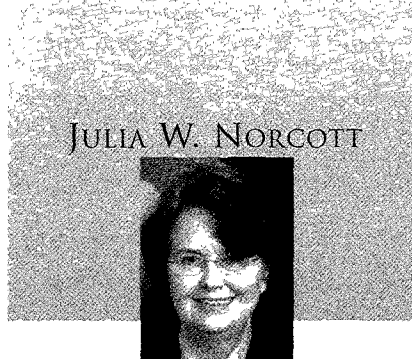
But for Christians, there's a better way, a surer priority. That priority, after securing our relations with God, is to ensure our personal care (Exod. 20:3), which includes the spiritual, physical, and mental dimensions of life (1 Cor. 6:19). Then comes our relationship with our spouses (Eph. 5:25-33) and our responsibilities to our children (Deut. 7:7), followed by obligations we have to the world surrounding us.

Of course the pressures are relative and subjective. We know full well, there are people in much worse circumstances than we are, which reminds us to be grateful, to be thankful, to count our blessings, to think of others more than of ourselves. A fresh look at the book of James, particularly chapter 1, can be especially helpful.

In rereading that chapter the other day, I realized that perhaps some of us don't really take in the full impact of its message. We love verse 2, because it tells us to be happy about our trials—opportunities to grow spiritually. We feel reassured by verse five that we will get wisdom if we ask God “who gives generously to all” who ask.

But grateful thoughts alone are not enough to stop the stress, because we're missing part of the equation.

We tend perhaps to somewhat ignore verse 21. We need to *humbly* accept the word of God planted in us which will protect us and in this way help save us. The idea of God's protection is soothing, but the humility part is



less easily swallowed. Humility means honestly—*honestly*—letting go. It does not mean, “I know they are wrong, but I'll just be the bigger person”; or, “I know I'll get my stars in heaven for bearing this burden that I don't deserve to bear.”

But we are not called to bear our burdens alone. Jesus has done that—and beyond—for us. The slashing of the whips onto His arms, the smashing of the thorns into His head, the pounding of the nails into His arms and into His feet were not the worst of His suffering. Beyond the physical pain, He suffered the weight of the guilt of all our sins, which so overwhelmed Him that He could not feel the presence of His Father. He suffered this agony *for* us. When we begin to feel like bearing our burdens alone, we must remember that doing so is not our part.

Easier said than done, and I believe God knows and has mercy on our human shortcomings. Yet I also believe it is our responsibility as Christ's followers to take time to read and absorb the true meaning of Jesus' message, given to us through the writers of the Bible, and apply that message to us. It is easier to read, for example, James 1:14, 15 and wish *other* people would listen and learn how they should treat others. We nod our heads along with the sermons we know a lot of people need to hear.

But often at least part of that sermon may somehow apply to all of us if we listen closely—and with an open heart.

James 1:14, 15 reminds us that every person “is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.” Surely this warning fully applies to all of us who are tempted to feel reassurance for our suffering without actually praying for and being open to developing that true humility that is the basic ingredient of the whole recipe.

Cookies without sugar don't taste very good—or so said my children after my post-camp-meeting experiments. Perseverance without humility, likewise, doesn't add up to the Christlike character we pray to have. In the full context of the message, we must accept humbly—not self-righteously—the complete “word [of God] planted in [us]” so that our character becomes “mature and complete” (1:4).

In other words, accepting the complete word of God is accepting God's work in its pure form. Any kind of self-talk that implies that he or she is just a little wiser or better—the kind of self-talk that we do secretly to help us be able to *act* the way we think we should—is not only arrogant, it is *impure*—as James says, it is “double-minded” (verse 8).

We all pray for our characters to be molded into what God wants us to be. Let's also remind ourselves to take the time to slow down a little for priority one and take in the complete context of God's words. For now, I'm working on giving—completely, purely—whatever problems arise to God, who strengthens me as I *humbly* accept His gifts. ■

**All Scripture passages in this article are from the New International Version.*

Fellowship, our greatest witness

James Coffin

This article is adapted from a devotional presented by the author at Annual Council 2003.

Twenty-one years ago I was serving as associate pastor of a large suburban congregation when I was invited to join the editorial team at the *Adventist Review* as an assistant editor. Suddenly a word unfamiliar to our four-year-old son came into frequent use in our home—"editor." The word sounded interesting, but what did it mean? There was nothing in his limited experience to serve as a reference point.

Not long after, our son lined up his toy animals on the couch (his favorite was a little dog named "Doggie"). Addressing them in good preacherly fashion, he solemnly intoned, "Ladies and gentlemen, dogs and editors." To him, it seemed an appropriate use for his newfound word.

As Christians, we seek to share with the world "something" we call God. The word sounds interesting. But what does it mean? There's nothing in normal human experience to serve as a reference point. How do we put the notion of God into practical perspective?

The Word

John tells us that Jesus was the Word, and "the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14).^{*} What does that mean? Why did John employ such a

metaphor? Let me offer a suggestion.

In my mind are thoughts. As far as you're concerned, they have no form. But when I take those abstract thoughts and put them into words, they suddenly become accessible to you. They suddenly assume meaning, shape, and form.

That's what Jesus did in revealing to our world what God is like. Jesus became to God what words are to thoughts. Jesus put God into tangible form—a form we can begin to understand. "The Word became flesh."

Jesus came with a specific mission. John 3:17 says, "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." And in Jesus' last prayer before His death, He says, "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18). He was talking about all of His followers. That includes you and me.

You and I have a role not altogether different from Christ's. We have to ensure that the Word becomes flesh. And we do it by the way we live. Our lives are the main reference point from which others will derive their understanding of God.

Not long ago I was asked to talk about the relationship between fellowship and witnessing. As I pondered what to say, it suddenly struck me that fellowship is the witness. Jesus said, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). That's the acid test! That's the proof. That's the unassailable argument. In fact, 1 John 3:14 says that "we know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers."

Honest, down-to-earth fellowship is the greatest witness we can give.

John makes the point even more strongly: "For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother" (1 John 4:20, 21).

We can present truths with crystal clarity, but if we have no love, we are "only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1). Our greatest witness isn't the words we say—although we need to say the right words. It's not the perfection of our theology—although our theology needs to be right. Rather, it's how we let that theology work in our lives, manifested in the relationship we have with each other.



James Coffin is senior pastor of the Markham Woods Seventh-day Adventist Church in Longwood, Florida.

Our fellowship needs to embrace more than just our own little circle. It needs to include other Christians and other denominations. We may not have the same level of intimacy with other denominations that we have within our own. But when we shut out other denominations or ride roughshod over them, we're not allowing the gospel to work as it should. And when we exclude the down-and-outers, when we shut out people who don't live up to our standards, we miss out on a great blessing—not to mention the chance to *be* a great blessing. A tightly knit fellowship that doesn't reach out to others isn't truly fellowship; it's a clique.

Club Adventist?

Our view of the church to a great degree determines the nature of our fellowship. And the nature of our fellowship determines how effectively we witness to the world. Is the church a club for saints, fraternity for the perfect? Or is it a hospital for sinners, a rehab facility for the failing and faltering?

The saints' club welcomes those who are spiritually *good*. The rehab facility welcomes those who are spiritually *needy*. The question we need to ask is not, "How can we justify admitting this person to our fellowship?" Rather, it's, "How could we possibly keep this person out of our fellowship?" We're not talking about church membership, but about drawing people in and including them in the life and blessing of the congregation.

A few years ago I was standing in the foyer of a church when a young woman walked in wearing tight blue jeans, heavy makeup, a lot of jewelry, and a leather jacket. As she stood timidly, unsure what to do next, an elderly greeter walked over to her and asked, "Are you a man or a woman?"

The girl looked at the greeter and stammered, "I'm . . . I'm a woman."

"Then why don't you dress like one?" the greeter asked. The girl turned and headed for the door. I never saw her again.

"Some rash, impulsive, yet honest souls . . . will accost those who are not with us in a very abrupt manner, and make the truth, which we desire them to receive, repulsive to them."¹

For too many of us, there's no sense of fellowship. Our sense of what's wrong about the person almost eclipses our sense of love for people and any desire to have the kind of fellowship with them that God longs for.

There's sometimes little recognition that here's a person who, for whatever reason, has come through the door of our church. Now we should take advantage of the opportunity to reach out in love. In great measure we react as we do because our concept of fellowship doesn't include the down-and-outers, the strugglers, those who haven't yet arrived at the standards demanded by our religious club. We want to protect our "fraternity for the perfect."

Law and grace

I remember sitting in a church business meeting discussing the case of a retired pastor who had committed adultery. He had written a letter to the church saying, "Please take my name off the roll."

Raising my hand, I asked the chairman of the meeting, "Do you believe that this man truly doesn't want to be a Seventh-day Adventist? Or do you believe that he wrote the letter because he knows we're going to throw him out anyway, and he feels that his letter of resignation will make it a lot less messy?"

"I'm absolutely certain he wants to be an Adventist," the chairman said.

"Do you believe he's repentant for what he has done?" I asked. The chairman then described the steps the fallen pastor had taken to demonstrate his repentance. And he described the humiliation the pastor felt because of the shame and pain brought on himself, his family, and the church. The man had been stripped of his credentials. Never again would he baptize anyone. Never again would he perform a marriage.

Most of the things that had given meaning to his life for the past 45 years were gone. Now the final blow was that we would disfellowship him.

"Wouldn't it be possible for us just to put him under a vote of censure?" I asked. "He's done something terribly wrong. And he's going to pay for it the rest of his life. But don't we have a place in our church for people who've messed up their lives?"

"I'm sympathetic to your concerns," the chairman said. "But the *Church Manual* says that even if the person shows true repentance, if the sin is grievous, we may need to disfellowship to preserve the fair name of the church. What this man did certainly tarnished the church's image."

By a two-vote margin, the group opted for disfellowshipping.

I'm not saying that the pastor was not guilty. And I have no problem with a vote of censure to officially put our disapproval on record. But when a person comes in tears and says he's sorry and that what he did was terribly wrong and that his life is falling apart because of his sin—that's when he most needs the church. It's vital to ask how we think God is looking at such a person, and what Jesus might, in fact, do with them.

As a group of church leaders, we have it within our power to effect some change. That power may not be as great as we would like. But we need to use what influence we have to create a culture of fellowship that will enhance the witness of the church.

Ellen White makes an important observation: "There is a vast amount of rubbish brought forward by professed believers in Christ, which blocks the way to the cross. Notwithstanding all this, there are some who are so deeply convicted that they will come through every discouragement and will surmount every obstacle in order to gain the truth."²

No matter how many mistakes we make, there are some people who, like bulldozers, will come on through. But let's not force people to become bulldozers in order to become a part

of our church. Let's reach out, help them grow, and watch them become everything that God has in mind for them to be.

What about people who believe differently?

Too often our sanctuaries have become a place where we've declared open season on other faith systems. Shortly before I arrived in my current congregation, a visiting speaker wreaked havoc one Sabbath. One of the members was married to a Roman Catholic. However, she attended church regularly with her husband. Soon she became involved in the children's Sabbath School. Though she wasn't officially a Seventh-day Adventist, she became increasingly attached to the church. This was her congregation, the place where she found spiritual nurture.

The week the guest speaker came, a member of this woman's family was getting married, and all of her Catholic relatives from around the country were coming for the festivities. So she invited them all to visit "her" church. Nearly 20 of them came with her that day.

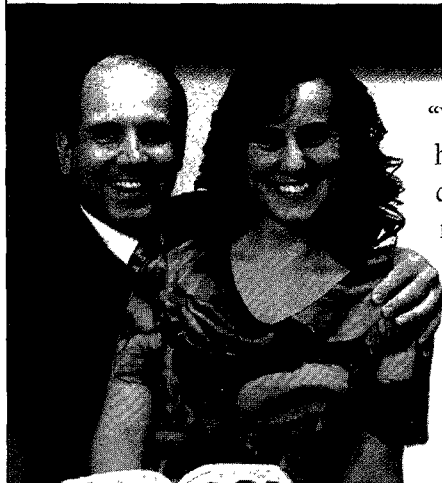
Sadly, the guest speaker decided to have open season on the papacy that day. As nearly 20 visiting Catholics sat in front of him, he tore into the pope. And then he tore into him some more. And still more. Midway through the sermon, the Catholics all got up and walked out. And about 40 Adventists walked out as well—in protest that their church pulpit would be used to annihilate another organization in such a way and with such a spirit. Such events aren't easily forgotten. Their impact lingers for years.

A safe zone

I pastor a congregation made up largely of Adventist professionals. Yet when I arrived I found they were frightened to invite their professional colleagues to church because they never knew what would be said from the pulpit.

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church would be a “no-put-down zone.” (We actually have signs in some areas of the building declaring it such.) We don’t put each other down. And we don’t put down other organizations. We try to look to Jesus and keep our eyes focused on Him. There are other times and other ways to deal with these kinds of differences.

So deeply did professionals in my congregation fear what might be said that it took seven years before I began to see a significant change in the culture of our church. Seven years before people truly began to believe that it was indeed safe to invite their friends and business associates. Now, every Sabbath about 10 percent of those sitting in our congregation are *not* Seventh-day Adventists. But that didn’t develop overnight.

I’m not, of course, suggesting that we don’t disagree with other denominations theologically or that we should never talk about those disagreements. But we can limit the venue. For me, it makes sense to restrict such discussion to situations that include few people, allow face-to-face interaction, and encourage questions and clarification. In short, such negatives should never be addressed in a monologue setting, but only when dialogue is possible.

Fortunately, I pastor a congregation that instinctively does much of what I’ve been describing. It has been wonderful to see people welcomed, loved, nurtured, and just absorbed into the church family. Evangelism by osmosis, we might call it.

The power of open arms

In one case, a young woman was actually a member of our congregation but hadn’t been to church for about 12 years. She married outside the church. They had children. As is often the case, as she looked at her little ones, she suddenly realized that they needed spiritual nurture. She thought, *We need to go to church.*

Her husband, who had no Seventh-day Adventist background, agreed to go with her. With his earrings, pony-

tail, and casual dress, he didn’t look like what we think of as a typical Adventist. Unfortunately, he didn’t feel welcome in the congregation they visited, so he refused to attend again. But his wife wanted her family to go to church.

Telling her neighbor the story, she discovered that her neighbor was an Adventist. “Come to *my* church,” the neighbor said. “My husband’s not an Adventist, either. Yet he goes with me every week. He feels right at home and is very active in the life of the church. Your husband will like it, too. I guarantee it.”

So they came to church—earrings, ponytail, casual clothes, and all. Taking his children to Sabbath School, the man sat and watched. After about eight weeks, he said to the Sabbath School leader, “I’d be happy to lead out at one of the activities tables.”

Now, what should church leaders do? This man has come along. He likes what he sees. He feels at home (despite his differences). And he’s saying, “Here I am, use me!” Do you say “Well, you wear those earrings and long hair. Maybe you should just wait a while. When you come up to our dress code, we’ll let you get involved.”

The Sabbath School leader said she was delighted to let him help. And he did a tremendous job. The kids loved him. He was animated and interesting. A few more weeks passed, and he said, “I’ve noticed that the people who lead out in front do it on a roster basis. I’d be happy to be put on the roster.” So he started taking his turn up front.

About that time we put a notice in the bulletin calling for guitar players to make themselves known so we could use their skills on Pathfinder campouts. The next Sabbath he told me, “I bought a guitar last week. I’ve never played one. But if you need a guitar player, then I’ll learn to play it.” And he did—just so he could help in youth activities.

Looking around, he realized that the culture of the congregation wasn’t into dressing as he did. So his appear-

ance began to change. Then one day he was out in the parking lot talking to the associate pastor. “You know,” he said as he lit up a cigarette, “I need to be baptized and join this church.”

“Wonderful!” the associate said. “In fact, I’d like to have you read an article the senior pastor has written.”

The article obliquely addressed tobacco use. But it addressed it directly enough that the young man got the idea. And the next week he said to the associate pastor, “I get it. I’m not supposed to smoke.”

The young man was baptized in a crystal-clear spring early one Sabbath morning during our annual church retreat. He gave a testimony in which he told about his *spiritual journey* and the fellowship he had experienced in our congregation. “The Bible says that Christians are to be the salt of the earth,” he said, “and this is the saltiest group of people I’ve ever encountered.”

In emphasizing fellowship as our most critical witness, I’m not trying to belittle organized witnessing. I’m just saying that until we create a culture of fellowship, all our organized witnessing is seriously limited. The two need to go together. But fellowship is absolutely imperative.

Admittedly, what I’ve written here isn’t totally balanced. But it’s a corrective to a problem we have all too often. As a corrective, it leans one way. And perhaps having a bias is what we need when it comes to this concern.

So I’d like to conclude with a succinct passage from the apostle Paul that gives the balance. In 1 Corinthians 16:13 we read: “Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love.”

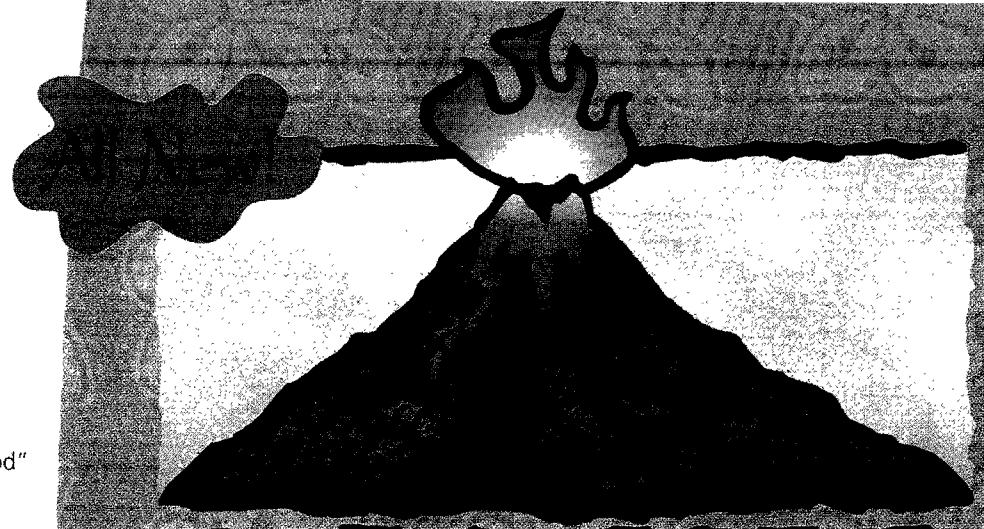
That last phrase bears repeating: *Do everything in love.* ■

* All Bible quotations are from the *New International Version*.

1 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1885), 4:68.

2 Ibid.

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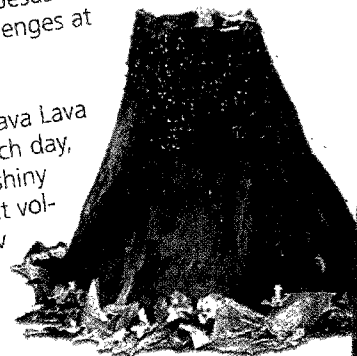
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2. Kids share Jesus' love as they carry out their home.
3. Back at Lava Lava Island each day, kids will add shiny lava to a giant volcano to show how Jesus' love flows!



Day 1

BIBLE POINT:

Jesus brings hope

BIBLE STORY:

Jesus is born

Treasure verse:

"I will put my hope in God"
(Psalm 42:5)



Day 2

BIBLE POINT:

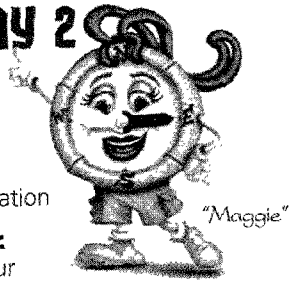
Jesus follows
God's Word

BIBLE STORY:

Jesus resists temptation

Treasure verse:

"I have hidden your
word in my heart that
I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11)



Day 3

BIBLE POINT:

Jesus gives us courage

BIBLE STORY:

Jesus sends out the 12 disciples.

Treasure verse:

"For I can do everything with
the help of Christ who gives me
the strength I need" (Philippians
4:13)



Day 4

BIBLE POINT:

Jesus saves us

BIBLE STORY:

Jesus dies and rises again

Treasure verse:

"For God so loved
the world that he
gave his only Son, so
that everyone who believes in him will not
perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16)



Day 5

BIBLE POINT:

Jesus gives us a reason to
celebrate

BIBLE STORY:

Jesus ascends to heaven

Treasure verse:

"...I am going to prepare a place for you"
(John 14:2)



Seventh-day Adventists and the Lord's Supper

Seventh-day Adventist Statement of Faith #15: The Lord's Supper: The Lord's Supper is a participation in the emblems of the body and blood of Jesus as an expression of faith in Him, our Lord and Saviour. In this experience of communion Christ is present to meet and strengthen His people. As we partake, we joyfully proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again. Preparation for the Supper includes self-examination, repentance, and confession. The Master ordained the service of foot washing to signify renewed cleansing, to express a willingness to serve one another in Christlike humility, and to unite our hearts in love. The communion service is open to all believing Christians. (1 Cor. 10:16, 17; 11:23-30; Matt. 26:17-30; Rev. 3:20; John 6:48-63; 13:1-17.)

EKKEHARDT MUELLER



with the foot washing mentions in passing that it was done at a meal where Jesus and His disciples were present (John 13:1-16). Obviously, foot washing goes along with a meal, both in terms of the regular customs of the day and in terms of the ceremonial meanings that Jesus attached to these two actions.

Foot washing in the Old Testament

The earliest references to washing feet are found in Genesis.¹ There foot washing precedes participating in a meal (Gen. 18:4, 5; 24:32, 33).² Therefore, it seems best for Christians to celebrate both ordinances in conjunction, with foot washing preceding the Lord's Supper and preparing participants for it.

Old Testament references show that it was a custom of that time and an act of courtesy and hospitality to offer visitors water for washing their feet. Obviously, no spiritual meaning was attached to this type of foot washing.

In the book of Exodus, however, the priests had to wash their hands and feet before serving at the sanctuary.³ In this case, the idea of cleanness and purity is present, which allowed a priest to serve his people in the presence of God. This kind of purity seems to have surpassed mere bodily cleanness. A holy God was to be approached by pure people.

With few exceptions, people during Old Testament times seemed to have

washed their own feet after having received some water (Gen. 18:4; 2 Sam. 11:8). Sometimes the act may have been performed by a servant. According to 1 Samuel 25:41, the wife of Nabal was willing to wash the feet of David's men.

Although foot washing was not uncommon and contained the concept of cleanliness, Jesus gave it a new meaning and used a new approach.

Foot washing and the Lord's Supper in the New Testament

Washing feet is mentioned again in 1 Timothy 5:10. Opinions are divided over whether or not this passage refers to the ordinance of foot washing. Whereas S. Horn holds "that foot washing was practiced in the early church is attested by Paul" (1 Tim. 5:10),⁴ H. Kiesler seems to understand it as "a gracious mark of hospitality" as also found in Luke 7:44.⁵ The emphasis on washing the feet of "saints," or God's people, seems to make it more likely that 1 Timothy 5:10 stresses participation in the ordinance of foot washing.

When it comes to the Lord's Supper, we find additional information outside the Gospels. In Acts we hear that "they [the early Christians] were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42).

The phrase "breaking of bread" points to the eating of a meal. It may include the Lord's Supper. But the Lord's Supper is not always in view when we read this phrase,⁶ although it is quite probable that the Lord's Supper is meant in Acts 2:42.

The previous verse talks about receiving the Word, baptism, and people being added to the church. Verse 42 continues with religious activities and ends with prayer. The breaking of bread may very well refer to the Lord's Supper.

Clearer evidence is found in

The Lord's Supper is first mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-25; Luke 22:7-23). It was instituted by Jesus and focuses on Jesus. It is unthinkable to celebrate the Lord's Supper, also called Communion or Eucharist, without reference to Jesus.

Although linked to the Passover, the Lord's Supper is seen to be a new and unique institution in the New Testament, one that has become an integral part of Christianity down through the centuries.

Interestingly enough, the Lord's Supper is not mentioned in the Gospel of John, though Jesus' speech about the bread of life in John 6 seems to contain a reference to it.

On the other hand, foot washing—as the other ordinance instituted by the earthly Jesus Himself—is found in John's Gospel alone, and not in the Synoptics. Rather than being contradictory, these Gospel accounts are complementary. Both ordinances, the Lord's Supper and foot washing, are part of the Passion narrative in all four Gospels.

Interestingly, John's account dealing

1 Corinthians 10 and 11. In chapter 10 Paul discusses the issue of idolatry. He asks how fellowship with Christ and with evil spirits go together. He argues that participation in the Lord's Supper and participation in a pagan cult ceremony are incompatible.

In chapter 11 he deals with an abuse of the Lord's Supper in the Corinthian church, and even reports Jesus' own words when he instituted the Lord's Supper. As in the Gospels, the focus is on the Lord and His gracious provisions.

The beauty and meaning of foot washing

Both foot washing and the Lord's Supper have been understood and practiced differently by Christians throughout the centuries. In some cases Christians avoid one or both ordinances; in others, they celebrate the Lord's Supper on a daily basis and build their faith on an actual repetition of Christ's sacrifice.

They may argue for transubstantiation, consubstantiation, the symbolic character of the emblems and the special presence of the Lord, or the sacramental nature of the Lord's Supper, which seems to be considered automatically effective independent of the attitude of the receiver. In the case of some, the ordinances are too sacred to participate in. In the case of others, there is difficulty keeping a balance between what is common and what is holy.

What is the theological meaning of the ordinances of foot washing and the Lord's Supper?

Starting with foot washing, the following elements should be stressed:

The Lord's love (John 13:1). Foot washing stresses the Lord's love. The paragraph containing the account of how Jesus instituted it is encircled by the principle of love.

In John 13:1 Jesus' love is stressed, His love toward His disciples, even to Judas Iscariot, who became His enemy (John 13:1-4, 10, 11). In spite of what He knew would happen soon, He served the traitor as He did the rest of His disciples. In doing this, Jesus showed us how to live. Love, not retali-

ation, is the principle of the kingdom.

As soon as Judas had left Jesus and the group of disciples, Jesus (according to John's Gospel) issued His new commandment: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34, 35). Foot washing is an act of sacrificial love.

The Lord's service and humility (John 13:4, 5). The Old Testament references to foot washing do not report a single case in which a superior washed the feet of an inferior. Abraham, it seems, did not wash the Lord's feet but did at least provide water for His feet to be washed (Gen. 18:4). But Jesus, God of eternity, stooped down to wash His disciples' and His enemy's feet.

His condescension did not stop with His lowly birth or with His hard life as a refugee and a laborer. The Word who was God, and through whom all things are made (John 1:1-3), the One who could say "Before Abraham was born, I Am" (John 8:58), He who stated that "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30), and whom Thomas would call "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28), He took a towel, girded Himself, and

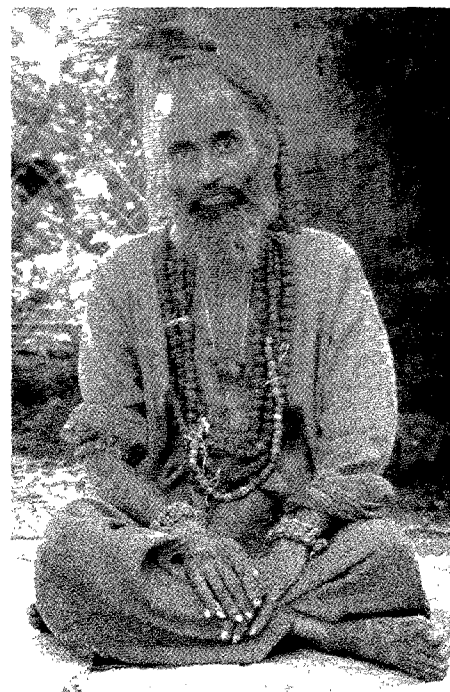
washed His disciples' feet.

Other masters are served by their followers. This Master serves His followers, all of them. Jesus humbled Himself (Phil. 2:8). Obviously it is not enough for us to exhibit humility; the Lord wants us to bow down and wash each others' feet. This may seem objectionable, inconvenient, even humiliating, but the Lord wants us to do it. The ordinance of foot washing is designed "to wash away all feeling of pride, selfishness, and self-aggrandizement."

Foot washing is a sign of willing service and humility.

The Lord's means to stress equality before God and fellowship with one another (John 13:13-16). Although Christianity does not do away with all social distinctions, before God all differences of rank, status, race, gender, and age no longer count. The Christian master bows down and washes the feet of his slave, who is in fact his brother in Christ. In this sense, foot washing is in many ways a critique of social injustice. It encourages intimate fellowship among all the members of the church.

The Lord's means for believers to have full fellowship with Jesus (John 13:8). Peter, who wanted to prevent Jesus from serving him, had to recognize that such a decision would mean separation



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from Jesus. "Peter would much rather wash Jesus' feet than that Jesus should wash his feet; he would prefer to lay down his life for Jesus than that Jesus should lay down His life for him."⁸ But we cannot save ourselves.

Washing each others' feet recognizes that we are always dependent on our Lord for salvation. He served us first, and we have part with Him. Therefore, we serve others and also enjoy fellowship with them.

THE LORD'S SUPPER IS A MEMORIAL SERVICE, NOT A FUNERAL SERVICE.

The Lord's cleansing (John 13:10). Foot washing is associated with cleansing. It is evident from the way Jesus spoke to His disciples about His act of washing their feet that a symbolic cleansing is intended rather than a mere cleansing from the dust of the road. The end of verse 10 shows that Judas was not clean because he had made the decision to become the traitor.

Thus, the concept of cleanness deals with moral purity and moral defilement. Even after having been washed completely at the beginning of our walk with the Lord, further cleansing through the act of foot washing is necessary.

The figurative language of John 13:10 seems to refer to baptism and compares it to foot washing.⁹ The term *louo* ("to bathe," "to wash") is used in Hebrews 10:22 to describe baptism.¹⁰ Members of the Christian community commit sins even after having been baptized. These postbaptismal sins require forgiveness. Foot washing points to the fact that Jesus is willing to wash away these sins and cleanse us.¹¹ We need forgiveness, and forgiveness is granted to us.

The Lord's command (John 13:14-16). Jesus calls us to follow His example. He has washed the feet of His disciples. We wash the feet of our fellow believers. As Jesus set an example in being baptized—and we follow Him—as He set an example of how to celebrate the Lord's

Supper—and we follow Him—so Jesus set an example in washing the disciples' feet—and we are to follow Him in this also. We, the servants, are not greater than the Master, and discipleship involves imitating the Lord and Teacher.

The Lord's blessing (John 13:17). Finally, Jesus declares those blessed, fortunate, and happy who participate in foot washing. It is not an empty ritual. Maybe we have to detect anew its deep meaning and implications and gain a

greater blessing by thoughtfully washing each others' feet. A blessing is waiting for us.

The beauty and meaning of the Lord's Supper

The foot washing with the aspect of cleansing has set the stage and the tone for the subsequent Lord's Supper.

Salvation through Christ (Matt. 26:17-19). The Lord's Supper was originally linked to and grew out of Passover. Both Passover and the Lord's Supper still share some common elements. The participants eat. They drink of the cup. Their thoughts turn to God, and God intervenes. He brings about salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. All slavery is gone. Freedom is restored. We can enjoy fellowship with God and serve Him willingly. We are saved through Jesus Christ.

The means of salvation: Christ's flesh and blood (Matt. 26:26). In the Lord's Supper, the bread represents the body of Christ and the contents of the cup, the blood of Christ. The life of Jesus and His death are the only means for our salvation. By celebrating the Lord's Supper, we recognize that all attempts to save ourselves are futile. We are dependent on what Jesus has done for us, not on what we have done, are doing, or will do.

In light of the Cross all our attempts at self-improvement and all our intrigu-

ing ideas of using the powers of the self in order to reach our full potential are useless.

Remembering Christ (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24). The Lord's Supper is taken as a remembrance of the substitutionary atonement. Because we forget so easily, because we may tend to grow too accustomed to the gracious gift of salvation, because we are imperiled by our reliance on ourselves instead of on the Lord, we constantly have to remember what Jesus has done for us. The Lord's Supper is a memorial service, not a funeral service. It is a joyous celebrating of the love of the Godhead and the sacrifice of Christ that has brought us to full salvation.

The fellowship of Christ and unity in Christ (1 Cor. 10:16, 17). In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul stresses to a great extent the concept of *koinonia*. The term can be translated as "fellowship," "a close mutual relationship," "sharing in," or "participation" to name some possibilities.

In the Communion we participate in the blood of Jesus. "Those who receive the cup rightly receive Christ. They are bound together in fellowship with Christ. . . . Such a reception is, of course, a spiritual process, and therefore takes place by faith. . . . The statement about the bread must be understood similarly: the broken loaf means a participation in the body of Christ."¹²

The fellowship with Jesus produces fellowship with those who belong to Him.¹³ Because we partake of one bread, we become one body. The Lord's Supper contributes to the unity of the church.

The new covenant in Christ (Matt. 26:28). Jesus taught that the cup that we take represents the blood of the covenant. A new covenant was already promised by God through Jeremiah. There are elements of continuity and discontinuity between the old and the new covenants.

God's basic law and intentions would not change. But whereas the old covenant only foreshadowed the new covenant, salvation became a reality under the new covenant, not through

the sacrifices of animals but through the sacrifice of Christ. "In the Last Supper this new covenant became a reality. As the disciples partook of the cup, they participated in the provisions and power of that new covenant, made possible by Christ's death. . . . In Bible times a covenant was often consummated with a meal. By eating together, the parties committed themselves to fulfill their pledges. . . . Jesus would shed His blood for them, making possible their salvation; He also agreed to prepare for them a place in God's kingdom, to which He eventually would take them. . . . As their part of the agreement, Christians partake of the emblems of His sacrifice as evidence of their compliance with the terms of the covenant."¹⁴

The covenant concept stresses the close relationship between the two parties involved in the covenant. We enjoy such a close relationship with God.

Forgiveness through Christ (Matt. 26:28). In taking the Lord's Supper we remember that our sins are taken care of by Christ. One of the most important elements of the new covenant, especially stressed in the book of Hebrews, is the fact that forgiveness is a reality to those who repent and believe.

We do not need to live guilt-ridden lives. We do not need to fear God or Christ's second coming. The Lord's Supper reminds us that we are free from sin and guilt as we accept Christ's gift of redemption and forgiveness and commit our lives to Him.

The expectation of Christ's second coming (Matt. 26:29; 1 Cor. 11:26). The Lord's Supper not only takes us back to the life and death of Jesus but points ahead to Christ's second coming.

By partaking of the emblems, we remember that Jesus has promised to eat and drink with us again in His Father's kingdom. By partaking of the emblems, we confess that we are eagerly waiting for His return.

Loyalty to Christ (1 Cor. 10:21). It is a serious contradiction to attempt to worship Christ by celebrating the Lord's Supper while we worship ancient or contemporary idols. The Lord's Supper calls for us to express our loyalty to

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Christ as the supreme Lord of our lives and challenges us each time we take part in its emblems to recommit our lives to our only Savior and Hope.

Proclaiming Christ (1 Cor. 11:26). Participation in the Communion is an act of proclamation. We confess that we are followers of Christ, in order that we may rely on His merits only. We are grateful with all our heart and mind for His life, death, and ministry for us, and we look forward to and count on His second coming.

We keep our priorities in order because of what He has done for us, is doing for us, and will be doing for us.

Living lives worthy of Christ (1 Cor. 11:27). Finally, the Lord's Supper has an ethical dimension.

Paul discusses abuses of the Communion in 1 Corinthians 11 and stresses that we cannot play with the Lord's Supper but must celebrate it worthily. What does this mean? The context tells us that the way in which we treat our brothers and sisters is crucial.

The Lord's Supper not only has a vertical dimension, namely our relationship with God, but influences the horizontal, our relationship with each other.

Conclusion

Foot washing and the Lord's Supper

are rich and beautiful in meaning. In them our Lord wants to meet us, and we want to be open to Him for Him. When we meet to celebrate the ordinances, we lay aside all routine and whatever hinders us to listen to His voice and His story. We accept the Lord's invitation to His wonderful meal. ■

Ekkehardt Mueller, Th.D., D.Min., is associate director of the Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.

1 E.g., Gen. 18:4; 19:2; 24:32; 43:24.

2 See also Judges 19:21.

3 Exod. 30:19, 21; 40:31.

4 Siegfried H. Horn, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1979), 386.

5 Herbert Kiesler, "The Ordinances: Baptism, Foot Washing, and Lord's Supper," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, edited by Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2000), 592.

6 See, e.g., Luke 24:30, 35; and probably Acts 2:46.

7 Kiesler, 594.

8 R. V. G. Tasker, *John*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, revised edition (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1992), 155.

9 See Kiesler, 593; Tasker, 158.

10 In both cases the perfect participle of the verb is used.

11 See, 1 John 1:7 and 9 in which cleansing from sin comes through the blood of Jesus when sinners confess their transgressions.

12 Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, revised edition (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1993), 143, 144.

13 The idea of fellowship may be present already in Matthew 26:27.

14 Kiesler, 598.

Controversies great and small: Seventh-day Adventists and conflict management

Helen Pearson



Helen Pearson is a communication consultant in Berkshire, England.

I work with the business of reconciliation on two levels. As a public relations and communications consultant, I am usually concerned with enabling an organization to communicate better with its external audiences via mass media and other means. As a counselor, I work in communications on a micro-management scale, supporting people's attempts to improve both intimate and professional relationships.

In the course of my work, I've seen clear parallels between the business of reconciliation on the corporate and on the individual level. Almost always, when an organization is having difficulty communicating its work *outside* the organization, some of the problem is that the organization is driven by conflict *inside*.

Good communication inside means the same outside

In my work as PR consultant I have developed the maxim: "An organization's external communication is only as good as its internal communication."

If there is unity at the heart of an organization—a clear shared vision, good working practice, support and supervision of staff, transparent, regular and mutual communication—if all these things are valued in its culture, an organization will have few problems in creating a strategy for communicating with those *outside* the organization.

The same principle applies on the individual level. Internal conflicts hamper effective external communication. People at peace with themselves are less likely to have problems in communicating with others.

People who know their own strengths and weaknesses, people who are ready to recognize and acknowledge their own problems, are less likely to blame their own weaknesses on others, and less likely to apportion blame where it does not belong.

So when we come to talk about reconciliation, the heart of the matter is that internal and external communication in the individual and the group are vitally connected.

Identifying the unwritten rules of conflict

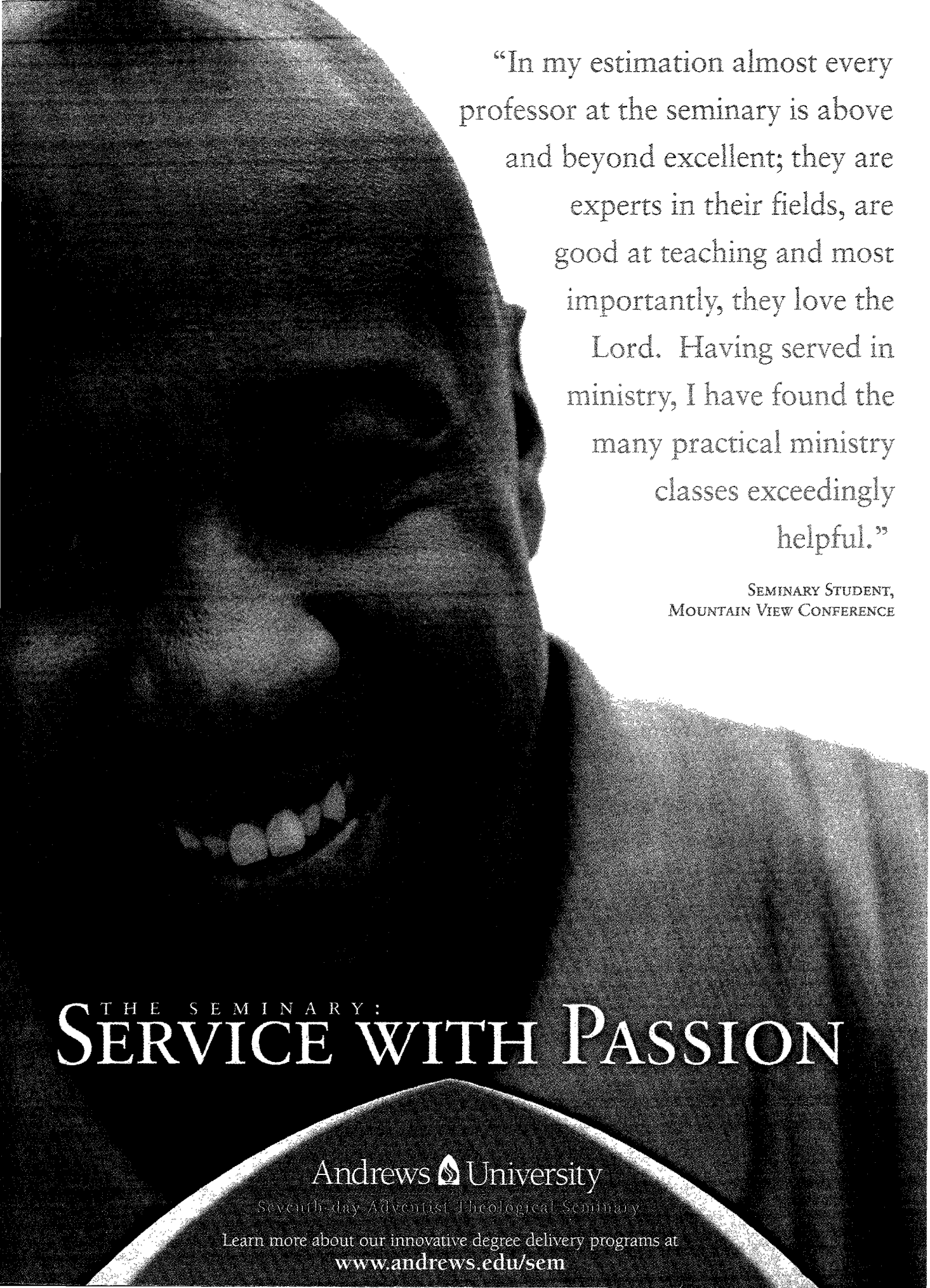
As Seventh-day Adventists and their fellow Christians work to improve their communication with what are sometimes viewed as unreceptive publics *outside* the church, it may be helpful to look at the dynamics of relationships *inside* the church. What sort of conflict resolution do we practice?

First of all, conflict is an everyday experience in every Seventh-day Adventist church or conference I have ever known. How do we relate to these conflicts? What are the internal messages—the unwritten rules about conflict and its resolution in the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

The Mennonite peacemaker John Paul Lederach¹ invites churches to examine their own dynamics and design their own versions of "The Unwritten Rules of Conflict Management in Our Church." I've accepted that invitation and asked myself: What are the unwritten rules when conflict arises in a group of Seventh-day Adventists—in an Adventist institution, on a church board, in a Sabbath School class, and even in a Seventh-day Adventist family?

The unwritten commandments are, it seems, as follows:

1. Thou shalt be nice. Niceness is the essence of Christianity.
2. Thou shalt not confront others in public. The church is our home and conflict belongs in the outside world; out there, not among us in *our* home.
3. Conflict is nasty and unmanageable, it is painful and messy. Yes, it is evil and raiseth thy blood pressure.
4. If challenged or confronted in public,



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thou shalt not listen to thine enemy but prepare thy speech while thine enemy is still speaking.

5. Thou shalt not speak *with* nor look *at* contentious persons who are likely to disagree with thee. Those who have raised thy righteous anger are to be avoided. As the apostle Paul says: Have nothing to do with anyone who causes divisions (see Titus 3:10, 11).

6. Thou shalt not speak to those with whom thou dost disagree lest they lead thee into the sin of anger. Thou shalt rather get angry with them and talk about them behind their backs.

7. Thou shalt not show emotions in public—if thou art a man, it is better to maintain a remote silence than to show controlled emotion. If thou art a woman, thou shalt not argue.

8. If conflict arises, thou shalt not discuss thy problems face to face. Go to thy home and write a critical letter or email.

9. If someone disagrees with thee, tell him or her to go home and pray about it until he or she sees that you are right. We have no time to resolve conflicts. We must finish the work.

10. Thou shalt keep the peace at all costs. Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God. Where does it say anything about those with concerns for truth and justice in the Beatitudes?

11. If thou must confront, save thy energy for the church business meeting where thou canst argue about money.

12. If thou dost not like the way things are going in the church, blame the pastor, or the church board, or the General Conference, or “the brethren.” And if all else fails, find another “they” to focus upon.

Like a dysfunctional family, we avoid conflict at all costs until it blows up. And it usually does. Then there *is* pain and schism and division. As the conflict erupts, people inevitably sustain wounds which, if they are not treated and healed, get inflamed again in the next round of conflicts.

As I mix with other Christians, and as I read John Paul Lederach’s commandments for the Mennonites on which those above, for the Adventists, are based,² I am slightly comforted to see that Adventist behavior is not unlike that of other Christians—we are all only too human!

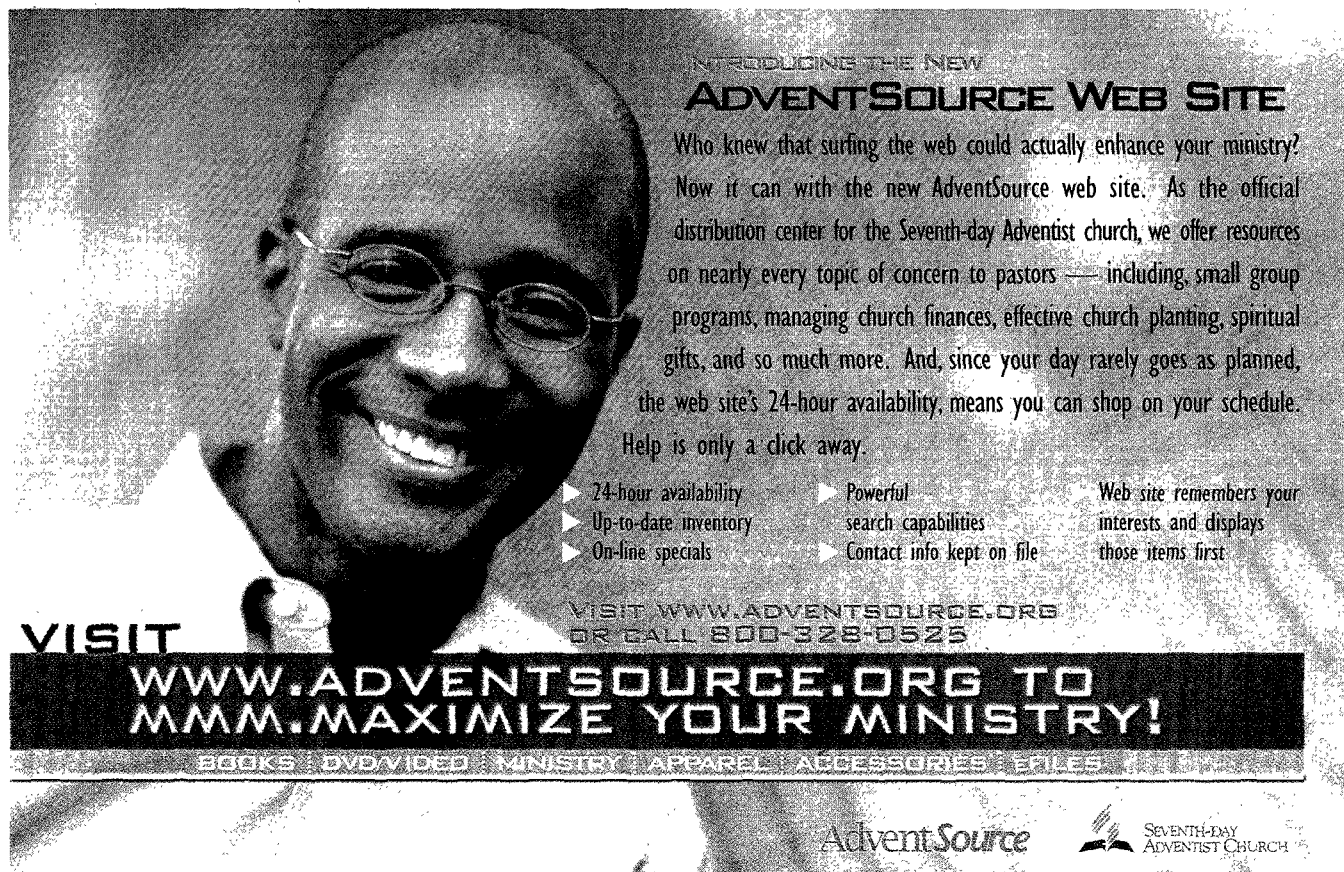
If we are to take the first step in any real reconciliation and be honest with ourselves, we may need to look first at our behavior and then more fundamentally at our theology.

Familial dysfunction

There’s a lack of synchronicity between what we say and what we do.

New beatitudes

As my contribution to a discussion of these issues, I would like to suggest



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twelve beatitudes for peacemakers:

1. Blessed are those who are prepared to move toward a difference of opinion, not away from it.

2. Blessed are those who see conflict as a problem to be resolved, not a battle to be won.

3. Blessed are those who are prepared to give a full hearing to the other side of the question without worrying about what they are going to say next.

4. Blessed are those who can give equal hearing to the demands of the four great values: truth and justice, mercy and peace.

5. Blessed are those who can listen to an outpoured can of worms and identify the real issue.

6. Blessed are those who when confronted by someone who disagrees with them avoid saying directly or indirectly: You are the problem. Your ideas and behaviors are wrong.

7. Blessed are those who, when confronted by someone who disagrees with them, are prepared to say: "We have a problem here. What can we do about it?"

8. Blessed are those who see people not problems—who work with individual concerns, not stereotypes.

9. Blessed are those who are prepared to acknowledge their own uncertainties, defenses, and hang-ups.

10. Blessed are spouses and friends and colleagues who are prepared to ask each other, Do I have a problem? Is something I am doing contributing to this conflict?

11. Blessed are those who are prepared to abandon roles and position and then acknowledge and speak from their common humanity.

12. Blessed are those who are frequently heard to say: Please, Thank you, and I'm sorry.

Theology and conflict

Finally, and most importantly, we must come down to the theological underpinnings of our ideas about conflict. If we are to make headway with reconciliation over the issues in our

churches, institutions, and families, there are four areas we may need to look at:

1. Our understanding of *truth as a process*. Do we need to revive the Adventist pioneers' concepts of "present" truth? Do we need to find, as they had to, truth for ourselves, hammered out among us at personal cost?

2. Our concept of *God's words as comforting*. The apostle Paul reminds us that God's Word—the Word that brings comfort—is also a two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Heb. 4:12). Coming to the truth is not always an easy or comfortable process.

3. The implications of our belief in the *Incarnation*. What did it mean and what might it mean to us, to live *alongside* those with whom we disagree?

4. The object of our *worship*. What does it mean to worship the Servant King alongside the High King of heaven? We must beware of hierarchy in all its ecclesiastical and institutional forms and pursue mutuality in our dealings with each other. In our church organization we should pursue forms of participative management long understood and practiced in secular organizations.

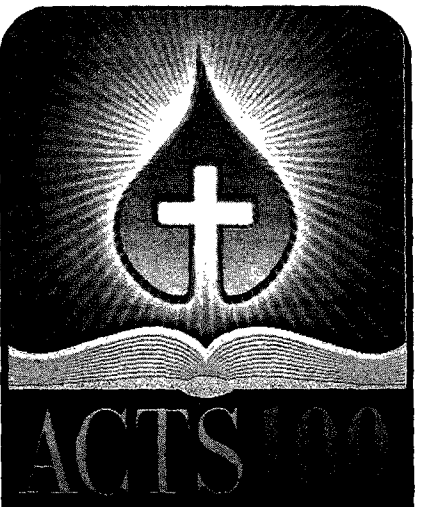
At the heart of everything, we need to find ways of constantly refreshing our belief that the truth about reconciliation is rooted and grounded in the good news of the gospel, which teaches us that we will never be *forgiving* people unless we first know ourselves to be *forgiven* people.

Reconciliation is more than a policy or a strategy or a process; it is the gospel way of life.

Yes, of course we want to communicate better with the world. Fine. Then we first need to communicate better among ourselves. ■

1 John Paul Lederach, *The Journey Toward Reconciliation* (Herald Press, 1999), 101.

2 Lederach, *op.cit.*, 101-103.



acknowledgement • communion • training • service

Growing in Jesus

*There is a fountain,
filled with blood.*

Drawn from Immanuel's veins.

*And sinners plunged
beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.*

"Spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Chrst. We should take it point by point and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His Spirit . . . Beholding the beauty of His character, we shall be changed into the same image from glory to glory."

—*Desire of Ages*, 83.

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Church planting as growth strategy: Is it effective?

Skip Bell and Rod Davis



Skip Bell, D.Min., is associate professor for church leadership and directs the Doctor of Ministry program at the Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.



Rod Davis pastors in the British Columbia Conference, Armstrong, British Columbia, Canada.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in the North American Division emphasizes the strategy of planting new churches. No thorough research in the Church, however, has investigated the claim that church planting is a highly effective evangelistic strategy.

We initiated this study to encourage careful examination of the effects of planting new churches on kingdom growth in the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This study is not intended to provide thorough research comparing the effectiveness of evangelistic strategy, nor to offer conclusive inferential statistical data supportive of conclusions that may be applied across North America.¹ This is an examination of experience in one conference alone. However, we hope this inquiry, within its limitations, will support investment in extensive quantitative research among a broad sample of North American Division conferences.

We approached this study with the assumption that determining the initial fellowship attachment of a new member would be informative regarding the role of a new church plant in the evangelistic process. Our position assumes an association between joining and the ministry activity of a particular church.

We selected the New York Conference (NYC) as the context of this study for several reasons:

1. The Adventist Church has a long history in its territory;
 2. It is a conference characterized by old established churches;
 3. There has been minimal effect of immigration patterns on its territory or church growth;
 4. The conference experienced a significant change in growth history in the decade of the 1990s;
 5. In 1993 the conference listed church planting as one of its action steps to accomplish growth in a vision and master plan for 1993-1998 titled "To the Glory of God";
 6. During the second half of the decade the conference implemented a church planting strategy, beginning church planting as early as 1995;
 7. The NYC provides an observable model in which planting rural churches, Caucasian churches in urban settings, Hispanic churches, and African-American churches occurred simultaneously;
 8. No major metropolitan area public evangelist effected the growth history of the conference in the years 1994-1999; and
 9. The conference accompanied church planting with equal emphasis on pastoral and lay church ministry development, as well as public evangelism.
- For these reasons we believe the NYC offers an opportunity for comparison of church planting with the productivity of other evangelistic activity.
- The research methodology included these steps:
1. We compared the growth of the New York Conference with like conferences in the North American Division in two selected time periods, 1990-1992, the first three years of the decade during which no church planting activity was occurring, and refer to it as the early period, and 1997-1999, the last three years, which we refer to as the recent period;
 2. We identified persons making decisions for baptism in the years 1990-1992 and 1997-1999 in the New York Conference;
 3. We examined the church planting strategy of the conference;
 4. We surveyed new members baptized in the two selected time periods to discover sources of interest, retention, their initial local church attachment, and the dynamic of new church plants in their evangelistic decision; and

5. We surveyed pastors in the New York Conference to discover attitudes regarding church planting as an evangelistic strategy.

The context of the New York Conference

The New York Conference consists of that portion of the state of New York lying north and west of Columbia and Greene, Sullivan, and Ulster Counties. The population of the area in 2002 (the time of this study) was approximately 5,730,000.

The 2001 General Conference Yearbook of the Seventh-day Adventist Church lists 60 churches and a membership of 4,796. Several church groups and companies add to the number of congregations. Twenty-four pastors served the members of the conference at the time of this study.

We identified 16 new groups, companies, or churches planted in the years 1994-1999.

The NYC in the years 1990, 1991, and 1992 averaged 112 baptisms a year. Later in the decade, in the years 1997, 1998, and 1999, the second selected time period, the average had grown to 198. We included professions of faith in all calculations.

During the decade of the 1990s the membership of the conference was negatively affected by migration. Regardless of the adverse effect of the migration, the membership grew from 4,426 in 1994 to 4,745 in 1999, reversing a trend of declining membership. There was a net loss by transfer of letter in the same time period of 46.

We examined the kingdom growth rate in order to remove the factor of transfers of active members by letter, thus revealing conversion growth. Kingdom growth rate is calculated by taking the number baptized in a one-year period, subtracting the apostasies and missing, then dividing by the beginning membership of the year.

In the period of 1990-1992, the kingdom growth rate of the conference was below the North American Division (NAD) rates. The KGR (king-

dom growth rate) was 1.5 percent, -.7 percent, and .7 percent in the NYC, while it was 2.8 percent, 2.7 percent, and 2.7 percent in the NAD in 1990, 1991, and 1992. In the years 1997-99 the kingdom growth rate in the NYC had changed to match or exceed the NAD. The KGR was 2.5 percent, 3.1 percent, and 4.9 percent in the NYC, while it was 2.6 percent, 2.4 percent, and 3 percent in the NAD in 1997, 1998, and 1999.

A survey of the growth patterns of the New York Conference in the 1990s reveals excellent conversion growth rates in the latter part of the decade. Although the Upstate New York region experienced population contraction and economic recession, the conference experienced a reversal of years of membership decline, and had significant tithe growth, a measurement meaningful to some who examine growth characteristics.

The church planting strategy of the New York Conference

The conference voted a formal church planting strategy in February 1997 that had been in preparation for over a year. Implementation of church planting activity had actually begun as early as 1993—the reality which led the researchers to compare the first three years of the decade and the final three years. The strategy contains the following vision statement:

“We see newly planted churches in our large municipal areas, unentered counties, and among distinct people groups. These churches are attracting people who would not be disciplined in existing churches of the New York or Northeastern Conferences. They are healthy, growing churches that attract new people by the proclamation of the Adventist message and joyful, spiritual worship. Catalytic, visionary leaders initiate and lead these new churches with the support of the Conference.”

New Member Survey findings

We administered a survey of 11 questions that solicited information

concerning respondents' length of time in the church, the name of the pastor who baptized them, the church they were currently attending, and their attendance patterns. It also asked for basic demographic information such as gender, ethnic background, education level, and age group.

The questions pertaining more specifically to church planting asked them which church they joined when they became a Seventh-day Adventist, and what the most influential factor was in their decision to join the church.

A total of 223 usable responses were received from the surveys sent out to new members baptized or received into membership by profession of faith during the years 1990, 1991, 1992 (the early group), and 1997, 1998, and 1999 (the recent group). The number of respondents who fell into the early group, 1990-1992, was 93, representing 42 percent of the total respondents. The number who fell into the recent group, 1997-1999, was 130, representing 58 percent of the total respondents.

It is important to remember that the recent group correlates with the time period in which new church planting was occurring in the conference. The recent group, 1997-1999, can be further divided into two subgroups, those who were connected to one of the new church plants at the time of their baptism or profession of faith, and those who were not.

The first finding relates to the percent of additions to the church correlating with one of the new church plants. The number of respondents from the recent group who were connected to one of the new church plants was 32, representing 25 percent of the 130, while in the early period, prior to church planting (1990-1992), virtually all evangelistic growth came from the activities of established churches.

During the years 1997-1999 we estimate that 250 established Adventist members were instrumental in the formation of the new church plants, about 6 percent of the members of the

New York Conference. These members were involved in 25 percent of the conference evangelistic growth.

The second finding relates to biological growth, the addition of new members from the families of established members.

Respondents were asked to indicate from a list of choices a factor they considered to be the most influential in their decision to be baptized or join the church by profession of faith. Their options were "a friend," "spouse/family member," "Bible studies with a group," "Bible studies with a pastor or other individual," "public meetings," or "other."

In a few instances, respondents circled more than one choice, but rarely more than two. When this happened, we decided to include all of their choices in our calculations, based on an assumption that the respondent was having difficulty deciding between two or more factors, as to which was the *most* influential.

The influence of a spouse or family member as the primary factor in a person's decision to join the church was considered to be biological growth; since the factor was within the home or family circle. This usually involves more of a passive witness by the church member, as he or she lives out their Christian life in the presence of their family. An argument can be made that these incidents should be registered differently. However, the determination was consistently applied in the analysis.

In the early group, 52 percent of the respondents indicated the biological factor to be the most influential in their decision to join the church. Among those from the recent group who were not connected with one of the new church plants, 34 percent chose the biological factor, and among those who were connected with a new church plant, 31 percent chose this factor.

This suggests that in the recent group, the passive witness that naturally occurs among families of church members, now accounted for a small-

er percentage of the evangelistic activity, not because it had declined but—as indicated by the sheer increase in numbers of baptisms in the recent period—the other more active forms of witness increased significantly. The variation in the case of new church plants was small.

The third finding relates to the life of personal witness of members. Two factors that must certainly be considered as indicative of church members who are actively involved in intentional witnessing activities are "friend" and "study with a group." These factors suggest that the respondents who chose either of them as the most influential factor in their decision to join the church were subjects of relationship with one or more church members prior to baptism.

A difference was discovered to exist between those who were connected with a new church plant and those who were not. The most influential factor of "friend" was selected by 11 percent of the respondents in the early group.

When we compare this to the respondents from the recent group who were not connected with a new church plant, we find the number slightly lower at 10 percent. However, among those in the recent group who were connected with a new church plant, 16 percent chose "friend" as the most influential factor.

Moving to "study with a group," again 11 percent of the respondents in the earlier group chose this as the most influential factor. The number dropped to 6 percent among the recent group, who were not connected to a new church plant, while among those who were connected to a new church plant, it was 13 percent.

When these two factors are combined under the heading of friendship evangelism, we found that 29 percent of respondents from the recent group who were connected with a new church plant, were influenced by this type of activity. In contrast, only 16 percent of those from the recent group not connected

to a new church plant, and 22 percent from the earlier group, fall into this category.

We found a higher correlation between involvement in intentional witnessing activities and new church plants.

One final finding relates to "public meeting." While one would expect that this factor would play a significant role in the evangelistic growth of a conference, our study indicates that it played a minor role in the New York Conference.

In the early group, only 4 percent of the respondents chose this as the most influential factor. In the recent group the numbers were 11 percent for those not connected with a new church plant and 16 percent for those who were. This number parallels the increase in personal witness. One possible reason for this parallel is that public meetings are more effective when church members are more actively involved in intentional witnessing activities.

Analysis of the growth characteristics of the conference and the data gathered from the survey indicates a relationship between increased lay ministry activity, evangelistic growth, and church planting.

Findings of the Pastoral Survey

We administered a survey of nine questions which solicited information concerning respondents' ministerial role with the New York Conference, as well as specific years of service.

It also asked basic demographic information such as gender, ethnic background, education level, and age group. The questions pertaining more specifically to church planting asked if the ministers had ever been involved in or observed church planting in their district, whether or not, in their opinion, church planting made a contribution to evangelistic growth, and the degree of contribution they felt it made.

Pastors were also asked to rank, based on their own feelings, the five

evangelistic activities of church planting, giving personal Bible studies, inviting friends to church, public evangelism, and small group ministries, according to their contribution to evangelistic growth.

A total of 25 surveys were received from the 32 sent out, representing a return rate of 78 percent.

The first significant trend to note is that every respondent who indicated he or she had been involved in church planting, 17 in total, also indicated that they believed that church planting activities contributed to the evangelistic growth of the conference. Among the remaining respondents who had not been personally involved in church planting activities, 75 percent of them (6 out of the 8) indicated that they also believed that church planting activities contributed to the evangelistic growth of the conference. Out of the 25 respondents, 2 felt that church planting made no contribution to the evangel-

istic growth of the conference.

When the demographic information was analyzed we found no variations in any particular sector.

The group of 23 respondents is made up of 16 pastors, 3 volunteer lay pastors, and 4 salaried (fully or bi-professionally) church planters. They represent every age group, with 8 falling between the ages of 25-39, another 8 between the ages of 40-54, 5 between the ages of 55-65, and 2 over the age of 65. They also represent a variety of educational backgrounds with 2 indicating some high school, 4 indicating some college, 7 who were college graduates, and 10 with post-college training.

The degree of contribution cited by the 23 respondents varied between the three choices of "minor," "average," and "significant." There were two who left this question blank on the survey, leaving only 21 usable responses to analyze. From this number there were four who chose

"minor," eight who chose "average," and nine who chose "significant."

One final area to consider is the result of the question asking respondents to rank the five evangelistic activities mentioned earlier. In connection with this question, there were 19 usable surveys from among the 23 respondents. These indicated that they felt church planting made a contribution to evangelistic growth. Of these 19 respondents, 9 placed church planting among the top 3 spots. When numerical values were assigned to the rankings (first = 5, second = 4, third = 3, fourth = 2, and fifth = 1), "giving personal Bible studies" scored the highest at 71, "inviting friends to church" was next at 61, followed by "public evangelism" at 55, "church planting" scored slightly lower at 51, and finally, "small group ministries" at 47.

It is important to note that 3 of the 4 unusable responses were ones who
continued on page 26

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Hyveth Williams had a very personal "Damascus Road" experience in 1978 that completely changed her life. She attributes her contributions and accomplishments since then to "the miracle, measure and marvel of God's grace."

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Nothing but the blood of Jesus

JAMES A. CRESS



Across my desk last week came an amazingly harsh criticism of Mel Gibson's new movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, which depicts the final hours leading up to Jesus' death. I am not attempting critique of a film I have not viewed. I am critiquing an unfair critique which asserts that the movie is too full of blood; much more than is recounted by the gospel writers.

This critic elaborates that Protestants must reject such copious amounts of blood and suffering based on his assumption that the biblical record minimizes Christ's sufferings. In fact, if you were to follow his specious reasoning to its conclusion, the crucifixion of Jesus would have been nothing more than a surgical procedure which got a little rough.

Ridiculous!

The theme of redemption centers on the Jesus death as our substitute. I deserve to die. Jesus took my place.

Nothing could be more important than to validate and appreciate the suffering of Jesus on our behalf, the shedding of His blood for the remission of our sins, and the promise of His return and restoration commemorated by the communion cup's representation of the new testament in His blood.

When such critics reject what they term "slaughterhouse religion," because they don't like the language of beating, breaking, and bleeding, their argument must be with God. For blood is the language of both the Old and New Testament.

From the first lamb sacrificed after Adam's fall through the passing over of the homes protected by blood on the doorposts to the death of Jesus, Himself the Great Passover, to the promise that He awaits the His opportunity to share the juice of the vine with His redeemed in His kingdom, to the assurance that

He, our High Priest, ministers His own atoning sacrifice in heaven for us, Scripture is filled—type and antitype—with the blood sacrifice of our Saviour.

Both by shadow and reality, the Bible declares, "not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption . . . How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your consciences from dead works to serve the living God . . . without shedding of blood, there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:11-14, 22). The Old Testament describes the shedding of vast quantities of animal blood while the New Testament affirms the vast quality of Christ's shed blood.

Do you see the emphasis? By His own blood! The gospel focuses on Jesus, Himself the Priest; Himself the sacrifice. Once for all. When Jesus poured out His own blood, I see Him pouring out His life for me.

The singularity of Jesus' own offering stands in contrast to the daily offering of sacrificial lambs. Once! Never before! Never again! Christ offered His own blood as an act of God's eternal love. No price was too much! Jesus paid the maximum. Never can there be an doubt about the sufficiency of payment. Jesus paid it all!

I carry a clipping in my Bible that well describes the all-sufficient gift of Jesus' own blood: "No mere human savior could have paid such a price and purchased redemption. Not in the least! Why? The demands of a broken law were too exacting. That law had been broken by finite beings incapable of again rendering complete obedience, but the law demand that a perfect obedience be rendered. Man could not do it. It required a God-man. Only Jesus, the incarnate in human flesh, could do it. And when He did it, He did a completed work. He did not purchase a half pardon; He did not provide a partial blotting out of sin. His was a perfect atonement for us. He set us free. We no longer need to pay the penalty for our transgressions. We are absolutely free of all condemnation and guilt."

How? By His own blood appropriated by faith! Understand the symbol and understand the reality: "Now the blood shall be a sign (a token) for you" (Exod. 12:13). The wages of sin is death. We each have sinned. We have corporately experienced it and we have individually chosen it. We deserve the wages of sin. We deserve only justice, only condemnation, only death.

But God's love and grace has provided an escape. The Lord, Himself, has provided a sacrifice. The Lord has provided Himself the sacrifice. The blood of Jesus Christ becomes the surety of our salvation. The blood of Jesus Christ becomes the sustenance of our lives. The blood of Jesus Christ becomes the title to our heavenly home. Right now Jesus pleads His own blood for me and you.

Reject a Hollywood depiction if you will. Never reject the soul-saving, sinner-redeeming, mind-transforming, sin-atonement, copiously-sacrificed, life-saving blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world! ■

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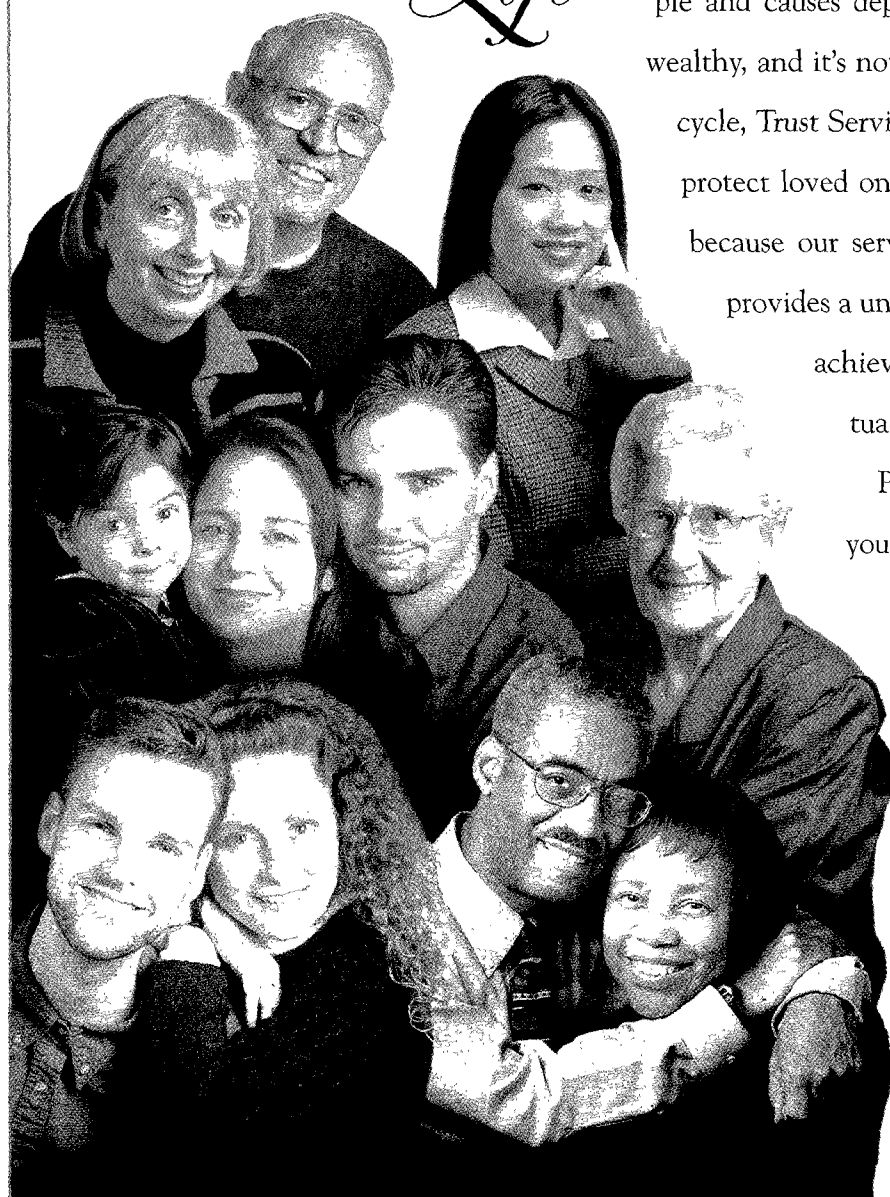
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Sunday-morning evangelism: A case study

Dave Gemmell

Seventh-day Adventist evangelism is going well in many parts of the third world. In the first world, in contrast, it's a different story. There are two trends, however, that do offer some promise for the developed world.

First is the "seeker church" movement advocated by Willow Creek, a huge nondenominational church in the suburbs of Chicago that has sparked a remarkable movement in the first world. Second is the church planting movement that continues to grow within evangelicalism. Where do Seventh-day Adventists fit into the new paradigms?

In this article we will look at a case study from Las Vegas that could shed light on this issue. What can we learn from this example?

The obstacles

I was sitting on a boat on Lake Mead with a group of lay people. We had gone there to brainstorm. Our purpose was to find ways to evangelize the rapidly growing Las Vegas population.

The breeze had been blowing, and every wave that hit the boat seemed to be a further reason for the people of our city not to want to come to church. We were trying to look at "church" through the eyes of the unchurched and had concluded that to many, church is simply boring.

Pews are weird things! Hymns are in a foreign language and a foreign style of music!

Sermons are dull compared to the shows on the Las Vegas strip. And then the biggest obstacle of all: Who wants to go to church on Saturday morning?

That's when I said, "What if we could bypass all of those objections?" The group was quiet for a moment, and then as if on cue the wind died down and the group began to brainstorm in earnest.

What if we did evangelism in a way that was truly pertinent to the unchurched? What if we used popular music with lyrics and a style that was familiar to the general population? What if we held evangelistic meetings in an informal public place where people could come dressed comfortably? What if we could use extensive graphics and video to augment the evangelistic presentation? And what if we offered the meetings at a time when people and the general culture were used to having religious things (or were doing little)—Sunday morning?

The boat got quiet again. Then someone was bold enough to ask the obvious questions: "How in the world could an Adventist church hold meetings on Sunday morning? Isn't that against our religion? How could we get anyone to help us fund something like that?"

Yet despite these concerns, the group was excited enough about the vision to go to work on the objections. They discovered that Ellen White advocated exciting, relevant evangelistic meetings on Sunday morning. "Whenever it is possible, let religious services be held on Sunday. Make these meetings intensely interesting. Sing genuine revival hymns and speak with power and assurance of the Saviour's love."¹

When this was presented to the church body as a whole, there were no theological objections. The whole concept was then presented to the Pacific Union Evangelism Endowment Committee, and we received a grant for our Sunday-morning evangelism project.

Ups and downs of the new project

The Sunday-morning evangelism began on Easter Sunday, 1999. Oversized postcards were mailed out three different times to the ZIP Codes surrounding Cimarron High School, where the meetings were to be held.²

Cimarron was in a great neighborhood for church planting and had been the site of a nondenominational church plant the previ-



Dave Gemmell, D.Min., is associate director of Adventist Communication Network, North American Division, Silver Spring, Maryland.

ous year that had grown from 600 to 2,000 in one year. The marketing professionals gave us the assurance that, based on other marketing campaigns in Las Vegas, there would be about 200 guests for the opening service.

Unfortunately the time change was on the eve of Easter that year, and besides, people woke up to freak snow flurries that morning. Attendance was only 150, including about 50 of our local church members. The next week attendance dropped to around 100, but the spirit was good.

I did the preaching while I continued as senior pastor of Mountain View Church. Because of the good attendance and Union funding, the Nevada-Utah Conference began looking for a full-time church planter. The guests were about one-third Catholic, one-third Protestant, and one-third Mormon, all inactive.

I preached the doctrines of the Adventist Church in a systematic,

seeker-sensitive way. I continued preaching through the summer but was much relieved when a pastor who was deeply interested in this unique evangelism method transferred to Las Vegas from British Columbia.

Meanwhile the costs at Cimarron High School went much higher than originally negotiated. For this reason, the Sunday-morning evangelism was moved to a more economical junior high school, in a less desirable location.

With the transfer another advertising campaign was launched. Unfortunately a mix-up on the ZIP Codes sent the postcards to an area several miles from the new location.

The name of our new group was changed from Mountain View Community to Higher Grounds (a coffee shop motif). The time was shifted to Saturday at 4:00 p.m. to accommodate Xers, who were presumably sleeping Sunday morning. The new pastor began to shift away

from overt Adventist doctrine to simply preaching through the Bible.

Somehow Xers were unable to discover Higher Grounds; attendance dwindled to about 15. The Adventists supporting Higher Grounds gradually dropped out, leaving the core team to about eight people.

After two months of Saturday afternoon services, the time was moved back to Sunday morning at 10:30, and attendance immediately went back up to about 40.

Transitions

Meanwhile, by September 2000, the core team was beginning to press the planting pastor a little harder to teach more Adventist doctrine, begin Sabbath services, and get the group moving closer to becoming an authentic yet contemporary Adventist congregation. He made overtures in that direction but not enough to satisfy the core team.

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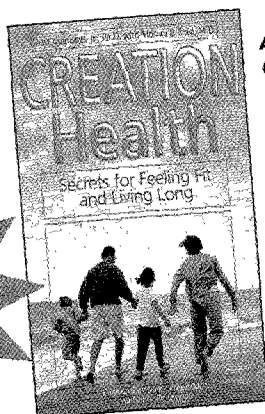
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HELPING OTHERS PREPARE FOR ETERNITY

Some more conservative members of Mountain View Church were anxious that Higher Grounds be more than just a Sunday-morning church funded by Seventh-day Adventists.

During the Christmas holidays, the planting pastor made a decision to change his career from the ministry to journalism.³ A farewell service was held for the pastor and his family on January 14. To enable new leadership to develop, he was asked to worship with Mountain View and not Higher Grounds for a while.

Attendance at Higher Grounds on January 21 was down to about 20, with none of the pastor's disciples in attendance. Two weeks later Higher Grounds was discontinued. To this date there have been no accessions to the Seventh-day Adventist Church because of Higher Grounds.

What did we learn?

As you can imagine, I was extremely disappointed by the results. We had put in more than a year of hard work and great expense.

Despite the outcome, though, much positive came out of our Sunday-morning evangelism experiment. The core team is stronger in the Lord and more evangelistic than ever. Perhaps the most successful part of the experiment was the learning that we gained through it that can be helpful to many churches and church plants in the postmodern world:

◆ A Sunday morning time slot doesn't in itself cause church growth. Even though the Sunday morning time slot was easier than a Sabbath time slot for seekers, it still took massive marketing attempts to get people to come.

◆ It is difficult to get Adventists to commit to helping out on Sunday morning. Although there was a good initial response from Mountain View members (and no theological objection), Adventists could commit only to sporadic help on Sunday morning.

◆ It is difficult to get new Christians to transfer from Sunday morning to Sabbath morning. Aside

from the possibility of deep conviction over the Sabbath, why should they change days when we are providing great programming for them on Sunday?

◆ Holding back on the unique teachings of the Adventist Church doesn't prevent people from slipping away. The attrition rate for those attending Higher Grounds was about the same as it would be for traditional evangelism.

◆ Children's ministry is important. Many people discontinued coming to Higher Grounds because the children's ministry was sporadic.

◆ Providing an environment where people can come and feel comfortable without having to make any kind of a commitment doesn't cause church growth.

◆ If a church planter is not totally committed to planting an authentic Seventh-day Adventist congregation, the church plant will likely fail.

Would I recommend doing Sunday-morning evangelism again? Absolutely, with some significant changes.

◆ I would not switch leadership in

the middle of the campaign.

◆ I would shorten the length of the campaign to less than two months and then switch to Sabbath morning after the Sabbath had been presented.

◆ I would teach the doctrines of the Adventist Church in a secular or postmodern context and call for decisions.

◆ I would choose leadership that was absolutely sold on Adventism.

If we are to turn the church growth trend around in the postmodern world, we have to be bold. The history of the Christian faith is filled with pioneers willing to take great risks in order to share the gospel. Unless we can create an environment where it is safe to experiment, we will never discover what it will take to put the awesome truths of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in a package accessible to the secular and postmodern people of the first world. ■

- 1 Ellen White, *Testimonies to the Church* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1909), 9:233.
- 2 We used the services of Outreach Marketing found on the Web at <www.OutreachMarketing.com>.
- 3 As of this writing, the planting pastor is serving as an assistant pastor at a nondenominational church.

Church planting

continued from page 21

had indicated they felt that church planting had made a "significant" contribution to the evangelistic growth of the conference. Had these responses been able to be included, it's likely they would have increased the score for "church planting."

The investigators feel the sample base, given its geographical and quantitative limitation, should not be approached with the intention of extrapolating a verifiable comparison of evangelistic methods. The responses do suggest that while value is seen in church planting, it is not viewed as significantly different in value when compared to other more traditional

and proven forms of evangelistic strategy.

Conclusions

Does a relationship exist between planting new churches and evangelistic growth in the context of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America? The discussion should continue, and further research is needed. This single project does suggest a relationship to the objective observer, and provides to the more subjective observer evidence that indeed church planting is an effective evangelistic strategy for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. ■

- 1 The researchers believe the nature of the inquiry and the context of the sample itself lend to discovery from analysis of relationships, and less to discovery from calculated inferential tests of significance.

Encounters with Adventist women planting churches

Douglas Tilstra

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has opened more than 1,000 new churches in North America since 1995.¹ Few of these churches were planted by women. However, during the church's first 100 years or so there were numerous notable church-planting women, among them Lulu Russell Wightman (mid 1800s-early 1900s), Marinda (Minnie) Day Sype (1869-1956),² and Jessie Weiss Curtis (1881-1972). Collectively these women, and about half a dozen others, planted scores of churches.

From 1896 to 1905 *Lulu Wightman* planted 12 churches in the state of New York. Later, with her husband, she planted another five. Bert Haloviak says of Wightman that "the results from her evangelism would rank her not only as the most outstanding evangelist in New York state during her time, but among the most successful within the denomination for any time period."³

Wightman did face some opposition to her dynamic ministry from within and without the church. She was never ordained, though the idea was seriously discussed and almost accomplished. But "her husband noted in a 1904 letter regarding her pay, they had 'fixed her compensation as near the ordained rate as possible.'"⁴

Minnie Sype and her family left Iowa to homestead in Oklahoma following the Oklahoma Land Rush of 1889. During the

summer of 1901 a heat wave destroyed thousands of acres of farmland, including the Sypes' homestead.

Agriculturally the venture failed, but Minnie discovered she could grow something else. That fall she gathered other discouraged farm families to encourage them with friendship and spiritual hope. The gatherings became regular religious meetings. Minnie was the leader and speaker. Her husband assisted her with song services in the meetings and by doing the housework at home.

That winter the group organized officially as the Gyp, Oklahoma, Seventh-day Adventist Church. Minnie had just started her church-planting ministry. The Oklahoma Conference sent her an appreciation check of \$25. That spring the conference leadership hired her as an evangelist and her husband to assist her. For the next 50 years Minnie served as a licensed minister in Oklahoma, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Florida, and the Bahamas.⁵

Jessie Weiss, a 45-year-old successful businesswoman, sensed the call of God to evangelistic ministry and arranged to preach a series of Bible lectures in a large tent near Drums, Pennsylvania. Eighty converts and a new church planted in Drums marked Weiss's success and the beginning of 25 more years of active ministry and church planting.

During most of that time she was single. Her marriage to John Curtis at age 50 lasted only five years before Curtis died. Weiss was noted in the newspapers of her day as a skilled and successful preacher. Her many accomplishments included supervising the construction of new church buildings, fundraising, sponsoring students' education, interim pastoral assignments, innovative graphic designing for sermon illustrations, and the training of others for ministry.⁶

These brief accounts of Wightman, Sype, and Weiss serve as samples of the larger history. Several themes rise from a survey of the women who planted churches in the early history of the Adventist Church. One is that female church planters had a significant role in the early development of the church. Most of them had long, sustained ministries that spanned two decades or more. For the most part they were well accepted even though they did face opposition based on their gender.

Their roles embraced both nurturing qualities and aggressive leadership qualities. Finally,



Douglas Tilstra is associate professor of religion at Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee.

they seemed to disappear, along with other visible female church leaders, in the early 1900s.

Female church planters today

A recent search for contemporary Adventist female church planters in North America revealed only five women who fit that description. As of today only three of those women are involved in church planting. There may be others. My search process indicated the need for better networking and central record keeping for all Adventist church planters, especially female planters.

I interviewed these women by phone between June 24 and July 2, 2002. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Several themes emerged from the interviews with the five women.

One of the dominant themes that pervaded each interview was the fact that gender is only one issue among many that distinguishes one church planter from another. While none denied that gender was an issue, each had a difficult time identifying just which traits in her own leadership style were gender-specific.

In trying to think aloud about the unique gender traits each woman brought to the job, some made comments like, "Maybe that's actually a matter of temperament rather than gender," or "When I compare myself with my [male] church planting partner, I see reversals of the stereotypical gender roles."

These comments and others highlighted the fact that individuals are complex beings and cannot be neatly divided into two or three groups regardless of the method of classification—ethnicity, race, age, gender, or any other grouping. Individuals are unique blends of personal talents, unique backgrounds, varied experiences, diverse cultural heritages, preferences, tastes, interests, and spiritual understandings.

Any classification system that considers only one dimension of an individual, even the dimension of

gender, is a faulty classification system. Administrators responsible for filling positions, such as church planting positions, need to consider the complex blend of traits any candidate brings to the job, not just one trait, such as gender.

When asked about gender-related advantages of female church planters, most women spoke of the female ability to nurture and build relationships more effectively than their male counterparts. Some also mentioned the ability of women to multitask, develop systems, and confront emotional dysfunction in a group.

The message was clear. Female church planters identified specific stereotypical feminine traits and saw them as advantages in their work. They were quick to add that some men also possessed these traits and that personality might account for the traits as much as gender.

Upsides and downsides

Research findings support what these women observed. Daly and Ibarra⁷ found that female managers tended to form webs of inclusion. By contrast, the male managers tended to form pyramids with themselves at the top. Women were more likely to encourage participation; men, more likely to command.

Women were more likely to use communication to establish relationship; men, more likely to use it to establish position. Daly and Ibarra conclude, "Traditional 'feminine' qualities such as nurturing and collaboration represent the kinds of leadership and management skills needed today."⁸

Sharpe reports a variety of studies of current organizations that show this same trend: women out-performing men in management and leadership. Some of the noted strengths are teamwork, partnering, stability, lack of turf protection, coaching, keeping others informed, and inspiring quality work in others. Sharpe suggests that perhaps men ought to take a lesson or two from women.

While the leadership qualities mentioned above may be significant for today's businesses, they are essential for today's church. The church is essentially about relationships—with God and with others. Leaders who excel in relational skills are likely to also excel in leading a church. It appears that female church planters may have an advantage over their male counterparts when it comes to focusing a new church on the essentials of building a community of faith rather than merely creating centers for religious activity.

There is a downside, however, to women in leadership. Most of the women interviewed regarding their roles as church planters also commented that they were not taken seriously as leaders because of their gender. This is a well-documented fact in the general literature on the issue.⁹

Groups do not concede leadership to women as readily as they give it to men. Even after a woman is in a leadership position, she is more likely to be penalized for the same actions that would have been rewarded if she had been a man. One study highlighted this inequity by citing the example of performance review.¹⁰

"Male CEOs and senior vice-presidents got high marks from their bosses when they were forceful and assertive and lower scores if they were cooperative and empathic. The opposite was true for women: Female CEOs got downgraded for being assertive and got better scores when they were cooperative."¹¹

This issue is particularly relevant to female church planters because leadership is such a vital component of starting a church from scratch. It is impossible to harness the necessary resources—financial, human, and otherwise—to start a new church without high quantities of aggressive leadership. A male church planter may be admired for the very activities that bring scorn on his female counterpart.

During the interviews, the women clearly identified the dramatic differences between church planting and

traditional pastoral work. In every case they found closer identity with male church planters than with female pastors. Part of the reason is that church planters, male or female, must assume a posture that is primarily leadership focused and only secondarily nurture focused. On the other hand, many pastors, and almost all female pastors, assume a nurture posture.

This dichotomy poses concerns particularly for women currently in training for ministry. If they intend to enter more traditional pastoral ministry, then a nurturing model will work well. If, however, they enter a church-planting ministry, they need to prepare for an entirely different style of leadership. Their background may not have prepared them for that style or the anguish of being misunderstood as they use it.

Male church planters are likely to navigate this dichotomy more easily. Aggressive leadership is more socially acceptable for them, and they have many more church-planting role models to observe in their own gender.

Female church planters, especially those still in training, may need specific training that will allow them to take the appropriate control necessary for planting a church.

Tied closely to the issue just discussed is the need for female church planters as role models. Most of the women interviewed had little or no networking and certainly no visible role models. They need to become the role models for the generation now in college.

Women training for ministry need to realize that there are other options besides the nurture role of associate pastor for visitation and pastoral care, which many female pastors fill. If they are inspired by the stories of women who are planting churches, it may encourage them to do the same. If they are mentored by women with that vision, they are more likely to succeed as church planters.

The research of O'Neill and Blake-Beard indicates that barriers still exist

for cross-gender mentoring.¹² In time, those barriers will probably be addressed. But in the meantime, perhaps one of the transitional solutions needed is the increase of female church planters who will mentor future female church planters.

One of the church planters interviewed told of the positive impression made on community people when they learned that the new church had a female pastor. It began to break down their stereotypes about the closed-mindedness and irrelevancy of the church. For some it was the first step toward fellowship in the church community.

But another story by another woman stands in stark contrast. During her church-planting experience, she was not supported by some leaders in her church and was actually opposed by others.

The conclusion is inescapable. The corporate witness of the church in North America, at least, will be greatly hurt or helped by what leaders decide and do regarding women as church planters (and pastors).

Issues to address: ignorance and silence

The women I interviewed expressed optimism about the increased numbers of women working in ministry and church planting but also showed concern regarding issues such as sexual harassment, appropriate working relationships with men, support of conference administration, and spousal and family needs.

The church has remained almost silent on some of these issues and virtually ignorant on others. The issues must be intelligently and sensitively addressed if women are to find an atmosphere of welcome and mutuality in the church.

Other issues raised by the women church planters included support from conference administration, ordination, and support structures for spouses and families of church planters. These are all indications that church leaders must move beyond

merely permitting diversity to encouraging it and managing it wisely.

Summary and conclusions

Despite a rich heritage of female leaders and church planters in the Adventist Church, today only a handful of women serve in full-time church-planting ministry. The long, heated debate over women in ministry, and women's ordination specifically, has detracted needed emphasis from a fact of Adventist history.

God has used women as some of the most effective church planters in the denomination. Female church planters, especially prior to Ellen White's death in 1915, were largely accepted and encouraged.

Some Adventists today believe that encouraging women in ministry or church planting is a drift away from Scripture and Adventist heritage and an accommodation to sinful societal trends. Actually the opposite is true. What is needed in the Adventist Church today are women of the caliber of Lulu Wightman, Minnie Sype, or Jessie Weiss Curtis; church members who will embrace them; and administrators who will hire them and urge them to excellence. ■

- 1 North American Division database of church plants, March 2004.
- 2 James R. Nix, "Minnie Sype, Pioneering Evangelist," in *Adventist Review*, Aug. 25, 1988, 908.
- 3 Bert Haloviak, "The Adventist Heritage Calls for Ordination of Women," in *Spectrum*, 16 (3:1985), 52-59.
- 4 M. Berto, "Nineteenth-Century Women in Adventist Ministry Against the Backdrop of Their Times," in *Women in Ministry*, Nancy Vyhmeister, ed. (Berrien Spangs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1998), 211-234.
- 5 Josephine Benton, "God Called a Woman," in *Spectrum* (16) 5:1986, 44-50; Josephine Benton, *Called by God: Stories of Seventh-day Adventist Women Ministers* (Smithsburg, Md.: Blackberry Hill Publishers, 1990); Nix, 1988; Kit Watts, "Ellen White's Contemporaries: Significant Women in the Early Church," in *A Woman's Place: Seventh-day Adventist Women in Church and Society*, Rosa Banks, ed. (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1992), 41-74.
- 6 Benton, 1986, 1990.
- 7 K. Daly and H. Ibarra, "Gender Differences in Managerial Behavior: The Ongoing Debate," in *Managerial Excellence Through Diversity*, M. Gentile, ed. (Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1998), 30-34.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 31.
- 9 Janet K. Winter, Joan C. Neal, and Karen K. Waner, "How Male, Female, and Mixed-Gender Groups Regard Interaction and Leadership Differences in the Business Communication Course," in *Business Communication Quarterly*, Sept. 2001; Rochelle Sharpe, "As Leaders, Women Rule," in *Business Week*, November 20, 2000.
- 10 Sharpe, 2000.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 84.
- 12 Regina M. O'Neill and Stacy D. Blake-Beard, "Gender Barriers to the Female Mentor-Maie Protégé Relationship," in *Journal of Business Ethics*, April 2002.

My covenant with God: Seminary student in front-line evangelism



The call came one September evening: The Global Team was looking for volunteers for the Southern Luzon area. The mission field assignment was located about 500 miles southeast of Manila city.

For almost two years I have been studying at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies in Silang, Cavite, Philippines. I am enrolled in the M.A. in Religion. Since I had been a volunteer missionary, a classmate volunteered my name as a speaker in one of the meetings in Luzon, Philippines, for the Global Evangelism Team. Now the call had come, and I was willing to go.

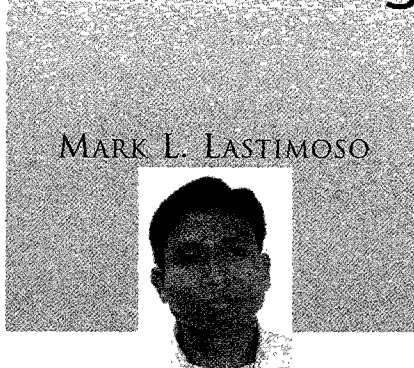
Challenges

Bicol region, as it is known, is the general area to which I was going. This region is famous for the warmth and friendliness of the people. One of its main tourist attractions is the "perfect cone," Mt. Mayon, a volcano. I was assigned in Ligao City, Albay, about an hour away from the capital city of Legazpi.

Though I've been a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church since I was 12 years old, I have never had the opportunity to be a featured speaker. This was to be my very first solo campaign. Goose bumps rose on my neck as I boarded the plane. My partner was Pastor Caesar Wamalika from Kenya, who was assigned to preach in the capital city of Legazpi.

The preaching

I preached nightly from September 6-20, 2003. From the onset it was obvious that I was an amateur preacher, inexperienced for a major evangelistic effort. Yet in my heart I was not embarrassed. It was never my intention to impress the local church with my knowledge and skill. I had come to tell



of the glory of God's grace and His saving love. I was determined to preach the gospel of salvation.

During the second night of the series, I noticed that some people were restless. I tried to avoid focusing on them. This was a distraction I did not need! I directed my eyes elsewhere, and began relating God's providence in my life.

I told the people my life story, how my father rejected me because I did not follow his desires for me to become a sea captain. I described how I went to the Seminary instead. I testified about the night I chose to serve God.

I spoke of how both of my parents had died of cancer and how I had been left alone. I was not embarrassed to tell the congregation that God could use even me.

One particular woman

Among the people, there was a devout Roman Catholic woman in her 50s who had been invited to the meetings by an Adventist member. She was half-paralyzed and needed assistance when taking her seat. She was said to be ill-tempered and a deep devotee of the Virgin Mary. But because of her ailment and her desperation to find comfort, she came to the evangelistic meeting. I had been preaching for a few nights when I noticed that she had become very attentive.

One evening as I preached about baptism, I told the congregation that everyone could have a new beginning in life by accepting Jesus Christ as a personal Savior. This could be done in part by following the Lord in baptism by immersion. I told the people how Christ can heal us by faith. I talked of how Jesus is the need of the hour.

After proclaiming these things, I began making a call. At the same time, the choir began to sing. For a few minutes no one rose and my heart began to sink. Disappointed, I let the choir go on singing.

I was about to end my call when I saw this devout Catholic lady struggling her way out of her seat. I saw how she leaned on her cane just to stand. It was very slow and she was trembling. Tears were flowing from her wrinkled face. I could see them glistening on her cheeks. She slowly moved to the front.

As she took her place at the front, people began popping up from their seats. Many of them came forward, making a stand for Jesus.

The final day

During the last Sabbath, I made a final appeal. Forty-three men, women, and children stepped forward to embrace the Lord and request fellowship in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

I was standing to the side of the baptismal pool as the local pastor baptized for an hour and a half. The paralyzed lady was the last to enter.

Seeing these people baptized marked a turning point in my life. I made a promise to do this again. I felt that I, too, was being baptized . . . into the work of ministry. ■

Mark L. Lastimoso is an AllAS seminary student in Silang, Cavite, Philippines.

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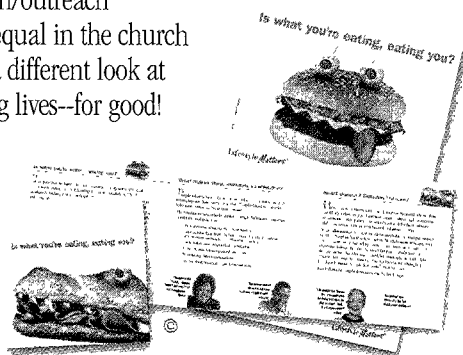
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