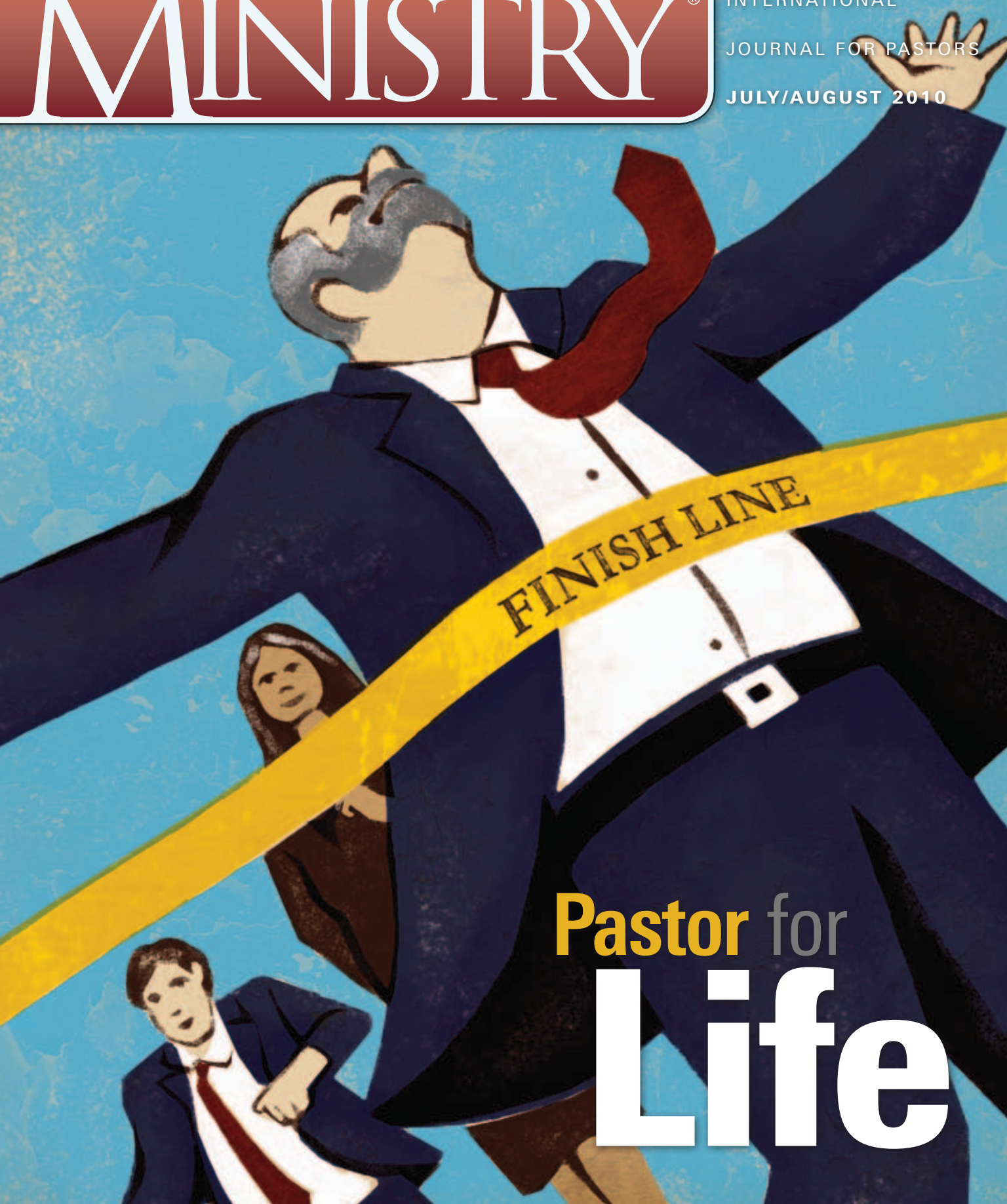


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## MINISTRY®

### MINISTRY®

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# A Message of Appreciation

## Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Few professions demand the breadth of skills we've come to expect of our local church pastor: public speaker; business manager; counselor; teacher; administrator; fund-raiser; mentor; social worker; evangelist. And, of course, we assume they will also complement this package with an inexhaustible store of energy and good humor.

What a weight of expectations a pastor carries!

You, as a local church pastor, have been called to a task that has no parallel. You're a shepherd of the Lord's flock; a caretaker of something that is infinitely precious to Him. The full scope of your job description cannot be contained by any written document or defined by the expectations of your congregation. The parameters of your duties are found in your relationship with the One who has entrusted you with this special responsibility. And if you commit yourself—with integrity and dedication—to discharging this trust, you've already met the only expectation that really matters.

The local church pastor is key—absolutely central—to everything we are and do as a church. It's a truth that's been expressed so many times that perhaps it's acquired the air of a cliché. But, nevertheless, it expresses reality. The 22,000 pastors globally who minister to our church family, shape and direct the Seventh-day Adventist Church to an incalculable extent. Administrative decisions, church statements, position papers, and publications—none of these come close to touching the level of influence wielded by pastors who, day by day, week by week, are nurturing, strengthening, comforting, ministering to the whole Adventist community.

It's a sobering thought, for with great power also comes great responsibility—and ultimately, accountability to God. Ellen White calls the pastor's role a "grave responsibility."<sup>1</sup> Why? Because a pastor carries the trust of the congregation. The words and actions of a pastor have a disproportionate impact—building up God's kingdom or tearing it down; exerting a tremendous influence for good or an even "stronger influence in the wrong direction."<sup>2</sup> When this potential is God-directed, the community of faith is blessed immeasurably. But when it is not, the consequences can be devastating.

I know that each of you confronts a unique set of circumstances—issues and challenges that reflect the distinct mix of cultural, political, and economic "flavors" of the environment in which you're placed. But over

the past few years, as I've talked with pastors in many different places, I've heard a number of common themes: the never-ending challenge of balancing the demands of ministry with the needs of your own family; the challenge of keeping one's own spiritual life alive and growing; the challenge of mobilizing church members for witnessing, engaging with the broader community, providing programs and services—all with limited financial resources; the challenge of congregations that are increasingly diverse—not just ethnically and culturally but which contain radical differences in backgrounds, attitudes, expectations, and needs.

And as we've talked together, I've become even more firmly convinced that the voice of the local church pastor must be heard more clearly—by those of us in administration and also by the church community as a whole. I'm so pleased that at the General Conference Session in Atlanta this year we're profiling the Adventist pastor. We'll look at the joys, fulfillment, challenges, frustrations, hopes, and sacredness of the calling of those in local church ministry. I want the whole richness of that experience to be placed before the church. I want us to acknowledge, publicly, how critical your work is to the well-being of our spiritual community.

Each one of you has been obedient to God's call. Every day you serve His people: you expend your time, your energy, and sometimes even your peace of mind, striving to be faithful "shepherds of God's flock" (1 Pet. 5:2).<sup>3</sup> And so my prayer for you is this: that our Lord, "out of his glorious riches . . . may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power . . . to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:16–19).

May Christ's infinite, saving love sustain you as you live and work for Him.

Yours in His service,

Jan Paulsen  
President, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

1 Ellen White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), 360.

2 White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1892), 25.

3 All Scripture quoted is from the New International Version.


Our editorials usually address a theological issue or topic that deals with various aspects of ministry such as preaching, teaching, leadership, and training, for example. In this editorial, we will not address these topics as this special issue relates to a special event.

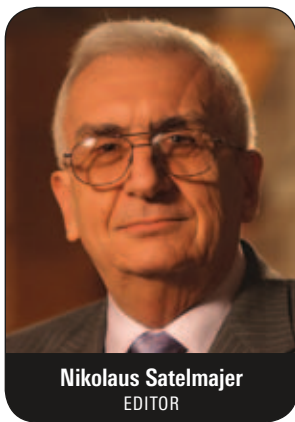
Every five years the Seventh-day Adventist Church holds, what we call, a General Conference Session where delegates from various parts of the world gather to hear reports, proposed plans, vote constitution and bylaw changes, and elect various leaders for the next five years. This year—June 24–July 3, 2010—this session will be held in Atlanta, Georgia, United States. Many of our readers will be at this

special gathering, and we hope you will visit us at the *Ministry* booth in the exhibit hall (booth no. 1434). All four members of the editorial team will be in Atlanta, and we always enjoy meeting our readers. If you cannot attend the session, we invite you to view it by visiting [www.HopeTV.org](http://www.HopeTV.org). By all means, please pray that God’s Spirit will be present at this session and Jesus Christ will be honored.

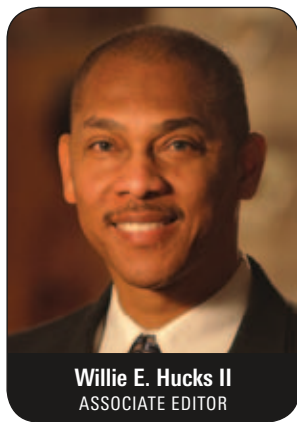
This issue of *Ministry* is also special—it’s twice the usual length. We are publishing the July and August issues together as a special issue for the General Conference session. The majority of the speakers at the session will be congregational pastors; therefore, we decided that

most of the articles for this issue would be written by them or will focus on topics of particular interest to pastors. The articles also represent pastors from various parts of the world, commemorating *Ministry* having subscribers in more than 180 countries. The articles cover many themes such as pastoring for life, how congregations meet challenges in their communities, caring for the preacher’s voice, spiritual growth, and responding to God’s Spirit. We believe these articles will be a blessing to you.

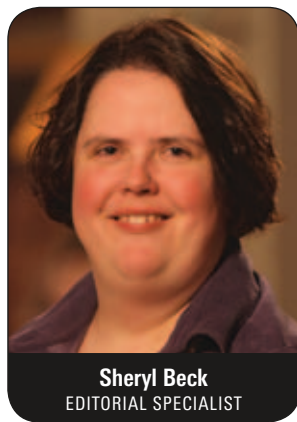
Here is our editorial team. If you are in Atlanta, we hope you will make yourself known by joining us at the display booth (no. 1434). See you there! 



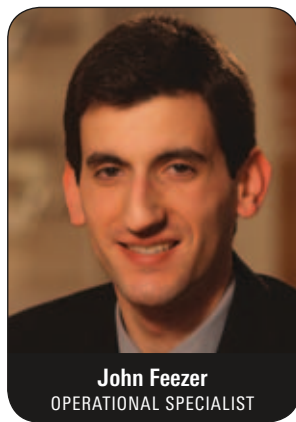
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## We did it last year—let’s do it again!

Many of our readers and their congregations focused on God as Creator in October 2009. We invite you to hold another special worship service the weekend of **October 23, 2010**, recognizing Him as Creator again.

Visit [www.CreationSabbath.net](http://www.CreationSabbath.net) to find resources such as sermons, articles, children’s stories, songs, and other helpful items to help make this Sabbath special.

Ivan Charles Blake, DMin, is pastor of the Fletcher Seventh-day Adventist Church, Fletcher, North Carolina, United States.



# Pastor for life

**T**hey say pastors resign on Monday morning.

If you are a pastor and you preached one or two sermons over the weekend and ministered in a million ways to all who needed you, you probably know that after-the-glory blues feeling. Often the highs of the Sabbath are followed by the lows the next day. In your tired brain, you go through reruns of the myriad of incidents that crowded your demanding day. The elevated emotions of vigorous preaching took so much out of you that you know you will need a few days to recover from exhaustion. One look into the mirror and you see that the aging process has accelerated, possibly irreversibly. And then that email or phone call casts doubts on your integrity, sincerity, or accuracy—a put-down that effectively knocks you down. After going through this wave-crashing experience for a number of years, a Monday morning resignation seems like a welcome release into anything but pastoral work.

Though some would disagree, many would insist that never before have pastors struggled more with too much work, too many unsolvable problems, far too much stress, and too little job satisfaction.

## Disturbing data

One person gleaned data from several sources and published sobering information about pastors. He claims the following:

- Fifteen hundred pastors leave the ministry each month due to

moral failure, spiritual burnout, or contention in their churches.

- Eighty percent of pastors and 84 percent of their spouses feel unqualified and discouraged in their role as pastors.
- Eighty percent of seminary and Bible school graduates who enter the ministry will leave the ministry within the first five years.
- Seventy percent felt God called them to pastoral ministry before their ministry began, but after three years of ministry, only 50 percent still felt called.
- Eighty percent of pastors surveyed spend less than 15 minutes a day in prayer.
- Seventy percent said the only time they spend studying the Word is when they are preparing their sermons.

This report also reveals the feelings of pastors' spouses:

- Eighty percent feel their spouse is overworked.
- Eighty percent wish their spouse would choose another profession.
- The majority of pastors' spouses surveyed said that the most destructive event that has occurred in their marriage and family was the day the pastor entered the ministry.

And never should the feelings of the children of pastors be forgotten.

- Eighty percent of adult children of pastors surveyed have had to seek professional help for depression.<sup>1</sup>

Reading through this alarming report may yield an understandable reaction from some: "Why don't these pastors give priority to developing their relationship with God through personal Bible study and prayer? That should strengthen them to face the many challenges, and they will be overcomers instead of being overcome!"

Never has there been a more sound opinion. A strong relationship with God, daily nurtured, becomes the key to faithful and fruitful pastoral ministry. But might the issue of the high turnover of pastors be more complex than walking closely with God? The point—Monday morning resignations are mounting.

## Who is retiring?

The opposite of the Monday morning resignation is the Saturday night joyful celebration of more than 40 years of fulfilling pastoral ministry.

How many of these honoring events occur where the celebrant spent all those years in pastoral ministry? By far, it seems that most retirement parties are for men and women who have served in various ministries of all descriptions.

All forms of ministry are worthy of celebration: teaching, administration, writing, editing, departmental, treasury, trust services, medical, evangelism, and many other areas. Many who enter these areas of ministry began their service as pastors. For a few years, they preached a fresh sermon every week; served a congregation with tireless energy; and comforted, counseled, and chaired committees all they could.

Then the call came to move into another form of ministry.

There is no fault with someone moving from pastoral ministry to another form of ministry. The fault is found in this becoming a trend, resulting in the *perceived* shortage of experienced and seasoned pastoral leaders serving congregations and the consequence of less than optimally healthy congregations.

There is no intention to denigrate the quality of pastoral leadership of

logical that pastors need specialized training and postgraduate professional development, combined with several years of experience in cultivating the unique skills necessary to provide the kind of leadership congregations need. Churches can only suffer for the lack of such advanced training and skill development in the pastors who serve them. A decade of pastoral service is far too short a time to become proficient in meeting the needs of congregations.

because these are the areas of excellence in ministry in which a dearth exists. These are the abilities and qualities most desired, but it takes experience and hard work over a period of time to do them well.

It seems that we do not often have the ability to observe what healthy churches could look like because there are so few examples of seasoned pastors giving 40 or more years of quality service to congregations.



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those who have served congregations for 15, 10, or fewer years. There is also no intention to devalue the service rendered by those who moved from pastoral work to other forms of ministry. Spending 40 years in pastoral ministry does not, in itself, necessarily reflect quality ministry. There is, however, definite concern for the large number of pastors that are quick to “move on” to other nonpastoral ministries, often leaving behind congregations that miss out on seasoned leadership. And seasoned leadership is what the rigors of pastoral ministry in congregations calls for.

If the rigorous demands of pastoral work are real, then it seems

### Underserved congregations

Perception is often reality. And very often, perception is not subjected to rigorous examination or testing, but is mostly anecdotal. What does one hear while listening to church members talk among themselves right after their pastor moved on to a “higher calling” (a.k.a. higher organization)? Or after their pastor decided to go into counseling as a profession, or any number of other professions? Or after their pastors quit the ministry altogether for some secular employment? They typically express the need for a new pastor who *preaches* well, *leads* well, *organizes* well, and *visits* well

My burden is for more pastors to stay in pastoral work exclusively, giving themselves to quality preaching, teaching, leading, and training. This yearning comes from personal experience after 38 years of ministry, all of which (except for six years in administrative leadership) were devoted to the pastorate. I have said no to several opportunities to move into other forms of ministry, due to my passion for providing churches with significantly developed pastoral skills and many years of experience.

During my 38 years, I served too many congregations. Instead of staying at one congregation for ten or more years, my average

stay has been five years. This is not something to be proud of. Virtually every move occurred because a previous pastor left for some other form of ministry, went into secular work, or experienced a tragedy that terminated their ministry in the denomination. I often experienced sorrow for these fine persons who are talented, devoted, and needed in pastoral ministry. But they left, and I sensed the Holy Spirit's leading to pick up where they left off. If only these persons had stayed on, worked through their tough issues, and were given necessary support, they could still be giving superior service to needy congregations.

Should we not be overwhelmed by a sense of need for churches to be served by men and women who have been trained, honed, and equipped by the Holy Spirit's unction and who stay there to build God's kingdom?

I have derived a high level of satisfaction in preaching the Word,

loving the people, and leading in ministry. I wish that more would keenly and passionately long for that to be the experience of thousands of pastors, pastors who stay in the parish to lift up Jesus and love people with the grace of God!

### What can ensure pastoring for life?

In a study of pastoral morale among 172 Seventh-day Adventist pastors in the United States and Canada, a significant minority reported a variety of low morale experiences.<sup>2</sup> Respondents offered possible remedies: changes in the structure of the pastorate that would make the ministry more fulfilling; relieving pastors of the administrative minutiae of the church; more continuing education with its development of talents and abilities; and a more equal relationship with conference administrators, including input into conference goals and programs.

These remedies may improve morale, but would they result in longer tenures for pastors? If these proposals were in place, there might be more pastors who would do so well that they would become "qualified" for opportunities to become departmental directors and, eventually, administrators.

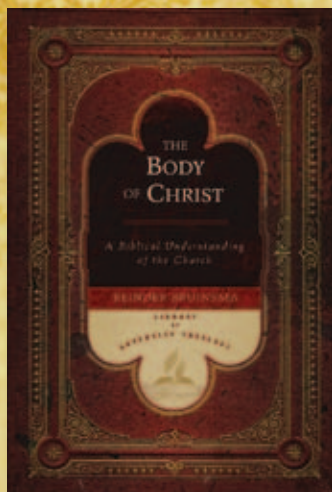
The core issue, it seems to me, is a need for the development of, and commitment to, a culture of viewing pastoral leadership as the primary ministry in the denomination's structure. This could be achieved by the following:

1. Designing and implementing a slimmer and more efficient administrative and departmental structure, hence reducing the need for so many personnel to occupy those positions.
2. Rotating qualified senior/lead pastors every two years in leading sections of a territory (conference or field) administratively while still

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occupying the pulpit and serving the pastorate.<sup>3</sup>

3. Working hard to provide meaningful support and assistance to pastors who need professional, collegial, and developmental security. Felt needs of pastors would be addressed. Resources can be available for developing the particular gifts of pastors. Personal problems should be seen as opportunities for growth rather than a threat to effectiveness.
4. Giving equality in rank by administrators with pastors being more accountable to their local lay leaders and congregations rather than administrators.
5. Establishing local ministerial support groups to provide a nonthreatening environment for spiritual and professional growth, including peer accountability.
6. Giving pastors the opportunity to maximize their personal leadership strengths. Staffing can be provided to make it possible for pastors not to be distracted by time-consuming and energy-depleting assignments that do not fit their makeup.<sup>4</sup>
7. Placing efficient departmental leaders and administrators back in pastoral work every four or five years.<sup>5</sup>
8. Using the expertise at the local church level to provide training for church officers from several congregations instead of depending on departmental leaders to organize and present training. Observing how ministry, successfully done in a real setting, seems to be a more effective means of training. This will reduce the number of departmental leaders who could, instead, serve as effective pastors in local congregations.



### Conclusion

Of greatest importance is the commitment of denominational leadership to show, in actions, that they mean what they say, "The local congregation is the most important part of our denomination." Such actions will certainly include making it attractive and desirable for pastors to remain in congregational ministry for more than 40 years.

Imagine attending 10 retirement parties for men and women who have given themselves to ministry for more than 40 years and 9 of these celebrations are for parish pastors. Surely the result would be reflected in a growing number of healthy congregations! 

management tasks that they will be unable to lead a congregation at the same time. Financial management could serve several territories from only a few locations nationally, utilizing technology and uniform policies. The same can be done with the education and church ministries departments. A pragmatic formula can be developed that calculates how many pastors should be in the field for every administrator and for every departmental leader in order to achieve optimum efficiency and maximize the number of pastors in the field.

If a formula is applied to determine how many church members must be in attendance at weekly worship services (including other factors) before a pastor can be assigned to a congregation, then why not apply a similar formula to determine how many pastors need to be in the field before it will be feasible to establish conference administration and departmental leadership? Such a formula should be weighted heavily in favor of minimizing full-time administrative and departmental personnel. This can easily be achieved, it seems to me, by giving many senior pastors limited administrative responsibility.

- 4 Such staffing can be provided by part-time paid or volunteer persons whose gifts, training, and expertise can provide leadership in local church ministries such as Religious Liberty, health programs, publicity, singles, children, and youth ministries. This will be more difficult to implement in smaller churches where less talent may be available. Funding can be made available once volunteers demonstrate resulting membership growth by their productivity. In a congregation that I recently served as pastor, the church board was reduced to a small number of administratively gifted individuals who knew how to use their governing skills to manage the main direction of the church instead of micromanage the details of church operations. The day-to-day items were cared for by trustworthy volunteers who led the ministries of the church. This freed me, the pastor, to give more of my attention to preaching the Word and leading and training the people.
- 5 This would necessitate a revision to constitutions and bylaws, making provisions for term limits. It is recognized that continuity in leadership is important for the health of an organization. The redistribution of responsibility, however, to several senior pastors in the field will greatly reduce the need for full-time leadership that makes the organization dependent on their being in office for a long time, due to the complexity of their duties.

1 These statistics were collected by Richard A. Murphy in "Don't Become a Statistic," *Life-Line for Pastors*, April 2003, <http://www.maranathalife.com/lifeline/03-04-p.htm> (accessed April 19, 2010). (*Life-Line for Pastors* is a publication of Maranatha Life.) He drew information from across denominational lines and various sources, such as Pastor to Pastor, Focus on the Family, Ministries Today, *Charisma* magazine, TNT Ministries, Campus Crusade for Christ, and the Global Pastors Network.

2 Roger L. Dudley and Des Cummings Jr., "Factors Related to Pastoral Morale in the Seventh-day Adventist Church," *Review of Religious Research* 24, no. 2 (December 1982), 127.

3 This will lessen the administrative responsibility of one person, who, of necessity, has to give full-time attention to the enormous task of leading a territory. It will spread the load among many, who will not be so swamped with

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Denis Fortin, Dean

John S. Nixon, DMin, is senior pastor, Collegedale Seventh-day Adventist Church, Collegedale, Tennessee, United States.



# Answering Jesus' prayer

**“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”**

—John 17:20, 21<sup>1</sup>

As Jesus poured out His heart to the Father in prayer, the disciples were about to face the greatest crisis of their lives. They had already declared their implicit faith in their Lord as Messiah. Peter, speaking for all of them, said, “‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God’” (Matt. 16:16). They may have been confused about Christ’s mission, but the disciples had no doubts about His identity—until now.

They watched in amazement as Jesus allowed Himself to be arrested; He who had escaped so many times before to be taken into custody. They were stunned into silence as they beheld His hands tied behind His back—hands that had cured leprosy and raised the dead. And to their shame, they were frightened into abandonment as He was spat upon and beaten. All this lay before them as the great test of faith, but they did not know it.

Jesus knew what they would face and how it would overwhelm them. He had told them, quoting the prophecy of Zechariah, “‘This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: “I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered” ’” (Matt. 26:31).

What would Jesus say to His disciples on a night like this? What words of instruction could prepare them? He did not ask the Father to give them more knowledge or even increase their faith. Jesus prayed for them to be one in love. This, the expression of God’s love toward each other, would keep them in the hour of temptation. And if the disciples had answered Jesus’ prayer, the bond of love between them would have preserved them.

## The importance of loving one another

At the inception of the Christian church, the believers were organized into a community so that the Son of God would have a body through which to demonstrate His life on earth. The body is not an illustration; the life of Christ is the life of the body.<sup>2</sup> But under the influence of individualism, the church has become more devoted to personal rights and freedom than to the mandate of God’s Word. In my own personal life, I have detected this rebellion in me. I once was the type of person that, if I walked up to an establishment and saw a sign on a door that read “Do not open,” I would open that door.

The heroes of our culture are the rebels and individualists who

go their own way and keep their own counsel; we take pride in their resistance to conformity. But is this the posture we want to be in when Jesus speaks to us? Is it not far better to give up our individual rights to Christ that we might be His servants for a holy purpose? And His purpose for us is that we should come into complete oneness as members of His body.

It is interesting to notice the emphasis of various renderings of John 17:23:

“‘Be brought to complete unity’” (NIV).

“‘Be perfected in unity’” (NASB).

“‘Be made perfect in one’” (KJV).

“‘Be as one as we are one’” (*The Clear Word*).

“‘Be completely one’” (NCV).

“‘Become one heart and mind’” (*The Message*).

In John 17, the command is given, but in John 13, the standard is set: “‘As I have loved you, so you must love one another’” (verse 34). And we are severely challenged. Who is equal to such a calling, to love as Jesus loved (and still loves)? This is one of those things God must do in us for it is not in our nature to love this way. But this high and holy standard reaches beyond our capability.

No love reaches the pinnacle of Christ’s love until it willingly sacrifices itself for the other. This is the distinction of divine love; it is self-sacrificing love. How many of

us can say that we have this kind of love, not for our spouse, our children, but for the members of the body of Christ? And one of the greatest challenges of this love in community is to exercise it across racial and cultural lines. Not only in Jesus' prayer but throughout the New Testament, the biblical authors clearly express the imperative of communal love.

"And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, *together with all the saints*, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge" (Eph. 3:17–19; emphasis added).

"Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, *love one another deeply, from the heart*" (1 Pet. 1:22; emphasis added).

Then Peter puts it into the context of the end time: "The end of all

things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. *Above all, love each other deeply*, because love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:7, 8; emphasis added).

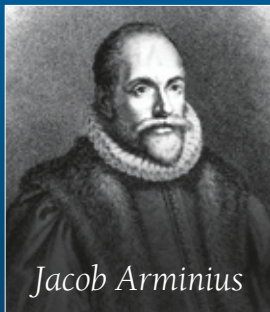
There are at least four levels of a relationship that could exist between people groups at the communal level.

1. *Rejection*. This we cannot truly call a relationship at all; rather, a lack of relationship or a refusal to be in relationship. When rejection occurs, for example, based on someone's race or culture, it is usually because of stereotyping, pre-judging, or ignorance. None of these characteristics do we like to admit to or have attributed to us, even by implication. But, if we search our hearts, we will have to admit that we have been guilty of "antipathy toward a racial or cultural group based on a faulty and inflexible generalization."<sup>3</sup> Theologically, racial prejudice—or any other

type of prejudice—is a form of idolatry, a faith that does not rest on facts nor need facts.<sup>4</sup> And when this behavior is not repented of, it leaves unresolved guilt in the heart of the perpetrator and a barrier between the parties involved that prevents a genuine relationship from ever forming.

2. *Tolerance*. Our attitude may be "I will put up with you, but I will not like it, my heart will not be in it. I will grit my teeth and bear it, but I will never truly relax around you. I may even overcompensate with undue familiarity and unwarranted compliments to mask my discomfort."

Unlike rejection, tolerance is a form of relationship, but not a positive one. The most we can say in favor of this kind of relationship is that tolerance is better than rejection, but not by much. "When I tolerate you, I will not do anything to harm you, but I will not do anything to help you, either. I may have been offended by someone from your



Jacob Arminius

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group at some time in the past, and I hold it against your entire group.” Your discomfort comes through no matter how you try to mask it. We cannot fake our way into genuine relationship; we must pray for changed hearts.

3. *Acceptance.* “I realize I have been wrong in keeping you at a distance, in not even attempting to get to know you, in treating you as a category instead of a unique person. I acknowledge you as a son

the other, it sacrifices itself for the other. This is the place to which we seldom go across racial lines. We will tolerate, we will accept, but we will not nurture the way we do our own. “When I love in nurture, I do not just sit beside you, I sit with you; I do not just share in a meal, I learn about your food; I do not just open my mind to you, I open my heart. I am not color blind; I see your color, but I do not judge you based on color. I see you as so much more.”

constant prayer, can we ascend to this kind of love.

## Conclusion

On so many levels we have made progress toward racial and cultural reconciliation within the body of Christ—but not enough to answer Jesus’ prayer. We sometimes pretend to be one in love when we know we are not. We mean well, we want to be more loving, but we try to achieve community cheaply by suppressing the issues instead of dealing with them. There is no way to achieve true community without honestly addressing the issues that create division—without speaking the truth in love.

This is the time of the outpouring of God’s Spirit; and as a church we desperately need it. But how can we receive the latter rain if we have not fulfilled the conditions of the early rain? “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place” (Acts 2:1, NKJV). By God’s grace we possess the power to answer Jesus’ prayer—and it is a mandate to all who belong to the body of Christ. **M**

NO LOVE REACHES THE  
PINNACLE OF CHRIST’S LOVE  
UNTIL IT WILLINGLY SACRIFICES  
ITSELF FOR THE OTHER.

or a daughter of God. I accept you as you are, not just when you comply with my cultural values. I accept your differences and will learn to appreciate your culture. I will sit beside you, share a meal with you, listen to your music, and let you speak in your own language. I will relax and stop trying to impress you with my open-mindedness and truly open my mind to you and what I can learn from you.” If that is our attitude, a genuine relationship appears. Acceptance is a big step in the Christian relationship, but as important as it is, acceptance still does not answer Jesus’ prayer. Even acceptance does not reach the zenith of the oneness our Lord has in mind for us. It is a start, but it is not the finish. There is one category of relationship that is higher still.

4. *Nurture.* Nurture is an expression of love that does not merely receive, it pours itself out. It does not simply accept; it seeks. Nurturing love not only acknowledges

And this is important: “When I love you in a nurturing way, I do not keep silent when someone from my group maligns you because of your race or culture. I stand up for you as my brother or sister in Christ even when you are not around to hear it. I even stand up to my own family members when they are wrong. But I never leave you to fend for yourself. I take your part against those who are threatening the body with their bias.”

Jesus set a high and holy standard for us in His passionate prayer to the Father. Then He sacrificed His life to make it possible. Jesus did not die so that we could love our own family and show kindness to our friends, even unbelievers do that (see Matt. 5:47). The love of Jesus takes us to a place where natural affection cannot go. The love that John calls for in John 17 does not come from human nature; only by the life of Christ in us, preserved by

- 1 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.
- 2 Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Kingsway Publications, 1977), 210, 217.
- 3 Sakae Kubo, *The God of Relationships* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1993), 19.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 19, 20.



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# Faith in God: The secret of a fulfilled life

The story has many versions, but the same point. One night a house caught fire and a young boy was forced to escape to the roof. The father stood on the ground below with outstretched arms, calling to his son, "Jump! I'll catch you." He knew the boy had to jump to save his life. All the boy could see, however, was flame, smoke, and blackness, and, as can be imagined, he was afraid to leave the roof. His father kept yelling, "Jump! I will catch you." But the boy complained, "Daddy, I can't see you." The father replied, "But I can see you, and that's all that matters." The boy's faith in his father asserted itself even though he could not see his father, but his father could see him. He jumped, safe in his father's arms. He had faith in his father.

George Mueller, known as a man of prayer, faith, and a builder of orphanages, is reported to have said, "Faith does not operate in the realm of the possible. There is no glory for God in that which is humanly possible. Faith begins where man's power ends."

I have experienced the power of such faith in my life. I was not born in a Christian home; faith was not my heritage. I grasped faith when it was given to me as a gift.

I was born in a Buddhist family. I did not know anything about Christ until I entered high school in 1996. An evangelist had come to my town in Malaysia, and out of curiosity, I attended the meetings, heard the Word preached, and it gripped my

heart. After the evangelistic meetings, I decided to learn more about the Bible and God. Soon I accepted Christianity and wanted to study theology and become an Adventist preacher. Therefore, I prayed to God to open a door to study theology according to His will. God made this possible when I arrived at Hong Kong Adventist College in December of 1998.

I was a new believer as I had only been baptized for a year. I faced many trials and difficulties when I was studying in Hong Kong. Despite my faith in God, my situation did not change. One of the struggles I was facing was finances; I was a self-supporting student. Besides studying full time, I had six part-time jobs in order to pay off my tuition fees and living expenses. As a result, I suffered physically. My health condition worsened; I had migraine headaches at least three or four times a week because of stress and lack of sleep. I still remember several times when I cried out to God to let me die because the pain was so unbearable. Every time a migraine came, it lasted for days. One evening, when I was admitted into the emergency room, I was hoping the doctor could treat my migraine. However, he simply said, "You need to relax and rest more."

## Faith to the rescue

It was in this period of time that my faith came to my rescue. From the time I became a Christian, the Bible was always my refuge, and I

found great comfort in its promises. I treasured God's Word in my heart. My one consistent prayer was that God would continue to strengthen my faith in Him. I knew that Jesus loved me, and He would always be with me no matter what happens.

Besides financial and physical struggles, another trial I faced was the unfairness of life. Since I was an international student coming from Malaysia, the only scholarship I received was a one-fourth tuition discount from the school. I was jealous of my fellow students who were local and received much more generous scholarships. Neither my desperate needs nor higher grades made any difference. However, my faith did not waver. I reasoned to myself that God was testing me so that my faith could be strengthened in the midst of trials. Just like Job says, "'But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold'" (Job 23:10).\*

Job! What kind of experience was he going through that led him to make such an affirmation? Job was a God-fearing follower; he obeyed God and trusted Him.

If we look at Job chapters 1 and 2, we learn that God allowed Satan to test Job. He lost almost everything he had—livestock, children, servants, property, and even his own health. Job 2:7 tells us that Job was afflicted with painful sores from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet. Even his wife told him to curse God and die. Yet, Job replied to her in verse 10, "'You are talking like

a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?' " In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

This story is recorded in the Bible for us to learn about faith and trust in God. Can you imagine? If you were Job, what would you do? Job would never be able to stand firm on this trial if he did not have a relationship with God. Look at what he said, " 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised' " (1:21). Job realized that God is the Lord of our lives. He gives and He takes away.

Despite all these terrible and heartbreaking trials, Job still believed in the Lord, for God was the object of Job's faith. Our belief affects our attitude and our reaction. What do I mean? Look at the attitude and reaction Job had while facing all these problems. Job's faith, trust, and belief were all rooted firmly in

God. What if his faith and belief were in his children, property, livestock, and servants? Then he might have

Redeemer lives." In that Living God, Job trusted, so he survived every crisis. He did not lose hope because

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committed suicide as his wife suggested, "Curse God and die." Job would have been so hopeless if his faith was based on everything he possessed. That was not the case. His faith was in God, and God never disappears. So, when everything was lost, Job had one assurance that can never be lost and he exclaimed, "My

he based his faith in the Lord—God was the object of his faith.

### God opens the way

Going back to my own story, despite my trials and struggles in Hong Kong, I kept praying to God and believing in Him. I was praying for God to open a way for me to

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study in the United States if it was His will. I also prayed that He would help me pay off all my expenses, tuition fees, and provide me a place to stay. I was very sure that there was no way for me to be able to study in the States if it was not God's will.

God opened a way for me to study at Southwestern Adventist University in Keene, Texas, United States. I arrived there in August 2000. When I arrived, I did not know anybody. I was by myself, yet I knew that God was with me. Before arriving there I also prayed for God to care for my life and studies.

God is so amazing and great. The day after I landed on the university campus, I went to see different departmental heads and school administrators to check on what kinds of scholarships I could receive. Meanwhile, I also looked at some ads, trying to find a room off campus since it was cheaper.

On the second day of my search, God amazingly put me in touch with a lovely couple. I told them that I wanted to study theology and all I had was the deposit and enough tuition for the first semester. After listening to my testimony, the couple looked at each other. Then the husband told me that they used to rent their rooms out to students, but they did not rent them out anymore. However, just a few days before my arrival, the Holy Spirit impressed the heart of the husband *that if there was a student who was studying and working hard and did not have a place to stay, then they would allow the student to stay.*

"Now a few days later you're here," he said. "I'm sure God has sent you to our house." The wife showed me one of the rooms and said to me, "Don't worry about anything. You may stay with us." They treated me as their own daughter, and let me stay



with them for almost one whole year without charging me anything.

It was all God's doing. I always reminded myself that "we live not by sight, but by faith." Though I did not have enough money to study, know anyone, or know the culture, I believed God and His promises in the Bible. My faith was in God. I believed His Word, "You have made the heavens and the earth by your great power . . . nothing is too hard for you" (Jer. 32:17). I know that everything on earth belongs to the Lord, and if it's His will, then He will hear my prayer just like 1 John 5:14 says, "This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (NASB). I received my Bachelor of Theology at Southwestern Adventist University and Master of Divinity at Andrews University Theological Seminary. I finished these degrees debt free.

The important lessons I learned from my walk with God include: to trust and have faith in Him, believe His Word, and claim His promises because our God loves us so much that He will always carry us through. There might be times when we pray and pray and

nothing happens. We believe in God and His promises yet certain things happen that let us down. We might have lost faith in God because of various situations. However, we must never lose heart, never give up hope. Always trust in God.

Augustine is reported to have said, "Faith is to believe what we do not see, and the reward of faith is to see what we believe." That was the story of Job. That is also my story. And that can be yours too. Just believe in God. ❏

\* Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quoted is from the New International Version.



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# Effectively using media in ministry

Among the many realities pastors face is the ever-changing and increasingly complex landscape of media technology. However, while topics involving pixels, pokes, and podcasts can be daunting, as kingdom builders we are constantly struggling with how we can best use modern media to communicate the life-changing message of Jesus Christ. After all, we live, work, and learn in a very mediacentric society, which makes both understanding and effectively using media in ministry critical.

So, how do we describe media methods and technologies in a way that benefits pastors in the context of ministry? Considering the endless diversity found in the worlds of both media and ministry, the task is not simple. At the same time, there are several broad ways in which media resources can be effectively harnessed. Consider the following six.

## Enhancing the worship experience

Perhaps the most obvious use of media technology by local churches has been in the context of corporate worship. Up until recently, technology was used only as needed for tasks such as amplifying voices and lighting a platform. Today, however, we are staring into the face of a culture that seeks after—dare we say, *requires*—creative and media-rich environments for everything, including worship.

This necessitates a shift in our thinking, one that author Len Wilson describes as moving beyond the AV (audiovisual) mentality, defined as “the use of electronic media as an afterthought, an add-on, a value to be added, or something less than an intrinsic ingredient in worship and church life.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, we must begin to understand technology as a core element in the process of communicating spiritual messages, an issue somewhat sensitized by our strong views on corporate worship.

However, despite differences in worship theology, we are left with the reality of human psychology. In the end, we, as humans, process information and our environment in a number of ways based on factors such as personality, educational background, and social upbringing. In addition, the ways in which we communicate are heavily influenced by the dominant forms of media. And if, as churches, we are to speak the language of our members and modern culture, then our goal centers around finding ways to communicate using modalities that are already familiar to them.

That said, the first step is to equip the church with efficient, yet professionally installed media systems. Audio mixers that can handle the rigors of worship style versatility, properly installed speakers, video projectors that are bright enough to handle the amount of light in the room, and the ability to capture both audio and video are a few examples

of the basic tools every church needs to create a culturally relevant worship environment.

If that sounds cost prohibitive for some local churches, the great news is that the digital revolution has allowed technology prices to plummet during the last ten years. Consequently, there are legitimate media solutions available for any size budget and the best way to determine what is right for a particular ministry is by working with a skilled consultant. In the end, there is nothing worse than “media-rich” done poorly. Not only does it frustrate those in the congregation who already have reservations about media, but it can actually detract from the message rather than enhance it. Find a consultant with industry expertise and their fee will more than pay for itself in the long run.

## Branding the local church

A second way in which a local church can use media effectively includes creating and communicating its unique identity. The advertising industry refers to this idea as *branding*. While the concept may seem out of place in a religious environment, author and strategist Phil Cooke explains that “at its core, branding is simply the art of surrounding a product, organization, or person with a powerful and compelling story.”<sup>2</sup> He goes on to argue that churches that impact their culture have not only understood,

but are fully embracing concepts of organizational branding.

From a practical standpoint, branding begins with a thorough analysis of what makes a local church unique (based on history, location, and beliefs among other factors). Cooke suggests the following four questions to guide the process: (1) *What's the point* (why are you doing this)? (2) *Who are you?* (3) *What are your gifts and talents?* (4) *What makes you different?* The ultimate goal of the branding process allows one core identity or one core story to emerge, which will define the unique identity of the local church, communicating its mission clearly to both its congregants and community.

How does media play into this? In this context, we understand media to be more than just technology. In the end, media comprises any channels or intermediaries of communication, and the goal of branding is to tell the same story using as many of them as possible. To that end, effective use of media in branding includes—but is certainly not limited to—the creation of a meaningful logo; standardizing all printed materials on an agreed upon set of design elements; redesigning bulletins, newsletters, and Web sites to reflect the brand; and an ongoing commitment to tell your story using the highest quality standards available to you.

### **Communicating with the congregation**

Yet another use of existing media channels is in effectively communicating with the congregation. Many local churches fail to create the critical mass necessary for ministries, special events, and organizational change to be successful—due mostly to poor communication methods.

While corporate communication includes dozens of applications, the best place to begin is with a well designed and regularly updated Web site. An increasing number of parishioners are leaning on Web sites as a main point of connection to their local church, mainly because

it coincides with their increased use of the Internet for reasons such as paying bills, looking at weather forecasts, and spending time on social networking sites.

Though obvious to many that in today's environment a church Web site is no longer optional, what does not appear so obvious is the value

offerings such as NetAdventist and Church Connect. All are based on CMS technology and offer turnkey, as well as customizable, templates for a broad range of applications.

One additional way to communicate with the congregation using media platforms is by creating digital signage. A common way to

PERHAPS ONE OF THE MOST  
POWERFUL ASPECTS OF DIGITAL  
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MINISTRY BEYOND THE WALLS  
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of what is called Content Management System (CMS) Web sites. Most church Web sites become irrelevant within a few days because of outdated material. More than likely, the Web site was built (coded) from scratch by a well-meaning parishioner who now struggles to find the time to rewrite the code necessary for updates or who has dropped the project altogether.

A much better alternative, especially for small to midsize churches, is a CMS site that simplifies design and updates to the level of low-level word processing. In addition, the process takes place online, which means that the Web site can be updated from any computer with an Internet connection. Recommended resources in this area include Wix, WordPress, and denominational

do this is by utilizing existing projection screens to advertise upcoming events and important messages prior to and following worship services. More and more churches are also installing small, flat panel monitors in hallways and other heavy traffic areas that stream in-house advertising content to people making their way across the church campus. It is not rocket science, but another effective way to connect people to the church's life and mission.

### **Extending the congregation**

Perhaps one of the most powerful aspects of digital media lies in their ability to extend the reach of ministry beyond the walls of the church. Weekly attendees are, in reality, only a fraction of a much larger

“congregation” who are accessible via media technologies.

In order to maximize these opportunities for extending the size and scope of the local church’s ministry, there are some key elements that must be in place. First is the ability to capture (record) audio and video, which ensures that the church can share its worship services and education and music programs with those not able to attend. This is mostly done by transmitting (streaming) the content on the Internet, offering shut-ins, traveling members, church shoppers, and others a guaranteed seat in your auditorium and a globally accessible connection point to your church. Again, as mentioned above, this type of technology is no longer only for those with large budgets. A qualified consultant can offer a number of cost-effective, high-quality solutions for any size church.

A second key element is having the ability to duplicate the content produced. Caution must be taken with respect to copyright law,

especially as it relates to music and video clips. For details, consult CCLI and CVLI, two organizations created to help churches manage copyright law. That said, there are again many options for duplicating both CDs and DVDs, most of them fully automated and priced very modestly.

Third, the church must have a way to archive programs—especially sermons and messages—online. The ubiquitous nature of online video content both necessitates that churches contribute to the cultural discourse in this way and encourages church leaders that, indeed, a fast growing audience online does exist. Solutions in this area range from free YouTube channels, to CMS Web sites offering the ability to upload audio and video files, to a complete in-house system. Note that the goal focuses on making the life of the church and the messages presented inside its walls accessible to as many people as possible using as many points of connection as possible.

Fourth, a local church must invest further into the development of its Web site, which is the primary way in which most people first connect with a local church. In fact, it is quite common these days for churches with robust and media-rich Web sites to attract full fledged members who live abroad or in situations where church attendance is limited. In the end, the Web site should function as a comprehensive hub of information and resources, ensuring that the online congregant becomes fully connected to the life and mission of the church. Additionally, Web sites that are easy to navigate and have language in which denominational and in-house lingo is minimized, create an inviting atmosphere for those looking to connect with a local church.

Finally, in the twenty-first century, any attempt to extend the congregation beyond the walls of the church is incomplete without the use of social networking technologies. Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and

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dozens of other online applications have attracted hundreds of millions of people essentially looking for one thing: community. This deeply human desire clearly dovetails with the Christian church's calling to provide meaningful community. It follows then that every local church would find it beneficial to have an online presence on the major social networking sites, if possible. The power of social networking is in its viral nature and within a few days of launching, a local church could have several hundred followers or fans, most of whom have never stepped foot through its physical doors.

### **Proliferating the message**

Arguably, the primary mission of any Christian church is to spread the gospel message of Jesus Christ. That said, no other moment in history has offered as many possible channels for that message to travel through into the hearts and lives of people everywhere. It is also true that the Christian church has used media technologies since their inception, although not always in the most effective and appropriate ways. Most of these efforts have centered on radio and television, which are still the perceived apex for any media ministry.

However, media consumption patterns have changed so much in recent times that it requires a shift in thinking away from the traditional media model to more of a hybrid media model, which gives increasingly more weight to emerging media platforms such as the Internet and mobile technologies. Within this model, pastors are encouraged to stop dreaming about "getting on television" one day, while realizing that millions of media consumers are acquiring their information from nontraditional sources.

Consider only one of many ways of proliferating the gospel message without expending enormous amounts of money. Assuming that

the church has invested in audio or video production capabilities, create a podcast that will appear in the global iTunes directory free of charge. Several online companies will aid you in the process and some CMS-based Web sites will automatically publish your media files to iTunes. Choosing tag words (words describing the content) carefully will drive traffic to your podcast. The same process applies to YouTube, the leading video sharing Web site where the church can have its own "channel" to populate with content. More than 100 million people spend time on YouTube every month—a sizable congregation by any estimation. Be prepared for a variety of comments on the content uploaded, not all of it positive; but be encouraged that the messages are being viewed by those who, many times, need to hear them most.


### **Becoming a world church**

Finally, one of the most effective uses of media by a local church is in becoming a resource-generating church. A relevant model is found in London, England, at the All Souls Church, where prolific author John Stott is rector emeritus. At some point in its history, All Souls decided not to become a large church but a world church. In other words, the success of the local church would be measured by its influence rather than its size. Without a doubt, through the ministry of Stott and others such as Rico Tice, creator of the Christianity Explored study curriculum, All Souls has truly become a world church whose influence benefits millions around the world.

In order to accomplish this ambitious goal, pastors first need to reframe their ideas about the shelf life or the scope of a sermon or sermon series. Many times, sermons are preached once, only to be resurrected years later when the pastor takes another assignment. Rather, consider the possibility of packaging

every sermon on a CD or DVD for distribution. This works exceptionally well with a sermon series developed around a topical theme or the study of a biblical book. Next, consider turning several of the best series into curricula, complete with study guides, DVDs of the sermons, and an accompanying book. Advertise the resources on your Web site, in Christian or denominational magazines, and introduce them to managers of local book stores. Now we are beginning to use media in productive and effective ways.

### **A clarion call**

Any media-related project should be taken on with an absolute commitment to quality. Packaging the gospel message in the age of aesthetics requires Christian communicators to be creative, intentional, and to give great attention to detail. After all, the message of Jesus Christ is worth our energy and creativity. 

- 1 Len Wilson, *The Wired Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 39.
- 2 Phil Cooke, *Branding Faith* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2008), 26.



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# enditnow today!

Looking back, Pastor “Jones” should have known. All the warning signs were there. “Stella” often seemed anxious and nervous when “Mike,” her husband, was around. She was always very subservient, so intent on doing whatever he said. Even then, Mike would talk down to her in public, in ways that were embarrassing to those who heard it. How many times did he, the pastor, hear Mike bark, “Stella, just shut up”?

Stella often talked to others about how jealous Mike was, how he was constantly accusing her of flirting and looking at other men. She complained, too, that he was overly controlling, that he did not want her to have any financial independence and that she always had to call him and let him know where she was and what she was doing.

Those were warning signs, but, perhaps because Mike was a church leader, Pastor Jones never saw them, never connected the dots.

Even after the injuries, he did not see it. *How could he have been so blind?* Over the course of a year, Stella had two “accidents.” One resulted in a broken arm from “a skiing mishap” (only later did the pastor find out that Stella had never skied in her life); the other time, the side of her face was swollen and bruised, a result (they said) of “a fall on the ice.” Only after it all came to the forefront did he remember, too, the bruises, the cuts, and the other marks of violence that he had seen on her.

There were rumors, but they neither sounded like the kind of gossip that a pastor wanted to hear

*nor wanted circulating in the church, and so he firmly shut them down when he could.*

He will never forget the call from another member that night, just before he went to bed. Stella was in the hospital in critical condition.

“What happened?” he asked.

“You just better come,” he was told.

To this day, the pastor still does not remember what shocked him more: seeing Stella beaten to within an inch of her life or being told that Mike had been arrested for doing it.

## The harsh reality

If there is one biblical truth that pastors do not need faith to believe in, it’s the doctrine of human sinfulness. They do not need Paul, in Romans, telling them that “there is none righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10, KJV). They know that truth all too well. And one area where they see it, yes, even in the church, is that of violence against women. From North America to Africa, from Europe to Asia, one of the great tragedies facing humanity, a tragedy not often talked about (or certainly not enough), is that of women as victims of violence.

And the violence needs to stop. It needs to end now.

The numbers alone are frightening: about one in three women worldwide will be raped, abused, or beaten.<sup>1</sup> In some countries, the numbers are almost double. More than half of women in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Peru, and Tanzania have reported physical or sexual abuse by an “intimate partner” (i.e., husbands or boyfriends);<sup>2</sup> in the United States,

one-third of women murdered are killed by “intimate partners.”<sup>3</sup>

Additionally, the problems of human trafficking and sexual violence against women are not exclusive to any one country. Hundreds of thousands of women, even children, are victims. Women, even young girls, are forced into prostitution. Worldwide, more than 100 million women have been victimized by female genital mutilation, and thousands more are at risk on a daily basis (in this case, often the young girls’ own mothers do it). In some battle zones, rape is just another tool of war, along with land mines and artillery.

Of course, when we quote numbers and statistics, we tend to think *only* of numbers and statistics. Yet behind each number, each statistic, is a human being for whom Christ died. Pastors who deal with this issue up close, know the terrible toll this crime against humanity takes on women.

## enditnow

For this reason, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), working with the Women’s Ministries Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, has launched a worldwide campaign, *enditnow*, not just to support development programs that empower women and help bring awareness of this terrible scourge, but—as the name unsubtly says—to *enditnow*.

To lament violence against women as another tragedy that takes place in the world is easy. But clergy know that this is a problem in the

church, too, however much (as with the sexual exploitation of children) they do not like talking about it. When clergy stand in a pulpit and look out on their congregations, they can be quite sure, if for no other reason than the statistics, that in their pews are either victims or perpetrators (or both) of violence against women.

of churches and other places of worship around the world took leading roles, the impact would be powerful. If there was ever a subject that can, and should, transcend denominational divides, this is it.

- Use your influence as clergy to get the local community involved—police, school princi-

why should anyone listen to them about anything else?

Pastor Jones learned his lesson the hard way. He was never again going to close his eyes to what should have been obvious. He should have intervened long before. It was a mistake he did not intend to make again.

Stella? She recovered and,

IF PASTORS, OF ALL PEOPLE, DO NOT SPEAK  
OUT—WHO WILL? IF THEY CANNOT TAKE A  
STAND ON THIS TOPIC OF VIOLENCE AGAINST  
WOMEN, WHY SHOULD ANYONE LISTEN TO THEM  
ABOUT ANYTHING ELSE?

### Getting involved

The question for clergy should not be, *Should we do anything?* Of course we should. The question should be, *What can we do?*

What follows are a few tips that can make a difference:

- Go to the campaign's official Web site, [www.enditnow.org](http://www.enditnow.org); there you will learn not only about the depth of the problem but how you can help get your own local church members invested in this campaign. Whatever you, as a pastor, can do, you cannot do it alone. You need to get your church involved.
- Seek the support of other clergy. With their backing, local congregations can play a big role in their respective areas. The work has to start in the local church, in the local community. If thousands

pals, community leaders, other churches, and shelters for battered women. The problem in some places has become so large that many people would be willing to help. You need to help muster all the resources possible.

- Preach on the subject, or get someone qualified to stand in the pulpit and talk about it.
- Pray for the success of this campaign.

### If not pastors, then who?

Pastors should function as the conscience of society—not the police, not the judge, but the conscience. Their voices should touch the hearts, not just of their own congregations, but also of anyone within earshot. If pastors, of all people, do not speak out—who will? If they cannot take a stand on this topic of violence against women,

despite counsel to the contrary, dropped charges against Mike and even took him back. They are together again. Pastor Jones worries, as do the few others in the church who know the situation. They have good reason to worry.

Violence against women. It is real, it is here, and it needs to stop. That is what the *enditnow* campaign is all about.

Be involved. How can clergy do anything but?

- 1 United Nations Development Fund for Women, *Not a Minute More: Ending Violence Against Women* (New York: United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2003), 6; [http://www.unifem.org/materials/item\\_detail.php?ProductID=7](http://www.unifem.org/materials/item_detail.php?ProductID=7).
- 2 World Health Organization, *WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence Against Women: Initial Results on Prevalence, Health Outcomes and Women's Responses* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2005), [http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who\\_multicountry\\_study/en/](http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who_multicountry_study/en/).
- 3 United States Department of Justice, "Intimate Partner Violence, 1993–2001," United States Department of Justice, <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/ipv01.pdf>.

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# How to care for your voice:

## Eight practical suggestions for preachers

I just signed up for voice lessons. No, I am not planning to stop preaching and become a professional singer! Rather, I want to learn how to care for my voice in order to maximize and preserve my impact as a preacher for years to come. Most of us received little or no instruction in voice care during our college or seminary training. Many of our preaching professors assumed we all knew how to take care of our voices. They were wrong. That is why I have dialogued with several voice professionals in order to discover some practical suggestions about voice care for preachers.<sup>1</sup>

Your voice is a miracle of creative genius. Your vocal cords are quite small, somewhere between 18–23 millimeters in size, with this miraculous and priceless instrument housed within your larynx. Your vocal cords vibrate hundreds of times per second when speaking. Continuous misuse or abuse will damage them, and sometimes that damage becomes permanent.

If you would like to protect and preserve your vocal cords and keep your voice working at peak performance, here are eight practical suggestions for voice care.

### Warm up your vocal cords

Athletes use a warm-up routine before vigorous exercise. This reduces the risk of injury to muscles and ensures peak performance. Likewise, your vocal cords are muscles,

and they need to be “warmed up” before use in order to realize their maximum potential and avoid injury.

A simple warm-up exercise for speakers involves humming on a descending scale. Your lips should be touching, with your teeth slightly separated. Feel the buzzing sensation when humming. You can also vocalize various syllables on a descending scale. Try using buzzing sounds like *vi, vi, vi, vi, vi; va, va, va, va, va; vo, vo, vo, vo, vo; or bede, bede, bede, bede, bede; or ze, za, zo, zu*. Start in the middle of your range and descend to your low range. Then go to your high range and descend to your middle range. You can also do lip trills (make a *brbrbrbr* sound, vibrating your lips naturally and easily). A few minutes devoted to a vocal warm-up routine is time well spent.

Gale Jones Murphy, a renowned Christian musician and motivational speaker, offers this practical suggestion for a vocal warm-up routine for preachers. Before a busy day of preaching, one of the best times and locations to warm up your voice is while taking a shower. The steam and humidity are great for the vocal cords. Sing the melodies of some of your favorite hymns or Scripture songs with *ee* vowels, remembering to relax your jaw. This focused warm-up routine can also be a time of spiritual reflection as you associate the melodies with the spiritual messages of the songs.<sup>2</sup>

If you find yourself running out of breath in just a few seconds during your warm-up exercises, then you need to pay special attention to the second suggestion below.

### Practice proper breathing techniques

The vibration of your vocal cords requires consistent, continuous airflow—this reinforces why proper breathing techniques are essential for peak vocal performance. Be mindful of proper breath management because too much pressure wears down the vocal cords. However, too little pressure has the same negative effect. Here are several breathing exercises to help you develop effective breath support:

- Inhale deeply, allowing your ribcage to expand and your diaphragm to lower without raising your shoulders. Then exhale slowly with a hissing sound, gently pulling in with your abdominal muscles for a consistent airflow through your vocal cords. Think about sucking through a clogged straw while inhaling. This will help your air intake to flow slowly and smoothly.
- Inhale deeply, then vocalize “*Choo, choo, choo*” with a loud whisper, using your abdominal muscles to pull in and up with each word. Learn to associate the use of your voice with good breathing techniques. These



YOUR VOCAL CORDS VIBRATE HUNDREDS OF TIMES PER SECOND WHEN SPEAKING. CONTINUOUS MISUSE OR ABUSE WILL DAMAGE THEM, AND SOMETIMES THAT DAMAGE BECOMES PERMANENT.

breathing exercises also help minimize upper body and neck tension and fatigue.

- Lie on the floor with a large book on your abdomen and breathe. The book should ascend and descend as you inhale and exhale. You can also practice this breathing exercise while lying in bed.
- Explore the extremes between too much air pressure and too little air pressure. Exhale with a loud hissing sound (too much air pressure). Then exhale with no hissing sound (too little air pressure). Develop muscle memory for an appropriate breath support that produces better tone quality. Practice reciting sermons with passion without developing tension in your throat.
- Learn to breathe deeply. Engage in activities such as brisk walking, biking, and other aerobic exercises that require you to breathe deeply. Panting can also help you to breathe deeply. Start slowly, then speed up. Feel your whole torso moving when you pant, not just your chest. Deep breathing gets the diaphragm to lower, which produces a more efficient and pleasing tone. Intentionally wake up your body by deep breathing prior to a speaking appointment.

### Practice good posture

Good posture is essential for efficient voice production. When your physical alignment is poor, you not only look awkward to your congregation but you also impair proper breathing techniques. Have you noticed preachers who slump over the pulpit? That is an example of poor posture. When you have proper body alignment, you should be able to drop a line from the top of your head, past your ear, the point of your shoulder, the highest point of your pelvis, just behind your kneecap, and just in front of your ankle. Proper posture enables you to have good

balance, move freely, and provide efficient breath support.

### Provide adequate hydration

My colleague, Dr. Evan Chesney, often coaches me in good voice care with a single word: "Hydrate!"<sup>3</sup> Most of us are aware of the fact that our bodies are made up of approximately 60 percent water. Lost water needs to be replaced daily, and the best way to hydrate is to drink pure water. Other fluids, like juices, are not good substitutes for pure water because your body processes these fluids as food and treats them differently.<sup>4</sup>



[www.eldersdigest.org](http://www.eldersdigest.org)  
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Adequate hydration with pure water becomes particularly important for the lubrication of your vocal cords. Make sure that you are well hydrated before speaking and, if necessary, drink additional water during breaks. Room temperature water is preferable because chilled water will cause the vocal cords to constrict. When preaching three times in a row, my regular preaching routine, I make sure that I drink at least 16 ounces (0.47 liters) of water prior to my first sermon and an additional 16 ounces of water between each sermon. I thought that I was doing well until Reyna Carguill shared with me that she drinks 64–128 ounces (1.89–3.79 liters) of water in the four hours preceding a major event.<sup>5</sup> This requires some intentionality, but adequate hydration is well worth the effort in order to avoid damage to inadequately hydrated vocal cords.

My voice teacher, Mark Becker, shared a story that illustrates the importance of adequate hydration.<sup>6</sup>

A preacher requested Becker’s assistance because he noticed that his throat was beginning to get sore during his speaking assignments. In asking for help, the preacher demonstrated wisdom because soreness is your body’s way of telling you that something is wrong, and you could be damaging some aspect of your physical being. After careful analysis, it was discovered that the preacher was sipping water during his sermons. Rather than providing adequate hydration, this sipping habit was simply washing away the natural lubrication from around his vocal cords, resulting in soreness. When the preacher began to drink adequate fluids prior to speaking and on breaks, rather than sipping water during his presentations, he was able to speak all day without soreness of any kind.

**Get adequate rest**

Has anyone ever said to you, “You sound tired!” When you are

tired, one of the first parts of your body to be affected is your voice. Adequate rest is essential for optimal voice performance. Reyna Carguill makes a point of getting extra rest two days before a major event. Preachers also need to give their bodies some rest reserves. Be intentional as well about providing rest for your vocal cords. Have you heard the expression “Silence is golden”? That is true, not only in times of conflict, but also when you want to provide good care for your voice. Vocal rest becomes very beneficial for your instrument. Be silent for an extended period of time. Some preachers have the mistaken idea that whispering rests the vocal cords, but nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, whispering is more stressful on your vocal cords than speaking. So take time to just be silent. Rest.

If you have a demanding speaking schedule on a particular day, schedule time for your vocal cords to rest. Ask someone else to welcome



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the visitors, give the announcements, lead the songs, and offer the morning prayer. Make room for others to serve, while providing rest periods for your voice at the same time.

impact as a communicator. Dr. Julie Penner strongly encourages all of her voice students to take an exercise class that concentrates on strengthening the core of the body, namely the innermost abdominals.<sup>8</sup> This

are experiencing a vocal disorder of some kind, your voice teacher might suggest you consult a physician because your vocal cords could be damaged and may require complete rest or even surgery.

## BE DETERMINED TO USE YOUR VOICE TO BRING HONOR AND GLORY TO GOD.

### Provide healthy fuel for your body

Your whole body supports your voice so make sure you provide your body with healthy fuel. Everything you eat and drink either sustains or alters your nutritional balance. To maintain the proper chemical balance in your body, you need the appropriate nutrients. Enjoy a healthy balance of fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts, and legumes. Be aware of foods and beverages that can damage your instrument; for example, spicy foods and fried foods can cause acid reflux that damage the vocal cords. Also, be aware of personal food allergies that can affect vocal performance. Avoid overeating as overeating results in shallow breathing and lack of energy. Adequate and appropriate nutrition prior to speaking helps provide the needed energy for peak performance.<sup>7</sup>

### Keep your whole body toned


Exercise is also essential for optimal vocal performance, for exercise will keep your body toned and enhance your core strength. Many muscles are engaged when speaking, and a well-toned muscular system will help you maximize your

exercise class also involves stretching and controlled deep breathing, all of which results in freedom and support of the voice and helps the speaker or singer become more supple in body and voice.

### Take some voice lessons

Every preacher could benefit from taking some voice lessons from a good vocal coach. Dr. Evan Chesney shared a lesson he learned early in his career: “My first teaching experience began when I taught remedial English at Southern Adventist University. After my first week of teaching, I had pretty much trashed my voice, which was very frustrating since I was a vocal performance major. My voice teacher pointed out that I needed to learn to speak the same way I sing. Applying the same techniques when speaking that I used in singing—proper posture, abdominal breath support, proper vocal placement and projection—relieved the stress on my vocal cords, and I didn’t have any more trouble.”

Your voice teacher can help you avoid voice strain and provide some helpful strategies to protect your precious instrument.<sup>9</sup> Old habits die hard, but it is possible to change with discipline and practice. If you

Your voice is a precious gift. Do not misuse or abuse it. Make an effort to practice good voice care. Be determined to use your voice to bring honor and glory to God.<sup>10</sup> 

- 1 I am grateful to Mark Becker, Reyna Carguill, Dr. Evan Chesney, Gale Jones Murphy, and Dr. Julie Penner for their significant contributions to this article.
- 2 Gale Jones Murphy serves as a choral teacher at Brentwood Academy in Brentwood, TN, and is minister of music at Riverside Chapel Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nashville, TN. You can learn more about Gale’s music and teaching ministry at [www.galejonesmurphy.com](http://www.galejonesmurphy.com).
- 3 Dr. Evan Chesney serves as the minister of music at the Forest Lake Seventh-day Adventist Church in Apopka, Florida.
- 4 Alcohol and caffeinated drinks are also detrimental to optimal vocal performance. Alcohol causes constriction of the blood vessels in the vocal cords, causing a reduction in vocal control. Caffeine causes dryness in the throat and impairs a healthy rest cycle.
- 5 Reyna Carguill is a professional operatic soprano.
- 6 Mark Becker teaches voice lessons and directs choral and handbell activities at Forest Lake Academy in Apopka, Florida.
- 7 A healthy lifestyle is an important part of caring for your voice. An excellent resource for whole person health is CREATION Health, which is produced by Florida Hospital. You can learn more about CREATION Health at [www.creationhealth.tv](http://www.creationhealth.tv).
- 8 Dr. Julie Penner is the director of voice activities at Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee.
- 9 Preachers need to learn how to use a microphone correctly. You should not adjust your speaking voice in an attempt to find the appropriate volume or tone. That is the job of the audio technician. Take time for an audio check. The equalizer levels (EQ) are different for speaking versus singing. Female voices may require less treble and male voices may require less bass tones.
- 10 An excellent user-friendly book on the use and care of the voice is *The Performer’s Voice* by Meribeth Bunch Dayme (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005). For a more technical book on vocal pedagogy, Dr. Julie Penner recommends *Your Voice: An Inside View* by Scott McCoy (Princeton, NJ: Inside View Press, 2006). A helpful Web site on voice care is [www.your-personal-singing-guide.com](http://www.your-personal-singing-guide.com).

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# Assessing and fulfilling the needs of a Hong Kong community

**H**ong Kong, once a small city in China, has become one of the world's financial centers.\* With a population of more than seven million in only 1,100 square kilometers (425 square miles) for businesses and residences; high-rise buildings, traffic jams, and people crowding the streets have become a normal scene whether during daylight or nighttime hours. Located at the southern part of mainland China and part of the province of Guangdong, the history of this city began, more than 100 years ago, as a British colony. Like other metropolitan cities such as Tokyo, New York, and Seoul, Hong Kong could be called one of the melting pots of world cultures and religions.

Known as a free port, Hong Kong draws more than 20 million tourists every year. Although Hong Kong boasts of one of the highest living standards in the world, residents live in limited spaces and work in stressful environments. According to reports, one-tenth of the city's residents have emotional problems and therefore need professional help.

## History and background of the church

The Seventh-day Adventist message was brought to Hong Kong by Abram La Rue. After the 1888 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Session in Minneapolis,

Minnesota, La Rue requested to be sent to the Far East as a missionary, but his request was turned down by the committee because he was not a trained minister. His age was another factor for, at that time, he was 65 years old. However, because he had an urge to do missionary work in that part of the world, he decided to support himself without any denominational financial assistance.

La Rue's work was fruitful. Mountain View church, along with 22 other churches and groups, make up the Hong Kong-Macao Conference. At the end of 2009, the church membership totaled 4,600; in addition, the three conference-owned high schools have a total enrollment of approximately 2,300 students.

Located in the west section of the New Territory area of Kowloon, the Mountain View church is just inside the campus of Tsuen Wan Adventist Hospital. Organized in the early 1970s, the original mandate of the church was formed to cater to the needs of the medical personnel of the hospital. Since the missionaries eventually returned to their homelands, the local members took over the administration of the hospital, as well as ministering to the community.

Since then, the church's focus has been on ministering to the needs of the neighborhood, in addition to caring for the needs of the patients. The community is diverse and the

following countries are represented: Australia, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, mainland China, United States, Myanmar, as well as others. Because of the variety of cultures represented, the church has become bilingual. Each Sabbath, members and visitors fill the church to its 200-seat capacity.

## Multifaceted ministries

Because the church is composed of different age groups, the associate pastor and I have divided the members into three areas of ministry.

1. The children and early teens. We allocate a very significant budget each year to cultivate these age groups to be the future leaders. Since Boy Scout or Girl Guide activities conflict with Sabbath worship, we have used the Pathfinder Club (an organization for both boys and girls) to help this group grow up in a Christian environment. Not only do the parents of our congregation's children send their young ones to enroll in the Pathfinder Club, we have also attracted the parents of the children in the neighborhood to send their offspring to join this program. Each year we have baptisms from that group.
2. Inasmuch as the church building is located inside the hospital's

compound, we use friendship evangelism to make contact with the hospital staff—professionals in their working fields—and we invite them to join social programs and activities. There is interest in Bible studies, and every year we have some who commit to baptism and join our church.

3. As in any other city, Hong Kong has an aging population that is increasing rapidly. Thus there are many seniors' homes operated by business people. We took the opportunity to conduct meetings inside some of these homes. Many seniors, having never previously heard the good news of the gospel, were given

leadership in small groups; some provide good involvement as they guide in the Personal Ministries department. We may not inspire the whole church to participate, but since more than half of the members willingly lead in different ministries, the church is successful in sharing the good news. The pastor, along with key lay leaders, oversees all ministries.

### Short-term and long-term goals

When I was assigned to pastor this church, I conducted a self-survey to discover how I could grow and develop. During a church board meeting, I highlighted areas in which

picture of the church for the coming years, they will be more inclined to plan and, if necessary, change.

### Reaching the community

In the Tsuen Wan area, we concluded that the most effective methods of reaching our community included health evangelism, Pathfinder programs, women's ministry, and youth ministry.

With the multifaceted ministries that the church offers, we can witness the blessings that God has given—they were even more than we expected. But if the church stays still, then eventually, it will have a natural death, for no new members will have been added into the congregation.

WITH THE MULTIFACETED MINISTRIES THAT  
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a chance to listen. So far, this group of people has been very responsive in accepting Christ as their personal Savior.

### How to mobilize members to use their spiritual gifts

Members participate in spiritual gifts inventory surveys and this helps them identify their strengths. With this information in hand, we then ask them to identify the areas in which they would like to serve. Since they are aware that the Holy Spirit has given them certain gifts, it is easier to nominate church officers to serve in areas that would work the best.

As a good foundation has been laid, the members participate in the activities with enthusiasm. Some members provide excellent

I needed to pay more attention. I visited all the key leaders and shared with them my assessment of the various ministries and how to best utilize them.

As the pastor, I challenge the members to consider what they would like their church to be in a year and then in two years and finally in five years. This gives them a vision and it helps them anticipate the challenges that have to be met in the future. Pastors come and go, but usually members stay in the church for a much longer period of time.

Thus planning for short- and long-term goals is essential. Some pastors may say, "I will only be here a few years, why do I have to worry about long-term planning?" It is true that some members may resist change; but once they see a more complete

### Conclusion

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 3:5–9, "What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building" (NIV). Paul reminds us that each of us has, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, a role to fulfill in the proclamation of the gospel. **M**

\* Wikipedia contributors, "Hong Kong," Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Hong\\_Kong&oldid=356761196](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Hong_Kong&oldid=356761196) (accessed April 19, 2010).

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# “I will send a famine”: An interview with Dr. Walter C. Kaiser Jr.

*Editor’s note: This interview with Walter C. Kaiser Jr. was conducted while he was serving as president of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Massachusetts, United States.*

**Tom Dombrowski (TD):** *During your years of teaching and leading in theological education, what would you note as the biggest changes and developments you witnessed?*

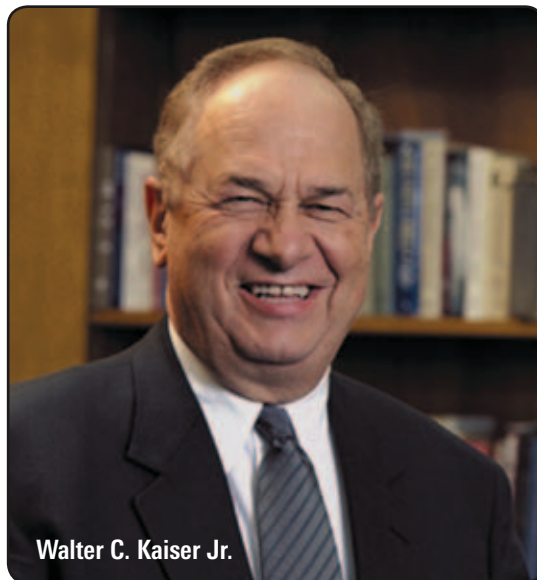
**Walter Kaiser (WK):** The biggest change I have seen is in the proclamation of the Word of God. Furthermore, there is an attempt to move away from actually teaching the biblical materials and talking about the Bible, going paragraph after paragraph and strophe after strophe, laying out for God’s people, “This is what He said.”

I’m a great fan of expository preaching, which is that method where the actual content of the message and the shape of the message are really dictated by the biblical context itself. That keeps us away from doing a sort of pop psychology, which could be no different than a motivational speech for leaders.

**TD:** *What do you believe has been the catalyst for these developments?*

**WK:** I think it’s been an attempt to meet the needs of people where they are; therefore there has been an

attempt to settle for sort of popular questions: How can I be what I want to be? How do I know what God’s plan for me is? How can I be a better leader? All of these are proper questions, but that’s not the whole counsel of God.



Walter C. Kaiser Jr.

Amos 8:11, 12 has impressed me very, very much. He writes, “I will send a famine, not a famine of food and water, but a famine for hearing the Word of God” [paraphrase]. Although there are some beautiful exceptions, we’re in one of the largest drought periods we’ve ever been in for hearing the Word of God.

**TD:** *Is that due to training or is it just the culture we live in, that it’s just so hard to listen in our world?*

**WK:** I’m not sure. Many have told me, “Thanks for your training. I know what you’ve taught us, but we really feel we need to go this way because that’s how we can get the new seekers into the house of God, and keep them.” I think preaching has been reduced to what is the lowest common denominator everyone will accept and at which no one will take offense.

**TD:** *In your book, Preaching and Teaching From the Old Testament: A Guide for the Church, you wrote about how “the church has made great strides forward based on aspects of the church growth movement and has learned from some of the megachurch groups how to attract the younger generations back into the house of God,” yet you go on to say, “the largest challenge that remains is how those same churches can develop a new appetite for the hearing and doing of the Word of God.”\* What role does seminary education play in helping pastors to respond to the challenge of helping the church develop a new appetite for hearing and living the Word of God?*

**WK:** I think once a person comes to really hear genuine expository preaching, they never go back to a substitute. You can have imitation ice cream, then have real ice cream. Once you’ve had real ice cream, you ignore the imitation.

We should be seeker sensitive, using the word *seeker* for the new convert who's coming in, but I don't think we should be *seeker controlled* in the way in which we form the message and develop the plan for teaching God's people.

**TD:** *You've been a seminary president. Did you try to address this challenge in your leadership position?*

**WK:** Over the years, I have tried to emphasize the preaching courses. I have also been trying to fill a need that we have in evangelical theology by developing a PhD program in preaching.

I also attempted to make the whole faculty aware of expository preaching and therefore introduced the practice of the president's Wednesday chapel—this will be my eighteenth semester in which I have gone through a different book each semester and tried to exhibit what expository preaching is all about.

**TD:** *What role should preaching play in the overall body life of the congregation?*

**WK:** Preaching is not the total end—all to serve God. It seems to me the whole program of the church must be thought through entirely—from the total worship experience to the preaching experience to the discipleship experience. And I think there is a continuum through all of those. Unfortunately, what we have are culture wars with about five generations at the same time, all wanting a different form of music. What we have done is break up our congregations in terms of age areas, what we lose is the concept of body in which the younger members minister to the older and the older ones minister to those who are younger. The other thing is pastors are concerned about music conflicts. They have turned the music over to worship teams who have a knowledge of guitar

and basic piano. But the concept of what worship is—how that is ingrained with the preaching experience and how to get not only praise elements, but lament elements and prayer elements and the whole of the spread of what's involved in genuine worship—is brand new. Therefore, it seems to me that pastors have got to be pastors and shepherds of the flock, even in the worship experience.

**TD:** *What contribution does expository preaching make to foster church growth?*

**WK:** Expository preaching really helps because, as Deuteronomy 8 says, men and women don't live by bread alone, but " 'by every word that proceeds from the mouth' " of God [v. 3, NKJV]. So, if you're going to talk about life, you're going to talk about growth. Growth and life can't come unless you're being fed. And God's people have got to be given a new experience with a new portion of God's Word. Both the minister and those ministered to have got to grow.

**TD:** *How can ministers use expository preaching in an evangelistic context when topical preaching would appear to be more the standard approach?*

**WK:** You can use both as you have key passages to explain. My complaint with topical preaching is that it's just hit and miss, and people don't know the context. So many people are biblically illiterate today, that a mere allusion to a reference won't do it; therefore, we've got to take them to it. I know I'm overbalanced on expository preaching. I say, "People should preach topically, once every five years," and then I pause, then say, "Repent and come back to expository preaching."

I taught a doctor of ministry class at another seminary where there were thirty in the class, seventeen different denominations, and I spoke

in the first hour on what *is* expository preaching. In the lunch line, I heard one of the individuals say, "You know, I think I'm going to like this course." There's enough depravity in my soul that my ears perked up, and so the next thing I heard, I couldn't believe. He said, "This suppository preaching is brand new." He actually used that word, so I knew I had a big job ahead of me. There's a man who needed a lot of preparation.

But at any rate, I think that you can do it. John 3 with Nicodemus, is a great expository chapter for that. Also, Acts 17 with Paul on Mars Hill is a great evangelistic message. Even coming at it from 1 Thessalonians 1 in which Paul talks about when he went to Thessalonica, what happened there, and that, as a result of their accepting the Lord, the Word of God was trumpeted forth from there all over Asia. So, in a way, Paul says, "You've kind of stolen my thunder, by the time I get there everyone knows what I've said." So I think there are expository passages, but in my saner moments, there are topical ways of doing it.

**TD:** *What would you say to a young ministerial student or someone new in the ministry about how to be more effective in their pulpit ministry?*

**WK:** I can't do it any better than Paul did with Timothy, 2 Timothy 4:2, "Preach the Word" (NIV). It's not that this is a mantra or something magical. It is as 1 Thessalonians 1:4, 5 almost is in a formulaic way; the Word of God plus the ministry of the Holy Spirit to that Word equals the power of God. And for the power that we're all looking for in the church and the ministry today, I would say if we're going to trust God at all, we ought to trust the God who has spoken from heaven. What else do we have to say? **M**

\* Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Preaching and Teaching From the Old Testament: A Guide for the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 9.

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# Assessment center for interns

## The need for an assessment center (AC)

After finishing master's degree studies, young Adventist pastors in Germany start their one-year internship, during which time they are coached by a trained mentor. The mentor's task includes introducing the intern to the various fields of ministry. The mentor also interprets and evaluates the work of the intern and, finally, promotes the intern's professional and spiritual growth. After completing the internship, the young pastor receives full employment by a conference.

Besides this mentoring process, what else can help identify and support the interns? What objective tools can be used to evaluate their professional and social skills? What may be helpful for the local conferences in deciding on their employment?

In 2009, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Germany installed an assessment center (AC) for interns, a process done at a designated facility. The concept of an assessment center has been developed and implemented by the Institute for Continuing Education (*Institut für Weiterbildung—IfW*) in Germany.

## Goals and purpose

The purpose of the AC is to serve the church, that is, the local conferences, and to aid the young pastors in their professional careers. Basically, two goals are pursued.

The first and foremost goal is to recognize and enhance the interns' potential. Their abilities and strengths

should be maximized and weaknesses minimized. Besides basic professional competency, social and personal abilities are also evaluated. This will help the candidates gain a fresh look at themselves.

The second goal of the AC is to give a recommendation about employment. A team of experienced assessors may provide objective judgments in regards to proper placement of the interns.

Therefore, the results of the AC can help match the abilities of the interns with appropriate church employment, assuming the young pastors have successfully completed their first year in ministry.

## How it works

For starters, to find out if the abilities of the interns meet the requirements of ministry, a job description is indispensable. The following qualifications for ministry were defined.

- Competencies in
  - » theology, teaching, and preaching
  - » mission, evangelism, and personal outreach
  - » counseling, visiting, and pastoral care
  - » personal and organizational leadership and change management
- Social competencies such as communication abilities, team orientation, and a willingness to serve
- Personal competencies such as spirituality, self-organization, flexibility, and growth

Before the AC begins, interns have to submit written documents to meet some of these requirements. After that, they will be observed in different exercises during a three-day AC period. A team of experienced assessors consists of persons from the following groups:

- Employers (conference presidents)
- Ministerial secretaries (representatives of the employees)
- Director of the institute (continuing education)
- Experienced pastors
- Church members (laity)
- Secretary of the institute

This team, comprising eight to ten persons, first studies the interns' documents carefully. Second, the assessors have to observe and evaluate the interns during the exercises and thus get an overall impression of the candidates. After carefully discussing each person, they come to a decision about employment.

## The preparation

Some months before finishing their internship, the young pastors are brought to the attention of the AC by their conferences. The candidates must supply the following documents:

*Personal questionnaire.* This form asks for personal and biographical information, such as their conversion experience and sense of calling. The information should also reveal their dedication to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and whatever previous church activities they have been involved in.



*Previous evaluations.* An evaluation from the ministerial training institution and a feedback questionnaire from a mentor have to be turned in.

*Personality test.* A professional psychological questionnaire should be completed, so—after being evaluated—it can be discussed with the candidate during the AC.

### The assessment center

The AC itself is conducted at a retreat over three days. It starts out with a team meeting of the assessors. There they get acquainted with each other, receive further instructions, and take notice of the candidates' written documents.

After a word of welcome and short devotional, the interns are informed about the goals and purposes of the AC. They are also told the procedures and time schedule but not the contents of the exercises. However, they do know the professional profile of a pastor and what is expected of them.

These are the exercises conducted at the AC:

*Bible study.* Fifteen minutes before the exercise begins, the candidate receives a Bible text with certain instructions (for example, explain the relationship between faith and law in Romans 3:21–31 and Galatians 3). After this short period of preparation, the candidate expounds on the text and teaches a Bible lesson to an imaginary student (an assessor). The rest of the assessors evaluate the theological knowledge, doctrinal balance, and didactic skills of the intern.

*Missionary plan.* In a group of six to eight people, the candidates will imitate the mission board of a local church. Their task is to develop a three-year plan containing the preparations of the congregation and the proposed outreach programs of the church. In this one-hour discussion, the young pastors will demonstrate their abilities to strategize some sort of mission outreach. Moreover, the assessors also look at social qualities such as

team orientation, communication, and leadership skills. Finally, the outreach plan is presented to the assessors.

*Counseling.* In this role-play, the candidates are confronted with a problematic situation of pastoral care. They are obliged to immediately respond to it and reveal their counseling qualities. The assessors will note if they are able to react to the problem calmly and helpfully. Can they show empathy and understanding? Will they add to the solution of the problem in an appropriate way?

*Church board meeting.* In another group of six to eight people, the candidates have to role-play a church board meeting. A certain problem is introduced that has relevance to church life. They have to discuss the topic, balance pros and cons, and present a consensus solution. The assessors will evaluate abilities such as persuasion, debate, leadership, conflict management, and team orientation.



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*Self-management.* This exercise is designed to evaluate the abilities of self-management, work organization, and time management. The candidates are introduced to the weekly timetable of a fictitious pastor. Then they are directly confronted with spontaneous interruptions, additional tasks, and urgent duties. They have to prioritize, reschedule, and finally present a manageable timetable.

a personal discourse. Later they will receive the results in a written form. These results are also sent to the mentors and conference presidents.

The mentors are asked to discuss the results with their interns and implement the recommendations into their coaching activities. The conference presidents will consider the results when discussing the employment prospects at the conference board.

church decide on the career of the pastors.

The advantage of the AC is the distant and objective view on the candidates. Persons working closely with the interns may be too involved and thus show biases. The competent evaluation of the assessors, who come from different areas of the church, is helpful for the self-reflection of the interns. It may also grant additional insights to mentors

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*Personal interview.* Each candidate is interviewed by one or two assessors. At this juncture, certain aspects of the initial questionnaire can be deepened or reassessed. Here, perhaps more than anywhere else, the calling to the ministry, spiritual gifts, and strengths and weaknesses of the young pastors can be candidly reviewed.

During the whole process of the AC, the assessors make notes and fill out evaluation sheets for the different exercises. They recognize strengths and weaknesses and get an overall impression of the candidates.

On the last evening, the assessors come together to discuss each candidate and, ultimately, who should or should not be employed.

### After the AC

In concluding the AC, the results are presented to the candidates in

If needed, the director of the AC is available for personal interviews with the mentors or conference presidents. Then, the AC considers its work to be finished. Further support has to be given by the ministerial secretaries.

### Conclusion

The AC is important. But, of course, it is not the only means available in developing the career of the interns. In the first place, the mentor coaches and promotes the young pastor; also the ministerial secretary and training programs of the institute are of great help.

However, the AC is located at the threshold between internship and ministry. The interns have a chance to evaluate and rethink their past experiences. They are also stimulated to think about their professional careers. Likewise, the work of the assessors helps the

themselves, who learn during this whole process as well.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Germany has found the AC to be very beneficial and plan to continue to use the AC as an additional tool in evaluating the interns and supporting the work of mentors. ❏



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# Will it work?

With the hymn “I Love to Tell the Story” being played softly by the pianist, I gave the altar call. While inviting people to accept Jesus Christ as Savior, I shared my conversion story: how I left my life as a rock-and-roll disc jockey (DJ) to become a Seventh-day Adventist pastor. As I finished the first invitation to come forward, I wondered if every pastor feels like this after an altar call at an evangelistic series. Scanning the congregation and seeing the new faces of those who had been attending the nightly meetings, I wondered if anyone would come forward.

*Will it work?* I thought.

Jesus Christ commanded His followers to “ ‘make disciples of all the nations’ ” (Matt. 28:19, NASB). However pastors, church leaders, and members often wonder if public evangelism still works. My church and I contemplated the same thing when we held the Revelation of Hope series in the fall of 2009 as part of the North American Division’s Year of Evangelism. When we began on Friday night, September 11, we still wondered if the Lord would give us success.

## What is success?

The most important step for an outreach ministry is to define *success* and make sure it matches with God’s view of it. The disciples shared the message that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, the risen Savior. At times, people believed the message and God’s people

rejoiced (see Luke 10:17; Acts 8:8); at other times, few believed and the disciples were physically beaten. Yet they still rejoiced (see Acts 5:40, 41). The goals were to preach the gospel and make disciples (see Matt. 28:18–20). If they shared the message, the disciples counted that as being successful. They left the results of the preaching up to the Lord. Success comes when God’s people are faithful in sharing the gospel.

the aisle to join his wife. Dave’s only exposure to Christianity came from his childhood, when he witnessed his neighbor, a pastor, drink alcohol and scream at children. After the song ended, the elders and pastors met with all those who had come forward. Dave wrapped his arms around me and whispered, “I’m scared, man.”

I held him and replied, “I know. I remember the feeling.”

Four years had elapsed from the

LIKE A PLANT WITHOUT WATER,  
WHICH STARTS TO WITHER,  
SOME MEMBERS NEED TO BE  
WATERED IN ORDER TO START  
GROWING AGAIN.

## Planting

Marta\* walked to the front of the sanctuary as I continued the altar call. Marta and her husband, Dave, drove an hour each night to the meetings. Marta accepted Bible teachings quicker than her husband did, but, as we sang the last verse of the hymn, Dave also walked down

the first message I heard about Jesus to the day I was baptized. Do we give up too quickly on people who take longer to respond than we think they should? We must be willing to invest our time and energy to allow people to respond to the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we try to harvest what was just recently planted. The public

meetings had planted seeds of truth in Dave and Marta, and today they are attending church, studying the Bible, and planning to be baptized.

### Watering

Evangelism produces growth in disciples. Jesus' command was to make disciples, which involves more than baptizing people. Churches are to help their members grow in God's grace and truth. The members who came to the evangelistic meetings said that they were blessed to hear the old story about Jesus and His love again.

One of the great concerns that churches have today is that young adults leave; the reasons for this exodus vary. Some feel the church is not relevant. Others were bruised inside the church. Many leave because, looking for examples of Christ in the members, they find hypocrisy. Evangelism and fellowship can help young adults become connected to the church again.

Like a plant without water, which starts to wither, some members need to be watered in order to start growing again. Several young adults came to those meetings. Some had not attended church in years,

but the Lord called them to try the church again. They needed to be watered. They needed to know that the church loves and forgives. As they heard the messages, they saw Jesus in the teachings. The members reached out with open arms and several young adults decided to be rebaptized and connect again with the church and its mission.

### Harvesting

Evangelism changes lives for eternity. I looked out into the crowded pews after giving the appeal to come forward and take a stand for Christ. I smiled and thanked the Lord. From the back of the church, Zion, a ten-year-old boy, walked down the aisle. Zion had come to almost all of the meetings with his father, and now he walked to the front before any other person had moved. His father, Dan, followed not far behind. Dan is a young adult who had experimented with a variety of belief systems, from New Age to Buddhism. He told me, "This makes sense. I can see this is truth." Dan had found what he was looking for when he found Jesus Christ in the prophetic messages. Father and son were baptized together.

### What brought success?

For evangelistic meetings to be successful, the members need to be supportive and excited. The members offered several ideas to help make the meetings a success. A group of ladies planned a three-course meal the first night for members and visitors. Others organized refreshments for every night of the meetings in order to facilitate fellowship. Without prayer and the Holy Spirit, our efforts would have been in vain, so we started the Alive at Five program months before the series. Alive at Five challenged the members to pray for five people they could invite to the meetings. Our elders also led a small group that prayed for the newcomers and for the pastor each night as the message was preached.

Our communication director suggested using a social networking Web site to invite people. We needed to use every available avenue. Several team members took pictures during the baptisms. A member quickly loaded the images into our computer so they could be viewed on the screens in the church as people greeted the new members after the service. Fresh from his baptism, Dan looked up at the screen and exclaimed, "This is too much! Pastor, look at the pictures. That is awesome!"

We tried to be aware of the needs of our guests. We started and ended on time every night. We held meetings four nights a week, realizing that people have busy schedules. A member recorded the sermons and broadcast them on our Web site so that people could listen again or catch a message they missed.

### God brings success

Success comes when we place the results in God's hands. We prayed that Satan would have no power to hinder the meetings. As I stood

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by the door one evening, greeting people, a woman who had attended every meeting handed me a satanic ring and said, "I know what this means now. I don't want it any more. Will you destroy it?" God was working in ways we did not realize.

One young adult couple, Bryan and Annette, had been coming every night, but Annette had missed several meetings because of an injury. When the night came to preach about a challenging topic, the first person I saw in the pews as I walked out to the platform was Annette. My heart sank into my shoes as my mind raced through her possible reactions. Then I prayed, "Lord, she is in Your hands." Bryan and Annette left after the meeting before I could speak to them. I drove home and pulled out the decision cards for the evening. I swallowed hard as I found Annette's card on top of the pile. She had marked every box, including the decision to be baptized!

## Moving forward

Evangelism series must not end with the baptisms. The energy and momentum of the meetings must continue. Dan said to me, "This is so exciting! When you come and worship here, when you hear the message, you want to be a part of it. You want to help support the ministry."

Dan's son, Zion, faced a tough decision about playing soccer on the Sabbath. Douglas Eley, our soccer-playing senior pastor, who coaches a team that plays on Sundays, invited Zion to join his team. Zion's face lit up as Dan said to him, "Remember your prayer last night about playing soccer?"

Those who were not baptized are attending a Sabbath School class for new believers. Our church plans fellowship meals for the newcomers. We work with newly baptized members to help them discover their spiritual gifts. We also invited those who came to

the Revelation of Hope series to attend our next laity-led Revelation seminar, which began in January. The church plans community events such as an international food festival, health fairs, Vacation Bible School, a child-friendly fall festival, and drama programs all year long to make connections with the community and prepare for the next evangelism series.

Here are three things to keep in mind as your church plans its next evangelism event:

1. Pray and trust the success and results (seen and unseen) to the Lord.
2. Make sure your evangelism has a personal touch.
3. Learn from mistakes and never give up trying different ways to touch lives in your community.

## Walking the aisle

The longest walk I ever took was the distance from sitting in the back

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of a small Adventist church, down the aisle to the front, as I responded to an invitation to commit my life to Jesus Christ. Indeed, it was a long walk from my old life as a radio DJ to something new with Jesus. That little church held the evangelism meetings, and I think I was the only one who was baptized as a result. They did all that work for only one baptism. Success should not be measured in numbers. In time my wife was also baptized, and the Lord placed us in ministry to lead others to Him. One changed life for God is worth it because one life touches another and then another until our world is changed (see Luke 15:3-7).

Did it work? Were our evangelism meetings a success? The good news of Jesus Christ was preached. Lives were changed. We rejoice that, with God's power, evangelism still works, just as Jesus promised in Matthew 28:18-20. ❏

\* Actual names are not used.

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# The Beijing approach to church growth

In Beijing, the capitol of the People's Republic of China, there are more than 4,000 church members. These churches are located in areas such as Gangwashi, Chaoyang, Daxing, Yanqing, Caimanjie, and Xiaotangshan. In the metropolitan area, there are a number of larger congregations, and additionally, there are more than 100 family or house churches in metropolitan Beijing.\* Each year more than 300 individuals join the various congregations by baptism.

Pastors in the Beijing area function similarly as pastors in other parts of the world—they visit members, give Bible studies, and organize church groups. Some of these groups remain as smaller house groups, whereas others become larger congregations. In this article, I will share some of the methods used by the pastors in our area with the hope that readers will be able to implement these methods where they work.

We place much emphasis on house churches because this has become one of the most effective ways of reaching the large population in our city. Another reason for using this approach is because in these areas we do not use public meetings to reach people with our faith. The public approach is not possible for us to consider, and, therefore, we have developed other methods such as house churches and smaller congregations.

In this article, I will focus on the formation of several groups in

the Beijing area. One congregation started about two years ago with 20 members and now has more than 70 members. During the past year, 20 individuals joined by baptism. What is responsible for this rapid growth of the congregation? Is the approach unique to our situation or can others use similar methods?

## Working together

One of the pastors in the area has several congregations, and he focused on the need for a team effort to start a new church. A group of church members was organized into a team so that a new church could be planted. Four experienced church members—though of rather different personalities and professions—started the evangelistic work. Each one performed a specific function such as preaching, giving Bible studies, and visitation. One of the group members organized family meetings for members in the community, focusing on the needs of those families. Another approach was visitation of individuals who were experiencing personal difficulties and praying for them and their families.

## House churches

A number of our congregations are house or family churches. One such group has about twenty members; and even though the congregation is small, it has met the needs of various individuals. In one instance, a woman was contemplating suicide, but her affiliation with

a house church brought her into contact with members who prayed for her and became her friends. She responded positively, and, in fact, she has brought her whole family; and they worship in this house church. House churches focus on the needs of the members, and they look to the Holy Spirit to meet their needs and the needs of those who visit the groups.

## Training for service

Because house churches are small groups, it may be assumed that no formal training is needed, and yet that is not so. One of the pastors called upon another pastor who has experience with house churches to provide training. Additionally, members from other groups were used in the training program. Part of the training focuses on helping the existing members identify the problems that people are having and then finding ways to help them. Helping people with their problems has become one of the most effective ways of reaching them with a spiritual message. Also important is for the members and the visitors to develop social relationships, and the pastor, along with experienced members, to provide such training. Social and spiritual relationships are strengthened through a well planned visitation program.

The desire for good health has been one of the ways of reaching new members. In order to do that, our groups have focused on specific needs that people have. In one




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instance a couple was experiencing some serious health problems for which they could not find a solution, in spite of spending a considerable amount of money. Our groups suggested that they focus on their lifestyle and this new lifestyle helped them experience better health. But the benefit was not only for them—their children and grandchildren were also advantaged by the lifestyle changes they experienced. Now some of their children are asking for Bible study meetings in their home. The Holy Spirit has guided these house churches to

address the pressing needs that people have and provide a new physical and spiritual life.

To tell people that God wants us to have good health is one thing, but more than that is needed. We need to be much more specific in our outreach to people and help them with health issues. For those reasons, we focus on nutritional seminar programs that help people stop smoking, seminars on stress, and other programs. By helping them with these needs, we also help them with their spiritual needs.

### Jesus at the center

Each house church becomes a family unit, and by uniting in Jesus Christ they flourish and also develop effective evangelistic outreach. Family churches grow and multiply in our area because the members work together and train for service. By using this approach, they not only focus on their needs but also on the needs of the community. 

\* For more information regarding house churches, please read Kwabena Donkor's article titled, "New Testament House Churches: A Model for Today's Complex World?" published in the April 2008 issue of *Ministry*. Please visit [www.MinistryMagazine.org](http://www.MinistryMagazine.org) and click on Online Archives to view back issues.

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**Doug Robertson, DMin**, is senior lecturer in ministry and missions, and associate director of field education, Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.



# Field based, supervised theological education

Churches expect exceptional leadership from their pastors to lead in the ministry and mission of their local congregation. Every time a new pastor is appointed to their church, many members hold their breath, praying that their new leader will rise up to their expectations. When ministerial interns enter their first parish, they hope that their training has prepared them for the demands they know they will face in their new appointment. Whether or not the ministry of individual congregations will be adequately directed and nurtured, and the new appointees will fulfill their mission to their local communities, depends largely upon the level of excellence achieved in the ministerial formation and training.

The preparation of pastors for ministry has gone through several learning cycles. The training process has transitioned from offering very little formal training to requiring multiple degrees for graduating ministry trainees.<sup>1</sup> Some training traditions have shifted from a strong emphasis on practical pastoral skills to an emphasis on the mastery of theology and biblical languages. Other ministry training establishments have sought a balance between wholly practical and wholly academic preparation for ministry. In this article, we will examine current forms of ministry formation at Avondale College in Australia, and

consider what key competencies employing churches are looking for in their pastoral staff.<sup>2</sup>

### Avondale's vision and model for ministerial formation

Avondale has been training ministers for more than 100 years. Our graduates have served as missionaries, evangelists, pastors, and church administrators throughout the world. Our vision has always been to offer students a participative ministry training process from which spiritual maturity and pastoral professionalism can emerge as key factors in preparing them for a lifetime of caring, sharing, and empowering ministry. In recent years, we have sought to refine that vision to meet the need that exists in churches for a balanced, participative leadership. Like many other theological training centers, Avondale places each of its students in a local church where, under the supervision of a seasoned pastor, they are able to develop their ministry skills in a variety of differing ministry situations. The supervised field education process at Avondale takes the academic, biblical, and theological content of the classroom and links it with the student's personal faith, passion, and spiritual giftedness in order to create opportunities for ministry development in the practical arena of a local congregation.

How has Avondale enriched this process for students? What do ministry trainees learn from their church placements that is essential for effective pastoral and administrative leadership in a local church? How can it be tailored for the benefit of ministry formation in similar training contexts around the world?

### Action-reflection-action model

Avondale's supervised ministry practicum program combines elements of contemporary adult experiential learning processes<sup>3</sup> with the method that Jesus exemplified in the training of His disciples as He engaged them in a variety of ministry-learning experiences. The process acknowledges that, while most adults generally have a preferred learning mode, they learn best from being involved in an *action-reflection-action* type learning experience. The following process indicates how this method is achieved.

1. *Action*. Throughout their ministry preparation, trainees are placed in a congregation where they are engaged in a variety of concrete ministry experiences in a manner similar to that followed by Jesus as He introduced His disciples to ministering to others.<sup>4</sup>

2. *Reflection*. Jesus, in the training of His disciples for future ministry, set aside time for them



to reflect on their recent ministry experiences. This helped them to process the theological and sociological implications for their ministry involvement. In a similar manner, pastoral supervisors assist our ministry trainees in contemplating and reflecting on the theological and experiential implications of their recent ministry experiences. For example, they are encouraged to reflect on where and how God has been at work in each experience. They may reflect upon what biblical story, parable, image, or symbol might come to mind. This reflection can illuminate their understanding of what might have happened during the ministry experience. They may also ponder how lecture contents or readings impact the situation. What biblical teaching or doctrine is relevant to this ministry experience? How well have they connected with the needs and concerns of the person or community to whom they have been ministering?<sup>5</sup>

3. *Action*. As ministry trainees reflect theologically on recent ministry experiences, they gain important insights and understanding into what they personally contribute to ministry and how they have responded in different ministry situations. This opens opportunity to consider how they might adapt and apply what they have learned to their future ministry.

Jesus gave His followers opportunity to plan for and apply in their future ministry what they had previously learned from past ministry experiences. In the same way, the insights gained from a reflective re-enactment of a recent ministry event are used to help current ministry trainees consider how similar ministry situations might be approached in the future.<sup>6</sup>

Trainees are also encouraged to consider what God is showing them from this present experience that might have bearing on similar, future experiences. Furthermore,

consideration is given to the kind of changes in manner, personal style, or address that might need to happen in their lives so as to enhance their future in ministry. Have recent experiences highlighted inherent human weaknesses that are limiting their capacity for ministry? Is there a call for greater dependence on God's grace to impact them if their future ministry is to be more effective?

### **Wholistic ministry formation in a field partnership**

Experiences gained in the practical arena of the local church are considered a vital and integral part of the ministry formation curriculum at Avondale. The supervised field education process, intentionally structured, provides balanced, true-to-life ministry situations that will prepare our trainees for future effective pastoral leadership among church congregations. The

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# SIGNS OF THE TIMES®

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following factors indicate how we expect to achieve our expectations:

1. *Self-understanding.* Being involved in supervised field education in a congregation offers trainees firsthand opportunities to assess their aptitude for ministry. Taking on leadership and pastoral responsibilities in their church assists them in acquiring valuable self-understanding and dependence upon God for success in future ministry. Trainees become aware of the strengths they bring to ministry in terms of

their future ministry. As they reflect theologically on these experiences, and seek to understand them in the light of Scripture, culture, history, and through interaction with other members of their Christian community, it helps them to make sense of these experiences.

3. *Mentoring by experienced pastors.* Crucial to the success of field education includes engaging experienced supervisors who can establish open and supportive working relationships with their

understanding about ministry goals, relationships, appropriate boundaries, workloads, and responsibilities with their trainers. This would then be summarized in a formal trainee-supervisor contractual agreement. Throughout the duration of the field education experience, trainees are able to observe various church leadership models being demonstrated in the way their supervisors conduct their ministry.

As modelers and mentors, supervisors assist trainees in

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INTEGRATES CONTENT AND PROCESS IN  
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their calling, spiritual giftedness, commitment, spiritual formation, character, personality, temperament, leadership ability, and experience. By contrast, they also become aware of those areas of their lives that need particular attention and nurture if, in the future, they are to become fully effective, transformational leaders in a local church.

2. *Learning to reflect theologically.* For it to be authentic, a personal cognitive knowledge of God needs to be affirmed and established within the social and ecological context of everyday life. Avondale's ministry trainees are challenged to reflect theologically on the many situations they experience in the course of their ministry among church members and to ask what they might learn for

trainees. Communicating clear ministry objectives and expectations becomes crucial. Supervising pastors are selected for their maturity and experience in ministry and their cooperation and commitment to mentoring trainees for lifelong ministry. Avondale is indebted to the conference leaders who select experienced pastors for the surrounding churches. Avondale's Field Education directors maintain regular dialogue with these supervisors. We conduct empowering training sessions where input and discussions on vision, spirituality, ministry training, supervisory skills, resources, information, changes to curriculum, and individual trainee development and progress are shared.

When first placed in a congregation, trainees establish a mutual

developing their own unique pastoral, evangelistic, and leadership identities. As they offer direction, encouragement, support, counsel, and model a variety of church pastoral responsibilities, supervisors facilitate the development of an authentic, personalized ministry in each trainee. By assigning ministry tasks appropriate to their maturing leadership skill levels and assisting them in achieving experience and depth in their assigned ministry tasks, trainee competency develops and matures.

A final important aspect of the supervisor-trainee mentorship is a monthly interview and debriefing session where the discussion focuses on the wholistic ministry formation of the trainee. Based on a prepared verbatim report of a

recent ministry experience, trainees reflect with their supervisor on their progress in ministry and analyze God's role in both their spiritual and professional development.

4. *Opportunity for experimentation.* In supervised field education, trainees are given firsthand opportunities to test their developing ministry skills in the real-life environment of a local congregation. Within a local church setting, they can build breadth and depth into their ongoing preparation for future ministry as they experiment with the biblical and theological concepts they have grappled with in the classroom. Within the nurturing surroundings of their hosting congregation, trainees find the generally supportive and encouraging climate provided by their local church to be the ideal place to come to terms with the types of spiritual, sociological, cultural, theological, and pastoral issues that typically confront those occupied in full-time pastoral leadership. Having the support of their supervising pastor to assist them in reflecting upon their ministry performance makes the trainee's church placement a healthy environment to learn and prepare for future ministry.

5. *Developing their relationship with God and family.* Whatever our students' expectations might be for their future in ministry, involvement in supervised ministry formation creates a realistic environment where their relationship with God can be nurtured. Within the local church, the kind of relational experiences that form part of everyday Christian ministry provide a place where God's calling to ministry can be confirmed and trainees can serve others in Christ's name. Such interaction with people in a variety of life experiences provides a depth of self-understanding and serves to remind trainees of their need to rely on God for wisdom and grace to minister to others with empathy and love. Involvement in the real-life environment of pastoral ministry also encourages trainees to see the need to carefully manage their time and set aside periods each day to strengthen their spiritual relationship with God and others.

6. *Developing experience in basic ministry competencies.* Dividing ministry training between the classroom and the congregation has real benefits. The finer points of ministry are caught as much as they are

taught. Instruction in each of the key areas of ministry, with their accompanying competencies, is structured into the course, giving trainees the opportunity to engage them at the theological and sociological level in the classroom and the experiential level through their supervised field education. Avondale's theological field education focuses on six key areas of ministry formation, and in each of these areas we have identified various ministry competencies. We expect that trainees completing the course will have reached proficiency in each of the competencies. The following is a summary of the six focus areas in ministry training accompanied by the various competencies engaged by the trainees.

1. *Personal development:* Spiritual formation, call to ministry, ministry attitude, personal health, time and resource management, role expectations, self-understanding, self-discipline, reflection and integration, personal values, and personal boundary formation.
2. *Building relationships:* Relating to peers, relating to church members, creating church

## Student interview

Kelly Fry graduates this year from Avondale College. She has been mentored by three pastors and two churches during the past four years.

*Kelly, what have been the benefits of your church placement?*

I've been able to see what pastors do and how they work. It has helped me grasp how I would do ministry. I have learned what to do, what will work for me, and what I don't think will work for me even though it may work for

others. It has helped me focus my learning on how I can prepare now for full-time ministry.

*What ministry factors have impacted you the most?*

The way pastors need to adapt to different styles of church and relate to diverse people appropriately. When I identify some of their great skills, I ask them how they developed them. A church placement is really getting a feel for what full-time ministry is all about. It

helps me look for things in class that I know I can use.

*How have you known that God is with you as you are involved in ministry activities?*

I have really felt God's presence in my life. In performing different ministry tasks, I have found I know where God wants me to be. Being with a church has kept my sense of calling relevant and alive. I feel honored that God wants to use me in this way.

community, cross-generational relationships, relating to authority, cross-cultural relationships, family relationships, community relationships, conflict resolution, marriage perspectives, and authentic sexuality.

3. *Proclamation*: Proclaiming purposefully, proclaiming through teaching, preaching with immediacy, preaching with variety and focus, preaching a range of sermon genres, preaching for decisions, preaching with passion and momentum, preaching with media technology, and communicating cross-culturally.
4. *Pastoral care*: Pastoral attitude, pastoral visitation, caring for new members, caring for nonattendeers, caring for the hurting, caring for the unchurched, crisis intervention, and mentoring.
5. *Evangelism and discipleship*: Meeting the community, evangelistic mentoring sessions, reaching the unchurched, individual Bible studies, discipling new Christians, small group Bible study, evangelism planning, evangelistic preaching, and baptismal preparation and planning.
6. *Leadership*: Pastoral leadership, leadership style, worship leadership, small group leadership, management and administrative leadership, team leadership, visionary leadership, and facilitating change.

These six focus areas intentionally prioritize the ministry skills graduates will need for full-time Adventist ministry. Students experience these competencies in either their church or the classroom.<sup>7</sup> Avondale has designed processes

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and opportunities for each trainee to experience some competency in each of these skills. By providing this framework for their life-long learning, Avondale prepares them for continuing maturation of their diverse ministry gifts. Our goal insures that many of the hopes parishioners have for their new pastors can be met.

The preparation of Adventist pastoral leaders requires our best practice. Partnering with dedicated, experienced field pastors vastly enriches our students. Their modeling and mentoring are foundational for ministerial formation at Avondale. Our *action-reflection-action* model integrates content and process in an intentional student-orientated learning experience that creates vital ministry formation. This ensures that wherever God calls our graduates, they have the necessary foundations to minister to a rapidly changing world. ☑

1 Brian Harris, "Defining and Shaping an Adequate Theological Curriculum for Ministerial Training," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 36 (Summer 2009): 157-168.  
2 Avondale has moved from offering a BA to offering a BTh/

BMin. The double degree provides majors in Theology, Biblical Studies, and Church Ministry.

- 3 David Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1984). Kolb developed a model of experiential learning in which he recognized that adults learn best when they seek to solve their own work-based issues. Through the interplay of theoretical knowledge and reflection, learning becomes self-directive and effectual.
- 4 Matt. 9:35-38; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 12:1; John 4:1.
- 5 Mark 6:30-32; Mark 8:27-29; Mark 9:28-31; Luke 8:9-11; Matt. 16:24, 25; Luke 12:22; Luke 24:27.
- 6 Mark 3:14, 15; Luke 9:1-6; Matt. 28:18-20; John 20:21, 22.
- 7 Avondale has eight church ministry units to which these are appropriately assigned: Spiritual Formation for Pastoral Ministry, Communication and Worship, Ministry in Practice A, Ministry in Practice B, Preaching in Ministry, Evangelism in Practice A, Evangelism in Practice B, and Marriage and Family Ministry.

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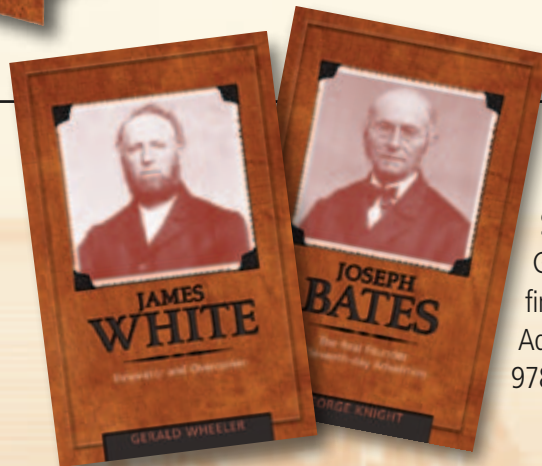
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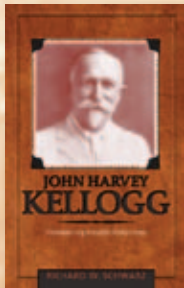
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# Beyond the usual pastoral duties: An interview with David and Freda Charles

*Editor's Note: Clergy and their families have many demands placed on their lives. In spite of the many responsibilities they have, some—such as Pastor and Mrs. David Charles of Baltimore, Maryland, United States—have reached out in their community by providing foster care for children with special needs. Our readers may not only be interested in the commitment this pastoral family has made, but may also consider becoming foster parents themselves or adopting.*

**Nikolaus Satelmajer (NS):** *You're a congregational pastor. Tell us about your church.*

**David Charles (DC):** We are a full-gospel Christian church in the area of Baltimore, Maryland, with an average weekly attendance of about seventy. In 2007, the Lord blessed us with our own building, and, as a result, we are able to more effectively reach out to the community.

**NS:** *You and your wife have a special ministry. What prompted you to open your home to the care of children, not only in a foster care situation, but who have special needs?*

**Freda Charles (FC):** Well, actually I had been thinking about it for a while, and it just so happened that we moved next door to a lady who

was doing foster care. She asked me, "Oh, are you a stay-at-home mom? Have you ever thought about doing foster care?" And I said, "Yes," it had been on my heart. Three years later we decided to go into foster care, which turned out to be a blessing.

**NS:** *When was that?*

**DC:** Two thousand and four. We began the process and were licensed to do it in January of 2005. It's been more than five years.

**Willie Hucks (WH):** *How many children do you care for?*

**FC:** Altogether, we've had five. Right now, we have one. At one point, not too long ago, we had three little boys in the home. It's been exciting.

**WH:** *There's no doubt in my mind that this takes a lot of time and energy. How do you find the time for this and pastoral ministry?*

**DC:** Basically, it's still raising children. So, yes, there's some additional time investment. For example, the little boy that we have now is a little more doctor-visit intensive. It varies from diagnosis to diagnosis. *In utero* drug exposure qualifies some of these children to be in the program. In the

cases we've had, the effects were not evident outside of being born with withdrawal symptoms. So those children were presented as normal. It was just as if they were our own children. We've always said, "We raise kids."

**FC:** When they come into my home, they are my children. So, it doesn't bring "extra" work. I would have to go through the same steps as if they were my children; they *are* my children. It's not an extra burden. It's just as if they were mine, as if I'd given birth to them.

**NS:** *Obviously you don't just say one day, "We're willing to do this," and the child shows up. What's involved in getting started?*

**DC:** A person has to be thoroughly vetted with regard to their background—legal, criminal, and so on. Then there are a number of informational classes you take to find out if this is something you are willing to commit to. There are statutory, state governmental things you have to be willing to adhere to in understanding that you are part of a team. This is not just your child; or what you say goes. You work with a team of social workers; there are informational meetings that can last several hours. Then we came back



David Charles

and once we decided to commit, we began to go through the steps: fingerprinting, and different things the government requires. Then we took classes to familiarize us with the kind of children we would be dealing with—special needs children—children from cerebral palsy to just about *anything* medical.

**Stephanie West<sup>1</sup> (SW):** In relation to your question about Pastor and Mrs. Charles, one of the things I see in working with them is they work as a team. And when you think of a first lady supporting her husband in a church, it's a lot of what you see in the home, and I think that's one of the things that really helps them do such a fabulous job as foster parents. Their demeanor and belief is so important for the type of kids they care for. So, I just wanted to add that because they don't speak a lot about just how much they bring, the individuals they are, or how much they have helped me as a social worker in the job that I do.

**NS:** *Do you remember the moment the first child came? What happened in your home?*

**DC:** Yes. Actually, we had already gone through the final steps of becoming licensed foster parents, which is called a home study—a series of interviews you have with a social worker as a couple and then as individuals. And then they interviewed my daughter—she was six years old at the time, I believe, and our son, because they're also concerned about the impact, not only on you, but on your children. So we finished the home study. We were in Seattle for a ministers' conference. While we were there, we got a call from the agency, saying, "We have a little boy that we would like you to meet as soon as you get back." Well, we were excited.

**FC:** At first he would come home with us for a few hours. When we picked him up to go, he just came with us, but after we would drop him

off, even after the first time he met us, he was crying as if he had already attached himself to us. It was the reverse of what we thought it would be, for we were strangers. But that spoke to us about some of the issues with his family attachment.

**WH:** *What impact do you see from your life and ministry, on these children, in terms of their growth and maturity?*

**DC:** Many times people say, "Well, you're just doing a wonderful job with these children." Sometimes what I see in fostering is that there is a parental deficit. As foster parents, what we're doing is taking a seed and putting it into that soil, knowing that it will one day sprout and grow. So to me, it's just a matter of providing that emotional normalcy of home that sometimes children don't have, for whatever reason, with their family.

**FC:** And with the kids we get, our members take them in just like

they're part of the congregational family. When the children return home, they notice. People in the congregation have developed a love for our kids. So, they have another extended family.

**WH:** *How do you say goodbye to these children?*

**FC:** We don't think about it.

**DC:** No. We try not to think about it.

**FC:** We make friends with the family, and hope to maintain contact in the future.

**WH:** *How has foster care impacted your view of God, and how has it impacted your church members' view of God as they see what you do?*

**DC:** When you look at a foster situation, or an adoptive situation, a lot of times you're asked, "Would you like to help this child?" So many times the child needs a lot of help. From

a spiritual point of view, recognizing that we are lost sinners with our faults and failures, God still adopts us, by His Spirit, when we ask Him. He adopts us into His family. He chooses us. We're all His children by creation, but sometimes we live outside of the blessing. We're like the estranged child. And so, it's just a reminder. I think, in general, parenting is a reminder to us about our relationship to our heavenly Father. It gives me a stronger daily reminder of what God puts up with, and God puts up with a lot.

**FC:** I think about myself—all that I was—and God took me in with unconditional love. So that's why I say, when these children come into my home, they're my children, unconditionally. We love to impart how much love God has for them. It's an unconditional love like God has for us that we have for these kids. And it's a love that never ends; they're always going to be in my heart.

**NS:** *These children have either emotional or physical, or both, challenges. What are some of the challenges and how do you cope?*

**DC:** The agency wants us to continue to foster for a long time. So they tend to ask, "What types of children do you want to bring into your home? Are you allright with children with emotional problems? How about medically fragile?" I've always said that with foster care, it's a choice. You're going to have to deal with issues of teenagers or older children or you're going to have diaper bags and strollers and deal with babies. Both are challenging.

**NS:** *I want to ask the social workers a question, How do you find families? Do you have other clergy families involved in fostering?*

**SW:** Well, in terms of clergy, we do have one who has been with the program for about three years.



Freda Charles





The Charles family

IT'S AN UNCONDITIONAL LOVE LIKE GOD HAS  
FOR US THAT WE HAVE FOR THESE KIDS.

**Nikole Satelmajer<sup>2</sup> (NiS):** We get a lot of phone calls from the general public. We also put ads in community papers because we want to recruit local families. We also do and we receive many initial phone calls—people interested, but few become foster parents because the training is so invasive.

**SW:** We've got a deacon who is also a foster parent. He's been fostering for quite some time. His child has grown into a teenager. So, he's been with him for quite some time.

**NiS:** Current families are our number one recruitment tool. So, not only do we want to keep our families happy because they're helping our kids, and they're doing such a great job, but they're also our number one outreach.

**DC:** The agency we're with, Kennedy Krieger,<sup>3</sup> provides respite. Like my sister, for example. She does not have a full-time foster child. She is actually what they call a child-specific provider for us. So, when we have ministry conferences, which we do once or twice a year, usually out of state, we just call and say we need these dates. She knows the boys.

**WH:** *Is that what you mean by respite—someone who just fills in while you take a respite?*

**FC:** Yes.

**NiS:** We have families that come in who can do the long-term commitment of foster care, and then we have families who come in and say

they can only do a little bit here and there. They do respite. All of these families help us out extensively.

**NS:** *If you were standing in front of a group of pastors representing various congregations, what would the two of you like to say to them?*

**DC:** Fostering children, or adopting children, whichever a person decides to do, certainly is, in many ways, a natural fit for a pastor, because it really is a picture of what God does.

**NS:** *It's obvious to me that this is an intense experience and something very personal that you go through.*

**DC:** I often think about the old illustration of the starfish on the beach. The tide had come in and left all

these starfish on the shore when it went back out. This little boy was picking up starfish and throwing them back into the surf. A man came by and asked him, "What are you doing? There's so many starfish on the beach—thousands of them. It doesn't make a difference, you

know." And the little boy smiled at him. He looked down again, picked up another starfish, and threw it back into the water. He said, "It made a difference to that one." That's what we do. We can't, as individuals, change every child's life. But to that one child who is changed, this

change is absolutely important to him, and he's absolutely thankful. **M**

- 1 Stephanie West is a social worker with Kennedy Krieger Institute Therapeutic Foster Care.
- 2 Nikole Satelmajer is a community outreach coordinator with Kennedy Krieger Institute Therapeutic Foster Care.
- 3 Kennedy Krieger Institute Therapeutic Foster Care operates in the Baltimore metro region and provides foster care and adoption services for children and teenagers with special needs ([www.foster-a-hero.org](http://www.foster-a-hero.org)).

Tell us what you think about this article. Email [MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org](mailto:MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org) or write to 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

## Resources

Various reputable organizations coordinate foster care and adoption. Our readers may want to encourage their church members to consider participating either in foster care or adoption to meet the urgent needs that exist. Below is a list of some of the organizations in North America. Readers in other countries need to research to find reputable organizations in their countries.

### ADOPTION

**AdoptUsKids**  
[www.adoptuskids.org](http://www.adoptuskids.org)  
 (United States)

The mission of AdoptUsKids is to recruit and connect foster and adoptive families with waiting children throughout the United States. This Web site (a federally funded national database of children awaiting adoption and families approved to adopt) allows families to search for children and workers to search for families throughout the United States. The site also includes comprehensive adoption information for families and many features to assist social workers.



**Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption**  
[www.davethomasfoundation.org](http://www.davethomasfoundation.org) (United States)  
[www.davethomasfoundation.ca](http://www.davethomasfoundation.ca) (Canada)

A national nonprofit organization dedicated to dramatically increasing the adoptions of the more than 150,000 children waiting in North America's foster care systems. The agency is a starting point for

information about foster care adoption, specific agencies, and advocacy. The goal is to find forever families for children in foster care who cannot return to their birth families. The foundation believes, "Every child deserves to live in a safe, loving, and permanent family. No child should linger in foster care or leave the system at age 18 without a permanent family of their own. Every child is adoptable."

**Adoption Council of Canada**  
[www.adoption.ca](http://www.adoption.ca)  
 (Canada)

According to their Web site, "The Adoption Council of Canada (ACC) is the umbrella organization for adoption in Canada.

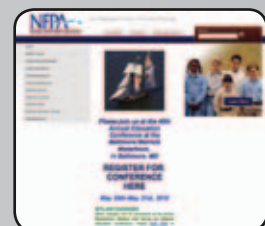
"Based in Ottawa, the ACC raises public awareness of adoption, promotes placement of waiting children and stresses the importance of post-adoption services."



### FOSTER CARE

**National Foster Parent Association**  
[www.nfpainc.org](http://www.nfpainc.org)

This association supports foster parents in achieving safety, permanence, and well-being for the children and youth in their care.





# Waking up to spiritual discipline

Will you be attending the pastors' retreat?" my conference president at that time, Bill Miller, inquired.

"I didn't know I had a choice," I answered. I was new to full-time pastoring, and was still learning the expectations not only of a three-church district but also of the conference.

"This is not like regular pastors' meetings," he said. "This event is optional. It's a spiritual retreat for pastors."

Since I was so new that my schedule was not yet packed sardine-can style, and I wanted to make a good impression, I decided to attend the optional retreat. I did not realize how my spiritual life was about to change.

I drove the two hours to the retreat camp and was surprised to see only a few cars. And no more showed up that evening. I wondered if I had the wrong date. But no, attendance was just low; maybe half a dozen of us out of nearly 40 potential participants. This, I soon learned, was not unusual.

When the time came to begin, the president laid out the program. The evening would include a short worship consisting of about 45 minutes of quiet music and silence among us. At one point, someone would read the selected passage of scripture on which we would be focusing throughout the retreat. Then another person would read it again followed by more silence.

We would continue in silence through the night and until noon the following day. In the morning, we would meet for breakfast and eat together in silence, then have worship like the evening before. After that, we could spend the rest of the morning doing whatever we wanted to do; sleeping, reading, walking, praying—anything so long as we were silent. Email and texting in this situation was not considered silence.

At lunch we would break the silence, spend part of the afternoon doing whatever we wanted to do, then at midafternoon we would meet to discuss the Bible passage on which we were concentrating. After supper, we had the same kind of worship with the same Bible passage and then silence. The schedule repeated the next day, and again the next, ending with Communion at noon.

I had heard the words *spiritual discipline* before. To some degree I could have even explained the concept. But I had never before *understood* spiritual discipline. That first retreat forever changed my spiritual life, though I did not comprehend that for some time. Nothing occurred during the retreat that I would have identified as profound, yet something profound happened. Since then I have become increasingly committed to spiritual disciplines. Thank you, Bill Miller.

## Making an effort toward relationship

Even though I am still only an entry-level participant, I can

categorically state that nothing has done more for my ministry and life, overall, than spiritual disciplines. The reason is simple: spiritual discipline is the way we actively pursue a closer relationship with God.

I sometimes think the old argument between faith and works might be solved even among the spiritually immature, if just one important concept would be understood. In the words of Dallas Willard, "Grace is not opposed to effort. It's opposed to earning. Earning is an attitude. Effort is an action."<sup>1</sup>

In a broken relationship, one side may initiate the process of reconciliation, as Jesus has, but eventually the other must respond with their own efforts toward rebuilding the relationship. One who hopes to grow closer to Christ must make efforts toward relationship building. And this must never be confused with efforts toward earning our salvation. Unfortunately, the very idea of "building a relationship with Jesus Christ" has become shallow Christian jargon to which everyone assents but few have even the remotest idea how to accomplish it.

The way we build our relationship with Jesus *is* through spiritual discipline. Here are some specific ideas.

*Spiritual discipline*, as a term, cannot be narrowly defined because it is varied and often unique to each individual. But one thing is not varied or unique about it: spiritual discipline, whatever its form,

requires that we put forth some kind of effort toward being with Jesus in a way that He will be able to speak with us, and we will be able to listen.

An athlete, by practicing discipline, learns to perform better. Even so the Christian, by practicing spiritual discipline, learns to live with God better. The level of intimacy we will find with God is directly proportional to the level of effort we put into spiritual discipline. Assuming balance, the more effort—the more reward.

success in pastoral ministry, why are we not more intentional about training pastors in spiritual formation?

Richard Foster writes,

The apostle Paul says, “he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life” (Galatians 6:8). Paul’s analogy is instructive. A farmer is helpless to grow grain; all he can do is provide the right

And I have been finding a growing wealth of information available for those seeking such training.

Spiritual discipline, I am discovering, is like any other education: the more you learn, the more you realize how little you know. In the past I might as well have attempted to read a book on quantum physics as to read John of the Cross’s *Dark Night of the Soul*. I would have given up almost immediately out of sheer inability to comprehend the concepts. But, as we become

I HAD NEVER BEFORE UNDERSTOOD SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE. THAT FIRST RETREAT FOREVER CHANGED MY SPIRITUAL LIFE, THOUGH I DID NOT COMPREHEND THAT FOR SOME TIME.

“Intelligent action,” says Dallas Willard, “is the secret to spiritual growth”<sup>2</sup>

It seems to me, in my admittedly limited perspective, that only in the past few decades has spiritual discipline been rediscovered as the path that leads to the with-God life. Richard Foster, founder of the spiritual formation movement *Renovaré*, says that intentional spiritual formation is only now beginning to make its way into the seminaries responsible for training pastors.

I’m currently enrolled in a distance learning master’s program for pastoral ministry in which a single optional spiritual formation class is offered. Why is that, when spiritual formation itself is not optional? Everyone is constantly being spiritually formed one way or another. If, in fact, a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is ground zero for

conditions for the growing of grain. He cultivates the ground, he plants the seed, he waters the plants, and then the natural forces of the earth take over and up comes the grain. This is the way it is with the spiritual disciplines—they are a way of sowing to the Spirit. The disciplines are God’s way of getting us into the ground; they put us where He can work within us and transform us. By themselves the spiritual disciplines can do nothing; they can only get us to the place where something can be done. They are God’s means of grace.<sup>3</sup>

Thanks to a small, optional retreat of silence, which introduced me to one form of spiritual discipline, now I am intent on training myself, however I can find to do it.

more familiar with the concepts of spiritual discipline through personal experience, we will find more and more that we can read and comprehend and profit, not just from contemporary re-discoverers of spiritual discipline but also from those so ancient that some even had the apostles of Jesus as their teachers.

At least for me, learning how to participate in spiritual discipline from the instruction of some of these ancient and modern writers has translated to a much deeper experience every time I open the Scriptures.

### Getting started: The discipline of silence and solitude

“In silence and in stillness a devout soul profiteth, and learneth the hidden things of the Scriptures.”<sup>4</sup>

Many who are experienced in the spiritual disciplines have learned that one of the most powerful introductions to the disciplines is silence and solitude. Actually silence and solitude can easily be separated into two different disciplines, but for space's sake, I will mention them together.

For someone wanting to begin a new effort in deepening their relationship with Jesus, a retreat of silence in solitude is one of the best ways to embark. Such retreats should become a regularly scheduled way of life in the long run, but my experience and the experience of many others has been that a person's first silence and solitude retreat is often the most profound—a perfect way to begin your search.

Oswald Chambers says, "There are whole tracts of stubbornness and ignorance to be revealed by the Holy Spirit in each one of us, and it

can only be done when Jesus gets us alone."<sup>5</sup>

### The discipline of contemplation

In a Christian context, meditation is a thing far removed from the mind-emptying goal of Eastern religions. But, unfortunately, Eastern religions seem to have hijacked the term *meditation*; therefore, it may be better to use the word *contemplation*.

Contemplation, as a Christian discipline, has as its goal mind-filling instead of mind-emptying. Thus the discipline of contemplation is intent on occupying the mind with things of God, particularly Scripture, with the purpose of fixing them permanently for constant and instant application.

Contemplation is a great thing to do in tandem with other disciplines like silence, solitude, and fasting. However, it is something that has much broader application since


contemplation is something that can be entered into in an instant. With practice, the discipline of contemplation can happen in traffic or waiting for a train to pass or sitting in an airplane.

### The discipline of fasting

"Bridle thy gluttony and thou shalt the better bridle all the desires of the flesh."<sup>6</sup>

Fasting is a spiritual discipline with which I am only now beginning to experiment lightly. Perhaps that is because somewhere deep within my subconscious, I know and am frightened by the truth of what Richard Foster states. "More than any other discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us."<sup>7</sup>


I understand that after a lecture, someone asked Dallas Willard where to begin in the spiritual disciplines. He said that silence and solitude are the places to begin, and then he went on to say that when someone



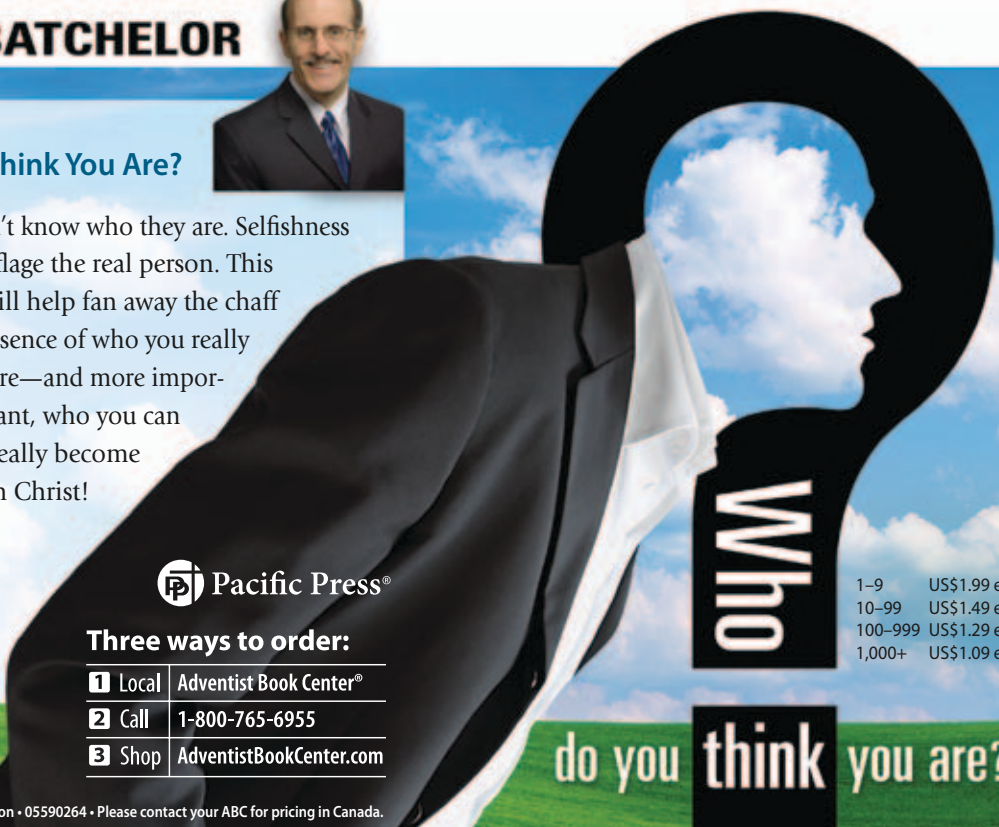
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reaches a certain point in their spiritual formation, fasting should then begin. Fasting is the discipline of the more mature disciple. When other, more tame disciplines are in place, then fasting becomes a necessary next step, and it will have far reaching results for the spiritual life.

### The discipline of service

The discipline of service is, in part, a rampage against our own pride. Of course, we cannot hope to gain humility by actively seeking it because the moment we believe we have succeeded, we become proud of our humility. Nevertheless, when we serve out of the joy to be found

what we have learned of God and ourselves in that process.

These, of course, merely hint at the possible spiritual disciplines in which we can involve ourselves. But they are a place to start. And once we begin, new disciplines will open themselves up to us in a training program that God Himself will supervise and instruct.

### Finding the time

Rarely will anyone deny the profit to be gained in spiritual discipline. Nearly always the problem is finding the time. A church elder in response to my question about the state of her devotional life said, "It is so hard to

### Participating without expectations

The primary reason to practice spiritual discipline is to give God opportunities to do the work of spiritually forming us. It is not possible for the discipline itself to grow us or deepen our relationship with Jesus. It is not possible for the discipline alone to do any sort of spiritual transformation at all. The only thing a discipline does is provide God with a specific opportunity for doing whatever He knows needs to be done in us.

Therefore, we don't need to bring expectations of our own to a particular discipline. Surely, it is good and

THE PROBLEM IS NOT REALLY FINDING THE TIME,  
THE PROBLEM IS STRAIGHTENING OUR PRIORITIES.

in service, the end result is humility. Why? Because in serving we cannot be in charge. Richard Foster, again: "the spiritual authority of Jesus is an authority not found in a position or a title, but in a towel."<sup>8</sup>

### The discipline of celebration

The discipline of celebration, I think, must be the cumulative effect of every other discipline. Minneapolis pastor and author John Piper calls Christians into what he calls "Christian hedonism," in which he convincingly argues that seeking our own pleasure and reward in obedience to God is not only *not* selfish but is in fact God's design.<sup>9</sup>

The discipline of celebration consciously cultivates happiness in God by seeking out His commands, being obedient to them, reflecting on how we have been blessed by God in being obedient, and then celebrating

find the time." Then after a pause, "I suppose I could give up watching the news." Thomas à Kempis wrote, "If thou wilt withdraw thyself from speaking vainly, and from gadding idly, as also from hearkening after novelties and rumours, thou shalt find time enough and suitable for meditation on good things."<sup>10</sup>

The problem is not really finding the time, the problem is straightening our priorities. Yet even in this, God's grace is sufficient if we will but ask.

### Beware

A word of caution, however; as we practice spiritual discipline we must be constantly aware of the temptation to see the disciplines as an end in themselves. After all, the Pharisees were masters of spiritual disciplines and they were convinced that Jesus and His disciples were anything but.

proper to bring an expectation to a discipline like fasting, along with prayer, in search of God's will in a specific circumstance. But if our own expectations are the only reason we ever practice a spiritual discipline, we will miss out on the most profound possibilities available in the discipline; that being to give to God open time to form us according to His expectations, instead of our own. ❧

- 1 Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (San Francisco: Harper, 2006), 61.
- 2 Willard, Spiritual Renewal Conference, Bethel University, St. Paul, Minnesota, October 9–11, 2008; emphasis added.
- 3 Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: Harper, 1978).
- 4 Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (New York: Crosslet & Dunlap, n.d.).
- 5 Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publishers, 1935).
- 6 à Kempis.
- 7 Foster.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 John Piper, *Desiring God* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 1986).
- 10 à Kempis.

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# From burned out to on fire for God

When I was working full time at Sahmyook University (Korea) in the Business Administration department, I felt God calling me into pastoral ministry. God seemed to be pounding on the door of my heart as I deeply immersed myself in reading the Scriptures. As I read, my soul was overwhelmed by His Spirit. I began to lament, mourn, and cry out as I saw how sinful, impure, and defiled I really was compared to how glorious, righteous, and holy God was.

I resigned from my teaching position in the Business Administration department and enrolled in the Theology department to pursue God's calling for my life. As a theology student, I busily read all the books and articles assigned and hurried through all the homework, reports, and projects asked of me by my professors. On top of all these requirements, I had to participate in various ministries and activities around the campus of Sahmyook University.

When I began to work as a pastor, ministry demanded that I prepare sermons and visit church members and potential seekers. In addition, there were requests for me to attend events that ranged from celebrating the birth of a child to ministering at funeral services. Soon, not only was I burned out, it felt as though my soul was empty. Even though I realized the severe reality of my spiritual condition, there was not much time for me to

even think about it as the visitations of my members and church programs clamored for my attention.

Then, on March 1, 2004, I was called to work at the Toigyewon church. As absurd as it may sound, I could not afford to spend time *with* God because I was too busy working *for* Him. With all my heart, I craved and desired to know Him and spend some time with Him. But, due to the demands of my church, it seemed almost impossible for me to set aside time to be with God; I was either too tired or too busy. Then one day I came across a passage in Mark 3:14, 15 that read, "He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that *they might be with him* and that he might *send them out* to preach and to have authority to drive out demons" (NIV; emphasis added).

The Scriptures testify that Christ appointed His disciples to be apostles so that they might be *with Him*. Christ desired that they might be *with Him*, for being with Him *preceded* being sent out. It was imperative that I resolve in my heart to be *with Him* daily in Word and prayer. I saw clearly that God called me to be a pastor that I might *be with Him first* so that He might send me to do the work of a pastor.

By the grace of God, He empowered me to make a resolution to set aside special time to be with Him and I began to spend at least a few hours a day in the study of the Word and in prayer. My time with God revived my spirit, gave me victory

over temptations, and gave me a fresh perspective and vision for pastoral ministry.

As I spent time with God, He began to reveal to me how I had taken so many of His blessings for granted. The members of the church I pastored had been very gracious and fully expressed their love and appreciation for me and my ministry. And, over the course of time, I found that I had acted as if I deserved those church members; but I failed to express my appreciation for their love and kindness.

God showed me, through our time together, that I had grown haughty, arrogant, proud, and selfish. God began to speak to my heart and led me to the Cross. He showed me how Jesus "who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God, . . . made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant" (Phil. 2:6, 7, NIV). He showed me through His own example how He came not to be served but to serve. And God began to transform my heart. I had been making many excuses for my "not giving" and "not serving" nature. I made the excuse that if I started expressing my appreciation for certain church members, it would plant seeds of jealousy and misunderstanding among the church members. But as God pounded on the door of my heart and showed me how poor my excuse was, I got down on my knees and promised to obey the promptings of His Spirit as He would guide me to kindness and generosity.

When the wife of one of my associates gave birth to their first child, my wife and I visited them in the postbirth care unit. We talked together, sang together, and prayed together. We rejoiced and celebrated the precious gift God had bestowed upon them. Around the same time, God opened my eyes to a deacon who had lost his wife and was living alone with his son. We visited him and ministered to him. God then led us to other members who had great needs: senior citizens, widows, and orphans. God renewed my spirit and invited me to partake in the fellowship of love and fully give myself to others through my time with them. Ephesians 5:1, 2 tells us to "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (NIV). The invitation is imitation. God demonstrated how He wants us to live through Jesus,

not as people living merely for ourselves, but as those living for something far greater. To give, in a sense, is to be like God, for God has been giving from the very beginning. And God loves cheerful givers, precisely, because He is one Himself. Through my time with Him and faithful and voluntary obedience to His command to give, I began to taste and see how amazing it was to live a giving life—a life like Christ's.

There were times when some of the church members appeared to dislike me. When they began to accuse and criticize, I found it hard to sleep for many nights. But as I continued to spend time with God, He poured out His Spirit upon me and gave me His heart of forgiveness and understanding. He led me to intercede for them. With His tears and sorrow, I was able to forgive them and intercede for them in prayer. And He touched their hearts and transformed them

in His own time and way. And now I have a positive relationship with those who criticized me.

The associate pastor with whom I was working suggested that we fund and establish a church for the youth. At that particular time, there were only about 10–15 young people coming to church every week. God led me to see how powerful this vision was, so I brought it to the board, and we decided to start this church. As a result, there are more than 50 young people worshipping together now.

Then the associate pastor came again with the idea to start a church for the teens. Up until that point in time, there were maybe 15–20 teens that were barely making it to church and other activities. I, personally, did not feel the need to start a church for those that were just coming for the Sabbath afternoon program. But once again, God opened my eyes, let me see His passion for the young people,

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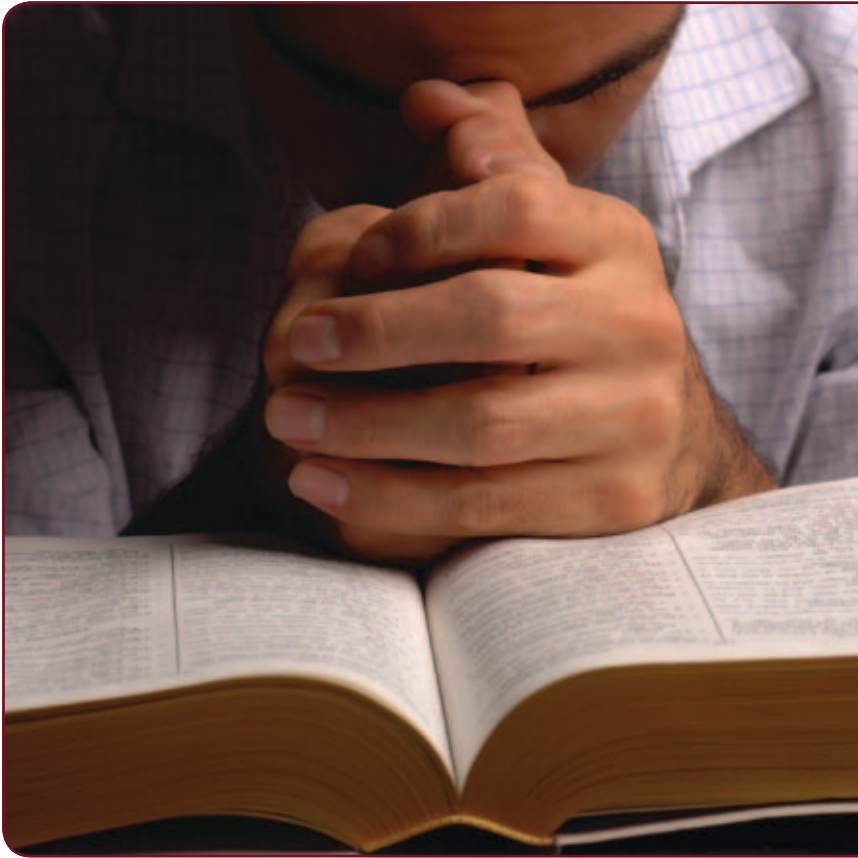
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GOD SEEMED  
TO BE  
POUNDING  
ON THE  
DOOR OF  
MY HEART  
AS I DEEPLY  
IMMERSED  
MYSELF IN  
READING THE  
SCRIPTURES.

and told me to bring this idea to the board members. Surprisingly, the entire church board agreed to support a church for the teens. Now there are about 70–80 teens who worship together every Sabbath. These students lead in their own Sabbath School and actively participate in the worship service. Twelve volunteers came forward to offer their services to help the teens with Sabbath afternoon activities and prepare dinner for them in the evening. There are also 12 teachers who are leading and helping the teens coordinate worship programs on Sabbath mornings and afternoons. The youth church and the teen church are precious gifts God has given to our church. God has been doing amazing things as I have been setting aside time to be with Him, every single day at His feet.

God did not forget to bless us with the salvation and celebration


of new souls who desired with all their hearts to commit their lives to Jesus through baptism. Throughout my time at Toigyewon church, God was calling people to Him, and the church added an average of 44 members every year from 2004–2009. During the same time period, the membership growth was 140 percent, along with increases in tithes and offerings.

If a church member is absent on Sabbath, I call the small group leader in which the absent member belongs, and ask them to contact this person. And, whenever we have a baptismal ceremony, we always ask the small group leader to come forward and officially welcome the new member into our church. Whenever we visit new members who have moved near our church, we always ask the small group leader to prepare an official gift from the church and give it to them. Then

the small group leader will be given the responsibility to keep in close contact and take care of them. In my time with God, He has granted me the vision to raise and appoint small group leaders and continue to support their leadership.

Through my time with Him, God has calmed the waves and now peace and joy reign when we elect new officers for the church. For the past three years, God has united our hearts and bound us together in His love.

When God brought me to that place where I finally surrendered, gave all of myself to Him, and began to spend time with Him, He revived me spiritually, filled me with His joy, and gave me His generous heart.

What can I say? Time with God will transform your life, your ministry, and your church. This is the truth, and this truth will set you free! 

Tell us what you think about this article. Email [MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org](mailto:MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org) or write to 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

## Creation lecture series

**Atlanta, Georgia, United States**—A major lecture series on creation is to be held during the noon and evening break times of the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference Session in Atlanta, Georgia, this June and July—with some of the best minds in Adventism exploring theological and scientific implications of creation.

“Significant effort has been made to ensure these presentations are accessible to all interested church members,” says **Timothy Standish**, a research scientist at the Geoscience Research Institute (GRI), based in Loma Linda, California, and organizer of the lectures. “This is not to be a dry discussion of theoretical issues rendered confusing and irrelevant with unintelligible jargon. Those who attend these practical and inspiring lectures will leave better informed about the issues and with more reason for faith in and worship of our Creator God.”

Across the entire spectrum of Adventism, belief in the biblical account of Creation serves both as the glue unifying the church and as an organizing principle upon which other Adventist beliefs are built. Pastors will share practical experiences of how the doctrine of creation enriches their ministries, graduate students will relate why creation is essential to their worldview, administrators will affirm the Adventist belief in a recent literal Creation as described in the Bible, and scientists will point out ways in which creation testifies to its Creator.

This series of lectures on creation will be presented in room B311 of the Georgia World Congress Center, adjacent to the Georgia Dome. Sessions will be conducted from 12:10

P.M. to 1:50 P.M. and 5:10 P.M. to 6:50 P.M.—each session containing three lectures.

Those interested in creation are also encouraged to visit the GRI booth located on aisle 300, space 316, in the exhibition hall. A detailed schedule of talks is available at the Geoscience Research Institute Web site: [www.grisda.org](http://www.grisda.org). [Timothy Standish]

## IMPACT Atlanta calls young adults to lead and serve

**Atlanta, Georgia, United States**—IMPACT Atlanta [iATL], held June 23 through July 3, 2010, at the Sheraton Atlanta Hotel, Atlanta, Georgia, United States, will bring together Christian young adults from around the world to sharpen leadership and compassion skills through training and community service to the neighborhoods of Greater Atlanta.

Held concurrently with the 2010 General Conference Session [[www.GCsession.org](http://www.GCsession.org)] of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, iATL is a young adult leadership and discipleship experience where collegians and young professionals will actively engage the Great Commission and great commandment in training, ministering, and worship.

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists youth director, **Baraka Muganda**, indicated that “Leadership refers to becoming involved, being a part of the mission of the church, and lending your influence to make things happen.” Fueled by mentoring in leadership and discipleship, iATL young adults are being groomed to impact Atlanta and beyond.

Registration, housing, and meal accommodation rates are exclusively available to collegiate age Adventist young adults through young professionals (up to age 35) who apply, register, and are accepted as official iATL delegates. Information is available at [www.impactatlanta.info](http://www.impactatlanta.info). [A. Allan Martin]

## The 150th anniversary of the name *Seventh-day Adventist*

**Silver Spring, Maryland, United States**—On Sabbath, October 2, 2010, Adventists worldwide are invited to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the adoption of the name *Seventh-day Adventist*. Although the church’s General Conference was not organized until 1863, local congregations and the publishing house started using the new name after it was voted on October 1, 1860.

**James Nix**, chair of the 150th Seventh-day Adventist Committee, described the purpose of the anniversary commemoration: “Names identify persons and organizations. Likewise, the name *Seventh-day Adventist* identifies who we are worldwide, including two major teachings of the denomination. More than just a time for remembering, it is hoped that each member, congregation, and institution will reflect on what it means to be *Seventh-day Adventist* in today’s world. How can I, my church, or local Seventh-day Adventist institutions more effectively carry out our God-given prophetic calling?”

Program suggestions, historical resources, and other information for the commemoration are available at [www.150SDA.org](http://www.150SDA.org). Additional



materials are being added continually. You and your congregation or institution are invited to join the worldwide Adventist family in commemorating our distinctive name. [James Nix]

## Advertising representative for *Ministry*

**Silver Spring, Maryland, United States**—*Ministry* is pleased that **Cheri Gatton** has agreed to be the advertising representative for *Ministry*. For a number of years, *Ministry* has had a loyal group of advertisers and, recently, other organizations have started using the journal to



Cheri Gatton

communicate with the magazine's larger readership.

As a professional journal aimed at clergy, advertisers have opportunities to bring their resources or services to clergy. In addition to advertising in the printed version, a number are also advertising on the *Ministry* Web site: [www.ministrymagazine.org](http://www.ministrymagazine.org).

"Cheri Gatton has demonstrated the ability to show advertisers how *Ministry* helps reach important clients, and we welcome her service to the journal and the advertisers," stated **Nikolaus Satelmajer**, editor. Ms. Gatton can be reached at +1-208-965-0157, or [advertising@ministrymagazine.org](mailto:advertising@ministrymagazine.org). [Nikolaus Satelmajer] 

## RESOURCES



### The Pastoral Epistles: First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus

By Benjamin Fiore, *Sacra Pagina*, vol. 12, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007.

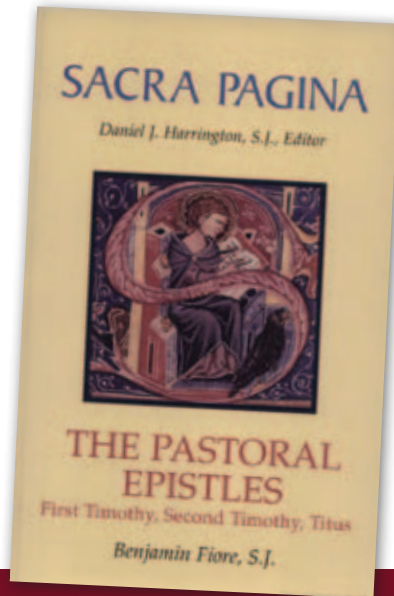
Commentaries on the so-called Pastoral Epistles, dealing as they do with many practical matters including church offices, tend to be agenda driven; and the present volume by Benjamin Fiore is no exception. The author, in line with

the larger tendency of recent biblical scholarship toward a "theological interpretation," blurs the distinction between the New Testament (NT) and later reflections upon it, which also advances his larger interest. The process of theological interpretation is seen by many critical scholars as already having begun through the allegedly pseudonymous composition of several epistles attributed to Paul, including the Pastorals. Fiore also takes this position, justifying it only briefly on the basis of these epistles' "divergence from the other letters of Paul" in terms of being addressed to individuals, exhibiting differences in content and style, and seeming to reflect a later period of the church when the imminent

expectation of the *parousia* had dissipated and attention turned toward the church as an organization (5, 6; cf. 16–19). Based on the ecclesiastical development that he perceives in 1 Timothy and Titus, Fiore dates the Pastoral Epistles to ca. 80–90 C.E. (20). However, in order to retain "the aura of Pauline authorship created by the letter writer" throughout the commentary, reference is made to Paul "as if he were the writer" (21).

The importance of the question of authorship is evident through the dramatic influence it exerts on interpretation, most obvious in discussions of the development of ecclesiastical roles and structure but also in the translation of the text itself: Fiore's fairly consistent translation of

*charis* (“grace”) as “favor” (e.g., 1 Tim. 1:1, 14; 2 Tim. 1:2, 9; Titus 1:4; 2:11) seems a deliberate effort to distance the Pastorals from Paul. While this is not the place to debate the issue of NT pseudonymity, it should be noted that Fiore, having articulated his position in the introduction, never looks back—not even to explain how the epistles, which devote significant space to combating false teachings, could have been written by an admirer of Paul with the clear aim of passing them off on readers as coming from the apostle himself (a recent commentary arguing persuasively for the



text. For example, Fiore designates 1 Timothy “an *aide memoire*, a letter-summary of instructions from a superior to a delegate outlining the latter’s duties” (40). He also gives a lucid yet concise explanation of the *chreia* form, illustrating it with examples from 1 and 2 Timothy (16–18). The historical and archaeological background is also put to effective use, as in his observation that “Christians did not build churches until after the Edict of Toleration in 313 c.e.” and that earlier Christian assemblies were held in private homes that were only later enlarged and remodeled, such as

THE AUTHOR, IN LINE WITH THE LARGER TENDENCY OF RECENT BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP TOWARD A “THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION,” BLURS THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE NEW TESTAMENT (NT) AND LATER REFLECTIONS UPON IT, WHICH ALSO ADVANCES HIS LARGER INTEREST.

traditional view from a Protestant perspective is Ben Witherington III, *A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1-2 Timothy and 13 John*, vol. 1, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006], see esp. 49–75). As several recent commentators have pointed out, lumping these three epistles together, as historical criticism since the nineteenth century has done, can paper over their distinctive features. These include different social settings (Timothy was in Ephesus and Titus in Crete) and genre (while 1 Timothy and Titus resemble personal correspondence, 2 Timothy, like 2 Peter, is a kind of last testament). It is just as likely, if

not more likely, that any perceptible “shift” in perspective reflected in these epistles represents the transition from the first generation (Paul) to the second (his coworkers), as argued by P. H. Towner, “Pauline Theology or Pauline Tradition in the Pastoral Epistles: The Question of Method,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 46, no. 2 (1995): 287–314. To be fair, Fiore not only highlights the differences but also the similarities he finds between the Pastorals and other Pauline writings, including those he considers authentic epistles of Paul.

The strength of this commentary is the author’s familiarity with and attention to Greco-Roman background material to illuminate the

Peter’s house in Capernaum and the house church in Dura Europos (65).

As is to be expected of volumes in the *Sacra Pagina* series, a decidedly Catholic perspective colors the interpretative comments. These range from the enumeration of the Decalogue (43) to the Catholic view of justification by which “Christ renders those saved in this way capable of doing good” (65). Yet we also find the Protestant-like assertions that good deeds “express the reaction to faith” (222) and that baptism “symbolizes” the transformation effected within believers by the Holy Spirit (220). Of course, readers will encounter positions expressed that differ from Adventist views. These



include their reading of Pauline references to the “last days” as rhetoric for Paul’s contemporaries rather than prophetic portrayals of conditions just before the Second Advent (e.g., 89, 132) and his labeling of “total abstinence from alcoholic beverages” as an “extreme” (213, 214).

Overall, for readers wanting a shorter commentary from a Catholic

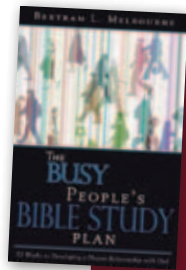
perspective, this volume will be helpful (though a better one from a more conservative standpoint is Luke Timothy Johnson, *Letters to Paul’s Delegates: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, The New Testament in Context* [Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996]). Its strength is its attention to Greco-Roman literature and rhetoric. The commentary also

includes a short general bibliography (23, 24), brief introductions to the content of the three epistles, and the requisite indexes (Scripture and ancient writings, modern authors, and subjects).

—Reviewed by Clinton Wahlen, PhD, associate director, Biblical Research Institute, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

## The Busy People’s Bible Study Plan

By **Bertram Melbourne**,  
Chicago, IL: **Urban Ministries, Inc.**, 2009.



IN A SUCCESS-ORIENTED WORLD,  
MELBOURNE’S CONTENTION  
THAT THE BIBLE “CONTAINS  
TRUTHS AND PRINCIPLES THAT  
ARE ESSENTIAL FOR SUCCESSFUL  
LIVING” IS HARD TO IGNORE.

Bertram Melbourne takes a thoughtful look at the current state of affairs in our culture and the toll it has taken on the Bible study habits of Christians. According to Melbourne, the Bible has been scheduled out of the daily lives of most Christians. In this work, the author draws our attention to what is truly important. In a world of constant busyness, time must still be carved out for that which is of ultimate importance.

Melbourne not only highlights the necessity of Bible study, but accomplishes the far more important and pragmatic task of providing the reader with some of the tools necessary to reintegrate Bible study into the daily routine. In a success-oriented world, Melbourne’s contention that the Bible “contains truths and principles that are essential for successful living” is hard to ignore. Using simple, time-tested, commonsense techniques, *The Busy People’s Bible Study Plan* offers a user-friendly,

six-step method of Bible study that can be accomplished in whatever time is available to the reader.


At the heart of the book is the counsel to ask valuable questions, such as What is God communicating to me through this passage? Is there a promise to claim? or How does this apply to my life? These are the types of questions that will lead to unexpected discoveries when studying even familiar passages.

In chapter 9, the reader will find a number of excellent resources for continued study, such as study aids, Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, and handbooks.

Included is an associated 52-week Bible study journal. For each week of the year, there is a

theme, such as purity and gratitude; a passage for consideration; and an area for readers to capture their experiences and interactions with the text. The journal provides additional structure to the biblical encounter and serves as the vehicle for step five of the plan.

*The Busy People’s Bible Study Plan* offers a concise method that the beginning Bible student will find useful and the seasoned Bible student will find as a good refresher. Melbourne’s emphasis on making time for meaningful Bible study in our chaotic world is much appreciated.

—Reviewed by David Arrington, MDiv, youth and young adult pastor, Dupont Park Seventh-day Adventist Church, Washington, DC, United States. 

**Jina Kim, MPH**, is wellness program coordinator, Adventist Risk Management, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

## Save your heart for Jesus (literally)

Many metaphors come to mind when the word *heart* is mentioned. “A big heart”: someone who is caring; “the heart of a lion”: someone who is brave; “a strong heart”: someone who is emotionally stable.

These metaphors are figures of speech usually connected to one’s emotions; but have you ever wondered about the connection between having a healthy heart and a good quality of life? Would these phrases be valuable if the heart was not in good shape? The heart is a complex and vital organ; and while there may not be a connection between the heart and emotions, it nevertheless plays a major role in our daily lives. As the pump of life, the heart powers the system of blood flow and provides oxygen to every living cell in the body.

The unfortunate news is that heart disease negatively impacts millions of people around the globe annually. By 2020, heart disease and strokes will become the leading causes of both death and disability worldwide.<sup>1</sup> They affect men, women, and children—and ministers are no exception!

How can we serve the Lord with all our heart when our physical heart remains in jeopardy? The psalmist wrote, “I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps. 139:14), and we should recognize the importance of staying healthy to serve and witness for Him effectively and joyfully.

Clergy need to be aware of the conditions associated with heart disease and how to limit or eliminate life-threatening risks. Eating an unbalanced diet, not exercising, smoking, or suffering from diabetes

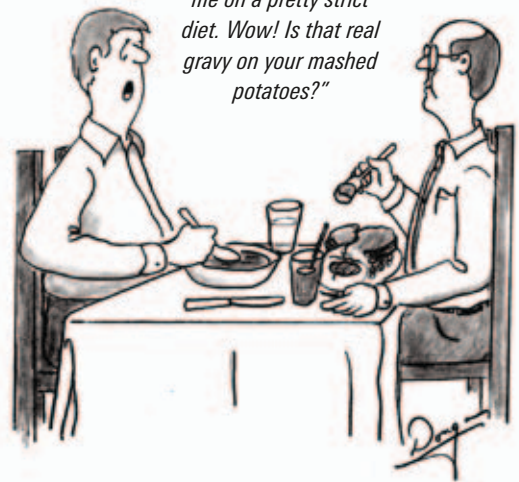
can increase the chances for heart disease, heart attack, and stroke.

Ministers can do many things to lessen their chances of a heart attack or stroke: exercise most days of the week, at least 30 minutes a day; plan balanced meals by including more fruits, vegetables, nuts, and legumes in appropriate portions; take time to relax and meditate to reduce stress.

Another important responsibility is to screen your cholesterol. Know your numbers! An accumulation of fat in the arteries raises the risk of heart attack and becomes harmful to your health. The American Heart Association says that total cholesterol should be less than 200 mg/dL.<sup>2</sup> In addition, HDL cholesterol (healthy) should be high and LDL cholesterol (lethal) should be low.


Blood pressure should also be checked at least once a year since hypertension is a significant risk factor for strokes and heart disease. Blood pressure should not exceed 120/80. These numbers represent the systolic and diastolic pressure respectively. Simply stated, systolic blood pressure is generated during contraction of the heart muscle and is higher, whereas diastolic blood pressure is maintained by the muscle tone of the arterial system, while the heart is relaxed and filling with blood. Blood pressure readings consistently above 130 systolic or 85 diastolic can indicate the condition of pre-hypertension. Persons with this warning level of blood pressure need to seriously address their

*“Since the heart scare, my doctor has had me on a pretty strict diet. Wow! Is that real gravy on your mashed potatoes?”*



sodium (salt) intake, lack of exercise, overweight tendencies, and increase their potassium levels by eating more fruits and vegetables. The higher potassium levels ingested by vegetarians are considered to be a factor in their lower blood pressure when compared to omnivores. Knowing your numbers can motivate you to stay in the healthy range.

Health plays a major role in spirituality. Daniel and his three friends provide a prime example of temperance and prudence. Making wise choices can lead along a healthier road to happiness and longevity. Actively pursuing good health may prepare you in your later years (since aging is inevitable as the body breaks down) to serve the Lord better. Protect your heart, do not hurt it, keep it strong because, as ambassadors for Christ, we represent Him in all we say, do, and are.

*Medical consultants: Allan Handysides, MB, ChB, FRCPC, FRCSC, FACOG; and Peter Landless, MB, Ch, MMed, FCP(SA), FACC, FASNC. *

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization, [www.who.int](http://www.who.int) (accessed April 14, 2010). WHO publishes definitive atlas on global heart disease and stroke epidemic.  
<sup>2</sup> Jennifer Ashton, “Four Numbers to Know for Your Health,” *CBS News*, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2010/02/10/earlyshow/health/main6193620.shtml?tag=mmcol;lst;5> (accessed April 14, 2010).

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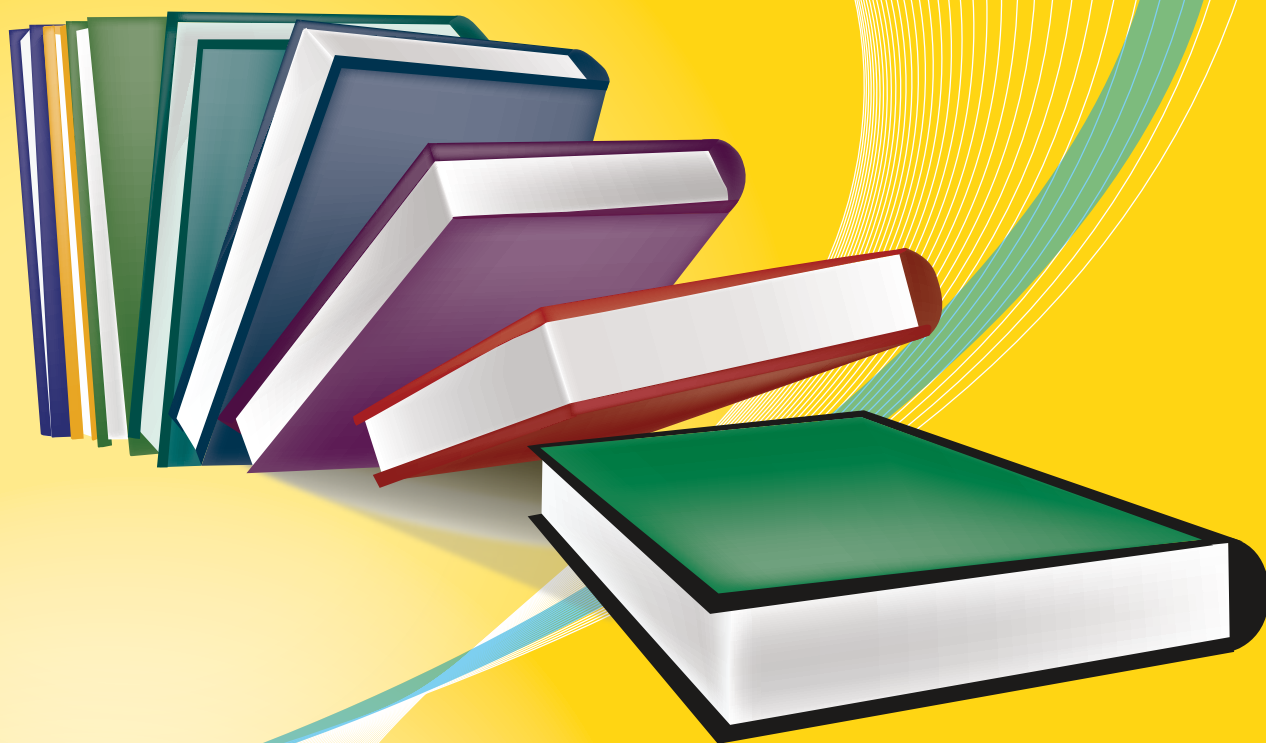
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