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06

Steering the ship: Staying on course in a multichurch setting

Seven steps to help steer God's people down the course He has given them.

Murray Miller

10

Fan the flame: How to maintain revival and reformation

What do you need to fan the flames of revival and reformation?

Delbert W. Baker

13

Planning a preaching calendar for a multichurch district

Find tips on how to develop a preaching calendar to best suit your church(es).

Rodlie Ortiz

15

Politics in the church

If politics is the norm rather than the exception, even in the church, how can we manage politics in a way that does not undermine the gospel?

Jon Paulien

18

Revival and reformation within the framework of last-day events

Pastors and members need to ask what role the elements of revival and reformation have regarding our Adventist "understanding" of last-day events.

Gerhard Pfandl

21

The motif of way in Luke and Acts (Part 2 of 2)

The way designates a vibrant Spirit-filled community, consumed with passion for Jesus, and living out its faith.

Kayle de Waal

25

Extending Christ's healing ministry: Nurturing health ministries in your church

Five essential components needed to ensure a flourishing church-based health ministries.

Bodil Morris

04

LETTERS

05

EDITORIAL

11

REVIVAL AND REFORMATION

29

DATELINE

30

RESOURCES

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“HE DID ALL OF THIS BECAUSE HE WANTS MEN EVERYWHERE TO SEARCH FOR HIM WITH ALL THEIR HEARTS . . .”

Where is God when we suffer?

Callia Rulmu’s article “The Good but Absent God? The Dilemma of a Christian Cancer Survivor” (June 2011) brings to mind a number of biblical passages that acknowledge this tension between the tangibles and the intangibles of faith and experience, drawing us as well into the great controversy theme of Holy Scripture.

First, the widely known words of the apostle Paul: “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7). Second, Jesus’ words in Luke 17:20: “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed” (NASB). Phillips’ translation is helpful, including verse 21: “The kingdom of God never comes by watching for it. Men cannot say, ‘Look, here it

is’, or ‘there it is’, for the kingdom of God is [or starts] inside of you.’” Third, Paul’s words to the Athenian philosophers provide the nexus for the “absent” yet “present” God. While the entirety of Acts 17:22–31 is helpful, verse 27 is pivotal. The earlier verses speak of God’s creatorship and of His sovereignty in lending direction to human circumstances “in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us” (NKJV). *The Clear Word* paraphrase reads as follows: “He did all of this because He wants men everywhere to search for Him with all their hearts, and if they do so, they will find Him, because He is not far away from any of us.”

As the article’s author reveals, the *relational* as nourished by revelation trumps the *sensational*; and if this is

not uppermost in our understanding, a personal crisis may provoke an existential struggle that may lead to an uncertain outcome.

With regard to the great controversy theme, it is my belief that the element of “time and chance” is operative, to some degree, in the human experience. Some degree of randomness can remind us that our Creator is not so overly present on this sin-plagued planet that nothing happens outside of His active will. If that were the case, there would be no free will, only compulsion, and thus no gospel, no good news about God and how He values our freedom, even with its associated risks and life’s unfairness (Eccles. 9:11, 12; Luke 13:1–5).

—Kent Knight, Grandview, Washington, United States

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The blessings of pastoral ministry

I have been blessed to serve in a variety of pastoral settings: multi-church, solo pastor, and multistaff. Even during my tenure as a full-time university professor, I considered it a privilege to serve as a pastor to my students. As I reflect on these years, the blessings of pastoral ministry have been too numerous to count.

My first district, after completing my seminary studies, consisted of three small churches in north-eastern Pennsylvania. While there, I discovered that the saints had little interest in my grade point average from Andrews University. What mattered to them was my connection with God.

I learned a lot about preaching (having preached in all three churches every week), but I didn't know much about intentional sermon planning. The article by Rodlie Ortiz in this issue of *Ministry*, on planning a preaching calendar, would have been very helpful for this young pastor, who knew more about *panic* than *purpose*. I would also have been blessed if Murray Miller had served as a pastor in a neighboring district—for I desperately needed a mentor. Miller's practical counsel about staying on course in one's district would have helped me to serve more productively.

When I moved to my first solo pastor assignment, I became more aware of politics in the church. I probably did not use that terminology, but I was certainly mindful of influential groups within the church, and learned to identify the patriarchs and matriarchs. I reminded myself that I was pastor to all of my church members and not just a chosen few. The transformation that occurred in the life of one of our elders, who had a reputation for being cold and critical, will long be remembered. As he saw the moving of God's

Spirit in our midst, his heart was changed; and we witnessed tears of joy that replaced angry scowls. That transformation marked a breakthrough, not only for that elder, but for the church as a whole. In this issue, Jon Paulien challenges us to process church politics in a humble, empathetic, and God-honoring way. What transformations might occur within our circles of influence if we heed Paulien's appeal!

My last full-time pastoral position was that of lead pastor in a multistaff setting. I still remember the day that the chairman of the board called and invited me to consider this new ministry assignment. His appeal touched my heart as he explained, "We need someone who will point us to Jesus." Isn't that what we all need? Hopefully, you will find many resources in *Ministry* that will both point you to Jesus and help you point others to Him. We are fully convinced that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Kayle de Waal reminds us, in part 2 of his series, that we are called to be disciples of the Way, a vibrant Spirit-filled community fully devoted to Jesus as Savior and Lord. The writings of Dr. Luke challenge us, not only to accept the One who came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10), but also to be His witnesses "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).*

I recently returned from a ministerial conference in Brazil attended by 4,000 congregational pastors. While conversing with one young pastor who cares for 12 congregations along the Amazon River, I found myself moved by his spirit of sacrifice and devotion. Also, I heard testimonies of challenge and heartache and was reminded, once again, that pastoral ministry does not come as an easy

assignment, for there are many easier ways to make a living.

The apostle Paul reminds us that he endured many challenges in his ministry: "Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my

WE ARE FULLY
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WAY, THE TRUTH,
AND THE LIFE.

own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (2 Cor. 11:25–27).

You might ask, "Paul, why did you continue since your ministry was so challenging?" Paul answers that question in the verse that follows: "my deep concern for all the churches" (v. 28). Pastoral ministry cannot be defined as a job; pastoral ministry comes to us as a calling—a sacred and blessed calling. I pray that every pastor will always remember the joys of pastoral ministry. As we count those blessings and name them one by one, it may surprise us what the Lord has done. ❏

* All scripture references are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible.

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

Murray Miller, MDiv, pastors five churches in southeast Kansas, United States.



Steering the ship: Staying on course in a multichurch setting

Imagine a ship with a gifted crew, lots of supplies, and other equipment needed for a successful voyage. The crew demonstrates an eagerness to do what they have been gifted to do, and they have all the resources they need to complete their task. However, there are problems. They have no map and are without a captain! As much as they want to go forward with their mission, these hindrances effectively stop them from doing so. It is not that the first mate cannot get the ship out of the harbor and onto the sea, but is about all of the challenges they will face in the open waters. In what direction will they go?

This illustration is not perfect, but I use it to emphasize the need for a clear direction (map) and a person to steer the vessel (captain). Jesus is the Captain of our souls and the church (Heb. 2:10). The first mate and the rest of the crew are dependent upon Him for direction. One way Jesus directs the ship is to give gifts to the crew members. One of the gifts is “administration,” or “governing” (1 Cor. 12:28). The Greek word, *kuberneseis*, used here, literally means a “steersman” or “pilot.”¹ We find it fitting to apply this function to both Jesus and church members, both paid clergy and lay leaders, who are gifted with the ability to “steer” the congregation in the right direction.

Anyone who has pastored churches (I currently pastor five) knows the need to decide prayerfully where God is leading the congregation and then to “steer” the church in that direction. This situation becomes even more complicated when there are two, three, four, or more “ships” to coordinate at the same time. How can they work together? Are there differences in direction that can be taken by some of them and still have them all reach the same destination? What can be done to not leave one behind while others press on?

My goal as a multichurch pastor includes helping God’s people prayerfully decide where God is guiding them, set sail, and steer them down the course that He has led them to pursue. How does one do this? Here are the steps I have taken to facilitate this goal.

Plotting the course

I begin with yearly planning sessions. If I am new to a district, I read up on where the church has been by reviewing the church records for as far back as I can. Then I come to the first board meeting with visioning questions: “If nothing changes and we keep on the current course, where will we be in the next five years?”

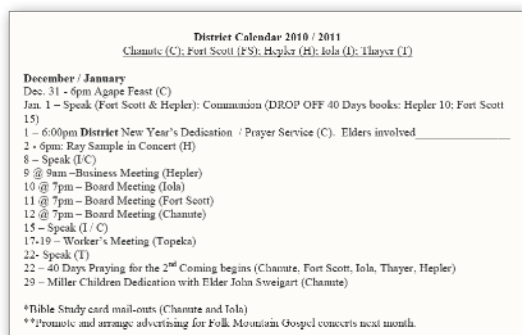
In the next ten years?” I also note activities the church is currently, or has in the past, engaged in and may want to have as part of next year’s ministry calendar. Before the meeting ends, I ask them to spend the next two weeks praying about what God wants us to do in the next year. When we meet again, we have a season of prayer for God’s guidance, and then share the ideas that have come to mind. We settle on our main objectives for the year and then plot them on a worksheet like the sample below:

<u>Ministry Calendar Worksheet</u>	
Events / Ministries we want to include:	
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
When we want to do them:	
August _____	_____
September _____	_____
October _____	_____
November _____	_____
December _____	_____
January _____	_____
February _____	_____
March _____	_____
April _____	_____
May _____	_____
June _____	_____
July _____	_____
<small>August - Planning Sessions to develop our ministry calendar for the following year.</small>	

The calendars are then posted on each church's bulletin board and inserted into the bulletin for two weeks. The calendar functions as our "map."

Setting sail

With a ministry calendar developed for all of the churches, I compile and condense them into a district calendar. This district calendar is sent to the elders and bulletin secretaries, so that they can promote events from around the district. I also make a plan of action calendar for myself that includes a month-by-month list of important dates and notes regarding what goals I want to achieve in each church (some of these notes are included in the condensed district calendar I send to the elders). Here is a sample section:



Keeping the destination before us

One crucial part of keeping the "ships" going in the right direction consists of communicating about the ministries going on through as many outlets as possible. I send out a weekly e-newsletter called *E-Tidings* with all the dates for a two-month period.² I also use Facebook to announce upcoming events, and have a district Web site with links to each church's individual site. When there is an upcoming outreach event in the district, I put it on the "Front Page" of the district site.³ The events for that church are posted on the calendar of that church's Web site, which automatically places them on the homepage.⁴ In addition to these electronic methods

of communicating, I use traditional methods as well: announcements, bulletin inserts, a list of "dates to remember" posted on the bulletin board, and board meeting agendas. All of these methods together help keep our goals for the year ever before us.

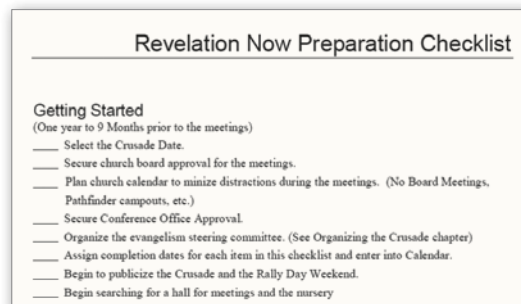
Land ho!

When a church reaches milestones in its yearly plan, I find ways to celebrate them. I usually do so from the pulpit during praise time or during my sermon. In addition to that time, I will include periodic entries on my weekly e-newsletter. For example, when the Thayer, Kansas, church conducted a wonderful Christmas program at the nursing home, I reported on that and included a link to one of the songs they sang. This not only helps other churches experience the ministry that has taken place, but also gives them ideas of what they can do themselves. Additionally, I send reports to our conference president, who includes them in his weekly email to the whole conference. Now that our conference has a Facebook page, I can also post comments and pictures from these events.⁵ Such information sharing encourages churches to get similarly involved.

Coordinating outreach

While each church progresses through the year with its ministry calendar, there are times when I am involved in evangelistic meetings or other outreaches in different parts of the district. During these times, I need to be sure that ministry continues in every part of the district. Usually, when conducting a series of meetings, I spend most of my time in the area where the meetings are held. Because of this, I cannot spend sufficient time in other churches for several weeks. What can be done? Well, I try to prepare each church for

my absence. For the host church, I have a month-by-month checklist that I follow to help the church be fully prepared for the evangelistic meetings. Here is a sample of a checklist for one year to nine months prior to the meeting:



I train the elders at the church hosting the evangelistic meetings to do visitations as well as follow up. We meet every Sunday morning (or Sabbath afternoon) for these training sessions.⁶

While preparing the host church for meetings, I also accomplish several other tasks. First, I find guest speakers about six to nine months in advance for the other churches during the time I will be gone. One to two months in advance, I appoint a small group leader to continue the weekly study groups at each church and an elder to chair any board meetings that need to take place. I guide the elder by giving him or her a blank agenda form to fill out, and going over the items that were submitted. Lastly, I communicate through bulletins, e-newsletters, and so forth that members can contact the elders on any concern while I am away. Thus, elders are "manning the ship" while I am away.

Ministry during the meetings

Having done this for the last four years, I have learned that, while in concept, leaders easily understand the pastor's absence, in reality it is not so. The primary difficulty has to do with pastoral visitation and preaching. In a one or two church district, a pastor may be able to conduct evangelistic meetings and

still maintain routine ministries. Or, a visiting evangelist may take care of evangelism, while the pastor carries on his routine functions. Such situations may make it possible for annual evangelistic meetings.

However, a multichurch setting with three or more churches poses critical problems. As a pastor, you are responsible for the administrative

series of meetings to get the attendance up to a stable place. With all of these needs in the four churches and no additional pastoral help, if I choose one of the declining churches for evangelism, I find myself absent from the rest of the district for up to three months during the year—not including vacation and other events. This means that

fill a pastoral position, do not like to be without a pastor for an extended period. This is usually a one-time occurrence every three years or so. How would a church feel with the pastor gone for four months each year? Reactions such as the following become common: “The pastor is never here,” “He is busy doing meetings over at one of the other



THIS, OF COURSE, HAS ENABLED MEMBERS TO BE INVOLVED IN MINISTRY, INCREASED THE NUMBER OF LABORERS IN GOD'S HARVEST, AND HAS LET GOD BE THE CAPTAIN OF THE CHURCHES RATHER THAN ANY ONE INDIVIDUAL.

duties of each of these churches, weekly study groups, and must ensure Sabbath speakers for each church. In addition, you must also care for evangelism because guest evangelists will not always come, especially in a small church with 80 members or less.

In my situation, consider church A. It has reached a plateau. To propel that church forward, I need to have some kind of semiannual outreach series. Meanwhile churches B, C, and D are in declining or dying modes. For these, I need an annual

three churches may have pastoral continuity for seven to eight months but no clergy leadership for four to five months.

What should I do? Some of you may be thinking, *This is the right time to apply the principle of the priesthood of all believers*. This is true to the extent that the people *want* this paradigm applied to them. Even with that being so, the reality is harder to experience than the idea! Consider an example that even those in a one church district can relate to. Most churches, when they are trying to

churches,” or “The pastor never visits.” You could dismiss these as just complaints and press on, but, after a while, these comments add up to create a conflict situation. One needs to be aware of this when trying to enact any ideal model for ministry.

Other models may be tried, such as holding weekend meetings for six weeks, shortened meetings (ten sermons) in two weeks, or doing extensive Bible work leading up to a three weekend series of reaping meetings. Each option has pros and


cons. What is obvious is the need to make the journey less turbulent for the whole district.

The journey continues

Since the elders and members have kept things going in my absence, when I take back my pastoral duties, the churches hopefully have moved forward in their ministry.⁷ Such an experience can be great because we have been sailing together with no one left behind.

At the completion of its yearly ministry calendar, each church conducts a celebration Sabbath where we highlight what God has done throughout the year. During the sermon, I ask everyone to consider prayerfully what God would have our church do next year, and then invite them to be a part of the process at an upcoming business meeting, usually in August. With five

churches now to plan, I schedule one business meeting on a Sunday. During the business meetings, we review, evaluate, and plan (REP). We review what happened last year, evaluate the effectiveness of the activities we conducted, and begin planning what we want to do next year. After these business meetings, subsequent board meetings are called to take the ideas of the church and develop a ministry calendar. Ministry calendars are developed and the process outlined above happens all over again.⁸ As a result, churches move forward doing God's work. This, of course, has enabled members to be involved in ministry, increased the number of laborers in God's harvest, and has let God be the Captain of the churches rather than any one individual. Hopefully, when the work is all done, the dear people who have been entrusted to

my care will all stay on a course that leads heavenward! 

- 1 Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 457.
- 2 For a sample newsletter, visit www.southeastkansas-sda.com and click on the "Front Page" button. There you will find a condensed version of the weekly email I send out.
- 3 See www.southeastkansas-sda.com for an example.
- 4 For an example, see www.independence24.adventistchurchconnect.org.
- 5 You can find the Kansas-Nebraska Conference page by searching for it on Facebook or visiting <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Kansas-Nebraska-Conference-of-Seventh-day-Adventists/202487973113165>.
- 6 See Secretariat of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 17th ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2005), 91, 92, accessed June 15, 2011, http://www.gcsecretariat.org/Evans_files/Seventh-day-Adventist-Church-Manual-17th-edition.pdf.
- 7 I do hospital visits and emergency counseling during evangelistic meetings that are four to six weeks in length, but the visits to touch base with the members usually have to wait until I get done.
- 8 Our ministry calendars have typically run from September to August. We include special Sabbaths, community concerts, seminars, evangelistic outreach events, study group start dates, district get-togethers, trainings, and other items.

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Fan the flame: How to maintain revival and reformation

In writing to Timothy, Paul provides the key for activating the gift of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life, thereby initiating revival and reformation: “For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God” (2 Tim. 1:6–8).¹

Fan the flame! What Paul wants Timothy to do is “fan into flame” his own faithfulness. The verb used here is a metaphor for building up a dying fire. Though Timothy’s faith is not specifically accused of dying, Paul does urge him now to fan his special gift into strong, unquenchable flames.

The gift of God that Paul tells Timothy to rekindle—that gift confirmed by the laying on of hands—is that of the Holy Spirit, whose attributes, among others, are power, love, self-discipline, and soundness of mind, which are so essential in leading an effective Christian life. Life will have its hardships, but God has given the Holy Spirit to face hardships and unmask the terror they may contain.

Serious business

Paul clearly indicates a definitive action. To fan the flame implies we

must get close to the fire! When we commence the pursuit of revival and reformation, we are declaring war against principalities and powers. Subsequently, we should be prepared for battle with the powers of darkness.

A story is told about a village in China that had been suffering a great and protracted drought. The people waited, then went through their various rituals and incantations to bring the rain, but nothing seemed to work. Finally, a group of elders in that little village sent for a rainmaker, a long distance away. They waited anxiously for his arrival. Days later, they saw two men appear on the horizon, carrying an old, shriveled man on a modest cot. They brought him into the village and set him down.

The little man got down out of his cot, looked around, and sniffed. The elders came to him and said, “What can we do for you?” The old man said, “I will need a little house outside of town where I can be by myself in silence.” So they gave him a house, and he went there by himself. The hours went by—two hours, three hours. In the third hour, it began to sprinkle, then it began to rain, and then it began to pour. Crops that had been parched were now fed. Seeds that had not germinated sprouted. The people went to him and asked, “What did you do?”

They thought he would come down into their village and perform public rituals and incantations, as Naaman expected of Elijah. The old man said, “When I came into your village and got down out of my bed, all I could feel was contention, chaos, and resentment. I had to get away to pray and be in touch with God.”

Revival and reformation

Fanning the flame for a higher level of service requires a focused mind-set. Ellen White compares fanning the flame with revival and reformation:

The time has come for a thorough reformation to take place. When this reformation begins, the spirit of prayer will actuate every believer, and will banish from the church the spirit of discord and strife. . . .

A revival and a reformation must take place under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from the spiritual death. Reformation signifies reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected

with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend.²

Note that Ellen White says fanning the flame, or revival and reformation, includes four essential pillars: (1) *prayer*—committing to the dynamic spiritual enterprise that provides the Holy Spirit complete access to life and affections; (2) *unity*—voluntarily setting aside ego, personal preferences, and petty jealousies; and committing to whatever way and with whomsoever God wants to move; (3) *revival*—spiritual abandonment in

resolutions make it past the month of March. Church services, prayer and study groups, and weekday Bible studies seem to be consuming your week, and you feel the need for some “time off.”

Maintaining momentum

Paul recognized the problem, and hence wrote to Timothy and all of us to keep rekindling “the gift of God” (2 Tim. 1:6) that we have received in our lives. What does it take to fan the flame and keep the spirit of revival and reformation strong? An upward connection, an outward commitment, and an inward control.

FANNING THE FLAME
FOR A HIGHER LEVEL
OF SERVICE REQUIRES A
FOCUSED MIND-SET.

Christ that submits to embracing an attitude of simple, primitive godliness that says, *Whatever God says or indicates, I am willing to do*; and (4) *reformation*—a crowning component that goes from just acceptance and attitude to action; *I will change whatever needs to be changed in my life*. The change is all-encompassing: ideas, theories, habits, and practices. Nothing escapes the searching scrutiny of the Spirit.

But keeping the fire burning becomes an ongoing job. New converts and workers are generally enthusiastic. Whether converted to a new exercise regime, vegetarianism, or a living faith with Jesus Christ, a rampant exuberance exists. The problem with such exuberance is that it takes a lot of time and effort to maintain that degree of enthusiasm for any length of time. For this reason, not many New Year’s

1. *Upward connection*. On our own, we are totally incapable of remaining faithful to anyone or anything, not even ourselves. The greatest gift each of us receives as new children in Christ is the abiding presence Christ sent to be among us, the Holy Spirit. Two images always seem to accompany the Holy Spirit—fire and wind. Just as all fire needs oxygen, so the flames of faithfulness within us cannot keep going without the breath of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit’s continued presence acts like a bellows to the flames that we tend in our hearts. If we ignore consistent Bible study, regular prayer, and witnessing, we shut down our own air supply and quench the flame of the Spirit.

2. *Outward commitment*. It is not enough simply to maintain our relationship with God. Until we open ourselves up to others and let the

Revival and REFORMATION

What should we do with truth?

For me, revival and reformation involve a personal, daily heart searching. This means, as Paul wrote, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith” (2 Cor. 13:5). Revival and reformation, like conversion, aren’t a package deal but happen one soul at a time. Sure, there was a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, but those people had individually been searching their hearts, searching the Scriptures, praying, and opening themselves up to the power of God. This Pentecost revival happened at the beginning of the great gospel proclamation. What a privilege for us to seek for the same Holy Spirit revival during the closing scenes of earth’s history.

As Adventists, we have the most wonderful message of “present truth”—the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14. But no matter how relevant and pertinent these truths are, we need power from on high, the power of the Holy Spirit, to be able to effectively proclaim this message to the world.

For years now, the Generation of Youth for Christ has been seeking the Holy Spirit in our desire to bring revival and reformation to not only our young people, but also to the entire church. We have been given truth; of that, there is no question. The question remains, What shall we do with the message that God has entrusted to us? Each one of us, as we surrender to the Lord in a sincere desire for personal revival, must answer that question for ourselves.

—JUSTIN McNEILUS, PRESIDENT OF THE
GENERATION OF YOUTH FOR CHRIST.

revivalandreformation.org

warmth of this fire spread through our family, friends, church, and community in acts of selfless service, the flames will gradually die out. We need to set Jesus' benevolence and goodness as our example.

Jesus taught, " 'Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect' " (Matt. 5:48). He demonstrated what this means throughout His everyday life and ministry. If we nurture the flames of faithfulness within us, we must love the poor and the outcast, and be willing to turn the other cheek, go the extra mile, and give the extra coat. "The world needs today what it needed nineteen hundred years ago—a revelation of Christ. A great work of reform is demanded. . . . Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them,

ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.' "3 Contrary to what we may sometimes feel, our contact with others fuels our faith—as though each person who touches us brings a log to throw on the fire. The more we reach out to others in love, the higher the flames of faith can climb.

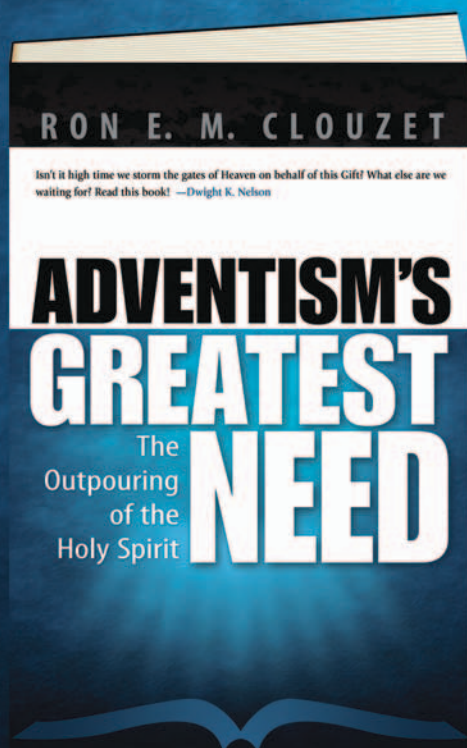
3. *Inward Control.* Even those who acknowledge the power of the Holy Spirit and encounter others with loving attitudes may gradually lose their sparks. To avoid becoming spiritually bland, we are challenged to practice a self-disciplined lifestyle. Paul, in his letter to Timothy, testified to the comfort daily prayer brought him. This was a discipline he practiced whether among friends or shut up in a lonely prison. Prayer is not always easy, and sometimes our own tongues cannot express the needs and longings of our spirits.

For this reason, we also need the discipline of the sanctified life. We need to keep the balance of our mental, physical, spiritual, and social faculties—remembering that "the body is the only medium through which the mind and the soul are developed for the upbuilding of character."⁴ Spiritual disciplines are essential, and anything that dampens the Spirit's influence must be eliminated. No flame, no matter how well fueled, will continue to burn without the input of a careful prod here and a push there. We must be willing to work our fires if we would keep them burning brightly.

Fan the flames! 

- 1 All Scripture passages are from the New International Version.
- 2 Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Takoma Park, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1947), 42.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1942), 143.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 130.

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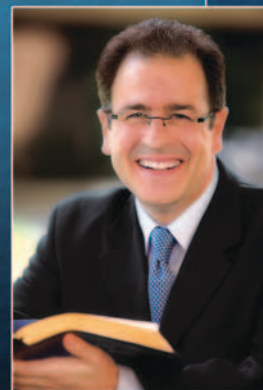


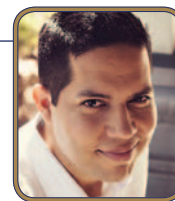
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Planning a preaching calendar for a multichurch district

Within three months of my seminary graduation, I received a call to pastor two churches in the Tampa Bay area. I could not wait. In the midst of daydreaming, I began a mental checklist of the things I had learned in the seminary that I wanted to begin implementing in my churches. Everything seemed perfect.

But then a surge of adrenaline hit me: How would I go about planning a preaching calendar? And how would I deal with preaching in two churches? After doing research and making calls, I discovered a system for planning a preaching calendar that I wanted to experiment with.¹

Early lessons

Before I implemented the system, I first wanted to get a taste for how preaching was normally conducted in my local churches. So I prepared two four-part sermon series. My eight sermons would give me time to see how preaching normally happened.

Because I had two churches, I would preach in one church one week, the other the next. On the week in which I was not there, an elder would preach on his or her own topic.

Right away I noticed problems. For one, there was no continuity because the congregation heard the next part of my series only every other week. Second, because the elders would preach on whatever they felt like, the quality of the sermons varied. And, to make things worse, I began to hear complaints that many of the speakers would preach on odd and divisive topics. I knew that something had to be done quickly.

First moves

The first step was to assemble a sermon planning group.² Having two churches, I selected seven people from each church and began to share the process. Their first task would be to “solicit feedback from family members, neighbors, and friends about topics that would interest them in the coming year.”³ They would do this for 30 days. At the end, we would debrief and begin to plan out series topics together.

I shared with the group that going through such a process would have the following benefits:

1. Minimize stress on the speakers, as they would know well in advance what they would be speaking on.

2. Help ensure a balanced spiritual diet for the congregation.
3. The worship teams could tailor the whole service around a common theme.
4. The church could give out invitation cards and post advertisements.

As I shared the vision, I could feel the excitement building. They understood that by being extremely intentional about the preaching calendar, many different aspects of the church would benefit. I left that group meeting feeling encouraged and excited about the process.

Lessons learned since

I have since gone through the process five times in five years with different teams. And, as a result, here are a few points I have learned.

1. *Make sure to have as many of your key leaders in the first group as possible.* This will help ensure corporate acceptance, as they are able to experience the process firsthand. In subsequent years, when they hear you are gathering another sermon planning group, they will not be alarmed or suspicious.
2. *Plan to have different people in the group every year.* Let the initial

group know in the first meeting that the members of the group will change every year. I noticed some resistance to this idea from some of my leaders in the first group. They wanted to remain filters for the topics and somehow still control the messages. This is exactly why you should not have the same people every year. Different people have different friends and will offer different perspectives. Having a diversity of people every year will help enrich the experience.

3. *Clarify the intended audience.* I made the mistake the first year of not clarifying the intended audience,

AS I SHARED THE VISION, I COULD FEEL THE EXCITEMENT BUILDING.

and so everyone just spoke to their religious friends for suggestions. Things became awkward because many of the suggestions dealt with theological oddities, like the meaning of the four horsemen of the apocalypse and so forth. Since then, I encourage people to get views from different sources, even from the unchurched. This will help ensure that the sermons maintain a balanced perspective.

Leading the debriefing meeting

At end of the 30 days, plan to have a retreat-style debriefing that will last about four hours. I have had these debriefings in various locations but have found homes to be the best places. Providing breakfast will go a long way towards building a sense of camaraderie and helping the group think clearly.

After breakfast, people can begin presenting their reports. Be sure to write down the main themes on large poster-sized paper that can then be torn off and stuck to a wall. After every person presents his or her report, you should have a wall with about twelve to fifteen large posters, allowing you to have a broad perspective of themes. Because each poster will have about 10–15 themes, it becomes necessary to whittle these down. You will quickly notice similar themes that can be consolidated right away. After that process, you will still be left with dozens of themes. So how do you select the most important and relevant ones?

I have found it helpful to place people into groups of four. Then ask each person to share his or her top five themes with fellow group members, who then, as a whole, will recommend five themes to the larger group. This kind of democratic process will help dissipate any control issues that might arise and will help give every person a voice.

You want about 15 major themes—more than enough to take you through a preaching calendar year.

Next you will want the group’s perspective on how many topics a particular series should receive. I also try to get suggestions for possible topics and titles to address within the given series. So, if they suggest a series on forgiveness, I might ask, “What are the issues associated with forgiveness that should be addressed?” In past groups, people have suggested topics such as “Why Should We Forgive?” and “How Do We Forgive?” and “What Are the Benefits of Forgiveness?”


By the time everything is done, you should have a lot of information—about 15 series themes with about four possible titles for each series.

The priority is now outlining these series on a calendar in order

to provide balance and proper edification. Some topics might serve well as an evangelistic series in which people are challenged to invite friends; others might be more of “building” series, to disciple and edify the church. You will have to take the time and prayerfully consider with your team where the series are placed in the calendar.

Preaching

After everything is done, I will usually give the final preaching calendar to my elders and have them select which topics within a series they would feel most comfortable preaching. This works much better than just trying to schedule the speakers in where I think they should be. They are more comfortable because they participated in the process, and were able to select their place.

This procedure will definitely challenge your preaching elders. For many of them, this will be the first time they will speak on a variety of topics. You will need to provide mentorship and training for them. Share resources. Let them know where they can find commentaries. Teach them how to develop an outline from a given pericope. Not only will you grow, but your elders will become more confident and comfortable preaching on different topics. Beyond that, your churches will be blessed as they experience a higher level of quality, consistency, and unity through the preaching of God’s Word. 

- 1 My former professor Derek J. Morris referred me to his book *Powerful Biblical Preaching*, in which he has a chapter called “From Panic to Purpose: The Process and Benefits of Planning a Preaching Calendar.”
- 2 As part of the research for this article, I interviewed ten pastors to see what they do concerning sermon planning. Six of the pastors develop and plan out sermon series by picking topics that they feel are relevant and helpful. Serving in multichurch districts, they continue the series every other week whenever they return to the same church. Three of the pastors interviewed stated that they never preach in a series. Most of their preaching is based on responding to local issues that arise in each congregation. They also cover various doctrinal and evangelistic topics as they see fit. Only one of the pastors plans out his preaching calendar for the whole year and actually includes local leaders on the preaching schedule.
- 3 Derek J. Morris, *Powerful Biblical Preaching* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Ministerial Association, 2005), 124.

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Politics in the church

Should there be politics in the church? Is not the idea of politics in the church contradictory? The following article explores this important question and presents principles to help us deal with the politics we face, yes, even in the church.

Finding the balance

Politics is the process of balancing competing interests in a social system. For example, on the island nation of Fiji, two main ethnic groups—native Fijians and Asian Indians—coexist. The two groups have little in common. Native Fijians are darker skinned (Melanesian) and have lived in the Fijian islands from antiquity. The Indians are lighter skinned and arrived during the colonial period. The Fijians tend to farm and live in the countryside; the Indians tend to be in business and live in the cities and towns. The Fijians tend to be Christians, while the Indians are usually Muslim or Hindu. When it comes to dividing up the island nation's resources, the interests of the Fijians and Indians almost always diverge. So the political way to keep the peace is to make sure that the respective political interests of the Fijians and Indians are kept in "balance," however difficult for that balance to sometimes be achieved.

In a similar fashion, there are competing interests in any religious organization. Growing up in New York City, I remember the tensions in my own conference

between Hispanics and Caucasians. The power in the conference had historically been held by Caucasians; but as the Spanish-speaking membership rose in numbers, they felt that they were often left out in the distribution of power and resources. They demanded greater representation or they would secede and form their own conference. Today, there are strong and continuing efforts to make sure the composition of leadership in that church organization roughly reflects the ethnic makeup of the membership. Whether we like it or not, this is politics in the church.

Competing interests

Theological differences can also create competing interests. Among Seventh-day Adventists, for example, there has always been some tension between a healing and service focus as opposed to a doctrinal focus based on the study of biblical apocalyptic. Both foci are grounded in Scripture and the instructions of Ellen White, but they tend to lead in somewhat different directions theologically. The healing side of Adventism tends toward an outward focus of engaging the world to make it a better place; the apocalyptic side tends toward an inward focus of avoiding contamination from the world. Naturally, when Adventists from both sides get together, there can be tension. Theological discussions are easily politicized when the outcome of a theological discussion could favor the interests of one side or the other.

Is there any way to avoid such politicization? Does God express His will through the outcome of political debate or does political discussion make it harder for people to hear the voice of God? Is it possible to balance competing interests in the church without conflict? Is politics in the church always a bad thing?

The evidence of the New Testament

On the surface of the New Testament, the obvious answer would seem to be No. Jesus' teaching seems clear: "If someone strikes you on one cheek, offer the other for a second strike." "If someone curses you, offer instead a blessing. If someone abuses you, pray for him or her" (Matt. 5:39, 44).¹ This seems to leave little room for competing interests in the church. All subgroups in the church should adopt the self-sacrificing spirit of Jesus toward others.

Yet a careful look around the New Testament suggests that the Sermon on the Mount was not often followed—even in the earliest church. Within a short time after Pentecost, competing interests arose in the Jerusalem church (Acts 6). It seems the Jerusalem church set up a safety net for the widows in the church who may have been abandoned by their families when they accepted Christ. The Greek-speaking members complained that the Greek-speaking widows were not getting their fair share of food. The complaint was brought to

the apostles, and they responded that it was not their responsibility to turn away from preaching and focus on food distribution instead. They invited the church to appoint seven men—deacons—to take care of the matter. What is of interest are their names: all these deacons had distinctively Greek names, which means that, possibly, they were added to the leadership to ensure that the interests of the Greek speakers were fairly represented.

The problem in the church was competing interests; the solution was to make sure the neglected segment of the church was represented in the decision-making processes of

two apostles that they separated. Barnabas took Mark with him and Paul sought out a different companion. Could not one or the other of the apostles have turned the other cheek? Maybe they could have, but they did not. Instead they chose to go their separate ways, pursuing a “political” solution to their dispute.

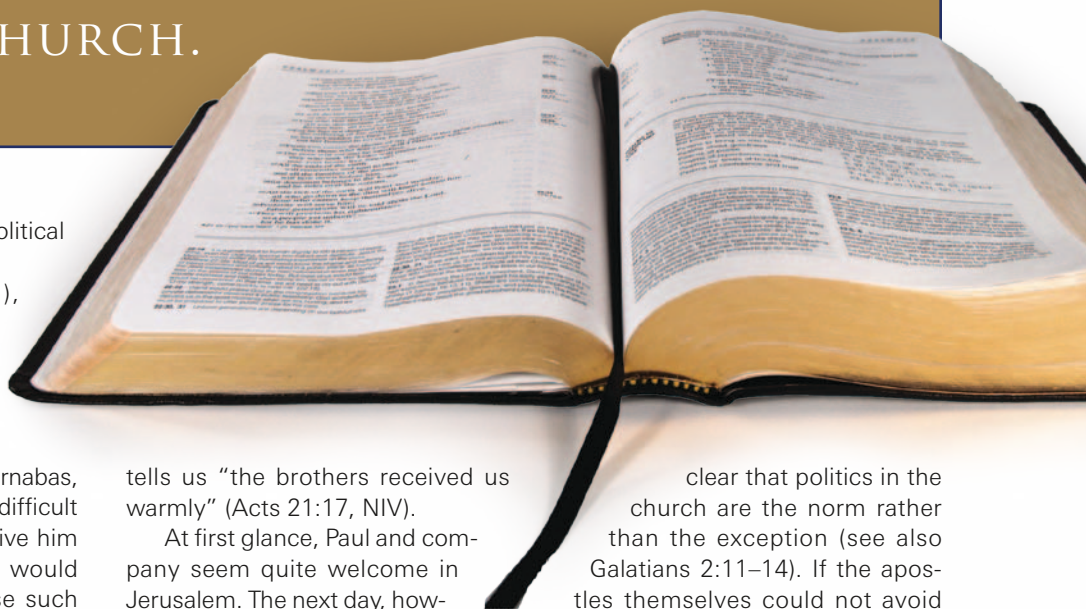
A less well-known story has to do with Paul’s last visit to Jerusalem (Acts 21:16). Paul, Luke, and a number of others, including at least one Gentile Christian named Trophimus, came to Jerusalem and stayed at the house of Mnason, an early disciple of Jesus (probably one of the 70 mentioned in Luke 10). The text

of believing Jews in Jerusalem did not yet know Paul was there (v. 22) and these were believing the worst about him. Following the advice of the apostles to appease this other group of believers, Paul is arrested in the temple and his public mission in the book of Acts is brought to a close.

Clearly, the church in Jerusalem remained divided between Greeks and Hebrews many years after Acts 6. Mnason, a Greek believer from Cyprus, was happy to welcome Paul. The rest of the church in town disagreed, and Paul ended up jailed.

This brief survey of just one book of the New Testament makes it

A COMMITMENT TO SCRIPTURE OVER
OUR OPINION ABOUT SCRIPTURE, A
WILLINGNESS TO SUBJECT ALL THAT WE
BELIEVE TO THE TEXT, IS ONE OF THE BEST
WAYS TO MANAGE THEOLOGICAL POLITICS
IN THE CHURCH.



the church. Sounds like a political solution, does it not?

Later (Acts 15:36–39), Paul and Barnabas are contemplating a second mission trip together. The previous trip had been hindered somewhat when John Mark, the nephew of Barnabas, abandoned the apostles at a difficult time. Barnabas wanted to give him a second chance, but Paul would have none of it. There arose such a sharp disagreement between the

tells us “the brothers received us warmly” (Acts 21:17, NIV).

At first glance, Paul and company seem quite welcome in Jerusalem. The next day, however, it is clear that thousands

clear that politics in the church are the norm rather than the exception (see also Galatians 2:11–14). If the apostles themselves could not avoid it, church leadership today should

not be expected to totally eradicate politics from the church, either.

Politics and faith

If politics is the norm rather than the exception, even in the church, how can we manage politics in a way that does not undermine the gospel? While individuals may at times turn the other cheek or adopt the self-sacrificing spirit of Jesus, groups of people with a common ethnic or theological interest rarely do. Politics is not the ideal but a fact of life.

So, how can leaders of the faith manage the politics that comes with competing interests in the church? I would like to offer four principles that have helped me manage politics through the years.

1. *The leader must practice humility and self-distrust.* Paul discusses such an approach in a powerful passage, 2 Timothy 2:24–26: “The servant of the Lord must not be quarrelsome, but rather gentle toward everyone; teachable, bearing slander without resentment, in humility instructing those who ‘oppose themselves,’ in the hope that God might give them repentance leading to knowledge of truth, and that they might escape the trap of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.”²

“Difficult people” in the church cannot free themselves from Satan’s trap. Nor can we free them. Only a miracle of God can. Not by coercion or by shame talk can politics be managed, but only by exhibiting the self-sacrificing spirit of Jesus in our own behaviors as leaders. No group will deny itself unless led by self-denying leaders. When we shame people, they raise walls of defense. When we practice humility, gentleness, and meekness, the way opens for God to transform the hearts of others. Self-denial is not natural; it is a miracle whenever it occurs. The best counter to politics in the church


is not to demand our fair share of whatever, but to be willing to yield our rights for the sake of the whole.

2. *The leader must learn and exhibit empathy.* Genuine empathy is also a miraculous event, whenever it occurs. By nature, selfish human beings are primarily concerned with their own interests and welfare. But an immersion in the grace and mercy of God can open our eyes to the suffering of others. A negative example of this is the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matt. 18:21–35). Not appreciating the mercy of the king, the unforgiving servant did not see that his fellow servant was in the same position in relation to him as he had been with the king. Seeing that fellow servant through the eyes of the king would have given him new glasses with which to see and understand the heart of another. We develop empathy when we experience the empathy of God. We learn compassion from the compassion that was first shown us. We love because God first loved us. We forgive because we have been forgiven. Empathy enables us to see and care about the interests of others and thereby to find a way to balance those interests in a way that unites people rather than divides them.

3. *The leader must have a passion for fairness (justice).* Some people have, by nature, more of a passion for fairness than do others. But we can all learn to be more fair. In a way, fairness is not possible until we have discovered both humility and empathy. A learning spirit, combined with empathy, will produce a passion for justice. When we have determined the facts of a situation (as far as that is possible) and care deeply about all involved, we will be able to move people toward the fairest possible outcome. When the people know that the leader intends to be fair, they are more willing to trust the process.

4. *The leader must distinguish between the clear and the unclear.* This is particularly relevant when theological discussions become political. While the Bible is the rule of faith and practice, not everything in the Bible is equally clear. Understanding the difference between what is clear and what is unclear in the Bible helps us to avoid arguments over ideas that are not clearly established in the text. One side of a discussion may see one side of truth clearly, but not the other. Truth is often a tension between poles rather than an either-or directive. When people see that the Bible often clearly teaches things that strike us as opposites, we come to realize that many of our political conflicts arise from competing groups seeing the side of truth that appeals to their personalities, and then trying to eliminate from the group those whose personalities incline them to see the other side. A commitment to Scripture *over our opinion about Scripture*, a willingness to subject all that we believe to the text, is one of the best ways to manage theological politics in the church.³

Conclusion

It would be nice if politics could be eliminated from the church. On the other hand, that might cause us all to become theologically lazy. Often in the heat of conflict people open their Bibles with a fresh willingness to learn and grow. Often in the heat of conflict we are forced to engage the other and discover that they are partly right. The One who sets up kings and puts them down is well able to manage the mess that human politics can create, even in the church. 

1 The author’s translation.

2 Ibid.

3 See my book, *The Deep Things of God: An Insider’s Guide to the Book of Revelation* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2004), regarding such issues of interpretation.

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Revival and reformation within the framework of last-day events

Editor's note: The following is a reprint from Reflections, the newsletter of the Biblical Research Institute, number 34, April 2011.

In view of the current emphasis on revival and reformation, it is useful for us to ask what role these elements have with respect to our Adventist understanding of last-day events as revealed in the Bible and the writings of Ellen White. Within the canon of Scripture, the book of Revelation gives the most detailed sketch of these events. Additional aspects, often only implicit in the biblical text, are developed by Ellen White, particularly in *The Great Controversy*. While these inspired authors provide us with a good preview of what lies ahead, we need to guard against overinterpretation; it would be a mistake to suppose that we know exactly how, when, and in what order future events will unfold.

Outline of last-day events

Central to Seventh-day Adventist eschatology are the events described in Revelation 12–14. Chapter 12 outlines, in brief, the history of the Christian church from the first century A.D. to the time of the end, when Satan makes war on the remnant

who “keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus” (12:17).¹ Chapter 13 portrays the climax of this war in symbolic terms. The first beast that rises out of the sea and the second beast that comes out of the dry land work together to enforce their brand of worship on the whole world. This second beast will compel the whole world on pain of death to worship the first beast and its image and to accept its mark. Deliverance, for those who refuse the mark of the beast, comes in chapter 14 with the second advent of Christ.

Based on the historicist method of prophetic interpretation, Seventh-day Adventists have understood these two beasts of Revelation 13 as symbols of the papacy and Protestant America respectively. According to Revelation 13, sometime in the future apostate Protestantism will call upon the world to worship the first beast, that is, be obedient to the papacy by the observance of Sunday, the first day of the week, in place of the seventh-day Sabbath of the Bible.² This Sunday legislation will eventuate in a death decree for those who refuse to accept the mark of the beast. But before the death decree can be carried out, Christ will come to deliver His people.

Since 1844, we have been living in the time of the investigative judgment, referred to also in Revelation 14:7.³ During this time period leading up to the close of probation, the following events will take place:

In heaven. The investigative judgment deals with those names found in the book of life and saved on the basis of Christ's work for us and in us (1 John 4:17; 5:12).

On earth. Shortly before the close of probation, during a period sometimes referred to as the early or little time of trouble,⁴ an image to the beast will be formed and universal Sunday legislation issued, which culminates in a death decree for those who refuse and reception of the mark of the beast for those who comply. Also during this period the remnant church gives the loud cry in latter-rain power and experiences the shaking, the sealing, and true revival. No chronological sequence for these events in the church is provided by the Bible or Ellen White. Many of them may occur in parallel, but certainly they occur before the decree of Revelation 22:11 is issued and the great time of trouble begins. While no specific time frame is given for these events, we are told that “the final movements will be rapid ones.”⁵

Revival and reformation in the church

A thorough revival and reformation prepares the church for final events and the giving of the loud cry. There will be a “revival of primitive godliness” such “as has not been witnessed since apostolic times,”⁶ including miracles of healing and genuine conversions.⁷ Satan will endeavor to prevent this revival:

Thus, we are able to understand better Paul’s words, that “the coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders” (2 Thess. 2:9).

Turning to Revelation 7, which also refers to the end time, the winds of trouble are held back until God’s people are sealed and prepared for the time of trouble. This

at its close for the ripening of the harvest.”¹⁰

This promise is for us today, not just for the future; but we have to be ready to receive it, by seeking the Lord in humility and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, purifying ourselves from all that is displeasing to Him.¹¹

The message of the fall of Babylon, given by the second angel

BY THE TIME CHRIST ANNOUNCES
PROBATION’S CLOSE WITH THE WORDS FOUND
IN REVELATION 22:11, GOD’S PEOPLE WILL
ALREADY HAVE BEEN SEALED AND WILL BE
PROTECTED FROM THE PLAGUES Poured OUT
DURING THE GREAT TIME OF TROUBLE, JUST AS
ANCIENT ISRAEL WAS PROTECTED FROM THE
PLAGUES THAT FELL UPON EGYPT.

The enemy of souls desires to hinder this work; and before the time for such a movement shall come, he will endeavor to prevent it by introducing a counterfeit. In those churches which he can bring under his deceptive power he will make it appear that God’s special blessing is poured out; there will be manifest what is thought to be great religious interest. Multitudes will exult that God is working marvelously for them, when the work is that of another spirit. Under a religious guise, Satan will seek to extend his influence over the Christian world.⁸

“is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved.”⁹

The latter rain and loud cry

Just as the apostolic church received the early rain at Pentecost, so the remnant will receive the latter rain, enabling it to finish the work of proclaiming the everlasting gospel (Joel 2:23, 28, 29).

“As the ‘former rain’ was given, in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the opening of the gospel, to cause the upspringing of the precious seed, so the ‘latter rain’ will be given

(Rev. 14:8), is repeated in the message of the angel in Revelation 18:1–4. The work of this angel joins “in the last great work of the third angel’s message as it swells to a loud cry.”¹²

The early time of trouble and the mark of the beast

Before the close of probation, there will come a time of trouble for the world and for the church. Political, financial, and social problems will increase (Luke 21:25). Ellen White refers to this time in *Early Writings*: “At the commencement

of the time of trouble, we were filled with the Holy Ghost as we went forth and proclaimed the Sabbath more fully." Later on in the book she explains further: " 'The commencement of that time of trouble,' here mentioned does not refer to the time when the plagues shall begin to be poured out, but to a short period just before they are poured out, while Christ is in the sanctuary. At that time, while the work of salvation is closing, trouble will be coming on the earth, and the nations will be angry, yet held in check so as not to prevent the work of the third angel."¹³

There will also be a shaking among God's people "caused by the straight testimony" of the True Witness to Laodicea¹⁴ and the introduction of false theories. Many Adventists will ultimately leave the church¹⁵ because they are not fully converted and have come to view religious matters "in nearly the same light" as the world.¹⁶

The image to the beast will be formed when the Protestant churches in America unite with the state to use its power to enforce their decrees and sustain the institutions of the church. Then "there will be a national apostasy which will end only in national ruin."¹⁷ Then, "as the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ."¹⁸ This throws light on Jesus' words that " 'if possible, even the elect' " would be deceived (Matt. 24:24).

Ever since Constantine, in A.D. 321, issued the first Sunday law, there have been Sunday laws in existence in many countries as well as in America. But many of these were limited in extent and focused primarily, if not exclusively, on commercial activities. Revelation 13 predicts that future Sunday legislation will be national, even international, and that such decrees will include religious observances: "All the world marveled and followed the beast" (Rev. 13:3). Ellen White elaborates on this: "As America, the land of


religious liberty, shall unite with the papacy in forcing the conscience and compelling men to honor the false sabbath, the people of *every country on the globe* will be led to follow her example."¹⁹ "Many a star that we have admired for its brilliancy will then go out in darkness." One reason for this apostasy will be "threatened imprisonment, and death."²⁰

Ellen White even beheld Satan saying, "When death shall be made the penalty of violating our sabbath, then many who are now ranked with commandment keepers will come over to our side."²¹ Since there will be no changing of sides after the close of probation, the test involving a death threat must, therefore, come before the close of probation.²² Regarding the mark of the beast, we are told the following: "When Sunday observance shall be enforced by law, and the world shall be enlightened concerning the obligation of the true Sabbath, then whoever shall transgress the command of God, to obey a precept which has no higher authority than that of Rome. . . . [These] will thereby accept the sign of allegiance to Rome—'the mark of the beast.' "²³

The close of probation marks the end of Christ's ministry in heaven. The work of investigation and judgment will then be finished, and "the door of mercy" for the world will be forever shut.²⁴ By the time Christ announces probation's close with the words found in Revelation 22:11, God's people will already have been sealed²⁵ and will be protected from the plagues poured out during the great time of trouble, just as ancient Israel was protected from the plagues that fell upon Egypt.

Conclusion

Seventh-day Adventist eschatology follows the historicist method of prophetic interpretation. While the precise order of future events has not been clearly revealed, we know the time of the Lord's coming is near. " 'Look at the fig tree, and all the

trees. When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near' " (Luke 21:29–31). Ellen White reminds us: "Our position has been one of waiting and watching, with no time-proclamation to intervene between the close of the prophetic periods in 1844 and the time of our Lord's coming. We do not know the day nor the hour, or when the definite time is, and yet the prophetic reckoning shows us that Christ is at the door."²⁶ 

1 Unless otherwise noted, all scriptures in this article are from the New King James Version.

2 The highest, truest form of worship is obedience (1 Sam. 15:22).

3 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1950), 425.

4 See Donald Ernest Mansell, *The Shape of the Coming Crisis: A Sequence of End-time Events Based on the Writings of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1998), 31n4.

5 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 9:11.

6 White, *The Great Controversy*, 464.

7 White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:126.

8 White, *The Great Controversy*, 464.

9 Ellen G. White Comments, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1978), 1161.

10 White, *The Great Controversy*, 611.

11 White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:50, 51.

12 Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1945), 277. See also, Ellen G. White,

Selected Messages, bk. 2 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), 118.

13 White, *Early Writings*, 33, 85, 86.

14 *Ibid.*, 270.

15 White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1962), 112; White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:89.

16 White, *The Great Controversy*, 608.

17 Ellen G. White Comments, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 976.

18 White, *The Great Controversy*, 624.

19 White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:18; emphasis added.

20 *Ibid.*, 5:81.

21 White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, 473.

22 Her position is also made clear by Ellen G. White Comments, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7:976: "The Lord has shown me clearly that the image of the beast will be formed before probation closes; for it is to be the great test for the people of God, by which their eternal destiny will be decided. . . . [Rev. 13:11–17 quoted.] . . . This is the test that the people of God must have before they are sealed." Revelation 13:11–17 includes the death decree. Thus, Ellen White in this statement places the death threat again before the close of probation.

23 White, *The Great Controversy*, 449.

24 *Ibid.*, 428.

25 White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:212.

26 Ellen G. White, MS 816, in *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 10 (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), 270; Letter 38, 1888.



The motif of *way* in Luke and Acts (Part 2 of 2)

Jesus met most people on the road. All the Gospels portray Jesus on a continual road trip—God in action—urgently making a way to reach us. Along the way, Jesus encountered women broken by disease; a boy and a girl, whose young lives have been snatched away from their loved ones; women caught in questionable activities; hope-deprived people; and disease-riddled men. Even though the *way* symbolically portrays Jesus' journey to the Cross, which is *the* act of salvation, those people along the way really mattered to Jesus. So He stopped, listened, cared, and healed along the way that led to Calvary. Jesus demonstrated that the journey is as important as the destination. When Luke introduced Jesus to the world, he quoted the prophet Isaiah: " 'A voice of one calling in the desert, / "Prepare the way for the Lord, / make straight paths for him. / Every valley shall be filled in, / every mountain and hill made low. / The crooked roads shall become straight, / the rough ways smooth. / And all mankind will see God's salvation" ' " (Luke 3:4–6).¹ God worked a highway construction project through Jesus by making a road straight through the desert of our sin, failure, and death. In a previous article ("The Way of the Cross in Mark's Gospel,"

June 2011), I looked at the motif of *way* in Mark and suggested that Mark uses the term to point to the death of Jesus and what it means to be a disciple of Christ. In this article, I will look at Luke's creative use of the motif.

Isaiah's new exodus in Luke and Acts

What immediately becomes clear from Luke 3:4–6 is that Luke has a longer version of the quotation from Isaiah than Mark. Luke adds the phrase "and all mankind will see God's salvation," not just to emphasize the universal nature of his Gospel, but also as an important theme that, indeed, pervades both his Gospel and Acts. This extension highlights the importance of the Gentile mission for Luke and also serves to unify God's writings. Furthermore, this extended quotation points to the fact that Luke's writings should not be read apart from the wider context of Isaiah 40–55.² To support this assertion, let us look at the beginning, middle, and closing of Luke and Acts. Luke 1:17, " 'to make ready a people prepared for the Lord,' " and Luke 1:76, " 'for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for Him' " contain allusions to Isaiah 40:3 (emphasis added).³ Acts 1:8 is regarded by many commentators

as the "ground plan" for Acts.⁴ It reads, " 'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my *witnesses* in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and *to the ends of the earth*' " (emphasis added).

First, the notion of witness, so dominant in the narrative of Acts (1:22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39; 13:31), is, in all likelihood, drawn in part from Isaiah 43:10 and 44:8. Yahweh had called His people to be His witnesses in the world. They had failed in this regard and Jesus, the Servant of Yahweh, had taken on this failure and succeeded in beautifully portraying the character of God, witnessing to His love and justice. Now Jesus had shared this witnessing ministry with His disciples.⁵ Second, the phrase "to the ends of the earth" in Acts 1:8 alludes to Isaiah 8:9; 48:20; 49:6; and 62:11. The closest in context to Acts 1:8 is Isaiah 49:6, which reads, " 'I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, / that you may bring my salvation *to the ends of the earth*' " (emphasis added). Paul alluded to this text from Isaiah in Acts 13:47 and Acts 26:23, more or less in the middle and end of the narrative of Acts.⁶ Luke begins and ends both his Gospel and his story of the church with allusions to Isaiah's new exodus.

Luke's travel narrative: Jesus and the way

Luke 9:51–19:27 is generally acknowledged to be Luke's "travel narrative," or Jesus' journey to Jerusalem.⁷ Luke prefaces this central section by referring to Jesus' departure or *exodus* in Luke 9:30, 31. This reads, "Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem." Clearly then, the travel narrative is depicted as the actual working out of Jesus' *exodus*, where He will die on the cross in Jerusalem.⁸ Luke's portrayal of the *exodus* theme here in Luke 9:31 has far greater implications, just as Jesus is greater than Moses and Elijah, with whom He talks about His impending death. During the travel narrative, Luke uses the verb "to go" (*poreuomai*) (9:51–53; 10:38; 13:31, 33; 17:11; 19:28) and the noun *road* or *way* (*hodos*) (9:57; 10:4). Luke, like Mark, also has a theology of the *way* that leads to the Cross.

An important variance emerges when one considers that Luke explicitly uses the term *way* in Acts (9:2; 16:17; 18:25, 26; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22) as an identity marker that points to the early Christians. The early Christians are to live out, in the context of Lukan theology, the teachings and experience of Jesus as outlined and identified along His *way* in Luke 9:51–19:27.⁹ In this way, Luke ingeniously follows Mark; for where Mark identifies the twelve disciples as traveling the *way*, Luke has the early Christians in Acts journey on the *way* as well.

There are three distinct and one subtle reference to Jesus on the *way* to Jerusalem in the travel narrative. Luke 9:51 reads, "As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem." Here again Luke gives us a window into the heart of Jesus to fulfill the plan set out for Him by His Father. By alluding to Isaiah 50:7, " 'Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, / I will not

be disgraced. / Therefore have I set my face like flint, / and I know I will not be put to shame,' " Luke once more keeps Isaiah's new exodus in the background as Isaiah 50:7 refers to the ministry of the Servant, Jesus.

A subtle reference to both Malachi and Isaiah is found in Luke 9:52, which reads, "And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him." Notice that the disciples are sent ahead of Jesus to prepare the way for Him. The words

earth, as outlined in Acts 1:8. Luke also portrays the ministry of Jesus in Luke 4:17–19 in the context of Isaiah's new exodus, with allusions to Isaiah 61:1, 2. Jesus is a New Moses, who will lead His people out of slavery to sin, Satan, and death. This deliverance will exceed everything God has done in the past.

Discipleship and the way

The disciples are little more than stage props prior to Luke 9:51; however, they appear more frequently



of Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 have been combined again and used creatively by Luke. Luke also makes reference to the *way* again in Luke 13:22 and 17:11. Jesus is engaged or attempts to engage in missionary activity in each of these references, specifically to the Samaritans. This is an indicator of the future ministry of the church, which commences its ministry in Jerusalem (Acts 1–7), then progresses to Samaria (Acts 8–11), and finally to the ends of the

once the journey begins (Luke 10:23; 11:1; 12:1; 16:1; 17:1, 5; 18:15).¹⁰ Luke makes an interesting connection between those that traveled with Jesus and the theme of witness in Acts 13:31: "and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people." The journey on the *way* serves as an identity marker for the early church and authenticates the witness of the disciples. For Luke,

God's revelation is the revelation of a *way*, not just of the saving events of the Cross and the Resurrection, but also a revelation of Jesus' ministry that the disciples are called upon to embody and emulate. Thus, Christian witness was based on the testimony of those constituted as witnesses by (1) their presence during Jesus' Galilean ministry, (2) their following Jesus on the trip to Jerusalem, and (3) their witnessing the Resurrection.

We are also on the *way* with Jesus, just as the early church. The

as Someone who has a deep abiding relationship with God, He stubbornly carries out the practice of prayer. He is utterly dependent on His Father for sustenance, wisdom, and guidance. Contemporary disciples are called to be people of prayer. Our resources, contacts, and influence will amount to nothing if we are not a praying people. Importantly, the context of Luke 11:5–8 and 18:1–8 centers not on casual, routine prayer but deep, persevering prayer. Prayer shapes us spiritually.

is continually in prayer (Luke 5:16; 11:1) and so are the disciples (Acts 1:14; 4:24). John Stott suggests, therefore, that the "contrasting parallel [Luke] draws between his two volumes was not between Christ and his church, but between two stages of the ministry of the same Christ."¹¹

The *way* for Jesus ends at the Cross, while, for contemporary disciples, the *way* begins at the Cross. There would-be disciples are confronted with the claims of Christ and see firsthand the richness and meaning of His sacrificial death and begin to understand, what Francis Chan calls, His "crazy love."¹² This crazy love impacts and transforms us into disciples of Jesus. Our exodus from the tyranny and power of sin begins at the Cross. This crazy love also sustains and nurtures us as we begin to walk with Jesus on the *way*. As we walk with Jesus, dig into His Word, serve and fellowship with other Christians, and grow in our understanding of Jesus and His plan of salvation, His love will become crazier and crazier. The *way* in Acts is often used in relation to opposition and persecution. Jesus predicted in Luke that the disciples would be persecuted and opposed because of the gospel.¹³ For example, the persecution of the disciples in Acts corresponds to the death of Jesus in Luke. Both Jesus and the disciples have the same opponents (Luke 22:4, 52; Acts 4:1; 5:21). Both Jesus and the disciples are questioned regarding the source of their authority (Luke 20:2; Acts 4:7). Jesus and the apostles are beaten (Luke 22:63; Acts 5:40). Both appear before the Sanhedrin (Luke 22:66; Acts 4:5, 7; 5:18–21).¹⁴ The disciples are therefore in continuity with Jesus and His persecution and suffering. However, the persecution related to the motif of the *way* also provides opportunity for God's intervention and triumph. Nothing the authorities can do can stop the growth of the church. Even after the disciples are arrested, the number of believers climbs to 5,000.¹⁵

AS WE WALK WITH JESUS, DIG INTO HIS WORD, SERVE AND FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS, AND GROW IN OUR UNDERSTANDING OF JESUS AND HIS PLAN OF SALVATION, HIS LOVE WILL BECOME CRAZIER AND CRAZIER.

experience of Jesus on His *way* will be our experience as contemporary disciples of Jesus as well. Luke's *way* or travel narrative teaches a number of things about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. The first thing we can learn is that the journey in Luke outlines an itinerary of spiritual development; the journey reminds us that a resolute purpose remains as a fundamental characteristic of the spiritual life. The journey is marked for Jesus by prayer (Luke 11:1; 18:1). Portrayed

Along the way, Jesus also reminds the disciples that His Father is more than willing to "give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him" (Luke 11:13). The Holy Spirit plays a central role in Acts, as He empowers and motivates the disciples for service and mission. In fact, Christ begins His ministry full of the Spirit (Luke 4:1) and so do the disciples (Acts 2:1–4). Christ is continually filled with the Spirit (Luke 4:18) and so are the disciples (Acts 2:18). Christ

The motif of *way* is all-encompassing – prophetic, soteriological, Christological, and ecclesiological.

translate their faith. Above all, Jesus has walked the *way* before us and is the Source of our joy and encouragement. **M**

THE MOTIF OF WAY

The Gospel of Mark	The death of Jesus / discipleship
The Gospel of Luke	The ministry and death of Jesus / discipleship
The book of Acts	The ministry and identity of the early church characterized by opposition and persecution

The time is ripe to recover the term *way* for Christianity and *disciples of the way* for Christians. The *way* designates a vibrant Spirit-filled community, consumed with passion for Jesus and living out its faith in a meaningful *way*. The adoption of the term also implies that disciples of the way will be opposed and persecuted for the radical *way* in which they

- 1 All scripture passages in this article are from the New International Version.
- 2 David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, Biblical Studies Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 39, 40.
- 3 Craig A. Evans, *Luke*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990), 34.
- 4 Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Eldon Jay Epp, trans. James Limburg, A. Thomas Kraebel, and Donald H. Juel (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 7.
- 5 F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids:

- Eerdmans, 1988), 36.
- 6 Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, rev. trans. R. McL. Wilson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 143n9.
- 7 Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 282.
- 8 Robert H. Stein writes, "This is the city of Jesus' destiny (Luke 9:22). It is central to Luke's view of God's plan in that his Gospel also begins (1:9) and ends there (24:53). Furthermore, Acts also begins in Jerusalem (Acts 1:4), and it soon becomes the center of the church (8:1, 14; 15:1-2) with Paul returning to Jerusalem after every missionary journey," *Luke*, The New American Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 298.
- 9 J. A. Fitzmyer writes, "The travel account, therefore, becomes a special device used by Luke for the further training of these Galilean witnesses. . . . The travel account becomes, then, a collection of teachings for the young missionary church, in which instruction of disciples alternates with debates with opponents." *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 28 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 826.
- 10 Joel B. Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 103.
- 11 John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 32.
- 12 Francis Chan, *Crazy Love* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008).
- 13 Scott Cunningham, "Through Many Tribulations": The Theology of Persecution in Luke-Acts, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, Supplement Series, vol. 142 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 194. Cf. Luke 12:4 with Acts 4:19; 5:29; Luke 12:8 with Acts 4:10; Luke 12:11; 21:12 with Acts 5:30, 31; Luke 12:12; 21:15 with Acts 4:8.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 196.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 199.

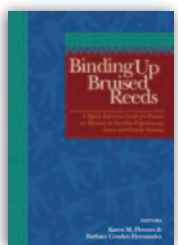
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Bodil Morris, RN, MSN, ARNP, is the director of health ministries at Forest Lake Seventh-day Adventist Church, Apopka, Florida, United States.



Extending Christ's healing ministry: Nurturing health ministries in your church

I am not a pastor. I am a nurse practitioner and a volunteer health ministry leader. I am convinced that God wants to extend the healing ministry of Christ through our churches to our local communities.

In recent years, I have been privileged to be a part of the flourishing health ministry team at the Forest Lake Seventh-day Adventist Church in Apopka, Florida. Our community outreach has grown exponentially, and the healing ministry of Christ has touched thousands of lives. I have a dream to see this kind of vibrant church-based health ministry extend the healing ministry of Christ around the world. The purpose of this article is to share five essential components that will ensure flourishing church-based health ministries.

Component 1: Vision

A flourishing health ministry needs a clear vision. Why make the effort and personal sacrifice to extend the healing ministry of Christ in our community? The answer is simple: Jesus has given us a clear ministry assignment to heal the sick and proclaim the good news of the kingdom. Traditionally, we have focused almost exclusively on the second half of this assignment—proclaiming

the good news of the kingdom. We preach sermons, present seminars on Bible topics, and give Bible studies. All of these activities have their places, but this proclamation should never displace an intentional focus on extending the healing ministry of Christ.

Jesus spent more time in healing than preaching. He healed simply because there was a need and He expected nothing in return. Once Jesus healed ten lepers, but only one returned to give thanks (Luke 17:11–19). This, however, did not cause Him to slow down His healing ministry. We are called to follow the example of Jesus: our healing ministry depends on the need, not on how others may respond. In this way, we will build bridges of compassion to individuals and families in our communities.

Component 2: Pastoral support

Pastoral support is essential for an ongoing health ministry in the local church. Several years ago, I sensed God's call to extend the healing ministry of Christ in my church family and in our community. I received excellent and ongoing support from the pastoral staff. They actively promoted health ministry

programs, and the communications team informed the community about various health programs. While it is not always necessary for the pastor to lead out in these health outreach activities, pastoral support is essential to start a health ministry program.

You may have individuals in your congregation who are just waiting to be asked to use their gifts and talents in extending the healing ministry of Christ. For example, I am not comfortable leading out in a Bible study seminar, but as a health care provider, I am able and willing to participate in health ministries. If you neglect these potential health leaders, they will either remain passive observers or move to another congregation where their gifts will be recognized and appreciated.

Component 3: Professional support

While pastoral support is a vital component for a vibrant health ministry, most pastors are not trained as health care professionals or health educators. Professional support is needed. Many health care professionals are eager to extend the healing ministry of Christ if someone will take the lead. For example, a member of our congregation decided

to launch a monthly health-education program called “Take Charge of Your Health.” She was able to recruit a Christian physician who was a gifted communicator to present topics of interest related to maximizing health: understanding heart disease, weight loss, vitamin D, avoiding Alzheimer’s disease, and so on. These monthly lectures have been very well received both by church members and visitors. They were filmed and posted on our church Web site, <http://healthministriesflc.org>, for those who were not able to

volunteers are not even professing Christians, but they are inspired by this intentional commitment to extend the healing ministry to those in need. Other service-oriented organizations like Rotary Clubs or Lions Clubs may come to your assistance as well.

Component 4: Resources

A major hurdle for some who want to extend Christ’s healing ministry in their communities can be a lack of up-to-date resources. Most potential volunteers do not

just concluded its third annual health fair. More than 400 individuals attended the fair and attendance grows every year. We needed more space for the health fair this year, so we rented a gym at a local school.

- I encouraged several members of our team to attend a training session for those struggling with addictions. This was presented at the NAD Health Summit in 2009, and recently we hosted the Adventist Regeneration Ministry Sabbath at our church. Visit [www](http://www.adventistrecovery.org)

JESUS HAS GIVEN US A CLEAR MINISTRY ASSIGNMENT TO HEAL THE SICK AND PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM.

attend in person. If one physician or health care provider were assigned full responsibility for this “Take Charge of Your Health” program, it would be overwhelming. However, if a coordinator does the groundwork, the busy physician or health care provider will be more than willing to devote one to two hours to make the presentation.

Some might express concern that there are no health care professionals within their local congregation to offer professional support, but you will find it is possible to solicit local health care professionals in the community to volunteer their services. For example, at the Forest Lake Seventh-day Adventist Church, we operate a free medical clinic. A number of the primary health care providers (physicians and nurse practitioners), nurses, interpreters, and support staff who volunteer at the free medical clinic are not members of our local church. Some

have the time to develop their own health education materials. I quickly learned that an important part of my work as a health ministry director was to identify useful resources and encourage potential leaders to attend the necessary training events.

- Our health ministry team attended the North American Division (NAD) Health Summits in Orlando, Florida, in 2009 and 2010. The Health Summits included many training opportunities and presented helpful resources for health ministries. They are open for all interested personnel to learn various ways of involvement in health ministries. (See the sidebar for upcoming health ministry training events.)
- One of our health ministry team volunteers attended a training session on how to conduct a health fair. As a result, our church

[.adventistrecovery.org](http://www.adventistrecovery.org) for more information. Our church now hosts Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon meetings once a week, and volunteers are actively involved in this ongoing outreach to people struggling with addictions in our church and community.

- A number of our volunteers decided to attend a CREATION Health training event. CREATION Health is an excellent health education resource produced by Florida Hospital (www.creationhealth.tv). Participants are inspired to strive to make healthy choices and improve their health. A trained presenter uses up-to-date motivational DVDs and PowerPoint slides. This program is offered at various times throughout the year in different settings. We have held CREATION Health events for the whole church and for smaller groups in a classroom setting.



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Visit www.nadwm.org/SummitOnAbuse for more information

- The Coronary Health Improvement Project (CHIP) offers annual training conferences. Several teams from our church have attended, and, as a result, we currently hold CHIP programs several times each year. This comprehensive program helps people reverse disease with diet, exercise, and lots of support. For more information, go to www.chiphealth.com.
- We have recently added “In Step for Life,” a North American Division health initiative. Anyone can participate. The goal includes encouraging each individual to take 10,000 steps a day. The leader of this ministry exhibits enthusiasm and motivation to help others improve their health by moving more. For guidelines, go to <http://www.adventistsinstepforlife.org/article.php?id=38>.

Your church may not have all the resources or personnel needed to have as large a health ministry as ours in Florida. But if you have the vision and the commitment, you can do what you can. As far as resources are concerned, your local conference or union health ministry personnel will also be able to help you.

Of course, any new ministry will involve costs. But where a viable plan exists with committed leadership, means can be found to further the aims of health ministry. In the long run, I have found that most of these health ministries are self-funding. Attendees value the excellent materials that they receive and would rather make a modest contribution to learn how to stay healthy or improve their health than spend vast amounts in a hospital or other health care facility.

Component 5: Follow-up

In order to have a flourishing health ministry outreach in your local church, you need follow-up. That follow-up has twin foci. First, you need to follow-up with those

who have attended health education programs offered by your local church. For example, those who have attended a CHIP program might be interested in a monthly “Take Charge of Your Health” lecture or a monthly vegetarian cooking class. Some who attended the “Depression Recovery” seminar might want to join the Witness 4 Fitness group exercise activity, which includes both physical and spiritual elements. Choosing a healthy lifestyle does not consist of a onetime decision. Those who have attended health ministries through your local church need additional support. They need follow-up. Your volunteers also need follow-up if the health ministry programs are to be

sustained long term. Conducting a health education program requires a significant commitment of time and energy. Your volunteers need to know that they are appreciated. Affirmation is often quite inexpensive but highly valued. A handwritten note, a gift certificate to a local restaurant, a beautiful plant—these are just a few ways you can say thank you to your volunteers. Follow-up support for leaders can also happen at leadership dinners and group activities.

If your local church has not yet developed a vibrant health ministry program, perhaps the time has come for you to think of starting one, and you will reap rich rewards both within the church and in the community. ❏

Resources

- The next NAD Health Summit is scheduled for January 27–February 5, 2012, in Orlando, Florida, United States. The event is open to all who are interested in health ministries. Visit www.nadhealthministries.org for more details.
- *Ministries of Health and Healing: A Handbook for Health Ministries Leaders, Educators and Professionals*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln, NE: AdventSource, 2002) is an excellent resource for a health ministry team. Compiled by DeWitt S. Williams, Kay Kuzma, and Leo R. Van Dolson, this handbook contains contributions from more than 45 health professionals.
- For a seminar on how to forgive when forgiveness seems tough, see “Forgive to Live” by Dick Tibbits, www.forgivetolive.net.
- PositiveChoices.com offers a free monthly newsletter (<http://www.positivechoices.com/healthbites>) featuring short, easy-to-understand articles on current health topics. To get your free copy with your church’s name personalized on the issue, log in and download the current issue, print, fold, and distribute it to your group.
- A complete training kit to address the challenge of childhood obesity is available at <http://floridahospitalpublishing.com/shop>. This training program is based on the work of Sherri Flynt, coauthor of *SuperSized Kids: How to Rescue Your Child From the Obesity Threat*.
- CREATION Health seminars are currently available in English and Spanish. To learn more about online training opportunities through CREATION Health University, visit www.creationhealth.tv.

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



Miracle in the desert

Ras al-Khaimah, United Arab Emirates—For the first time in history, the Seventh-day Adventist Church owns a building in the Persian Gulf region. Some called it historic, but **George Mathew**, the elder of Ras al-Khaimah Seventh-day Adventist Church, called seeing the reorganization of the Gulf Section into a field and the inauguration of the new Seventh-day Adventist Church Center in Ras al-Khaimah, United Arab Emirates (UAE), a miracle.

The building has church facilities for about 1,000 people, offices, apartments, and guest rooms. God blessed through not only securing the permission and funding for the construction of the church premises, but also when, on May 20, 2011, under the leadership of **Kjell Aune**, president of the Middle East Union, the Gulf Section was reorganized into a field and held its first session.

On Saturday, May 21, 2011, before the inauguration of the building, **Bertil Wiklander**, the president of the Trans-European Division, delivered a heartwarming message on revival and reformation, based on Micah 6:6–8, to the audience of delegates of the Gulf Field session, the Middle East Union session, and a number of visitors—where approximately 1,000 people were in attendance.

The Gulf Field president, **Michael Collins**, called the gathering “a foretaste of heaven” as he welcomed the dignitaries, delegates, and honorable guests. The afternoon inauguration was also attended by representatives of **His Highness Sheikh Saud Bin Saqr al-Qasimi**, ruler of Ras al-Khaimah and Supreme Council member. Kjell Aune extended a word of appreciation to His Highness for the piece of land graciously granted to the church.

On Sunday, May 22, the Middle East Union Session began, ending on Monday evening. During the sessions, Sudan was reorganized into three fields. The former South



Sudan Field territory, as proposed, was renamed the Greater Equatoria Field, while the Sudan Field remains

as the Sudan Field. A new field was created in the northern part of South Sudan, with the proposed name of Greater Upper Nile Field, which covers five states and the northern part of Jonglei State. The headquarters will be in Malakal. An

unprecedented number of locals were elected to field and union positions, making this session a milestone in the history of the church in the Middle East.

[Clement Arkangelo, *tedNEWS*]



One family to donate 500,000 books

In Indonesia, Seventh-day Adventists have the practice of welcoming and closing the Sabbath with family worship. Some time ago, I was in West Indonesia on a Sabbath. As it came time to close the Sabbath, I visited the family of a church member who owns the largest printing press in Indonesia, among other business interests. This dear brother prints the textbooks for the public schools in Indonesia and is very supportive of the work of the church.

After the worship in this brother’s lovely home in Jakarta, we had a conversation about two things: printing *The Great Controversy* in the Indonesian language and also printing Bible textbooks for our elementary and high schools in Indonesia.

After explaining the project to this family, they agreed to print, as a gift to the church, 500,000 copies of *The Great Controversy* in its classic version. Praise God!

[Albert C. Gulfan, *Great Controversy Project News*]



William Miller and the Rise of Adventism, by George R. Knight, Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2010.

I bought this book believing it to be a new book by George Knight, only to discover this manuscript is a reprint of his *Millennial Fever and the End of the World*. Nevertheless, I

developed out of the Millerite movement, have not, becomes instructive and sobering.

All the main characters who supported, and in some measure, resisted Miller, are discussed objectively. The man himself is set before us with his greatness and failings. One's admiration of William Miller can only grow when seen in the light of his achievements. I do not think a more useful and comprehensive portrayal of Miller, the Millerite movement he created, and its aftermath is presently available.

seeing the church changing from a movement to an organizational giant, expending more and more of its resources on maintaining itself at the expense of its mission.

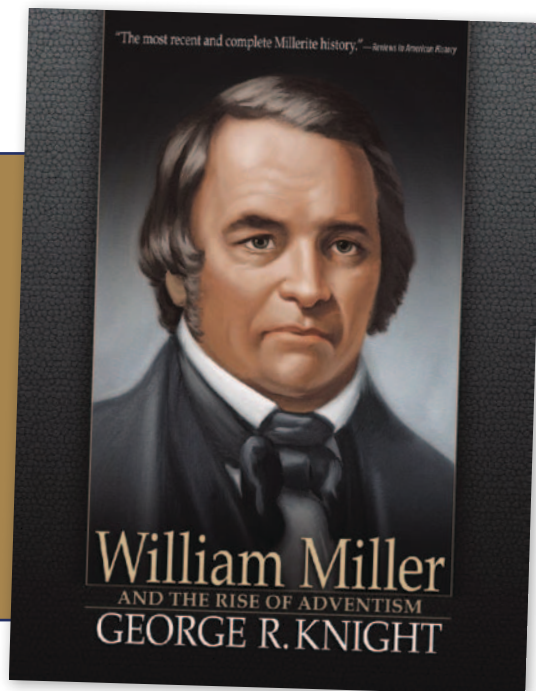
He laments that few in the church appear to have the perceptive grasp of what is required to recover the vibrant vision that initially energized, maintained, and motivated the church until the end of the twentieth century.

THOUGH THE AUTHOR WRITES AS A HISTORIAN, AND THIS IS DESIRABLE AND COMMENDABLE, ONE CATCHES A SENSE THAT BEHIND THE HISTORY LIES AN INTERVENING HAND.

appreciate having this book available again and find it indispensable for anyone who wants to know and understand the background of the world out of which the Seventh-day Adventist Church came.

Though the author writes as a historian, and this is desirable and commendable, one catches a sense that behind the history lies an intervening hand. His quite detailed analysis of how and why the Seventh-day Adventist Church has grown, while the other various groups, including Sabbatarians that

The contents of the book are arranged into three categories: (1) Moving Toward the Year of the End, (2) The Year of the End, and (3) Moving Away From the Year of the End. In this last section, Knight articulates some of his concerns for the future of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He sees three concerns that are dangerous to the future of the church: *complacency*, which has created a loss of urgency in witnessing; *affluence*, which has blunted faith in the actual imminent return of Jesus; and *bureaucracy*,



I find it encouraging to see this important book available again. The document is thought provoking, possessing the possibility of challenging and stimulating leaders and members to enlarge and expand their thinking of our heritage and how we can individually and collectively recapture the vision of a finished work. ❏

—Reviewed by Patrick Boyle, MA, a retired pastor living in Watford, Hertfordshire, United Kingdom.

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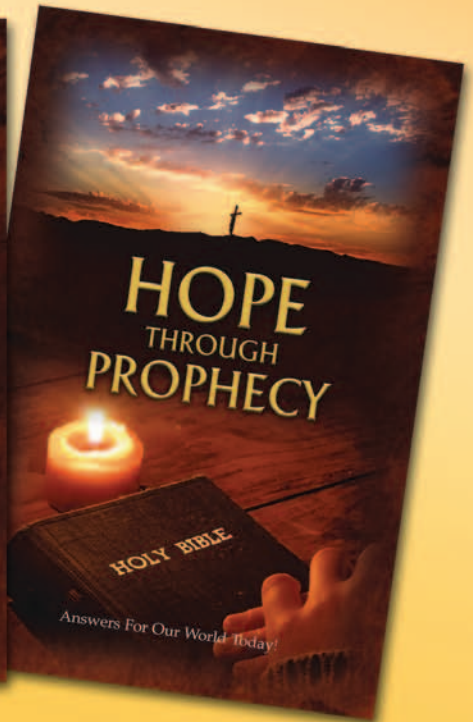
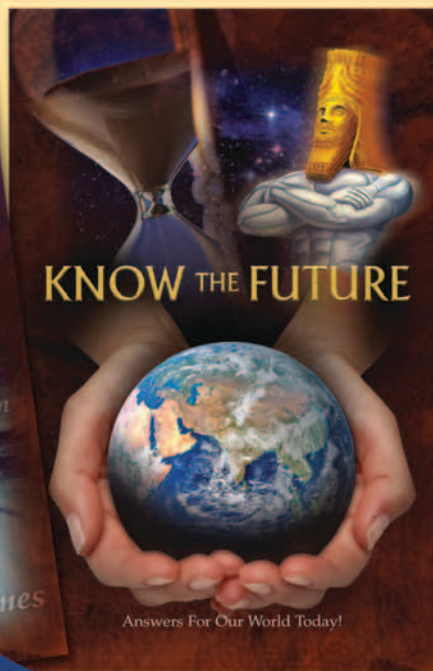
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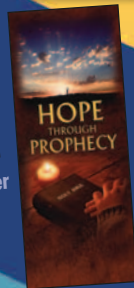


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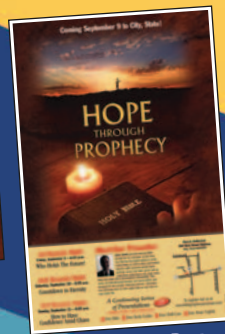
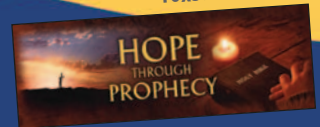


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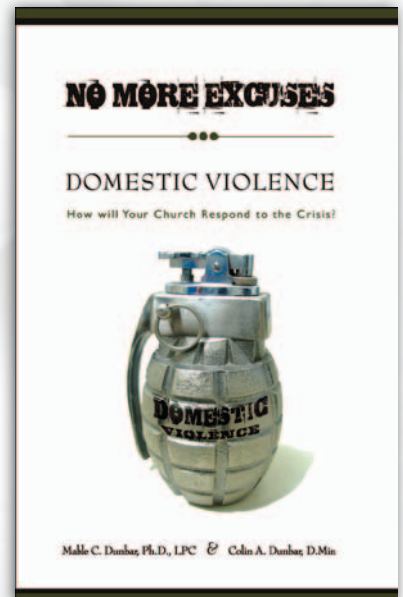
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