In Ezekiel's vision God had His hand beneath the wings of the cherubim. This is to teach His servants that it is divine power that gives them success. He will work with them if they will put away iniquity and become pure in heart and life. The bright light going among the living creatures with the swiftness of lightning represents the speed with which this work will finally go forward to completion.” 5 Testimonies, p. 754

Editorial: Answering the Ultimate Question

From a very young age (I took up reading about astronomy in the second grade), I have found science irresistible. Far from destroying my faith in God, it has only served to confirm His existence. I like how Robert Jastrow, astronomer and physicist, described the inevitable reconciliation of science with the notion of a Creator: “For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountain of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.”  (God and the Astronomers, p. 107)

To feed my curiosity, I've subscribed to Discover and other pop science magazines for years. This month's edition pictured an aging Mona Lisa on the cover, and one of the featured articles was titled, Immortality Within a Decade? It spoke of biological tinkering and suggested that we may be within striking distance of halting the aging process because of what we've learned from species that age far less quickly than we do. One species of jellyfish, it noted, is actually able to reverse aging and return to its polyp stage.

Apart from the notion that sinful human beings will be able to conquer death by their own efforts, the story seized my attention for another reason: the lead sentence. "The yearning for immortality dates back at least to ancient times,” the authors state.

Absolutely. It bothers us that we can spend a lifetime accumulating knowledge, building relationships, and experiencing life, just to have it come to a sudden and unceremonious end. It seems like a cruel joke: our aspirations are greater than the time allotted, our thirst for knowledge is greater than the opportunity offered by the brevity of life. We discover, very quickly, that there is not time to do everything we'd like to do in life, at least not well.

Our brains tell us that we're mortal, that life is fleeting, and that nobody we know has yet
managed to cheat death. We can stand at the grave of a loved one, reassuring ourselves, intellectually, logically, that death comes for all of us - but at the same time, our hearts scream that death is unfair. No amount of rationalization will convince us, ultimately, that death is not wrong. The editorial staff of Discover is sure enough of that fact that they're banking on it to sell magazines.

Even the most hardy skeptics can't help themselves when it comes to death. A few years ago, a friend of mine pointed out something interesting: when the likes of Richard Dawkins gathered to bury Douglas Adams (author of The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy), they planted a tree on the grave. In that moment, they betrayed their lack of absolute skeptical conviction to the discerning eye: that tree was a quiet statement of hope - hope that something of Adams would continue past the grave. Evolutionary biology told them that Adams was irrevocably lost, but even their doubting hearts were fighting death at that moment.

And therein lies one of the most powerful tools in a message for the public built on Bible prophecy: our message looks past the grave and declares that there is something wrong with death. It reveals a God who also weeps at graves - a God with a plan to set things right. It validates the fact that we feel cheated and explains our profound sense of loss. It breaks through every cultural barrier to answer the most pertinent question asked by mortal human beings: why do we die, and how do we stop it?

Science hasn't been able to answer it, but I know of Someone who can.

Why not share how God is blessing your ministry?

Many thanks to the pastors who submit articles for Best Practices for Adventist Evangelism. This month, we thank Pastor Richie Halversen for sending in the article featured below. We hope to regularly include more articles from pastor/evangelists in the field.

Maybe you've discovered something that made it easier for a congregation to respond to an altar call. Maybe you've streamlined evangelistic visitation in ways that really let you get more done in less time. Or maybe you've been blessed by God to be able to address tough subjects in a winsome way.

Please consider writing a short article for Best Practices for Adventist Evangelism ... someone out there really is waiting to hear from you.

Find out how to contribute to the discussion here.

Video Report: NY13 Prayer Rally

On September 21-22, 2012 the NY13 Prayer Rally was held at the North Bronx SDA Church. This event was the beginning of a campaign to reach the people of New York City with the message of the Gospel. The rally was hosted by the Greater New York Conference, and sponsored by the General Conference and the North American Division. You can watch the video report here.

Something Amazing is Going On Among our Youth!

Sometimes we may hear sad stories, negative reports, and acts of indiscipline among our youth in our schools. However, there are amazing evidences of a marvelous work that we cannot explain in human terms. In a few words, in the first three weeks of class at
Southern Adventist University more than 10% of our 3,319 students have expressed interest in preaching a full evangelistic series of 19 sermons!

You can read Dr. Martin's inspiring report here.

Carlos Martin

One Hundred Ten Graduate from OCSE

This summer, one hundred ten persons graduated from the Ontario Conference School of Evangelism (OCSE) inaugural class. The idea of having a school of evangelism arose from discussions among directors at the Ontario Conference who observed the favorable response of church members to training for lay preaching that had been offered through the Personal Ministries department early in 2010, and suggested a pooling of resources to offer wider training. The idea of a school of evangelism was born ...

... and you can read more about it by clicking here and scrolling down to page 12!!!

U.S. Protestants Lose Majority Status

NEW YORK (AP) -- For the first time in its history, the United States does not have a Protestant majority, according to a new study. One reason: The number of Americans with no religious affiliation is on the rise.

The percentage of Protestant adults in the U.S. has reached a low of 48 percent, the first time that Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life has reported with certainty that the number has fallen below 50 percent....

Read the entire article here.

Creating a Culture of Compassion: Getting Intentional With The Way We Care

I grew up the son of an evangelist. I'm used to traveling to different churches. I think of myself as pretty open to the various ways "kind and loving" can be manifested in a church. However, at some churches they were anything but kind and loving: places where you're handed a bulletin without a smile. Places where you're never welcomed. Places where people speak a language that, if you didn't grow up Adventist, seems completely foreign. How can one person see a church as friendly and someone else see it as cold and unfriendly?

Richie Halversen

You can read Richie's thoughts on being intentionally compassionate with visitors here.

Tools of the Trade

iGoogle Replacements

Users of iGoogle are beside themselves with angst: Google has announced that it will discontinue the popular web aggregator in November of 2013 - just a little over a year from now. The service allowed users to gather all of their favorite web content on a single home page, with a Google search
window conveniently located at the top. It was all in one place: news, maps, email, RSS feeds ... it was a boon to evangelists who like to keep current. Customized news feeds that provided fresh illustrations for the evening’s evangelistic meetings? Check. Customizable Google maps that allowed you to plot your evangelistic visits by dropping pins with notes on addresses? Check. A customized email account for your Bible study interests to use? Check. Quick links to Google Docs? Check.

And it was all on one page!

Users have been scrambling since the announcement to find a decent replacement, and realistic suggestions have been few and far between. Two services - while not quite providing the same level of user bliss one encounters with iGoogle - seem to be rising to the top, at least in the minds of desperate iGoogle users who write about such things in the blogosphere:

**Protopage.com.** This start page provides an interface reminiscent of iGoogle: widgets (news feeds, maps, etc) take the shape of the familiar rounded-edge windows that iGoogle users have come to expect, and they can be dragged about the page in much the same fashion. It has multiple tabbed pages, a healthy array of widget choices and almost creates the illusion that you are using iGoogle.

**Netvibes.com.** Advanced users of this aggregator can take advantage of Google-like tools, such as analytics, but that will require a paid membership. The free version of netvibes, however, provides an iGoogle-like experience. Widget windows are larger than iGoogle, providing more detail in the news feeds - but sometimes more is less, as far as being easy on the eye. This service also provides multiple tabbed pages and a wide assortment of widgets.

Neither service appears to have an interface as graphically customizable as iGoogle, but they do come close to providing a replacement - a relief for evangelists who have come rely on the quick access to data provided on iGoogle. Remember when you had to buy a newspaper, keep your interest data on cards, plot homes on real paper maps, and find directions with a map book? Yeah, me either.

Send your evangelistic ideas and descriptions of your best ministry tools to bpevangelism@gmail.com. Please be descriptive in your submission and follow the guidelines posted in this article.
How To Participate in Best Practices for Adventist Evangelism

Not only is this the maiden voyage of *Best Practices for Adventist Evangelism*, it’s also my inaugural attempt at serving as an editor - so I thank you kindly, in advance, for your patience as I grow into my new role.

Here’s what I’m thinking: each month, we’ll include editorials and *articles* that share or illustrate a key evangelistic principle. We’ll bring you *news* about evangelistic projects and initiatives from across the Division. We’ll hear from pastors who are actually in the trenches and finding solutions, and we’ll take time to share our best outreach ideas with each other.

Recently, I sent word to the field that I was looking for ideas from pastors active in outreach, and I was overwhelmed - nay, *swamped* - with responses. You’ll see a few of them included in this edition of the newsletter, and I would absolutely love to hear from more of you. Simply send your ideas to *bpevangelism@gmail.com*.

A few guidelines: I am looking for submissions that share specific ideas and give details on how those ideas are being implemented. There were many responses in the initial wave that were too general to be useful to the broader audience, such as “we use Christ’s method alone,” or “I like to get out into the community to meet people.” *Best Practices for Adventist Evangelism* - rightly or wrongly - will assume that pastors know and understand these basics, and will favor ideas that:

- **give specifics.** “Get people used to appeals and altar calls,” is not specific. “I like to have people pick up their free books and handouts at the front of the auditorium so they become comfortable coming to meet me well in advance of an altar call,” is much more specific.

- **share tangible results.** “This approach has resulted in the response to altar calls increasing by as much as 10%.”

- **report something that has actually been tried/implemented.** As opposed to ideas that you wish someone would try, or ideas that you want the conference/union/division to implement. We’re looking for a community classroom rather than a suggestion box.

Given the limits of an electronic newsletter, submissions should also be short(ish) - say four paragraphs or so. I realize that I violate this principle with some frequency myself, but hey, I’m the editor.

By God’s grace, this edition of *Best Practices* will blossom into a tool that helps us all stretch and grow as outreach leaders in the Seventh-day Adventist community.
Sometimes we may hear sad stories, negative reports, and acts of indiscipline among our youth in our schools. However, there are amazing evidences of a marvelous work that we cannot explain in human terms. In a few words, in the first three weeks of class at Southern Adventist University more than 10% of our 3,319 students have expressed interest in preaching a full evangelistic series of 19 sermons!

In fact, 366 students turned in an interest card. Of these, 189 filled out long application forms--and new applications arrive every day. We have already interviewed 62 students of these 189 volunteers and our schedule is booked for the next several weeks. Students must bring $200--non-refundable--to secure a post of duty.

These students already know that they will not go just to observe or participate at a distance. These students will do something that many pastors in the North American Division have never done and never will--they will preach a full evangelistic series of 19 doctrinal sermons!

Students already know that it is a demanding and tiring experience. They must use their vacation time (three weeks during summer), must pay between $600 and $1200 for the right to preach, and must attend a rigorous boot camp of 13 hours. Anyway, they volunteer!

These volunteers come from virtually all majors and departments. We believe that at Southern we are preparing future professionals--lawyers, nurses, architects, surgeons, teachers, social workers, mechanics, business people--who will serve in a local church as elders, Sabbath School teachers, preachers, etc. These students will have a story to tell to their friends, to their churches, and even to their grandchildren!

Jesus said, "Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers to the harvest" (Matt 9:38). Apparently, somebody is praying hard and God is answering those prayers.

We have a budget for 75 preachers. We already have 189 volunteers, and their number is growing every day. Should we reject them because we don't have the money? I hope it won't be necessary. I am confident that if "the Lord of the harvest sends out laborers into His harvest," He will also provide the necessary means.

Will you, please, forward this message to your friends far and near and let them know of what is going on at Southern? Some of them may want to sponsor a preacher! Or perhaps you want to do it. Send a check to the ERC at the School of Religion payable to "Southern Adventist University." If you just can pray for more showers of blessing, it will be greatly appreciated!

Dr. Carlos Martin is Professor of Missions and Evangelism at Southern Adventist University.
CAMP MEETING 2012

One Hundred and Ten School of

On Sabbath, June 30, 2012, one hundred and ten persons graduated from the Ontario Conference School of Evangelism’s (OCSE) inaugural class.

The graduation service was held at 3:30 p.m. in the presence of over 4,000 people during the conference’s annual camp meeting at the International Centre, Mississauga, Ontario. It was also broadcasted live over the Internet.

As the graduands, resplendent in their blue robes, marched into the auditorium to Elgar’s Pomp and Circumstance, there was a perceptible change in the congregation’s mood. At first, unsure as to what to expect, they saw the robed OCSE professor, Dr. Fitzroy Maitland, leading the graduands to their reserved seats, and perhaps sensed that the occasion was more significant than what had been anticipated. The significance was quickly confirmed by the composition of the platform party. It included Pastors Mark Johnson, SDACC president; Daniel Stojanovic, SDACC executive secretary; Dr. Mansfield Edwards, Ontario Conference president; Dr. Daniel Linrud, Ontario Conference executive secretary; Dr. Janice Maitland, education superintendent; Pastor Frank Dell’Erba, OCSE professor and, in their academic regalia, the four administrators of the OCSE, Dr. Errol Lawrence and Pastors Halsey Peat, Theodore Sargeant and Eustace Williams.

The service that followed was both joyous and solemn. The graduands were thrilled to have completed the gruelling 15-month course. Some had managed to squeeze into the graduating class by submitting their final assignments only a week earlier. Now, surrounded by their families and friends, it was clear that their sacrifice, time-commitment and hard work had paid off. So they eagerly walked across the platform to receive their certificates from Dr. Edwards and congratulatory handshakes from the other dignitaries. Their certificates were accompanied by a medallion bearing the school’s logo and inscribed with their names.

Of the 110-member graduating class, 104 were present, six graduated in absentia, unable to be present because they live outside the province in British Columbia or even outside Canada, in Maryland, USA, and Jamaica. They took the course online.

The joy of the students was tempered by the reminder that 240 persons had commenced the course in March 2011, but not all were able to complete it. Or in the very sad case of one person, he passed away.

The solemnity of the graduation lay in the charge given to them by conference president, Dr. Mansfield Edwards.

“The New Testament clearly teaches that all Christians are to be ministers,” he said. “When Jesus spoke of self-denial, taking up the cross and follow Him, He was addressing every believer.”

Dr. Edwards was emphatic when he told them that when they received certificates as lay Bible instructors, lay preachers or as both, their certificates, “were not simply to be placed on a wall”. The graduates are now expected...
to dedicate themselves to “building God’s kingdom”.

Speaking later about the value of the OCSE, Edwards said, “In my estimation, the school of evangelism is one of the best initiatives that has ever been undertaken in this conference. I unreservedly affirm the four principals who work day and night travelling all across this conference to make it a success”.

Part of the requirements for graduation is that all students must be engaged in personal evangelism—giving Bible studies with the purpose of leading someone to Jesus. Many students are already very active in sharing their faith.

The idea of having a school of evangelism arose from discussions among Pastors Lawrence, Peat, Sargeant and Williams, all directors at the Ontario Conference. They had observed the favourable response of church members to training for lay preaching that had been offered by Pastor Williams through the Personal Ministries department early in 2010 and suggested a pooling of resources to offer wider training. The idea of a school of evangelism was born, and they quickly moved on to develop a curriculum that would be challenging, yet inclusive. They did not need to look too far for teachers. The pool of pastors in Ontario provided a rich source of highly skilled, well-educated and well-experienced instructors. Some had taught at college or university levels, while others were experienced evangelists and leaders. The ‘four principals’, as the organisers were soon termed, worked on a schedule that would allow students to attend class and fulfil their assignments in their spare time. The proposal was adopted by the conference administration, and the school was launched on March 5, 2011 at Willowdale Adventist Church. Classes began at Kingsview Village Church on March 27, 2011. Fifty-five students viewed the first class online from across Ontario, Canada and the world.

Presently, students are able to register for one of two streams: Lay Bible Instructor or Credentialed Lay Preacher. However, registration for the credentialed lay preacher stream allows the registrant to complete all the requirements for the lay Bible instructor’s stream.

For 2012, students are able to attend the OCSE in Ottawa, Toronto, Kitchener-Waterloo and London. It is anticipated that a northern Ontario location will be added in the near future.

The class of 2013 is already hard at work and looking forward to its graduation.
NEW YORK (AP) -- For the first time in its history, the United States does not have a Protestant majority, according to a new study. One reason: The number of Americans with no religious affiliation is on the rise.

The percentage of Protestant adults in the U.S. has reached a low of 48 percent, the first time that Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life has reported with certainty that the number has fallen below 50 percent. The drop has long been anticipated and comes at a time when no Protestants are on the U.S. Supreme Court and the Republicans have their first presidential ticket with no Protestant nominees.

Among the reasons for the change a spike in the number of American adults who say they have no religion. The Pew study, released Tuesday, found that about 20 percent of Americans say they have no religious affiliation, an increase from 15 percent in the last five years.

Scholars have long debated whether people who say...
they no longer belong to a religious group should be considered secular. While the category as defined by Pew researchers includes atheists, it also encompasses majorities of people who say they believe in God, and a notable minority who pray daily or consider themselves "spiritual" but not "religious." Still, Pew found overall that most of the unaffiliated aren't actively seeking another religious home, indicating that their ties with organized religion are permanently broken.

Growth among those with no religion has been a major preoccupation of American faith leaders who worry that the United States, a highly religious country, would go the way of Western Europe, where church attendance has plummeted. Pope Benedict XVI has partly dedicated his pontificate to combating secularism in the West. This week in Rome, he is convening a three-week synod, or assembly, of bishops from around the world aimed at bringing back Roman Catholics who have left the church.

The trend also has political implications. American voters who describe themselves as having no religion vote overwhelmingly for Democrats. Pew found Americans with no religion support abortion rights and gay marriage at a much higher-rate than the U.S. public at large. These "nones" are an increasing segment of voters who are registered as Democrats or lean toward the party, growing from 17 percent to 24 percent over the last five years. The religiously unaffiliated are becoming as important a constituency to Democrats as

**TEAM**

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**VIEW FULL MEDAL ST.**

**OLYMPICS NEWS**

- **OLYMPIC BMX CYCLIST DIES IN AUTO ACCIDENT**
  3 HOURS AGO

- **BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL JOI OLYMPIC BID**
  3 HOURS AGO

- **OLYMPIC CHAMP MARONEY STS CRUTCHES**
  12 HOURS AGO

- **THORPE REVEALS YEARS OF DEPRESSION**
  2 DAYS AGO

**KOSTECKI, HONEY, REYNOLDS SAILING HALL CLASS**

**MULTIMEDIA**

- Mass, Catholics Hold Vigil in Endangered Churches
- Convent Shuts After Helping Generations 'Overcome'
- Inside a Voodoo Gege Ceremony

**RELIGION NEWS**

- Muslim Rebels Ink Philippine Pact as Step to Peace
- AP Impact: Feds Muff Kid Jewelry Cadmium Crackdown
- 2 Tulsa Ministers Want Charges Dismissed
- Catholics Biden, Ryan Talk Abortion in Debate
- Superior of Troubled Legion of Christ Steps Aside
- Pope Marks 50th Anniversary of Vatican II
- Calif. Man Behind Film Denies Probation Violations
- Religion News in Brief
- Motel Workers Discuss Church Bomb Plot
- Arrest

[News from The Associated Press](http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US_SURVEY_NO_RELIGION?...)

2 of 4 10/15/2012 10:32 AM
evangelicals are to Republicans, Pew said.

The Pew analysis, conducted with PBS' "Religion & Ethics Newsweekly," is based on several surveys, including a poll of nearly 3,000 adults conducted June 28-July 9, 2012. The finding on the Protestant majority is based on responses from a larger group of more than 17,000 people and has a margin of error of plus or minus 0.9 percentage points, Pew researchers said.

Pew said it had also previously calculated a drop slightly below 50 percent among U.S. Protestants, but those findings had fallen within the margin of error; the General Social Survey, which is conducted by the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center, reported for 2010 that the percentage of U.S. Protestants was around 46.7 percent. Analysts disagree on whether the increasing numbers of nondenominational Christians should be counted as Protestant. Pew researchers do include independent Christians in their Protestant figure.

Researchers have been struggling for decades to find a definitive reason for the steady rise in those with no religion. 'The spread of secularism in Western Europe was often viewed as a byproduct of growing wealth in the region. Yet among industrialized nations, the United States stood out for its deep religiosity in the face of increasing wealth. Now, religion scholars say the decreased religiosity in the United States could reflect a change in how Americans describe their religious lives. In 2007, 60 percent of people who said they seldom or never attend religious services still identified themselves as part of a particular religious tradition. In 2012, that statistic fell to 50 percent, according to the Pew report.

"Part of what's going on here is that the stigma associated with not being part of any religious community has declined," said John Green, a specialist in religion and politics at the University of Akron, who advised Pew on the survey. "In some parts of the country, there is still a stigma. But overall, it's not the way it used to be."

The Pew study has found the growth in unaffiliated Americans spans a broad range of groups: men and women, college graduates and those without a college degree, people earning less than $30,000 annually and those earning $75,000 or more. However, along ethnic lines, the largest jump in "nones" has been among whites. One-fifth of whites describe themselves as having no religion.

More growth in "nones" is expected. One-third of adults under age 30 have no religious affiliation, compared to 9 percent of people 65 and older. Pew researchers wrote that "young adults today are much more likely to be unaffiliated than previous generations were at a similar stage in their lives," and aren't expected to become more religiously active as they age.

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Online: HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/UNAFFILIATED/NONES-ON-THE-RISE.ASPX
New Technology Lets You Learn a Language in as Little as 10 Days

How Cruise Lines Fill All Those Unsold Cruise Cabins

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Creating a Culture of Compassion: Getting Intentional with the Way We Care

By Richie Halversen

I'm sure we have all attended a church where someone made a statement like, *I am so glad I am a part of such a caring church.* And you had to look around and make sure you were in the same place.

I grew up the son of an evangelist. I'm used to traveling to different churches. I think of myself pretty open to the various ways "kind and loving" can be manifested in a church. However, at some churches they were everything but kind and loving: places where you're handed a bulletin without a smile. Places where you're never welcomed. Places where people speak a language that, if you didn't grow up Adventist, seems completely foreign. How can one person see a church as friendly and someone else see it as cold and unfriendly?

Now that I am pastor, I realize how easy it is for a church to see itself as friendly, while outsiders perceive that same church as unfriendly.

Lee Atwater said, *perception is reality.* How can two people see the same thing in a completely different light? Perception. To the long-time member we tend to have an inward facing out perspective. We feel comfortable because we know everyone. We feel needed because we have a service position. We feel like we're part of the club because we know what "vege-meat" is. We are looking from the inside out. Often, Sabbath is the only day we see our fellow members (another issue for another day), so we look forward to seeing them. We naturally migrate toward people we know.

Meanwhile, we have visitors and new members that fall through the cracks.

Sadly, some of our churches are not use to substantial growth, therefore, they do not know how to handle a consistent stream of visitors and new members. We see things through the lens of inward facing out. "This is how I feel, therefore this is how everyone else feels."

We need to reverse this perspective and become intentional with how we care. We need to begin to see things through the lens of outward facing in. How are we perceived by people on the outside looking in? We have to continually ask the question: is our church about us (i.e. our comforts, our cares, our traditions), or is it about reaching others with the Good News? Are we the light Jesus called us to be?

In Matthew 5:14–16, Jesus says "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

According to the book *Building Strong Congregations,* "religious organizations that are aware of their constituents needs and of the ever-changing social environments are characterized by the high degree of personal satisfaction felt by the people who meet with these organizations."

In order to create a culture of compassion in our church we need to pay attention to the needs of each other, and the needs of our community.

According to *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs,* one of our most basic needs is the need for belongingness and love. This is one of the basic needs for people, and it's one of the basic needs for the church. The bottom line is that when people feel loved and important, they stay in the church. If someone comes to church and feels invisible, there is a good chance they will never come back. We need to let people know they are important. We need to let them serve as an integral part of God's church. The need to belong is more essential to people than even the need to understand. So before we give them a lesson on the 2300 days prophecy, let's show them that we care.

Here are a few ways we can be intentional about creating a culture of compassion.

1. **Learn peoples names:** Dale Carnagie, in his book *How to Win Friends and Influence People,* says, "remember that a man's name is to him the sweetest and most important sound in any language." When someone remembers my name, it tells me that they care enough about me to remember me. When they've seen me a dozen times and still can't remember my name, I don't feel very special. We often say things like, *I'm not good with names.* But in ministry, especially in leadership, you need to get good with names.

2. **Welcoming People:** We need to welcome visitors from the pulpit, but more importantly, we need to welcome them personally. I have the greeters tell me whenever someone is visiting, or when someone who hasn't attended in a while is at church. Then I can go to them personally and let them know how glad we are that they are there. While we're on the subject of greeters, make sure your greeters exude warmth and know how to smile. They should be fully trained in what to say ("Welcome, we are so glad you are worshiping with us today"), and what not to say ("Hey, I haven't seen you in forever, what rock did you crawl out of?" etc.). The greeters should also point out where the bathrooms are and have a deacon show them where the Bible study and children's class rooms are.
3. **A time during the corporate service to greet and shake hands**: This is something I do every night at my evangelistic meetings to help break the ice and to get people communicating. However, I also have begun doing it at my church. If we want our church services to be evangelistic, we need to help create the same environment that often exists in the evangelistic meeting. This helps to cure the stoic look often seen on faces in our sanctuaries. I believe in reverence; however, reverence is not synonymous with coldness. God smiles when we smile, and one of the greatest ways to worship God is by creating a culture of compassion.

4. **Fellowship Meals**: We need to make sure that every visitor has a place to eat, whether this done at members' homes or at a fellowship meal. We can't assume someone will invite our guests home. We need to have a deliberate system in place so that we know visitors have a place to go and eat. Fellowship meals are also great times for the pastor to intentionally visit with each person present. I make sure I especially make visitors feel welcome and comfortable.

Of course, these are not new or revolutionary ideas - just a few of the things we have done that help to create a culture of compassion. The point is that we cannot expect these things to just naturally happen. We need to be intentional: we have to rewire the way we think from inward facing out, to outward facing in. Isn't that what the Gospel reveals? Jesus left the comforts of heaven to serve and save us - surely we can leave what has become comfortable and serve him by serving others. That is what church is all about!

Richie Halversen is the pastor of the College Drive Seventh-day Adventist Church in Jackson, Missouri, where he lives with his wife Brittney and their four children.