You Can't Lead Through Appeasement
An Interview by Geoffrey Crowley with MyRon Edmonds and John Coaxim

Editor's Note: On August 15, 2013, Pastor Geoffrey Crowley, a seminary student, visited with Senior Pastor MyRon Edmonds and Associate Pastor John Coaxim at the Glenville Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cleveland Ohio. This is a partial transcript of that interview.

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February Best Practices Webinar
By Shawn Boonstra

February's Webinar. *(Registration Link coming soon.)*

Shawn Boonstra will conduct a webinar on
*"The Art and Power of a Strong Sermonic Appeal"*
on Tuesday, February 18, 2014 at 1:30 p.m. e.s.t.

Wise Words: Evangelism

The purpose of the church is not just to fraternize with the righteous, but to call lost sinners to repentance. That is the ministry of the church. We aren't saved just to experience the joy of Jesus in our hearts. We aren't saved just to grow toward spiritual maturity. We're saved to proclaim the message of a living, loving Lord to a dying world. Evangelism, in its truest sense, is not a duty to be added, a program to adopt, a technique to learn. It's not a "must," a "should do," or a "will do." Rather, it's something we are unable not to do. For before evangelism can truly be successful it must be a consuming passion. And we are called individually as a church to have hearts that beat with a passion for souls. Some have observed, "Evangelism never seemed to be an 'issue' in the New Testament . . . . Evangelism happened. It issued effortlessly from the community of believers as light from the sun. It was spontaneous, continuous, and contagious." - *Alfred McClure*  

Let's Talk

We would like to spice up the preaching of pastors and church leaders across the North American Division. Send us your very best sermon illustrations to share in a future issue of *Best Practices*.

Ideas, Events, Resources, Announcements

Two weeks ago, David Kinnaman, president of the Barna Group, addressed the issue of young adult retention in the church at the Adventist Ministries Convention in Monterey, CA. One of the issues he unpacked was the 5 Reasons Millennials Stay Connected to Church.

Brandon Hilgeman, a pastor at Sagebrush Community Church in Albuquerque, NM has created a list of *The Absolute Best iPhone Apps for Pastors* and *The Absolute Best iPad Apps for Pastors*.

Previous resource links:

- Hijacking Back Your Brain From Porn
Reflections on Transitioning a Church from One Generation to Another

Join the discussion on facebook.

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Crowley: Glenville is a historic church doing progressive ministry. Can you talk a little bit about the transitions that the church has made since you’ve been here?

Edmonds: When I first got here the average age of a church board member was 60. One of the first things that we did was recognize that we were lacking young people in our church and that in 5, maybe 7 years we’d be dead. We concluded that it would be wise if each of the leaders would find a young person to serve as an apprentice; someone they could train to replace themselves. They were not offended by it and embraced it and did pretty well with it.

Crowley: Was the conference supportive of a transition?

Edmonds: Before I arrived, President Freddy Russell came and met with the church; told them what kind of leader they were getting; told them how they should support the leader in the transition. When I came in and shared the vision of what we wanted to do, it was something that they were already expecting. And honestly, I was able to “get away” with some things early on because we had conference support in what we were doing.

Crowley: I understand that you haven’t lost many of the old guard as you have brought in young people into leadership. How were you able to pull that off?

Edmonds: What helped with that is their children, who were now in their 40s and 50s – you have to understand that the leadership was in the 60s – and then you had a lot of sort-of uninvolved, “young” (that’s relative) people in their 40s and 50s who weren’t really serving or doing anything. But they were the children of this older generation. My mentor Ben Jones told me one time, “If you want to get the older people,” he said, “love on their children.” Their children wanted change and because they were now leading the change, their parents were diffused in their aggressive fight against it.
Crowley: Some of the change appears to be music, geared toward the younger members. I can’t imagine that your older members always appreciate it. Do you find striking a balance between those two is kind of crucial to what you do here?

Edmonds: That’s one of the reasons why we decided to go to a two service format. We wanted to make sure that both services weren’t identical. We chose to have a service that was traditional as well as a service that was more progressive and youth-friendly.

Crowley: Were there already multiple services when you got here, or is that something you established?

Edmonds: No, there weren’t multiple services. There was one and it was a conflicted service. We were so busy trying to appease the young and trying to appease the old that the service didn’t have any identity; it wasn’t mission focused. And you know, at the end of the day, we said we wanted everything we do to have a mission-driven kind of emphasis.

Crowley: Do you preach the same sermon in both services?

Edmonds: In the first service there’s a different bent to it but it’s the exact same sermon. We said, “Listen, man, we’re going to bring you quality in both services.” We think that’s worked out for us.

Crowley: What would you say has been your biggest challenge in the transition?

Edmonds: The biggest challenge is trying to get people to see that we’re not changing for change sake; that change is totally based on souls being saved. That’s the challenge. Sometimes the assumption is that because of my age and my youthfulness and my associate pastor, “These are young guys and they’re just trying to make this church youthful; they don’t care about us, old people, and it’s about to be a youth takeover”. And for most churches it’s like the minute there is just a slight emphasis on young people, there’s this fear that the church is going toward young. When the mindset of the church is selfish and self-centered, then nobody’s needs are met; because you’re leading by appeasement. But when the mindset is totally on the lost, then you don’t care anymore about whether your needs are being met. It’s about winning souls for Jesus Christ. That has been our greatest struggle.

Crowley: It must be paying off because I’ve heard that you’ve been seeing an influx of young adults here at this church. Can you give me a reason that’s happening?

Coaxim: This church is an anomaly. It’s kind of weird because many churches don’t have a lot of young adults. Not only that, it’s weird in a different sense that both of us are very young. The pastor is only 10 years older than I am, you know, I’m 26 years old. I think it’s just fun for a lot of young adults to come into the sanctuary and to see two young men preaching the gospel. We’re friends with all of the young adults. All of their numbers are in our phones. We don’t just call them, we text them from time to time. Almost every Sabbath there’s probably around 20 to 25 young adults who come over to my house. We eat together; we play around with each other; we go on walks and things of that nature. Then also we started a Young Adult Bible Study that happens on Sundays at around 3 o’clock; and the young adults, they love it, for some reason they just love dialogue, they love discussion, they love interaction with each other. And so we’ve just kind of fostered that by setting aside time for them to do that.

Crowley: I’ve encountered people for whom the message and the methods are one in the same. Do you have any in your congregation?

Edmonds: Yeah, and I can tell you why. It finally hit me why people connect methods and message as the same thing.
Most of them received the message in this church through evangelism. A string of powerhouse evangelists have been to Glenville. These guys would run 6 – 10-week meetings. And so, it’s amazing, this church is primarily a church of first generation Seventh-day Adventists.

I discovered that if you say to them, “The hymnal is not any more sacred than a praise and worship song,” they’re offended by that. The reason why they are is because somebody told them that the hymnal WAS more sacred. And the person that told them that was the person that baptized them; it’s the person that blessed their children; it’s the person that visited them when they were in the hospital; it’s the person that prayed healing over their body when they were sick and they got well. And so they connect personality with their tradition. So when you tell them there is a different way, what they’re hearing is, “You’re telling me that everything so-and-so told me was a lie.” That’s offensive to them. And so we have to constantly try to tell them that the Seventh-day Adventist church is a progressive church. We’re a movement, we’re always learning and growing and we never get to a place where we just sit down and we don’t learn and grow anymore.

Crowley. I noticed that you used the NIV in one of your sermons. Has your church historically been a King James Version church? And if so, how were you able to introduce other translations?

Edmonds: Yeah, I know that historically they’ve been a King James version church. This is how you can always tell a church is a King James version church. By the way they pray. You know, it’s how they use ‘nevertheless’ and ‘per adventure’ and ‘heretofore’. Now they don’t talk like that normally. This was definitely a KJV church when we came in but I use a NIV to preach from. And mainly the reason I do that is because I want people to understand what I’m talking about. It just takes a lot of time to break down the King James and the Greek and the Hebrew and the context. And you know, honestly, I didn’t really get a lot of pushback from that. We taught in our Wednesday night teachings stuff we learned in Bible manuscripts at Andrews in the seminary. When they heard it and understood that there’s really no superior version except multiple versions or the original manuscripts, people readily embraced that.

We are professional preachers and teachers of the Word of God and know hermeneutics and know how to handle the Scriptures. I think they have grown to respect that these brothers are not playing with this thing; they know what they’re talking about.

Crowley: What advice would you give a pastor who is in a King James only church?

Edmonds: Actually I was in a King James only church before. And what I did to slowly open them up to multiple versions is that I would read from the King James version and then I would say something like, “Now I want you to take a look at this same text from another version so we can get more insight.” It was almost like, if you had the King James Version there, it makes them feel comfortable. If you add another version, they’re not offended by it. But if you simply just have that new version and don’t have the King James Version, then they’re kind of concerned about that. That was a slow transition. I also showed them that Ellen White, the founder of the Adventist church, used multiple versions. If it was good enough for Ellen White, it can be good enough for them.

Crowley: What has been easier in this transition than you expected it to be?

Edmonds: The transition has not been that difficult because this is a praying church. Everything that has happened here has happened on our knees. We set out in this church to do everything based on a prayer-driven mindset. “We’re gonna seek God and that everything we do is going to be born out of prayer.” And so we try to make prayer meeting the main thing in the church. We have a prayer line that goes 24 hours a day. We have a prayer ministry and the cooperation we have gotten from praying people has really taken over the church. It’s been amazing. This has been one of the most cooperative churches I’ve ever been to in my life. Because their history has been evangelism most of them ‘get it’. The reason that we’re doing this stuff is because that’s who we are. The music style may have changed, the packaging looks a little different, but we still preach the 3 angels messages, we still preach the coming of Jesus Christ, we’re not watering down the Seventh-day Adventist message, we are still doing that, it just looks and sounds differently. We still preach the Sabbath, but now, instead of doing it propositionally; we preach it based on benefits. Because people are no longer
asking, “Which day is the Sabbath,” they’re asking, “Why does it matter?” Nothing has changed from the message standpoint, and that’s been our argument, we just changed the methods.
Caring for Military Families

by Garry Losey

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Proverbs 3:5,6.

It is hard enough to give up our own ideas and trust in God in the easy times. It is even harder to give up our own ideas and trust God in the tough times, especially for military families who must live with separation and fear for the safety of their loved ones in times of war.

Through the years I have seen families come to Dover, Delaware to receive the body of their soldier who was lost in combat. I have seen the difference that faith in a loving God can make for these families. I can remember a 20 year old woman who came to see her brother, a squad leader staff sergeant, brought home along with two specialists who had also lost their lives in Afghanistan. The father of one of these specialists was so immobilized by his grief that he stood all alone, unable to connect with others in the group. Just before the three soldiers were transferred, the young woman approached this father, prayed with him, and encouraged him to put his trust in God no matter what. The father was profoundly moved by that touch of faith.

Pastors and church leaders can provide an important support for military families in their congregations. They can encourage military families to put their trust in God and to be a positive strength to others in times of crisis. Here's how:

1. Encourage your congregation to be people of prayer. Pray for your military members, especially when they serve in a war zone. Pray for your military families who remain at home.

2. Visit military families in their homes and over the phone to let them know that you are with them. This is especially important in times of uncertainty and times of loss.

3. Provide practical assistance to husbands and wives who are alone, or who are alone with their children - yard work, household cleaning, childcare, etc.

4. Do something special for your military families on Sabbaths that fall around Memorial Day, Veterans Day, etc.

It is said that one percent of Americans serve in the military - and that is true. But there are another two or three percent of Americans who make up the families of those military personnel. We need to be there to support them, especially when their loved one is deployed on a hardship tour (tours of duty without families) or in a combat area where they are in harm's way every single day. Let us hold them up with our love and prayers.

Chaplain Garry Losey recently retired from the US Army Reserves
The purpose of the church is not just to fraternize with the righteous, but to call lost sinners to repentance. That is the ministry of the church. We aren't saved just to experience the joy of Jesus in our hearts. We aren't saved just to grow toward spiritual maturity. We're saved to proclaim the message of a living, loving Lord to a dying world. Evangelism, in its truest sense, is not a duty to be added, a program to adopt, a technique to learn. It's not a "must," a "should do," or a "will do." Rather, it's something we are unable not to do. For before evangelism can truly be successful it must be a consuming passion. And we are called individually and as a church to have hearts that beat with a passion for souls. Some have observed, "Evangelism never seemed to be an 'issue' in the New Testament . . . . Evangelism happened. It issued effortlessly from the community of believers as light from the sun. It was spontaneous, continuous, and contagious." -Alfred McClure

When those who are called to fish don't fish, they fight. When energy intended to be used outside is used inside, the result is explosive. Instead of casting nets, we cast stones. Instead of extending helping hands, we point accusing fingers. Instead of being fishers of the lost, we become critics of the saved. Rather than helping the hurting, we hurt the helpers. The result? Church Scrooges. "Bah humbug" spirituality. Beady eyes searching for warts on others while ignoring the warts on the nose below. Crooked fingers that bypass strengths and point out weaknesses. Split churches. Poor testimonies. Broken hearts. Legalistic wars. And, sadly, poor go unfed, confused go unconsulated, and lost go unreached. And when those who are called to fish don't fish, they fight. But note the other side of this fish tale: When those who are called to fish, fish - they flourish. -Max Lucado

We can't touch the culture if we're not part of the culture. We need to be mainstream in the community, recognized as part of it, active participants, a positive lifting force. -Ted Wick

I've learned that evangelism is not something you go out and do, but something you do as you go along. -Helen Chung

It's clear to me that from the beginning, the use of the term seeker-targeted was intended to mean the building of a church that reaches unchurched people. Now the term has even been portrayed by some as meaning that we give seekers whatever they want or that unchurched people drive everything we do in the church. That's simply not true. This movement is not about creating churches that give seekers everything they want. It is about removing unnecessary barriers so that we can give them what they need - Jesus Christ. -Jim Mellado

If you're living a boring, lukewarm Christian life of drudgery and rule-keeping, you may be doing more damage to your friends than all the scandals involving the televangelists. You're sending a message that Christianity is "a stiff, upright, inflexible way of life, colorless and unbending," and it was certainly never intended to be that. -Lee Strobel