Blogging Basics for Pastors
By Seth Pierce

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By Samuel E. Reyes

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Read More

Blurring the Lines Between Church and Community
By V. Michelle Bernard
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Let's Talk

Best Practices is looking for articles about what is working for you in ministry. Articles that are one-subject focused and tightly written - 300 to 700 words. We
are also looking for top-flight sermon illustrations. Together we can make Best Practices for Adventist Ministry a go-to tool box for NAD pastors and church leaders.

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**Ideas, Events, Resources, Announcements**

Take a look at the faces of the young men and women you worship with each Sabbath. Do you know what they're thinking and feeling? You'll never find out unless you ask. *Let's Talk* begins a conversation that former GC President, Jan Paulsen hopes you'll continue. Each chapter ends with discussion questions and material to help you join the conversation.

In *Without a Plan, You're Going Nowhere*, John Maxwell challenges us to slip out of neutral and to go into high gear leadership with a four-part strategy personal and professional growth.
Previous resource links:

- Sabbath School Lessons from 1888 to 2004
- 7 Phrases to Outlaw from Brainstorming
- Into All the World
- Meal Train
- A Digital Sabbath
- Nonprofit Leadership Certification Program

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One of the greatest tools in building an online platform, as well as finding a place for the sermon leftovers that didn’t make the final cut, is a blog. While many people are familiar with blogs, and even have one, the truth is, like the book of Leviticus, many start but never finish. Maybe we crank out one or two theological manifestos or post a sermon — but the appeal diminishes easily among all the other stuff we have to get to but don’t.

However, the value of a well-crafted blog, is worth the effort. It allows another connection point within your congregation and even expands it to other avenues beyond your membership as people an share your thoughts with their friends. A well-focused blog can open professional doors for you — including paid speaking and writing opportunities. The one I maintain on my website, though in sore need of updating, has garnered speaking engagements both domestic and international and is a great way to connect with others around the world.

So what are a few helpful tips for maintaining a blog?

- Make it easy to find: whether on your personal website, or your church’s, the blog should appear on the home page.
- Include widgets that allow people to “share” on social media such as Facebook and Twitter
- Don’t exceed 500 words: while an occasional 750 word pieces is permissible, most people break out in hives when they see a webpage full of text. Simmer down, focus, simply, and give people a shot of spiritual Red Bull.
- Facilitate discussion: This is where you can elaborate on your points. As people comment, engage them and ask questions.
- Don’t write in huge paragraphs — 2-3 sentences maximum. Make friends with your “return” button.
- Use bold to highlight key phrases throughout the blog.
- Use one image, usually right justify, to capture the attention of your more visual readers. Websites such as www.foter.com allow you royalty free photos, as long as you include the HTML code at the bottom of your blog for proper credit.

With a little effort, posting 1-2x a week, you will expand your platform and your ministry potential.

*Seth Pierce is the Lead Pastor for the Puyallup Seventh-day Adventist Church in Washington*
Generation Change: Designing the Future

By Samuel E. Reyes

Last week we took a look at the challenges that lead many youth to leave the church. This week we want to explore strategies to reach and hold the emerging generation. While biblical principles will always guide our approaches, we must find new ways to apply those principles in ways that will help our youth discover and cement their Christian convictions, and to stay connected to the church. As we rethink how we do ministry, we need to redefine our approaches in evangelism, discipleship, leadership, and worship.

Redefining Evangelism

God created us with a need for community. Even God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – is a community. The human race, created in the image of God, is also a community. Effective evangelism, therefore, must be pursued through relational means. In His life and ministry, Jesus provides the perfect model for relational evangelism. He created friendships. He interacted with sinners by sitting and eating at their tables. He demonstrated an interest in their lives. He provided for their needs. And then, He invited them to follow Him.

The early Christian church followed the same model. They shared their lives together. They provided for each other’s needs. As Paul puts it in 1 Thessalonians 2:8, “We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.”

A new generation of believers is rising; a generation that wants to make a difference in the lives of those around them. Relational evangelism is the key to reaching people for Christ. Youthful disciples today not only want to bring people to Christ, they want to walk with them in their own discipleship journey, praying with and helping them along the way. This is essential to our commission to not only baptize, but to teach and disciple new followers for Christ.

Redefining Discipleship

Jesus has given us only one plan for church growth: Multiplication through disciples. Jesus did not say, “Go and make more church members.” He said, “Go and make more disciples.” Simply sitting in church for two hours on Sabbath morning is not going to make disciples. We must find new and effective ways to disciple our youth from the inside out. In their book, A Passionate Church, Mike Breen and Walt Kallestad recommend the three following strategies:

1. **Study the Culture:** Find ways to become relevant to the culture of your surrounding community and church members.
2. **Read the Bible:** Let it become a roadmap for developing an essential relationship with God.
3. **Build the Church:** In order to grow the church, we must change over time. While our biblical principles are constant, fresh, Spirit-led applications of those principles will enable us to experience a daily upgrade in our faith experience.

Redefining Leadership

Today’s youth do not respond well to authoritarian leadership approaches. They respond better to relational approaches. They recognize and respect authenticity and transparency. They want to follow real leaders who authentically “walk the talk.” They aspire to this kind of leadership in their own spheres of influence.

Redefining Worship

The prophet Isaiah invites us to a vibrant kind of worship – Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the instruction of our God, you people of Gomorrah! “The multitude of your sacrifices—what are they to me?” says the
Lord. “I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your worthless assemblies. Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals I hate with all my being. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I hide my eyes from you; even when you offer many prayers, I am not listening. Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong. Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow. Come now, let us settle the matter,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.” Isaiah 1:10-18

Today’s generation is looking for a worship that goes beyond tradition and routine. They seek to worship God in every aspect of their lives. In this life of worship they aspire to do that which is right, to seek justice and defend the oppressed. Thus our lives will become a reflection of He whom we worship.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Romans 12:1

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Samuel E. Reyes is the youth and young adult pastor for the Forest City Seventh-day Adventist Church in Altamonte Springs, Florida

[1] All Bible passages in this article have been taken from the New International Version
Churches that are Discovering and Meeting Community Needs
by V. Michelle Bernard

A year after having his home rebuilt by the Extreme Home Repair Ministry (Aldergrove, BC) Walt Grochowski walked through the doors of the Aldergrove Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Grochowski had never heard of Adventists before they helped rebuild his home. He describes the day he and his wife found out their home was selected as “like seven angels came down and lifted us up from the depths of hell and brought us to heaven on earth, the Seventh-day Adventists showed us the Christ that cares.”

Grochowski says he always believed in God, but the Extreme Home Repair gave his family a new beginning, which led to Bible studies with Pastor Michael Dauncey. His family now participates in the home makeovers and other projects and attends the church.

Aldergrove’s Extreme Home Repair Ministry has worked on 11 homes and is helping blur the lines between the church and the Aldergrove community.

Aldergrove Associate Pastor Michael Dauncey says about half of the volunteers in the Extreme Home Repair project, now in its 10th year, are not members.

Not all volunteers end up members, but some do. Aldergrove’s membership has grown from in the 200s to the 800s since becoming heavily involved in community ministry says Dauncey.

A non-member even donated $18,000 of labor and materials to the 2012 project, started serving as a leader in the ministry, and now attends the church says Dauncey.

“Often it takes time, but without the Extreme Home Repair there we would never have had that relationship. It breaks down walls from our church and community,” he says.

Provo Adventist Community Services has helped build strong relationships with their local soup kitchen, the Red Cross, the United Way and the local ministerial association.

Their community service focus has “opened the doors to relationships with civil society that are not always open to Adventist churches” says Dr. William Davis, pastor of the Provo (Utah) Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In addition to community service activities, the center hosts gymnastics, sports, and even the Utah Valley Symphony Orchestra in their facility.

“With nearly 300 people using the facility during the week they see it as a part of their community and not just a church of another faith,” says Davis.
The amount and diversity of community needs can be overwhelming, but these churches have found meaningful, relevant ways to help the community---something that doesn’t just happen by chance.

### Meeting and discovering community needs

“We (Adventists) have a field of dreams approach. ‘Build it they will come,’ says Dan Appell, senior pastor of the Auburn (California) Seventh-day Adventist Church, of many community service programs. “But we have to be in the community to be aware of what the needs are,” he continued.

Before starting a community ministry Appel says to “quit looking at the church as a project and begin to look at each individual as someone who God loves and treat them with dignity and respect… then God will lead us to the tools we need to accomplish what we need to accomplish.”

The Auburn Church’s community center now provides up to 1500 individuals a month with food, clothing and personal hygiene supplies, and hosts a rotating homeless shelter, among other projects.

They have also worked with many community members to begin the Auburn Renewal Center, which offers free medical, dental, vision, and psychiatric health services.

Pastor Kevin Kuehmichel and Walk of Faith Fellowship Church (Cleveland) have immersed themselves in the community and took time to understand its needs.

Kuehmichel lives in the community where the church is located, volunteers at the local city recreation center and hangs out with the kids. The church also worships in its community center.

In the last five years the church has had four baptisms, and there are five people regularly attending because of the center, but Kuehmichel says they don’t pressure their “clients” into joining the church.

“What we do is a slow, no pressure process,” he said. “People are comfortable in the building and they come in when we are worshipping. We don't have to transition them from the community center to a church somewhere else.”

The New Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church (Fulton, Md) is located in a wealthy community, also helps local shelters and food banks, but is working on ways to serve the more fortunate.

“When people go through a crisis they turn to God,” says New Hope Senior Pastor Mike Speegle. We have to find ways to engage them when they aren’t going through a crisis he continued… “We have to figure out ways to engage people and celebrate the good stuff that is going on in their life.”

New Hope engages the community by sponsoring a Sunday sports program for children and family entertainment activities at Highland Day, a local community event.

New Hope Outreach Director, Laura Krause, says local community leaders “appreciate that we are not in their faces about our religion, but that we can relate to them and have fun along with them.”

Speegle’s last church, Journey Adventist Church (Kelso, Wash.) held yearly Easter and Christmas “experiences” that drew repeat visitors from the community each year, with over 7,000 attending over several nights last year.

These events, staffed by members and community volunteers, also gave members the opportunity develop deeper relationships that might not have happened otherwise.

In that community everybody knew about and had a good concept of the Adventist church says Speegle.
Motivating members

“Members being involved is the key to success in any church,” says Speegle. But he says pastors need to first answer the “why” questions members would have by telling them the project will accomplish.

He also says it is important for churches to provide multiple opportunities to be engaged. One hundred percent of our members won’t be involved 100 percent of the time, but we can help their involvement be as meaningful and successful as we can, he says.

Davis says he has a group within his church that has been highly motivated over the years. “Others become interested as they try serving and realize the joy it brings them and others. They spread the news among themselves and the work grows,” he says.

Kuehmichel says his members started getting more involved after he began volunteering by coaching baseball and flag football at the city recreation center. He says he was able to bring stories of real people in need and hurting to the church.

“What I found in my personal experience was that you can't tell someone else to get involved in you aren't,” says Kuehmichel. “Find something you can do, even if it isn't your church doing it, and get involved.”

SIDE BAR: Tips for designing your community service program from Dan Appell

1) Don’t try to clone us! Get out in your community, get to know them, discover their needs, then allow God to lead you into what He wants you do in that place.

2) Examine your motives. If this is about your personal, local church or denominational ego, God will not be able to bless you. All too often our “felt-needs” ministries are really bait-and-switch tactics that people quickly see through and resent.

3) Focus on connecting people with Jesus and they will be naturally be drawn to you without any pressure or manipulation.

4) Allow the Holy Spirit to melt your heart with love for those in your community and then serve them not as lords or the ones in the “white hats” but as servants for Christ’s sake.

5) Actually get out and get involved in the community. As long as the salt is in the salt-shaker it may be pretty but it’s pretty much useless. Join community projects. Join local service clubs, and get to know your neighbors.