No one ever said that being a single mom was easy. In fact, if the truth were to be known, single moms have to be experts in almost every aspect of life! However, their most prolific and proficient skill is juggling! Because the reality is that being a single mom means you are performing a dizzying, non-stop, 24-hour-a-day juggling act. Read More
Ministry with Millennials: What's Good About Church

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The Forgotten Generation: Why You Should Preach Sermons for Older Adults
By Douglas Jacobs

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Beta Testers Needed
Registration will soon be open for the NAD Pastors Family Convention to be held in Austin June 28-July 1, 2015. The website will enable families to register for the event and reserve a hotel room as well as download the convention app. But before the release of the website we are looking for some beta testers to actually go through the registration process to make sure it is rock solid before we open the floodgates to everyone. If you would like to be a beta tester please shoot me an email at dave@acn.info and I'll send you a private link so you can be one of the first to register.

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**Let's Talk**

Stories in your sermons are powerful tools for communicating God's good news. These stories illustrate the important truths...
you are teaching, connect ideas with real life, emotionally touch the heart, and move congregants to act. So what are the best stories you have used in your messages recently? Send **Best Practices for Adventist Ministry** a story of 200 - 500 words that can be readily used by preachers across the North American Division. Be sure to include your name, title, and picture.

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**Ideas, Events, Resources, Announcements**

When a pastor preachers, he/she expects people to respond, either publicly at that moment or later in private. Or both. Joe McKeever, a retired Baptist pastor and missions director, offers **10 Must-Have Tips for Giving a Public Invitation** and 3 dangers to avoid.

Eric McKiddie, a pastor with the Chapel Hill Bible Church in North Carolina, believes that our sermon tool belt needs **5 Types of Sermon Illustrations**, and that by selecting the right tool for the
right job, we will effectively move not only the head, but the heart.

**Previous resource links:**

- SONset Friday Entertainment
- Amazing Grace
- Bridges to Health | Video Summary
- 7 Qualities Women Bring to a Leadership Team
- AdventSource Military Bible Kits
- 7 Steps to Getting the Most From Your Vacation

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No one ever said that being a single mom was easy. In fact, if the truth were to be known, single moms have to be experts in almost every aspect of life!

However, their most prolific and proficient skill is juggling! Because the reality is that being a single mom means you are performing a dizzying, non-stop, 24-hour-a-day juggling act.

It means that they are fairly adept at juggling many aspects of life … work, meetings, day care, school, orthodontist appointments, basketball games, birthday parties, and whatever else life throws their way.

But is being a qualified auto mechanic likely among the single mom’s list of talents? Well, in most cases, the answer is a resounding no because that’s asking a little too much, isn’t it?

In fact, according to Jamie Gallagher in an article entitled, *Single Parenting Problems and Solutions* single-parent families saw their annual earnings plummet twenty percent between 2007 and 2010, compared to only 5 percent for two-parent families. Economic survival has gotten harder and harder for these families: the number of single-parent families in poverty reached 35.3 percent in 2010, up from 30.9 percent three years earlier. (Statistics quoted from an article by Jamie Gallagher entitled ‘Single Parenting Problems And Solutions’ – Statistics given by The Hamilton Project at the Brookings Institution)

So recognizing the reality that single moms struggle financially and that they don’t always have enough spare cash for the “luxuries” of life such as their vehicle oil changes, a team of volunteers in Aldergrove, British Columbia has been coming to their aid now for over a decade.

Through the Aldergrove Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Acts of Kindness Ministry single moms receive twice a year, spring and fall, a free oil change for their vehicles.

Why do we do this ministry for single moms? We want to follow the example of Jesus who said ‘the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:28 NIV) So following the example of our Lord the SMOC team seeks to serve as many single moms in need as possible with no strings attached; to serve single moms with extreme generosity because that’s exactly what Jesus would do; and to not be concerned about growing the church, but rather about growing God’s kingdom, because if we focus on growing God’s kingdom, He will take care of growing His church.

So how can a Single Moms Oil Change be conducted in your area? What are the nuts and bolts of this kind of a successful community outreach?

First of all a location must be selected to conduct the single Moms Oil Change. Finding a local auto mechanic in your area who wishes his garage to be of service to the community on a Sunday afternoon is a great place to start.

Secondly, recruit a qualified volunteer team from within and outside the church. Why? Because serving is simply contagious!

Thirdly, utilize every local media opportunity available in your area to advertise the program, the date, time and place.
Fourthly, ask single moms in need to call in for an appointment so they can provide their vehicle information including the year, make and model, engine size, and number of cylinders in their vehicle.

Finally, remember if there is anyone who needs a break today, it is single moms.

David Jamieson is the lead pastor for the Aldergrove Seventh-day Adventist Church in British Columbia

For more information or to purchase a *Single Moms Oil Change How to Manual* contact us at aldergrovesda@shaw.ca
Ministry with Millennials: What’s Good About Church

By A. Allan Martin

Absence makes the heart grow fonder, but it sure makes the rest of you lonely.
—Charles M. Schulz

Being involved, being present, and feeling as if the church has something meaningful to say to one’s life can make a tremendous positive difference. For any age group, including young adults, attitudes about the church can influence behavior. Young adults [those post high-school through pre parenthood] have many attitudes, and when asked to characterize the Adventist church, there was no lack of responsiveness. In a recent study of Adventist Millennials, we took a look at our young adults and compared them to over 27,000 of their peers as studied by the Barna Group.

Here’s what the research revealed, as summarized in Ministry Magazine:

Based on their responses to various questions in the survey, respondents were categorized as either “engaged” or “disengaged” from their local congregations. Engaged respondents were those who attend services at least monthly and indicated that church is relevant for them. Disengaged respondents did not meet one or both of those criteria. Then, key differences between these two groups were extracted from the data.

Compared to the engaged young adults within the Adventist Church, those who are disengaged have much weaker positive experiences—particularly when it comes to the church they attended as children. The biggest differences were in the areas of feeling like “I can be myself” and of feeling like “doubts are tolerated.” Engaged Millennials were also much more likely to strongly agree with descriptive statements of church such as “compassion for the less fortunate,” “teaching is relevant,” “helped me understand my faith,” and “people are authentic.”

Both groups were later asked about similar experiences with their current church; if anything, the differences observed here became even more pronounced as they answered questions about their current church.

However, there were no significant differences between the behaviors of the engaged and disengaged young adults when they were children and teenagers. In other words, we cannot look at the level of activity among the children and teens and then predict which ones will disengage from the church as young adults. But negative experiences with their childhood church (specifically with the leadership and adult members) are strong predictors of such disengagement.
Among the poignant findings here is the contrast between engaged and disengaged young adults on the issues of “being themselves,” and feeling as if “doubts are tolerated.” I imagine we all have stories of where childhood, teenage, and young adult experiences with the adult members of the church helped shape our personal view of the church as “good” or otherwise.

As a church leader/pastor/member, what can you and your team do to constructively engage next generations? In light of these findings, and what the qualitative research bears out, let me offer a suggestion to start or sharpen your ministry to young adults: Initiate and Intergenerate.

**Initiate:** After doing the step *Listen&Learn* in the *Lost2Life* model[^1], I would encourage you to ask your young adults about their journey with the church, discovering what their experience has been with Adventism generally. Then as you build rapport and trust, invite your young adults to speak candidly about their experience with your local church community. Taking the initiative to have candid, safe conversations where your leadership has a posture of empathy, humility, and receptivity will not only inform your leadership about young adult attitudes, but also begin building bridges of rapport with your local young adults that can lead to great, authentic relationships.

**Intergenerate:** I know, I just made up a word! But it best reflects this crucial step that is based on fostering intergenerational relationships. As you gain the confidence of your young adults and begin to discover their passions and skill sets, intentionally find ways to involve them in your church ministry. The key here is to partner them with your leadership and adult volunteers who can apprentice them and use their ministry activities as good reason to build friendships and camaraderie with your local young adults. Plug them in where they enjoy serving the church: An area of interest, specialized skill, cause/issue they have passion for. The key here is to build a culture of involvement where generations are not segregated, but rather cross-fertilized as they accomplish ministry goals in the church.

If your leadership will take the time to initiate and intergenerate with your young adults, you can spark productive and...
meaningful relationships that will impress all generations of the good the church can do.

Next episode, we’ll give some attention to what the research reveals as Millennial negative attitudes towards the church, and take a look at next steps to consider.

A. Allan Martin, PhD is the teaching pastor of Younger Generation Church [www.YGchurch.com], the vibrant youth adult ministry of the Arlington Seventh-day Adventist Church in Texas

Notes

1Barna Group, a Christian research firm, is the world leader in understanding Christians, attitudes toward Christianity and Christian organizations, and spiritual perspectives in general. They surveyed Millennials who were (or had been) part of an Adventist congregation in order to understand their common experiences and attitudes. The survey was followed by multiple, moderated online discussions with Adventists and former Adventist young adults.


3Let me suggest a step by step matrix for developing your young adult ministry. LOST2LIFE offers steps to follow in progression as you consider starting or sharpening your ministry to Millennials. Download free https://db.tt/MRq3gRs9

4Provocative parallels can be found in the emphasis on intergenerational church relationships noted in the Adventist Millennial Research and the work of Dr. Roger Dudley, professor emeritus at Andrews University, whose study of youth and young adults spanned over four decades. See https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2009/01/embracing-those-who-reject-religion

A Book Review by Mary Maxson

When given a selection of books to review for Best Practices, I immediately chose this book because I know the author well. Not only has she been my pastor, she has been a colleague on numerous Women’s Ministries committees over a 7 – 9 year period.

Because of the sensitivity of this topic — women in ministry — this book could become divisive. Throughout my forty-three years of ministry experience, it has been my conviction the Devil tries to bring disharmony where he can. Throughout the history of Adventism, God has always led us through, as long as we trust in Him and choose Him as our Lord and Leader.

Bonita shares her personal conviction from God as to why she wrote this book. She states three reasons from her writing: “First, I seek to create a safe place for men and women to have a dialogue about how they can best be partners in the workplace, especially within the church … Second, I seek to build up my Christian sisters as they live out their calling to God’s work in a man’s world — whatever that calling may be… Third, I seek to answer the question How can a Christian woman live in a man’s world and be faithful to God, her family, her brothers in Christ with whom she works, and herself? … But if we seek to become instruments of healing, it can become the source of some of our greatest joys. And my greatest desire is that the words of this book will encourage this faithfulness.” (p. 16)

Within the 12 chapters, what I’ve personally appreciated is Bonita’s emphasis – it’s on the Holy Spirit’s longing and desires to make us (men and women) into His image and our ministry glorifying Him. Yet, she is extremely vulnerable in her personal journey “in a man’s world” in which she finds herself — day in and day out. She not only expresses her pain (Chapter 2) she also shares the joy of ministry to God’s people. “I went into pastoral ministry realizing that ordination was not an option for me. I asked the Lord to deliver me from the resentment to which some female pastors had succumbed regarding our church’s current stand on ordination. I didn’t’ want to become a bitter women. I didn’t want to become a male-basher, I wanted to focus on ministering to God’s people.” (p. 27)

Interestingly enough, she has chosen to use Dialogue Questions at the end of each chapter. It would be useful in a ministerial class/and or small group where there are both genders present to discuss the specific topics in which she includes in her book.

I have been personally inspired, blessed, and encouraged as a pastor by the reading of this book. I think this book can help begin a healing process in the church as Bonita reminds us that “Scripture tells us, ‘God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them’ (Gen. 1:27, NIV). The image of God is not complete until male and female work together to more fully represent Him. God’s power working through us—men and women together—can change the world!’”

Mary Maxson is pastor for discipleship and nurture at the Paradise, CA Church

Mary Maxson is pastor for discipleship and nurture at the Paradise, CA Church
When was the last time you preached a sermon for the older adults in your congregation? In conversations with pastors, I’ve found that few consider the needs of their senior listeners when preparing sermons. On Sabbath morning the older generation is often the forgotten generation.

Why? Younger pastors can struggle to understand old age before they’ve experienced it. They may misinterpret the apparent traditional outlook of their older members as proof that older members are secure in their faith and no longer facing the temptations experienced by younger members. Seniors have long since answered the big questions of life, so what can a younger preacher tell them that they don’t already know? Often older members are viewed as unchanging and implacable with, as one pastor put it, “lots of spare time to be a headache for me.”

Homileticians have also ignored older adults. Search for books on preaching to children, preaching to teenagers and youth, preaching to young adults, preaching to women, preaching to men, and you will find many examples—but search for a book on preaching to older adults and you will find just one, *Graying Gracefully: Preaching to Older Adults*, a collection of essays by various authors.

To help pastors focus on the needs of their older members I wrote a Doctor of Ministry Thesis-Project, *The Preacher and the Message: Preaching to Older Adults*, under the direction of well-known evangelical homiletician, Haddon Robinson. My research found five reasons why you should preach sermons for older adults.

1. **Older adults are the largest generation in many Adventist congregations.** The Adventist church in North America is much older than the general population. While the United States median age is 37, a 2008 study by Monte Sahlin and Paul Richardson reported the median age for Adventists as 51 with almost half of the white population in Adventist households over 60 years of age. Preachers who want to meet the needs of their audience must consider the special needs of older adults.

2. **Older adults have the capacity for continued spiritual, mental, and social growth.** Recent research reveals the reality of old age to be dramatically different than the stereotypes. Dr. Gene Cohen, first chief of the Center on Aging at the national Institute of Mental Health, helped move the aging paradigm “from a focus on problems to a focus on potentials.” In Cohen’s 2009 obituary, the Washington Post reported: Although the medical establishment tended to treat aging as a disease when he started his career, Dr. Cohen found that the later adult years can be a time of great creativity. Brains create new brain cells as long as people are encouraged to keep trying new pursuits, he reported, and people in the traditional retirement years have almost limitless capacity for intellectual growth…

Dr. Cohen and other researchers found that age-related declines in mental abilities are caused by specific diseases and not the aging process. In contrast to age-related declines are age-related benefits such as the “neural density” in the parts of the brain that an older adult has used continuously. According to Cohen, “the brain actively grows and rewire itself in response to stimulation and learning.” He concludes, “The complex neural architecture of older brains, built over years of experience, practice, and daily living, is a fundamental strength of older adults. And the more complex the architecture, the more it resists degradation by injury or disease.”

How do Cohen’s conclusions shape sermons for older adults? A goal of preaching should be the development of biblical...
neural density,” or memory of biblical concepts, principles, and goals. As one ages, one’s brain can be literally shaped into Christ’s image. Or as Paul put it: “though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. (2 Cor 4:16)

3. Older Adults have needs in every dimension of life that are seldom addressed by younger preachers.
Harold Koenig, a leading authority on health and spirituality has identified fourteen spiritual needs of physically ill elders. His list is a source for sermon subjects: a need for meaning, purpose and hope; a need to transcend circumstances; a need for support in dealing with loss; a need for continuity; a need for validation and support of religious behaviors; a need to engage in religious behaviors; a need for personal dignity and sense of worthiness; a need for unconditional love; a need to express anger and doubt; a need to feel that God is on their side; a need to love and serve others; a need to be thankful; a need to forgive and be forgiven; and a need to prepare for death and dying.

Preachers can apply many biblical doctrines to specific needs of those experiencing aging. For example, the Sabbath can help those making the transition from work to retirement understand the meaning of work and leisure. As the Sabbath time of rest is the climax of the week, so the Sabbath period of one’s life can be the climax as one finds maturity and satisfaction in completing one’s life work and putting it all in a godly perspective.

To preach effectively to the specific needs of your older members, keep a list of issues and needs they mention when you visit them, and then preach sermons answering your members’ needs with relevant Biblical truths.

4. Older Adults often struggle with doubt.
Doubt can be triggered by a wide variety of circumstances. For me it happened after I had conducted the funeral for the last of my mother’s three sisters. As I stood in a circle with seven of my first cousins, one said, “We are now the oldest generation.” Our mothers and our fathers had all died, and at that moment we realized that we no longer had an older generation to guide us. I went home to review my beliefs and confirm that the faith given me by my parents was now completely my own.

My colleague, Doug Tilstra, describes his experience in converting an 80 year old for the first time. She and her husband had been faithful church members for decades, but when her husband died, their plan to together meet Jesus at the Second Coming had also died. Dr. Tilstra gently led her into a new faith experience based on the biblical doctrine of righteousness by faith.

Many of your own members who have believed for decades may question their faith as contemporary events seem to disprove long-held beliefs. George Brown, past-president of the Inter-American Division and a still-active preacher and SS teacher at the age of 90, told me, “I don't think there is any time in a person's life where the tendency to question, to doubt is more active than in senior citizenship.” Using Jesus’ Second Coming as an example, Pastor Brown continued, “People don't doubt that he’s coming again, in general terms. But there is this lingering question of why so long? Why does he tarry so long?” Brown believes preachers who provide answers to the questions of older members are establishing confidence and trust in God and in His Word.

Although you may be challenged by their responses, give your older adult members the liberty to express their doubts and questions. (See the sidebar for “questions your older members may be asking.”) When you provide answers to your members’ questions, your sermons will become spiritual conversations which bear fruit in changed lives and revived churches.

5. The Gospel is the Answer to the Needs, Questions, and Doubts of Older Adults.
Listeners who are dealing with declines in their mental and physical powers need sermons which focus on the Good News of God’s saving and sustaining power. Like Paul we are called to “preach the Gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.” (2 Cor 4:16) For congregations to experience the power of the
Cross, every sermon must have a biblically-derived, God-centered, Good News central truth. Often sermons are structurally legalistic because the sermon’s central idea is focused on what the audience should be doing rather than on what God has done, is doing, or will do for us.

Sidney Greidanus, professor emeritus of preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary, refers to “the temptation of human-centered preaching” and quotes the sad assessment of Duke Divinity School professor William Willimon, “unable to reach Christ and him crucified, we preach humanity and it improved.”

The contrast between God-centered and human-centered preaching is brought sharply into focus in Genesis 22, the story of Abraham being asked by God to sacrifice Isaac. Although many commentators emphasize God’s test and hold up Abraham as an example of the unquestioning obedience and trust that God wants from his people, Greidanus finds the story’s central truth in the repeated key words, “God will provide.” My search for a God-centered, Good News central truth in Genesis 22 ended when my wife suggested, “What God Promises, He Will Provide.” I have included my manuscript and a video of the sermon here (link 2) as an example of a God-centered, Good News, narrative sermon aimed at both younger and older generations.

To find the God-centered, Good News central truth in a biblical passage follow the power. The power will always be found in God’s action, not in the action of the passage’s human characters.

Look also for the motivation of the author or the passage’s characters. Often a passage will clearly state a specific God-centered, Good News truth as the motivation for the passage or the actions of its characters.

**Conclusion**

God-centered, Good News sermons which apply biblical truth to the needs of older adults can transform their lives. When, through the power of the Gospel, older adults experience fruitfulness and growth, they are able to face the future with hope. And such preaching has a healing effect on all generations. The angel Gabriel’s prophecy regarding John’s preaching before Christ’s first coming shows what God-centered Good News preaching can accomplish in uniting generations before Christ’s Second Coming:

“And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17).

Douglas Jacobs is professor of Homiletics and Church Ministry in the School of Religion at Southern Adventist University. His Doctor of Ministry project for Andrews University (1993) studied the relationship between Health and Spirituality and his Doctor of Ministry thesis-project from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (2014) explored preaching to older adults. Dr. Jacobs is a co-principal investigator for the on-going Adventist Connection Study, which is looking at the various ways that recent graduates of Adventist universities are connecting with or disconnecting from Adventist churches. Before joining the faculty of SAU in 2002, he served for 26 years as a pastor in the Florida Conference.


