Did I Lose You?

By Hubert Cisneros

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**Read More**
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By Chad Stuart

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The Doctor of Ministry Missional Church concentration is designed to move participants into the mission field of North America, leading transformation for mission and organic systems thinking, and transacting the vision of missional church through leadership development. A new cohort is forming now, with the first intensives scheduled for January 26-February 12, 2015. The application deadline is November 28. Contact dmin@andrews.edu or call 888-717-6244 for more information. You will find the application package on the DMin website.

Funding Voted to Attend Convention

Dave Gemmell

Pastors in the North American Division will have access to funding to help them attend the June 28-July 1 Pastors Family Convention. Although the funding varies by
conference, the majority of conferences are offering full reimbursement for pastors attending the convention. A survey this week finds that 7 out of 9 unions have voted funds ranging from $300 to $1,125 per pastor to be distributed through their local conference. A majority of conferences will add to that amount enough to reimburse pastors the full amount to attend the convention. Pastors are encouraged to contact their local conferences to see what funds are available to assist them for convention expenses. The early bird registration rate of $199 is scheduled to expire December 31, 2014.

**Pastor to Pastor Webinar**

**Dave Gemmell**

[REGISTER NOW](#) We have an opportunity for you to help support some of your pastoral colleagues by letting them know about the June 28-July 1 Pastors' Family Convention. We believe that a personal phone call from one pastor to another is the most powerful way to insure that a pastor feels included in this groundbreaking event. If you are open to the possibility of making some phone calls join us for the orientation webinar on October 22 at 1:30 pm east coast time.

**Let's Talk About Your Best Practices for Ministry**

**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. Pitch us an idea. Send us an article. Be sure to include your picture and ministry title. 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**

**Enter the Deep** is a revolutionary baptismal study guide for young adults that uses the latest multi-touch technology on your iPad and Mac. Developed by Loma Linda University Church's Roy Ice. More baptisms. More modern. More fun.

**Scientists Are Beginning to Figure Out Why Conservatives Are... Conservative** - When I get together with Adventist pastors and they just vent, there is one subject that invariably comes up - dealing with uber conservative members in the church. Just what makes these people tick? While this article is written within the American political framework, I think you will readily find this article helpful in understanding the needs of members who are particularly conservative.

**Previous resource links:**

- [Online Sermons: Church Internet Outreach?](#)
- [6 Insights From the #IceBucketChallenge for Church Communications](#)
- [MA in Pastoral Ministry](#)
• On the Unique Headship of Christ in the Church
• 8 Reasons Why Most Churches Don't Break the 200 Attendance Mark
Ministry Partners

Did I Lose You?

By Hubert Cisneros

Pastors and elders are responsible for the people in their parish including the 70% of our youth and young adults who end up leaving. Did I lose you with that opening line? If not – keep reading. That is why Steve Case and I have written a book (training manual) to train youth leaders and leading youth. The name of the book is, A Place To Belong[1] and it comes out of personal experience.

Our church Sabbath School leader was a busy attorney by the name of Lloyd Summers. Lloyd also coached our Boulder Junior Academy (now Vista Ridge Academy) basketball and football team. At the same time, I was beginning to get into trouble. My loving and caring parents were aware of my harmful choices but like many teens I dismissed them and their efforts to help me.

Lloyd learned what was happening and went into action. First, he got permission to pull me out of class. Next, he met me in the hallway and asked if he could talk to me privately about a serious matter. Soon, I found myself walking with Lloyd to the parking lot and sitting with him in his car. In a calm and caring manner Lloyd confronted me about the bad choices I was making. At the end of the conversation Lloyd said that the reason he came to talk to me was to pray with me so that I would stop destroying my life. This intervention was just what I needed. Afterward, he continued helping me to deal with my situation and turn my life around.

In January 2014, we learned at the NAD Ministries Convention in Monterey, California, from David Kinnaman that 59% of young adults stay active in the church because an adult, other than pastor or parent, took an interest in their life. I am one of those 59%. Kinnaman[2] informs us that we are losing up to a staggering 70% of our youth and young adults. What a tragedy!

My experience has taught me that we actually lose our young adults when they are much younger. We lose them when they are 13-16 years of age. If we don’t have a place for them to belong by the time they get the keys to the car – it is too late. What can we do for our young people before it is too late? The solution to this problem is not a simple one but I believe the key is by training youth leaders and leading youth.

I went on from my experience in Boulder, Colorado, to attend college and become a minister. In the seminary I took a class from Steve Case in youth ministry and soon afterward became a youth director of a local conference. I became busy with summer camp and Pathfinders, but I didn’t have a ready-made tool to help me train youth leaders and leading youth of local congregations. When I became a youth director of a union I received a call from a local pastor to help him train the youth leaders in his three church district. I searched my library for anything that would help. The only thing I had was Steve’s syllabus so I tried some of the material and the principles really proved effective. That’s when Steve and I teamed up to design the material into the special manual that it is. It is our hope and prayer that this tool can be a helpful and important tool for your church.

The training is rewarding and simple. Recruit leading youth and adults who love young people. Get a personal copy for each of your team members so they can take notes (Steve and I get zero royalties). Just read the six chapter
manual together with your group and do the exercises. The manual will train you. Take a chapter per week or take a weekend. The manual is ideal for one person or for a group of any size.

Please help stop the internal bleeding of our most precious commodity and thank you for making an effort.

Here is a great promise from God to encourage you: “And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.” Malachi 4:6 NKJV

Hubert Cisneros is youth director for the Mid-America Union Conference

Whether it is self-preservation or ego that makes us do it, most pastors/members I know fudge slightly on the high side when it comes to their church attendance numbers. I don’t believe people do this maliciously or to intentionally deceive but innocent or not this self-deception regarding church attendance numbers is detrimental to the growth of the church.

If we don’t know our actual numbers we can be deceived about the health and growth of the church. I first realized this when I was a member of a very large church many years ago. To my casual eye and I am sure to most the members eyes this church seemed like a healthy growing church. There always seemed to be a healthy number of folk filling the pews each week. The foyer seemed crowded before and after church. The quality of the service was great. If someone had asked me, “Are you a member of a growing church?” I would have responded with a firm, “Yes!” But one day I thought to myself, “I don’t remember seeing very many baptisms at this church in the last few years.” And I began to question, “Is this church really a growing church?”

I decided to do a little research and what I discovered was this – at the beginning of the year we had just finished, the church membership was 3000…now a couple months into a new year the church membership was…wait for it…3003. The church had grown by a net gain of 3 people in more than a year. I was astonished, I was disappointed, I was sad. I thought I was a member of a growing church. What I discovered is that I was a member of a very kind, a very busy, a high quality church…but not an evangelistic, growing church.

When we count (this is especially for the pastors) we are forced to take a true account of whether or not we are leading our churches to be healthy growing communities. If we don’t count, we can remain deceived; thus limiting the urgency to develop the evangelistic fervor needed within every church.

Now there are always those that will resist the value of counting.

They will say:
“Numbers don’t matter!” I would respond, “That if we see each number as representing an individual that Jesus died for, then they certainly do matter!!”

They will say:
“We shouldn’t be driven by numbers!” I would respond, “I agree. We should be driven by the heart of Jesus wanting to reach lost sheep. And one of the only ways to know if this is happening is to count.”

They will say:
“Numbers are relative.” I would respond, “They are indeed! A church of 16 that adds 3 new members in a year should celebrate. A church of 3000 that adds 3 new members in a year should recalibrate.”

Please count! Count every Sabbath to see if you are growing.
Then after you finish counting, start analyzing. There is no point in gathering data, unless you're going to use that data to help improve in specific areas.

Due to the fact that we don’t just count at our church, we also analyze; these numbers take on extra value to our ministry. Let me give an example.

This past year, 2013, our average attendance was 356 individuals attending per week; that was an improvement of 16 people per week over the previous year. We are growing. Not as much as I believe we could, but we are growing. There is more though to those numbers than just growth; as we analyze the numbers we see that our first service grew by an average of 15 people, and our second service grew by an average of 1. This has helped us to have discussions about what is appealing to people about first service and what may be unappealing to folk about second service? What are the demographics of the two services? Is the first service growth new member/visitor growth or long time members just choosing to go earlier in the day? All this is looked at because we count.

Also because we count we have found that we are unhealthy as a church in some areas. Last year we baptized or brought in through profession of faith 60 new people. Yet our average attendance for the year was only up 16 people per week. Our attendance definitely increased after all those baptisms, but that means we were actually a little below the previous year’s averages prior to the baptisms. Why was this? What was happening? Also, are we keeping all our new baptisms? Yes, for the most part we are. Then that means previous members are no longer attending as much? Who? And why not? We discuss this, look at this, try to work on this, and we know about all this; why? Because we count.

Another area counting has helped is that based on the data collected the past five years, analysis tells us there are 4 months that are exceptionally high months of church attendance & three months that are exceptionally low in attendance. So what do we do with this information? We schedule for our strengths. We don’t actually try to improve the attendance for the months that are low; five years is enough to show us that these are months that folk just don’t attend church. Rather than wasting time trying to get people there those months we accept reality and instead focus on growing the average months the rest of the year. We also take advantage of the exceptionally high months by making those services as evangelistically appealing as possible. How many churches plan big events in months that are traditionally low and then wonder why no one showed-up? Too many I’m afraid! Why? Because they don’t count. Has this made you decide to count?

I hope so, because…

…a lack of counting will lead to acceptance and even an over glorification of the status quo.

A lack of counting can prevent growth.

A lack of counting thwarts strategic planning.

A lack of counting may cause you to miss the members that are missing even though you’re adding new folk all the time.

A lack of counting is dangerous and hopefully after you’ve read this blog…

…a lack of counting is something you’ll never have to worry about again!

Please count! It will make a difference!

*Chad Stuart is senior pastor of Visalia, California Church*
Ministry Partners

Anointing the Sick

by Esther R. Knott, M.A.

When I was a child, the anointing service appeared to be something mysterious that happened behind closed doors. After 28 years of pastoral ministry I have learned that the anointing service is something mysterious that happens to open doors—doors of surrender, reconciliation, forgiveness, and healing.

As pastors we are asked to pray regarding many situations; one of the petitions that will continue to surface until Jesus comes is praying for the sick. Sometimes the prayer request comes from a young girl who is praying for a little brother who is having his tonsils removed (and gets to eat ice cream, popsicles, and Jell-O for a few days). Sometimes the request is for a spouse who is having a hip replaced, a pacemaker put in, a hysterectomy, or having cataracts removed. Sometimes the prayer is for an emergency appendectomy, a broken back because the spouse has fallen out of a tree, or a broken clavicle from playing Capture the Flag on an 8th grade class trip.

Too often, these days, the prayers seem to be for a friend, co-worker, family member, or small group member who has stage four metastasized cancer, or maybe a brain aneurism or a brain tumor. Perhaps it’s someone in need of a liver transplant or a baby born prematurely. These are especially serious health problems that drive us to our knees.

The Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Handbook (2009) reminds us of the following:

Anointing is not a last rite to bless the dying, but an act of faith to heal the living. It recognizes serious health problems and meets them by placing trust in God.” (190) Anointing addresses not only sickness, but forgiveness as well. It is a time of serious reflection and commitment to the will of God, and it is in the prayer of faith that His restoring power and grace are given. Anointing is not reserved as a last rite for the dying, nor is there mystical power in the oil itself. Both James and the early church were well aware that they were placing themselves in the had of God in faith, trusting that His will would be accomplished in their lives. (189)

The book of James records the following regarding prayer for the sick:

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. James 5:14-16 NKJV (Note gender adaptation below.)

Preparation for anointing takes place on two fronts—1) preparation for the one who is sick, and 2) preparation for the pray-ers. I recommend that all of those taking part in the anointing take time to read the chapter on “Prayer for the Sick” that is found in the book Ministry of Healing by Ellen White. This can also be found on line:
One important aspect of this chapter is the reminder that as we pray we should also take advantage of the medical help that is offered through the gifts God has given us through the medical profession. Another focus of the chapter is developing a willingness to trust God. We come to Him with our requests, trusting Him with the answers.

Preparation for an anointing gives us the wonderful opportunity to search our hearts and remove every barrier that prevents God from answering our prayers the way He wants to. An exposition of Psalm 66:18 says: “If I regard iniquity in my heart. If, having seen it to be there, I continue to gaze upon it without aversion; if I cherish it, have a side glance of love toward it, excuse it, and palliate it: The Lord will not hear me.”

When my friend Elisabeth* was anointed, I witnessed a wonderful example of someone taking seriously this admonition to clear away obstacles to answered prayer. The anointing started late because we were waiting for her dear friend Steve* to show up. When we heard the story of why he was late, we began to understand one of the “open door” mysteries of the anointing.

When Steve was 14 his dad left the family, notifying Steve that he was now the man of the house. For thirty years the father and son had not had a good relationship. Steve carried around much bitterness and an unforgiving attitude toward his father for disrupting their home and his life. Because Steve was going to participate in the anointing he felt compelled to visit his dad and try to bring some healing to that relationship. The morning of the anointing, he drove three hours to another state in order to see his father. His dad was surprised to see him and apprehensive. They ended up talking for several hours. Their tears washed away years of pain. As Steve was leaving, there was a long embrace and Steve heard his dad say, “I love you”—words he had not heard in 30 years.

When Elisabeth heard this story, she said, "If my brain tumor has been used by God to bring about this reconciliation, He can do whatever He wants with my brain tumor and me. I've been healed in all the ways that really count."

Preparation for the anointing opens the door for reconciliation, forgiveness, restoration and healing. Let no opportunity be wasted.

As a pastor you may be called upon to participate in an anointing without much notice. Therefore it is important that we keep our hearts ready—nothing between our soul and the Savior, or others.

In preparation for the anointing I ask those who will participate—family members, friends and elders—to be prepared to share a Scripture passage that has helped them when they have gone through a difficult time. Out of town family and friends can be included using technology such as Skype, Face Time, or a speakerphone.

My friend Cindy* was in the hospital when we discovered that she had a brain tumor. She requested to be anointed. Cindy was part of two small groups and they all wanted to be there to participate. This became a larger group than normal but fortunately Cindy was in a private room where we could all fit comfortably without disturbing anyone.

The day of the anointing arrived and I was concerned. For two days Cindy had been unresponsive. The group gathered in the lobby to pray before we went into the room; we wanted this to be a meaningful experience for Cindy and we longed to interact with our friend and demonstrate our love to her. When we walked into the room Cindy opened her eyes and smiled at us. She greeted each one of us by name. We marveled at what God was already doing.

This was the process:

1. We began with a prayer acknowledging that we were gathered following God’s instructions.
2. Each group member read the scripture they had written out on an index card—these they left with Cindy for further reflection and comfort.

3. We adapted James 5:14-16 to read this way:

Is anyone among you sick? Let her call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over her, anointing her with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise her up. And if she has committed sins, she will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of the righteous avails much.

4. I always ask the one being anointed if they would like to pray. Cindy and her husband both prayed. Their prayers were very touching, revealing the deep desire to live, yet total surrender because they know and trust God. Three of the elders prayed, and then I prayed and anointed Cindy with the oil. (Traditionally we use olive oil, but any oil is all right.) As I gently rubbed the oil Cindy’s forehead I reminded her (and those present) that the oil is the symbol of the Holy Spirit and of His desire to heal us in all areas of our lives.

In one of Pastor Dwight K. Nelson’s sermons he reflects on three things we know about God: He loves us. He is trustworthy. He knows the end from the beginning. I included those thoughts in my prayer. We reflected on Jesus’ prayer is the garden asking that if it be possible that the cup would pass from Him, nevertheless He surrendered to His Father’s will and the plan they had set from eternity.

5. After the final prayer we sang “He’s Able…I know my Lord is able to carry me through.”

6. It is my practice to leave something tangible with the person we have just prayed for—a reminder of the service and their relinquishing all to God. On this particular occasion, I had placed the anointing oil in a small olive wood communion cup I had brought back from Israel. (I had brought back 200.) On the bottom of the cup I had used a Sharpie black marker to write the date and the word “Surrendered”. My explanation is that in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus too faced a bitter cup and trusted His Father all the way. I wanted this cup to remind Cindy of Jesus’ great love for her and that she was not making the journey alone.

7. The group left shortly after. This is not the time to hang around and chit chat about trivial things. You want the moment of God’s special presence to linger. I also wanted to clear the room so that Cindy and her husband could spend some time alone since she was now fully conscious. It was a beautiful scene. They were both beaming. God gave them a few more months together.

In this story I mentioned that we anoint the person’s head/forehead. I have had an exception to this. Once while in a home anointing a child before surgery, the mother was sobbing. I realized that perhaps she was the one in need of the most healing. On an impulse, in the middle of my prayer, I reached over and anointed the mother’s hands, rubbing the back of them with oil—asking God to bless the hands that would look after the child while he was recovering from surgery. The mother seemed to relax as she gained the strength for the task that was before her.

In our humanness we desire an instant miracle of healing. I have seen God do that. (It really messes up the medical community when tumors disappear.) I have also seen God work through months of chemo and radiation. I have even seen those God loves fall asleep with the sweet peace of surrender, reconciliation, forgiveness and yes, healing.

Miracles are not a guarantee of faithfulness to God—look at the children of Israel. God works in mysterious ways in this world of sin. Consider the following three cancer cases:

1. The person has cancer and does not know they have cancer. God heals them.
2. The person has cancer, discovers it, prays and is healed.
3. The person has cancer, discovers it, prays and goes through months of chemo.
Which of the three do you think spends more time “on their knees”? The answer is always “the person in the third scenario”. So I’ve learned to not interfere with the work God is doing. While no one wants to suffer (neither the patients nor those who care about them) those who have grown spiritually mature through the process have somehow always found a way to see the blessing.

Encourage your members to enter into the ministry that opens doors—doors of surrender, reconciliation, forgiveness, and healing.

Esther R. Knott, M.A. is the director of the InMinistry Center as well as associate director of the NAD Ministerial Department.

This article contains excerpts from a book the author hopes to complete before she dies.

*Not their real names
Scientists Are Beginning to Figure Out Why Conservatives Are…Conservative

By Chris Mooney

Ten years ago, it was wildly controversial to talk about psychological differences between liberals and conservatives. Today, it's becoming hard not to.

Scientists are using eye-tracking devices to detect automatic response differences between liberals and conservatives. University of Nebraska-Lincoln

You could be forgiven for not having browsed yet through the latest issue of the journal Behavioral and Brain Sciences. If you care about politics, though, you'll find a punchline therein that is pretty extraordinary.

Click here to read more from Mooney on the science of why people don't believe in science.

Behavioral and Brain Sciences employs a rather unique practice called "Open Peer Commentary": An article of major significance is published, a large number of fellow scholars comment on it, and then the original author responds to all of them. The approach has many virtues, one of which being that it lets you see where a community of scholars and thinkers stand with respect to a controversial or provocative scientific idea. And in the latest issue of the journal, this process reveals the following conclusion: A large body of political scientists and political psychologists now concur that liberals and conservatives disagree about politics in part because they are different
people at the level of personality, psychology, and even traits like physiology and genetics.

That's a big deal. It challenges everything that we thought we knew about politics—upending the idea that we get our beliefs solely from our upbringing, from our friends and families, from our personal economic interests, and calling into question the notion that in politics, we can really change (most of us, anyway).

It is a "virtually inescapable conclusion" that the "cognitive-motivational styles of leftists and rightists are quite different."

The occasion of this revelation is a paper by John Hibbing of the University of Nebraska and his colleagues, arguing that political conservatives have a "negativity bias," meaning that they are physiologically more attuned to negative (threatening, disgusting) stimuli in their environments. (The paper can be read for free here.) In the process, Hibbing et al. marshal a large body of evidence, including their own experiments using eye trackers and other devices to measure the involuntary responses of political partisans to different types of images. One finding? That conservatives respond much more rapidly to threatening and aversive stimuli (for instance, images of "a very large spider on the face of a frightened person, a dazed individual with a bloody face, and an open wound with maggots in it," as one of their papers put it).

In other words, the conservative ideology, and especially one of its major facets—centered on a strong military, tough law enforcement, resistance to immigration, widespread availability of guns—would seem well tailored for an underlying, threat-oriented biology.

The authors go on to speculate that this ultimately reflects an evolutionary imperative. "One possibility," they write, "is that a strong negativity bias was extremely useful in the Pleistocene," when it would have been super-helpful in preventing you from getting killed. (The Pleistocene epoch lasted from roughly 2.5 million years ago until 12,000 years ago.) We had John Hibbing on the Inquiring Minds podcast earlier this year, and he discussed these ideas in depth; you can listen here:

Hibbing and his colleagues make an intriguing argument in their latest paper, but what's truly fascinating is what happened next. Twenty-six different scholars or groups of scholars then got an opportunity to tee off on the paper, firing off a variety of responses. But as Hibbing and colleagues note in their final reply, out of those responses, "22 or 23 accept the general idea" of a conservative negativity bias, and simply add commentary to aid in the process of "modifying it, expanding on it, specifying where it does and does not work," and so on. Only about three scholars or groups of scholars seem to reject the idea entirely.

That's pretty extraordinary, when you think about it. After all, one of the teams of commenters includes New York University social psychologist John Jost, who drew considerable political ire in 2003 when he and his colleagues published a synthesis of existing psychological studies on ideology, suggesting that conservatives are characterized by traits such as a need for certainty and an intolerance of ambiguity. Now, writing in Behavioral and Brain Sciences in response to Hibbing roughly a decade later, Jost and fellow scholars note that

There is by now evidence from a variety of laboratories around the world using a variety of methodological techniques leading to the virtually inescapable conclusion that the cognitive-motivational styles of leftists and rightists are quite different. This research consistently finds that conservatism is positively associated with heightened epistemic concerns for order, structure, closure, certainty, consistency, simplicity, and familiarity, as well as existential concerns such as perceptions of danger, sensitivity to threat, and death anxiety. [Italics added]
Back in 2003, Jost and his team were blasted by Ann Coulter, George Will, and National Review for saying this; congressional Republicans began probing into their research grants; and they got lots of hate mail. But what's clear is that today, they've more or less triumphed. They won a field of converts to their view and sparked a wave of new research, including the work of Hibbing and his team.

"One possibility," note the authors, "is that a strong negativity bias was extremely useful in the Pleistocene," when it would have been super-helpful in preventing you from getting killed.

Granted, there are still many issues yet to be worked out in the science of ideology. Most of the commentaries on the new Hibbing paper are focused on important but not-paradigm-shifting side issues, such as the question of how conservatives can have a higher negativity bias, and yet not have neurotic personalities. (Actually, if anything, the research suggests that liberals may be the more neurotic bunch.) Indeed, conservatives tend to have a high degree of happiness and life satisfaction. But Hibbing and colleagues find no contradiction here. Instead, they paraphrase two other scholarly commentators (Matt Motyl of the University of Virginia and Ravi Iyer of the University of Southern California), who note that "successfully monitoring and attending negative features of the environment, as conservatives tend to do, may be just the sort of tractable task…that is more likely to lead to a fulfilling and happy life than is a constant search for new experience after new experience."

All of this matters, of course, because we still operate in politics and in media as if minds can be changed by the best honed arguments, the most compelling facts. And yet if our political opponents are simply perceiving the world differently, that idea starts to crumble. Out of the rubble just might arise a better way of acting in politics that leads to less dysfunction and less gridlock…thanks to science.
Online Sermons: Church Internet Outreach?

Dave Hakes

Does posting your church’s sermons online count as internet outreach?

Or are they more like “preaching to the choir”?

Who are they reaching?

Is it outreach?

A pastor friend of mine told me about how his church produced a sermon podcast some years ago, and one of the moving outcomes of this was that a member of the congregation, serving in the military in the first Iraq war (if I’m remembering things correctly), regularly listened to the sermon. It kept him feeling connected to his church back home, and was a source of teaching and inspiration to him.

Other churches are able to reach vacationing members, ill members, those unable to come to church, and kids away at college.

All noble and worthwhile reasons to spend time posting sermons.

Does that count as outreach? Probably not.

Sermons can be outreach

But sermons can serve as outreach.

While some listeners may already be in your church or perhaps another, we all recognize that people will listen to sermons online. It may not be in droves, especially if churches aren’t trying to reach people with them.

There are those outside the church who may also listen. They may simply be curious. They may be looking for answers, comfort, or solutions. These reasons almost certainly count as internet outreach.

Is this common? It’s not easy to tell, but realistically, how often is a “typical” non-Christian likely to take the initiative to listen to a sermon?

Online sermons by themselves aren’t outreach

If we approach this realistically and are willing to pursue the outreach aspect, we can get the attention of those outside the church.
Think about your sermons: Do they generally speak to Christians or to non-Christians?

A Pastor has the responsibility to teach and lead the flock. An essential element of that is preaching the Gospel of Christ crucified and risen – and that speaks to all.

Sermons have the potential to reach those in the church and those outside the church.

I caution against simply putting the sermons online and calling it “good enough”, calling it internet outreach.

It’s unlikely enough that people outside the church, outside of God’s grace, are going to find themselves in front of a church’s website.

And what way too many churches do is post a sermon online with a headline such as “Sermon for June 2, 2013”, “Sermon for Pentecost 3” or something equally generic and nondescript.

Imagine a web page full of these listings. Who would such a “wall of sermons” reach?

Improve internet outreach with sermons

Let’s be more realistic. Let’s recognize who is most likely to see our posted sermons.

Let’s take steps to improve the visibility and access to our sermons.

Tips for more outreach-friendly sermon postings

There are basic things you can do to make your online sermons more likely to serve your church’s internet outreach ministry.

Give your sermons a title

Your online audience is not sitting in a pew, ready to hear the sermon.

They’re click-happy (even…especially?…if searching for something). You need a title – a headline – to grab their attention.

Make your sermon titles speak to those who need to hear it!

Avoid “church-speak” and the unnecessarily theological. Speak to the relevance to daily living, the impact on people’s lives. Speak to the hurting and those in need of hope.

Construct your sermon however you like best to deliver the message, but give it a title that draws people in.

Don’t bury the sermon in an archive of sermons

You can have a “wall of sermons” page if you wish.

But consider featuring the current sermon on the home page, perhaps with an audio or video player widget, but at least a link.

An archive of sermons need not be a lost cause

What if, instead of a week-by-week archive of previous sermons, they were instead presented topically or searchable by topics and key points?
Sermons touch on various topics, why not use those topics to index the sermons, to help connect the message to those who need to hear it?

Scripture texts are not footnotes!

I see this all the time: A scripture reference listed next to the sermon. Why stop there? If you want to reach out to people, those words of scripture the sermon is drawn from need to be seen.

Many of the people you want to reach don’t have the Bible memorized and may not even know where to go to look up a verse if they wanted to.

Instead, consider presenting the verse(s). It could be printed out. It could be a link to an online Bible. It could be a separate and quick audio recording.

**Make sermons easy to “consume”**

Video is wonderful. But not everyone likes online video. And not every church can produce a sermon video that works.

Some people like to listen. Other people like to read. Be flexible and willing to deliver the message in the way your online audience wants to consume it.

**A sermon doesn’t have to be called a sermon**

A sermon may be what gets delivered each week, but “sermon” doesn’t have to be what you call it online.

“Sermon” in “sermon archive” is one thing. But “sermon” in “this week’s sermon” on the home page is quite another.

If “sermon” is going to cause the non-church member to yawn, then maybe that’s a churchy word to avoid. “Message of the week” might work better.

Do you need to call it anything at all? What if you simply relied on that outreach-friendly title (from an earlier point)?

**Take it up a notch**

Those were just basic things you can do to make sermons more outreach-friendly.

**Outreach-friendly introductions**

Consider crafting outreach-friendly sermon introductions to go along with each sermon posting.

Even those who have never set foot in a church in their lives understand that clicking “play” on a sermon’s “listen now” or “watch now” link is going to take up a good-sized chunk of time – probably longer than most are willing to commit to.

Write a sentence or two that explains how the sermon is relevant to people’s lives. What will they learn? Why should they hear this particular sermon? What’s in it for them?

Put this introduction between the title and the play button. Ideally, include that scripture reference here too.

Use the introduction to bridge the mental gap between the reading the title and deciding to click “play”.

**Break it up into bite-sized chunks**
The sermon may have been delivered in one piece.

But online, this doesn’t have to be the case.

A sermon can be broken up into key points which are presented together, but separately.

Remember, we’re focused on outreach here, not necessarily on simply making sure our sermons are online somewhere.

Breaking up a sermon can be done as literally as splitting the audio into the sermon’s key points, giving each an outreach-friendly title.

It can also mean turning the key points of a sermon into an easy-to-digest post on the website.

It can mean re-delivering parts of the sermon to specifically speak to those outside the church. Where the in-church sermon made certain assumptions about the hearer, an online, outreach-friendly version could speak directly to those not yet familiar with the Gospel message.

The original sermon can still be presented intact somewhere on the website too. There’s no reason to abandon that method.

**Present key points first**

Consider extracting the key points from the sermons and presenting them separately for those who want to see what they’re getting into before they click “play”.

One approach could be to simply outline the sermon.

But what I really mean is to take those big, key points, and let people see them.

It’s a bit like people in a bookstore (remember those?) picking up a book and flipping to the end to see how things turn out before they buy it.

The core of the sermon is how God’s word applies to the hearer. It’s not the clever build-up. It’s not how you introduce it. It’s what gets taught. Present *that* to people and then let them decide whether to click “play”.

**Share the word out with social media**

Take your key points from the sermon and create short, highly engaging posts on social media (for example, Facebook).

This is similar to an earlier idea, but instead of relying on people outside your church stumbling across your website, put the message into a channel where it can spread naturally.

Social media, through its web of interconnectedness, can help get your message in front of people without them having to have first come to the church’s website.

Take advantage of the outreach opportunity it provides.

**Invite the hearer to learn more**

The teaching in a sermon doesn’t end when the sermon or the service is over.

People in the church will be back next week to hear more. They’ll participate in Bible studies through the week.
They’ll read and study on their own.

But people outside the church hearing a sermon, may be left with questions or wanting to know more.

Try including additional information, perhaps via a “learn more…” link. Maybe there’s another sermon you can direct them to? There may be a web posting or an online resource somewhere that would be worth checking out.

You could invite the hearer to ask questions or provide them an easy way to get in touch with the pastor or someone who can help them explore what it means for their life.

**Your church’s next steps**

How outreach-friendly are your church’s online sermons? Are they “preaching to the choir”?

What could your church do better?

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**Related Posts :**

- Your Church Online: More Than Just “Preaching to the Choir”
- The Road to Nowhere for Your Internet Ministry
- ITC 55 | A Year’s Worth of Church Online Ministry Tips

The following two tabs change content below.

- Bio
- Latest Posts

**Dave Hakes**

Founder at Internet Toolbox for Churches
Dave founded Internet Toolbox for Churches in 2011 after seeing the opportunity to reach people online and the desire within the church to do so but too rarely the sense of direction or know-how.
6 Insights From the #IceBucketChallenge for Church Communications

What leaders can learn from the recent social media craze.

In case you’ve been asleep for the last two weeks … here is Wikipedia’s description of the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge:

The Ice Bucket Challenge, sometimes called the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge, is an activity involving dumping a bucket of ice water on one’s head or donating to the ALS Association in the United States. It went viral throughout social media during the Northern Hemisphere summer of 2014.

The challenge dares nominated participants to be filmed having a bucket of ice water poured on their heads. A common stipulation is that nominated people have 24 hours to comply or forfeit by way of a charitable financial donation. [source]

Every once in a while, a craze hits social media that transcends the boundaries of the Internet and really does go culturally viral. The #ALSIceBucketChallenge is an example of that. I’ve found it fascinating to watch it gain and sustain cultural momentum. There are a handful of lessons I think we should draw from this for our work in church communications.

- **Cause + Fun = Win.** It’s fun to watch … there something about the anticipation of knowing that the person is going to get a bucket of cold water on their head that is so funny. It reminds me of the same anticipation of last year’s “Harlem Shake” viral phenomena. But this is tied to a great cause, which gives it sticking power outside of just being funny. How are we using fun in our communications to move people to connect with the causes that are important to us … even serious causes?

- **Everyone Plays!** There is no central committee organizing this thing. Some people are just doing the funny video and not donating … but even those people are aiding the cause because it’s building more momentum in their social networks. (online and offline.) It’s open, messy and a bit chaotic. This is how networks work. How can we encourage a more open structure in the way we do church communications that would encourage our people to carry the messages we want to send?

- **People Know How to Post Video Online.** I’ve been a bit shocked at some of the people that have figured out how to record and post a video online for this effort. Clearly the tools have become so easy that even the most novice user can utilize them. This is a huge opportunity for us. How can we leverage the ubiquity and utility of these video posting tools for our ministry?

- **Simplicity and Urgency of Action.** The challenge is so simple … dump a bucket of ice water on your head, challenge three people to do the same thing, and let them know they have 24 hours to respond. Easy to understand and the call the action moves people to respond. The urgency is fabricated, but it still moves people to make a decision. Are we being clear enough in the asks to our people? How are we using urgency
to move people to action?

- **Hashtags.** The #hashtag continues to move toward universal acceptance in our culture. This campaign uses easy to understand hashtags and employs them well across multiple platforms. Hashtags are an important tool for self-organizing social movements like this because they allow people to discover content from other people they don’t directly know. *How are you incorporating #hashtags in your communications strategy?*

- **Self-Deprecating Humor.** Nobody looks cool getting a bunch of water dumped on their head. You just look goofy. It’s refreshing to see so many people joining in this sort of humor … rather than making fun of someone else. People are attracted to leaders who don’t take themselves too seriously. *Do we take ourselves too serious for our own good?*

What about you? What have you thought about this particular campaign? I’d love to hear your thoughts!

- **Print Version**

Rich serves as Operations Pastor at Liquid Church in the Manhattan facing suburbs of New Jersey. He blogs at UnSeminary.com and is a sought after speaker and consultant on multisite, pastoral productivity and communications.

More from Rich Birch or visit Rich at [http://www.unseminary.com](http://www.unseminary.com)
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The MA in Pastoral Ministry degree requires students take a total of 48 credits. For Students admitted to the program before March 2014, please use the 2013 Curriculum which will satisfy degree requirements.

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*These classes are also taught in Canada*
ON THE UNIQUE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST IN THE CHURCH  
A STATEMENT OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Preamble

We, the faculty of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, affirm that Christ is the only Head of the Church (Eph 1:22; 5:23; Col 1:18). Therefore, while there exists legitimate leadership in the Church, no other human being may rightfully claim a headship role in the Church. As Head of the Church, Christ provides the ultimate manifestation of God’s love (Eph 5:23, 25), demonstrating and vindicating God’s moral government of love (Rom 3:4, 25-26 5:8), and thus defeating the counterfeit government of the usurping “ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 16:11; cf. DA 758; 2T 2:211).

God’s Moral Government of Love

Christ’s headship in the Church is inextricably bound up with the love of God and is itself the ultimate explication of God’s love for the world (John 3:16; 15:13; Rom 5:8). As the sole “head of the church,” Christ “loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Eph 5:23, 25). Christ’s demonstration of divine love as Head of the Church directly reflects God’s moral government of love, within which the law is a transcript of God’s character and, conversely, love is itself the fulfillment of God’s law (Matt 22:37-39; Rom 13:8; cf. TMK 366).

Since love requires moral freedom, God does not exercise His headship power or authority to coerce or determine the moral will of His created beings. God permitted rebellion, at the highest cost to Himself, because He desires willing obedience that is motivated by love rather than fear. Such voluntary obedience could not be obtained by the exercise of power or authority, but can only be freely given. In this way, God’s government is based on freely bestowed mutual love wherein God does not deterministically impose His will, but does hold intelligent creatures morally accountable to His perfect law of love.

Accordingly, rather than exercising His infinite power to unilaterally prevent or overturn the rebellion by removing the freedom necessary for a genuine love relationship, God has allowed the enemy’s counterfeit government to manifest itself, while actively demonstrating the nature of His moral government of love in direct and striking contrast. Whereas the enemy grasps for power and domination, Christ, who possesses all power, does not dominate, determine, or coerce but “made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant [doulos] . . . He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Phil 2:7-9, NKJV). In this way, Christ, the unique Head of the Church, “demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8). Consequently, God’s government of unselfish love is clearly and supremely manifested.

The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan

The Great Controversy originated with Satan’s direct attack against the nature and role of Christ in heaven, seeking to displace Christ and exalt himself to be like God (Isa 14:12-14;
Ezek 28:12-19; cf. Rev 12:7-9. In the history of the Great Controversy, the usurping “ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; cf. 2 Cor 4:4), although defeated at the cross, continues his quest to exalt himself by dominating others. He attempts to replace God’s government of love with an alternative form of government that grasps for a domineering, self-seeking authority. He seeks to replace Christ as the Head (2 Thess 2:3-4), injuring both Christ, the sole Head of the true Church, and Christ’s corporate body, His Church.

From the second century onward, post-Apostolic Christianity gradually implemented a system of church government that reflected Rome’s conception of authority as the power to arbitrarily command and coerce obedience and replaced the headship of Christ with the headship of mere humans. This counterfeit system of church governance was (1) hierarchical, based on a chain of command with a monarchical bishop at the “head” of the Church, with complete and final control over its affairs; (2) sacramental, meaning that the spiritual life of believers, including their very salvation, depended on ordained clergymen; (3) elitist (i.e., sacerdotal), meaning that the rite of ordination (laying on of hands) infused the clergy with special powers; and (4) headship-oriented, meaning that those who received the rite of ordination were thereby married to their Church and thus took on “headship” roles in the Church in place of Christ the Head (“in persona Christi Capitis”; cf. *Vicarius Filii Dei*, “in the place of the Son of God”).

This system of government has been implemented in various forms, amounting to the usurpation of Christ’s headship in the Church by mere humans. Indeed, this very system is that of the sea beast of Revelation 13-14 that was granted power and authority by the dragon (13:2, 4), counterfeits the resurrection of Christ (13:3), accepts the world’s worship along with the dragon (13:4, 8), blasphemes against God and His sanctuary, and exercises worldwide authority to persecute God’s people (13:5-7). This antichrist power which usurps the role of Christ on earth in keeping with the ancient attempt by Satan to replace Christ in heaven, seeks to destroy the everlasting gospel and ultimately commands obedience and enforces false worship. This culminates in severe persecution of those who refuse to worship the beast and his image, the remnant who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus, those who place no confidence in mere humans with regard to their salvation (Rev 13:6-8; 14:6-12).

The antichrist system of church government sets the stage for the climactic events of the final conflict in Revelation by, among other things: (1) asserting authority to appoint humans to Christ-replacing headship positions in the Church on earth (globally and locally), (2) thereby claiming to uniquely possess authority to interpret and teach Scripture and thus have the final word on all matters of doctrine and ecclesial practice while (3) wielding the spiritual power and authority to command and coerce obedience using both spiritual and civil tools.

This system of government stands in direct contrast to Christ’s headship and His teaching on the nature of the authority of Church leaders. Christ reflected God’s moral government of love by exemplifying service leadership (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45), including a kind of authority that does not seek to subject the wills of others or enforce obedience. Rather, it leads by the example of service and unselfish love, which draws (rather than compels)
others to willing service in love (Gal 5:13). All authority “in heaven and on earth” was given
to Christ (Matt 28:18), but Christ does not remove graciously endowed free will and force
His created human beings into obedience, but “loved [us] and gave Himself up for us” (Eph
5:2). The closest the Church comes to acts of enforcement is when it engages in discipline
as a corporate body based on very clear teachings of Scripture. Such discipline is not the
responsibility of any one person, or even a small group, but must be an action of at least the
local congregation. Even then, such discipline does not result in coercion, but in restricting
the individual from privileges of membership for a time in order to allow them to come to
repentance and restoration (Matt 18:12-17; 1 Cor 5:5).

Church members (including but not limited to Church leaders) are called to follow Christ’s
example of unselfish love [Eph 5:1]. They are to have the mind of Christ, which includes the
willingness to humble oneself and take on the role of a slave (doulos; Phil 2:5-8), or servant
(diakonos) of Christ (Matt 20:26), even as He humbled Himself to the point of death.
Whereas the leaders in the Roman Empire of Christ’s time “lord it over them, and their
great men exercise authority over them” (Matt 20:25), it is not to be so with God’s people
but “whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant [diakonos], and
whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave [doulos]” (Matt 20:26-27).

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a
ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Thus, the one who would be great is the one who is the
slave [doulos] of all (Mark 10:44), and the “greatest among you shall be your servant
[diakonos]” (Matt 23:11; cf. 9-12). The Bible outlines essential roles of leadership and
authority in the Church. However, all leadership within the Church must be servant
leadership. First Peter 5:1-3, 5-7 adroitly balances the affirmation of leadership within the
Church with the humility that such leadership entails: “Therefore, I exhort the elders
among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ . . . shepherd the
flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily,
according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording
it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock . . . You
younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with
humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the
humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt
you at the proper time” (Cf. AA 359-60; DA 817). Accordingly, Church leaders should be
humble servants. At the same time they should be respected and deeply appreciated for
their diligent labor (1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 5:17; cf. Heb 13:7) even as they also show proper
respect to others by demonstrating the mutual love and regard for others that is to take
place among all Christians (1 Pet 2:17).ii

The authority of those leading the Church is conveyed to them by the Church. This
authority is delegated by Christ to His Church and implemented through its representative
system. Thus appointed leaders become stewards of a power that should be exercised on
behalf of Christ and for the benefit of those they lead. The functionality of authority does
not negate equality among the members given to the Church by Christ. As the Spirit leads
the body of Christ, not just the few in leadership, those leading out should seek to allow
their decisions to be guided, insofar as possible, by the wisdom and insight of the group. As
a Church, we thus give decision-making authority not to any single president or chairperson, but to committees, where those that lead the group are seeking the wisdom and, where possible, consensus of the group.

God’s remnant, then, will treasure a system of Church government, authority, and leadership that reflects (as much as is humanly possible) the ideal of God’s government of love, within which moral freedom is cherished and leaders are the humble servants of all, even as Christ gave Himself up for all. This very kind of humble servant leadership, grounded in love, was perfectly modeled by Christ who, as unique “head of the church . . . loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (Eph 5:23, 25), supremely exemplifying God’s character and moral government of love.

**The Unique and Non-Transferable Headship of Christ**

Scripture affirms that the Son is eternally equal with the Father and the Spirit (Col 2:9; Heb 1:3; Matt 28:19; John 1:1; 5:18; 8:58; 14:9; Phil 2:6; Rom 9:5; Col 1:15-17; DA 469, 530; GC 495; 7ABC 437-40; TM 252; TA 209; RH April 5, 1906). Scripture also affirms the temporary voluntary functional subordination of Christ the Son in order to accomplish the salvation of humanity (John 5:19; 8:28, 54; 14:10, 28; 17:5; Phil 2:7-11; Col 1:18-20; Eph 1:23; Heb 1:8; 1 Cor 15:20-28; Isa 9:6-7; Dan 7:13-14; Rev 11:15; PP 34; RH, Oct 29, 1895; RH, June 15, 1905; FLB 76). The interpersonal relationships within the Trinity provide the ultimate model of love and self-sacrifice for us. As such, they do not furnish a model for a top-down governmental structure for human leadership within the Church.

According to Scripture, Christ is the only Head of the Church and the human members of Christ’s Church collectively (male and female) make up the body of Christ (Eph 1:22-23; 5:23; Col 1:18; 2:19; cf. 1 Cor 11:3; Col 2:10). Likewise, Ellen White counsels: “Christ, not the minister, is the head of the church” (ST Jan. 27, 1890), and “Christ is the only Head of the church” (21MR 274; cf. DA 817, GC 51). Neither Scripture nor the writings of Ellen White apply the language of headship in the Church to anyone other than Christ. Further, neither Scripture nor the writings of Ellen White endorse any transfer of the role of head in the home to roles within the Church body.

Since Christ is the only Head of the Church, no other can be head of the Church. That is, headship in the Church is unique to Christ and is non-transferable. All those who would follow Christ’s method of ministry cannot do so by taking on His role of headship in the Church but by serving others in accordance with the “mind of Christ” (cf. Phil 2:5) and God’s moral government of love. Deviation from the unique headship of Christ in the Church follows the enemy’s practice of domination and counterfeit government, which directly contradicts and opposes God’s moral government of love.

Accordingly, the role of “head” in the home (Eph 5:23) is not transferable to the realm of the Church. Indeed, the idea that the role of “head” in the home would or should transfer to other realms is a fallacious *non sequitur* (that is, the transfer from one realm to another does not follow logically). For example, one’s role in the home obviously does not translate into a similar or analogous role in one’s workplace.
Beyond the logical problems inherent in the move from head of the home to headship in the Church, two demonstrably biblical rationales exclude such a transfer. First, as already noted, Christ is the only Head of the Church. Any attempt at proliferation of “heads” in the Church is thus unacceptable for it is a step toward usurping the unique headship role of Christ, who is the only mediator between God and humans. It is unscriptural to speak of any kind of headship in the Church apart from that of Christ.

No inspired writer teaches the headship of man over woman at the Creation. Rather, Genesis 1 teaches us that male and female participate equally in the image of God, with no hint of pre-fall subordination of one to the other (Gen 1:27). Genesis 2 reinforces Genesis 1 in this regard. Eve’s creation from Adam’s side shows that she is “to stand by his side as an equal” (Gen 2:21- 22; PP 46). Although various interpretations of Gen 3:16 have recognized some kind of post-Fall disruption of this pre-Fall egalitarian ideal, the Bible consistently calls us back to God’s original plan for full equality without hierarchy (Song 7:10; Isa 65:17, 25; cf. Gen 1:29-30). Paul’s writings, though often misunderstood (2 Pet 3:16), maintain this Eden model (Eph 5:21-23), affirming with the rest of Scripture the Gospel ideal of the ultimate restoration of the Eden model (cf. Matt 19:8; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 3:28). Ellen White also underlines this redemptive paradigm: “Woman should fill the position which God originally designed for her, as her husband’s equal” (AH 231). “The Lord desires His ministering servants to occupy a place worthy of the highest consideration. In the mind of God, the ministry of men and women existed before the world was created” (18MR 380). “Infinite wisdom devised the plan of redemption, which places the race on a second probation by giving them another trial” (3T 484; cf. PP 58-59, and 1T 307-308).

Second, every member of the Church is part of the body of Christ, who is the One Head. Since each member of the Church (male or female) is a part of the body of Christ, a member cannot at the same time exercise headship in the Church. In the same way, since Christ is the unique Husband of the Church (Christ’s metaphorical bride), the members of the Church cannot themselves be husbands of the Church but collectively, men and women together, are the bride of Christ. That the Church as family of God is analogous to human families only serves to suggest that humans should manifest the love of God in their family relationships even as Christ does in relationship to His bride.

Within the body of Christ, the only Head of the Church, every member of the Church body receives spiritual gifts: the Spirit gives to “each one [hekastos] individually just as He wills” (1 Cor 12:11). The Holy Spirit is given to all believers at the time of the end: “And afterwards, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28-30 NIV). Within this very context, Scripture emphatically excludes the notion of elitism within the Church body of Christ, proclaiming that “we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many” (1 Cor 12:13-14; cf. Gal 3:28). Thus, no member of the body is “any the less a part of the body” regardless of one’s role (1 Cor 12:15-16) and, indeed, those that are deemed “less honorable, on those we bestow more abundant honor” (1 Cor 12:23).
In all this, every gift and ministry is nothing without love, for “the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor 13:13; cf. all of chapter 13; cf. Rom 12:3-10; Eph 4:11-16). Here again, the unselfish love that is central to God’s moral government should be reflected in humble service to one another within Christ’s body and bride, the Church.

This is reflected in Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Belief No. 14, “Unity in the Body of Christ,” which reads in part: “The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation.”

There is no third category between the Head and body of Christ, or between the corresponding bridegroom (Christ) and bride (the Church). The minister is not to be separate from the body of Christ, but is likewise a member of Christ’s body and thus plays a non-elitist role in service to and alongside the other members that corresponds to the individual’s Spirit-bestowed gifts and accords with the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet 2:5-9; Rev 1:6; 5:10; cf. Ex 19:5-6). Because it is the Spirit who gives gifts to each one (male and female) as He wills (1 Cor 12:11; cf. 12, 18, 19, 27-31; Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:18; Rom 12:4-8; Eph 4:11-12; 1 Pet 4:10), the Church confers no spiritual powers or gifts on anyone but merely recognizes the gifts that God has granted and facilitates corresponding opportunities for ministry within the body of Christ. Leadership ministries within the Church are facilitated by the Church body as a recognition of the particular Spirit-given gifts and characteristics of servant leadership that reflect God’s moral government of unselfish love (cf. Phil 2:5-8). In this way, both individually and collectively the Church is to complete its mission of proclaiming the Three Angels’ Messages and revealing God’s character of love, the last revelation of God’s mercy to the world (Col 4:15).

In sum, any form of headship claimed by a mere human, whether male or female, usurps the sole headship of Christ over the Church. Christian service, including Church leadership, is to reflect but never usurp Christ’s leadership. Thus, while Christ’s manner of leadership is to be reflected by believers, Christ’s particular role of leadership is unique and not to be encroached upon by any mere human. Christ alone is the Head of the Church body, of which all Christians are members and submitted to Him.

No human leader, then, may rightfully assume a headship role within the Church; the highest level that any leaders can “ascend” corresponds directly to the depths to which they are willing to descend in loving and humble service, giving themselves for Christ’s body even as Christ gave himself for his body and bride, his beloved Church, the object of “His supreme regard” (2SAT 215).

**Affirmations and Denials**
1. We affirm that there is only one Head of the Church, Christ, and this headship in the Church is non-transferable and inimitable. Thus, Christ's particular role of leadership is unique.

2. We deny that any human can rightly assume a headship role within the Church.

3. We affirm that leadership in the Church should be modeled after Christ's servant leadership and grounded in love, with the recognition that Christ’s manner of leadership is to be reflected by Christian leaders.

4. We deny any Church government that results in sacramental, elitist, and headship-oriented leadership, which are counterfeits of Christ’s moral government of love and usurp His unique role and authority as Head of the Church (His body) and husband of the Church (His wife).

5. We affirm that Church leaders possess stewardship responsibilities of the affairs of the Church, carrying out the decisions of the Church made in committee and business sessions.

6. We deny that any mere human is invested with final decision-making authority in regards to Church teaching, ritual, or doctrine.

7. We affirm the priesthood of all believers and that no human mediator is needed between God and humans.

8. We deny any elevation of Church leaders as mediators between God and humans or as head of or in the Church.

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1 Unless indicated otherwise, the biblical text is quoted from the New American Standard Bible (1995).

2 It is worth noting that some statements that refer to leadership roles within the Church use language that many English versions translate as “rule.” For example, 1 Tim 5:17 states: “The elders who rule [prostētes from the root proistemi] well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching” (cf. the similar use of this root in Rom 12:8; 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 3:4-5, 12). The root proistemi, here translated “rule,” literally refers to those who “stand before,” beneficially leading and ministering to the community, and should not be confused with some kind of monarchical rulership or sovereignty. In the LXX it refers to the household “ministry” of a servant of the prince (2 Sam 13:17; cf. 1 Tim 3:4-5, 12) and the noun form of this root, prostatis, refers to Phoebe’s ministry as diakonos (Rom 16:1-2).
8 Reasons Why Most Churches Don't Break the 200 Attendance Mark

All churches want to reach more people, but why do some end up staying small?

While social media, and even traditional media, are still preoccupied with megachurches and multisite churches, the reality is that most churches in North America are quite small.

The Barna group pegs the average Protestant church size in America at 89 adults. Sixty percent of protestant churches have less than 100 adults in attendance. Only 2 percent have over 1,000 adults attending.

Please understand, there's nothing wrong with being a small church. I just know that almost every small church leader I speak to wants his or her church to grow.

I get that. That's the mission of the church. Every single day, I want our church to become more effective in reaching one more person with the hope that's in Christ.

So, why is it that most churches never break the 200 attendance mark?

It’s not:

**Desire.** Most leaders I know want their church to reach more people.

**A lack of prayer.** Many small church leaders are incredibly faithful in prayer.

**Love.** Some of the people in smaller churches love people as authentically as anyone I know.

**Facility.** Growth can start in the most unlikely places.

Let's just assume you have a solid mission, theology and heart to reach people.

You know why most churches still don’t push past the 200 mark in attendance?

You ready?

**They organize, behave, lead and manage like a small organization.**

Think about it.

There's a world of difference between how you organize a corner store and how you organize a larger supermarket.

In a corner store, Mom and Pop run everything. Want to talk to the CEO? She’s stocking shelves. Want to see the director of marketing? He’s at the cash register.
Mom and Pop do everything, and they organize their business to stay small. Which is fine if you’re Mom and Pop and don’t want to grow.

But you can’t run a supermarket that way. You organize differently. You govern differently. There’s a produce manager and people who only stock shelves. There’s a floor manager, shift manager, general manager and so much more.

So what’s the translation to church world?

Here are eight reasons churches who want to grow end up staying small:

• Print Version

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