Tech Resources that (Are Supposed to) Help the Church

By Pedro Trinidad

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Resources to be Given Away to Attendees

Pastors who attend the CALLED Pastors convention will receive hundreds of dollars worth of ministry resources. Every pastor or chaplain who attends will receive the first printing of CALLED, a compendium of ministry written by some of Adventist's leading pastors.

Every pastor will also receive a full release of Bible Study Factory, a customizable Adventist Bible study printing and editing software designed for small groups, pastors Bible classes and personal Bible studies.

The new book Best Practices for Women Clergy will be released at the
convention and distributed to all women pastors and chaplains.

In addition pastors will receive dozens of other resources at the Ministry Resource Hall with 150 ministry resource exhibitors.

Registration for the convention is limited and is on a first come first served bases. The regular registration rate expires March 31. If you have a ministry resource that you need pastors to know about there are still a few exhibitor spaces available.

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.

Ideas, Events, Resources, Announcements

Offering Appeal Videos: Two minute video clips are available for use during the offering appeals at church by visiting the NAD Stewardship Channel. You will meet leaders from different conferences in the Adventist church throughout the North American Division and the General Conference. You have the printed offering appeals, now you have them on video.
**inSpire News**: Join in the conversation! Connect with other Adventist creatives, get news, event updates and more! inSpire eNews provides a place to share and examine issues and resources related to the creative process! This is unique because we focus on creativity within the realm of spirituality and faith! You are invited to join in the conversation and contribute your ideas, songs, artwork, videos, poetry and more! Help us share God’s message of hope in ways that are colorful, compelling, and culturally relevant!

**Previous resource links:**

- Old Fashioned
- Andrews University Music and Worship Conference
- 7 Things You Can Do If You Want Things to Change ... And No One Else Does
- MINISTRYinMOTION
- My Best Advice
- Jesus Unlimited

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Lately I have been compiling a list of resources that can help pastors and church administrators to be more efficient. I get e-mails all the time from different ministries with resources that are supposed to lighten the load church leaders carry. Here are a few of the resources you may find helpful in your ministry. As a disclaimer, I have not used all of these tools – some just don’t fit my current context – but they sound so cool that I hope to use them sometime in the future. Some are free. Some are not. So here we go –

1. Open.church – free videos, curriculum, art, etc. to use in sermon series, small group study, etc.
2. Develop.me – an awesome resource that helps you keep track of staff members. Develop.Me is a performance review tool that helps churches promote a staff-wide culture of continuous, collaborative growth.
3. Church Metrics – Track everything that happens in church. Attendance, Giving, Volunteers, "Salvations", and customize it to track other things like how many cars in the parking lot, how many kids in each class,
4. Weebly.com – Inexpensive and nice website that can be built by anyone with an imagination. Important: These sites automatically convert to mobile friendly when on phone.
   ○ Yes, I know that AdventistChurchConnect is free for every single Adventist Church in North America. But they are so hard to work on and their templates are well… Why do you think so many of the churches that use them treat them like parked cars that don’t get moved?
5. FaithLife Groups – This blog explains how awesome it can be if used by the church or a small group. FaithLife is also linked with the Logos Bible Software (same company).
   • Share reading plans
   • Making Announcements
   • Creating Prayer Lists
   • Sending Newsletters
   • Discussing Sermons
6. CrossMRKT – Texting service to send one message that will reach as many people who sign up to receive text messages from the church. I use this service. You can do giveaways at church using text service too and the system will randomly pick the winner. That is a way to get people to sign up for the service.
   Most people have unlimited texting so this shouldn’t be an issue.

All right, that’s quite a bit to look at for awhile. Hope this is helpful.

Pedro Trinidad is pastor of the Concord International Church in Concord, CA
Scheduling Posts

By Angela Taipe

One of the biggest challenges that social media managers face is time. For most people, overseeing a Facebook page or Twitter account is just one of many tasks they have to accomplish on a daily basis.

To save yourself time during the week, sit down to create a content calendar of what to post throughout the week. Then in one sitting, write and schedule those posts to publish on their own. This is especially helpful if you would like to publish during times you are not in the office, such as evenings or weekends.

There are many free third-party apps that will help you schedule, such as Hootsuite, Buffer and Social Oomph among others, but for now let's look at how to schedule on the native Facebook and Twitter platforms themselves.

To schedule a post on Facebook, simply compose your post and click the arrow next to the post button. There you will have the option to schedule the post for a future date and time, backdate the post which will make it appear as a post from the past, or save the draft to edit and publish later.

On Twitter the option is hidden in the advertising function, but it's possible, and still free. Go to ads.twitter.com and at the top click "Creatives" and select "Tweets." When you click the "Compose Tweet" button at the top you have the option of scheduling for a future date. Make sure the Delivery option of "Standard" is selected at the bottom.

There are two things to consider when scheduling posts. The first is to keep your content calendar close at hand. You may need to cancel a post if breaking current events make it untimely or inappropriate. And second, just because you scheduled your content, doesn't mean you can forget your page. You'll still need to oversee appropriateness of comments and answer any questions.

But hopefully scheduling posts will help you find a few extra minutes in your day.

Angela Taipe is the media relations assistant and social media specialist of for the General Conference Communication Department
Four Things You Need to Know About Church IT Security

By Tony Vargas

Information Technology (IT) Security for Churches? So what is the big deal and what is it all about?

While dealing with unlocked doors, open windows, vandalism and other such costly issues, many churches don’t give much thought to the security of their technology. What this document is intended to do is to illustrate why IT Security should be at the top of the list along with the question of who has keys to the building. Each can be just as costly as the other.

For many in the world of information technology, computers and all things technical can appear daunting. In this article we will give you the administrator’s view of IT security. These are the things you need to know as the leader, so that as you implement safe practices at your church, or as you work with the computer experts in your church who do the implementation, you will understand the issues and recommended solutions enough to ensure that best practices are being used.

As we discuss the importance of IT Security, we intend to focus on these primary topics:

1. What do I need to protect and why?
2. Layers
3. Access control
4. Backups

What do I need to protect and why?

Many church and other related organizations may not consider that they have anything of much importance on their computers. However, in this day and age, information is money. And so you may be surprised just how much the information that you have is worth. And that information can be used in a variety of damaging ways when accessed by the wrong people.

Take for example, your church members list, including phone numbers and addresses. In this scenario, armed with this information, a criminal can contact church members selling goods and services which may not even exist. However, when these perpetrators know and use names of other church members, it lends them credibility. Your church members can be scammed simply because your church member list falls into the wrong hands. What else may be on your computers? Do you have financials information, bank account information, and passwords?

Let’s consider another scenario. Your computer is hacked and the individual who now has control of your computer may use your computer to store or share with others, information or material of an inappropriate nature or they may even use your computer and Internet service to launch attacks against others. Some may simply be interested in causing damage like any typical vandal who paints graffiti. Did you know you could be held liable for their actions?

And while nothing is guaranteed to keep everyone out, the steps you take will keep you safe from the “general hacking community.” These are the people who will do random scans just to see what is out there. Criminals of opportunity, you might say, who are looking for an open door.

So where to begin? The best approach to your IT security is layers. The more layers, the more protected you, your systems and your data will be. Each layer you put in place will overlap the next, creating an environment that is unwelcoming to those who would do harm.

Layers

Approaching your IT Security using a layering approach allows you to evaluate each level of your technology infrastructure. And so let’s start from the top down, so to speak, with your firewall.

Your firewall is the device that connects you to the Internet. It sits between your computers and the Internet provider’s device like a cable or DSL modem or router. Never connect your computers directly to the DSL or Cable Modem.

There are many types of firewalls and just as many price ranges for them. Talk to your church IT department or ask others what they use.

The most basic purpose of the firewall is to allow or deny certain types of network traffic into and out of your computer network. Like a doorman at the door of a building who based on certain policies, chooses who or what to allow through the door.

As you look at choosing an appropriate firewall, consider features such as intrusion detection and prevention, stateful packet inspection (a stateful firewall keeps track of the state of network connections traveling across it[1]) and filtering.

Remember, when configuring your firewall, never use the default credentials. Be sure to change the passwords using 10 or more digits that include numbers, upper and lower case letters and special characters if you can.

The next layer in your security to consider is network segmentation. This is the practice of separating your network into logical sections to separate communication types that do not need to see each other.

Take for example, your wireless network. You may want to offer your users wireless Internet access while at church as well as to provide wireless Internet access for your Pastor and other church computers. But you don’t want member computers to have access to your church computers as this would expose your church computers to risk of infection or intrusion since church member computers and devices may or may not be protected from viruses or other vulnerabilities. And since you cannot control how well they are protected, you should keep them safely separate from one another. This is network segmentation.

Many affordable access points now come with the capability to provide both a business and guest network connection for wireless users by providing multiple SSIDs or networks. One for church business and one for your church congregation.
The next layer would be your computers themselves. Just as for all of your other devices such as firewalls or routers, you need to be sure that you are installing your operating system updates and patches monthly. And not just for your operating system like Windows but for all of your software applications such as browsers, Adobe, etc.

In addition to computer and software updates, be sure to run a branded antivirus / anti-malware program to protect your computer from infection.

There are additional layers that should be mentioned that can be added to your security approach such as using a filtering service to scan your emails for virus, malware and phishing attempts and removing this type of content before it ever reaches your firewall and even web-filtering services that filter the types of content the computers on your network can browse to on the Internet such as known infected websites or sites with questionable or inappropriate content. There are many affordable choices for these types of services that add significant levels of protection to your IT Security approach and yet they can be some of the easiest to implement.

**Access Control?**

For each layer discussed above, you should always consider access control. This is the practice of keeping adequate control of access to each of your systems.

Remember that your security is only as strong as the weakest link and often this can be passwords that are too simplistic or often non-existent.

Additionally, providing access to users and having that information passed on un-intentionally or even intentionally to others is a common failure in access control.

Be sure to only provide passwords for these systems to those who need them. And remind them that these passwords are not to be shared.

For all of your devices such as firewalls, access points, computers, projectors and other similar equipment, start by implementing password complexity. This is the process of using passwords with 10 or more digits that include numbers, upper and lower case letters and special characters wherever you can. And remember to change your passwords regularly.

Additionally, for computers, you should also consider setting your computers to not automatically login but instead require a user to press Ctrl + Alt + Delete when logging in. Also, never show the last logged in user. And consider always locking your computers when you are away from them.

For access points, use a hidden SSID (network name) for your church staff computers so it doesn’t even show up for member or guest use. And consider changing your wireless passwords at least four times per year or more.

And what about physical access? How often do you find doors at your church left unlocked? Following the password rules above, you reduce the chance that someone may easily obtain access to sensitive information on your church computers. However, if someone steals your computers they will have unfettered access which will allow them to eventually bypass your password and to obtain your data. So to protect your information on those computers, you may want to consider encryption of your computer hard drive(s). There are many affordable or even free hard drive encryption applications that can protect your data in the event that the computer is stolen.

**Backups?**

Remember in all cases, you should have backups of your data that if possible can be stored offsite in a secure location. In the event that your computers crash, or are hacked and data is destroyed or damaged what would it take to restore your data?

Now think about the time it would take to rebuild the computers if it was a catastrophic loss due to a natural disaster or a theft. How long would it take to reinstall all of your applications and configure them on a new computer? Does anyone know how they were configured or will you have to start from scratch? Do you have all of your software to reinstall or was that damaged or lost as well? Will you be relying on church members to get things back up and running or will you need to hire an expensive consultant who charges by the hour?

Fortunately, there are easy ways to reduce the impact from both of these types of loss. While backing up files and data is important, there are a vast number of affordable programs that will "image" your entire hard drive. Imaging is the process of essentially taking a picture in time of your computer hard drive. From that image, you can not only restore files but you can literally restore that image to a new or repaired computer and within minutes, your Operating System, all of your software applications and your data is restored and you are up and running.

Imaging technology, along with larger hard drives, allows for weeks of computer backups to be safely stored and taken offsite allowing for recovery from even the most disastrous of events.

**Conclusion**

In looking at everything we have discussed, we can now realize that just as we need to mitigate risk to our church property by securing against those who are looking to vandalize or perhaps even steal from our church, so must we also take care to secure our technology from those who wish to damage our systems or steal and misuse our systems or information.

*Tony Vargas is the manager of information technology for Adventist Risk Management*

A Review Eugene Peterson’s Book Under the Unpredictable Plant – An Exploration in Vocational Holiness

By Mic Thurber

Some books I have read have a sort of timelessness about them. This is one of those books for me. It is also one of those books for which the introduction (which I usually skim) is required reading because it not only sets up the premise of the book so well, it provides food for thought. There are no empty calories in this food. One example from the introduction –

"I take it as a given that all of us would prefer to be our own gods than to worship God. The Eden story is reenacted daily, not only generally in the homes and workplaces of our parishioners but quite particularly in the sanctuaries and offices, studies, and meeting rooms in which we do our work. The only difference in the dynamics of the serpent’s seduction in the explicitly religious workplace is that when pastors are seduced, our facility with the language provides us with a thesaurus of self-deceiving euphemisms. Our skill in handling religious concepts gives us above-average competence in phrasing things in such a way that our vocational shift from tending the Garden to running the Garden, our radical fall from vocational holiness to career idolatry, goes undetected by all but the serpent."

In this book, Peterson opens a window into his own struggle for what he calls "vocational holiness." And he is blunt, honest, and forthcoming about his own journey to, in his words, find "a spirituality adequate to my vocation," concerned that he might be "abandoning his ordained vocation for a religious job."

Once we have begun to abandon vocational holiness, the temptation for ministry to become our idol is real, and it is not easily discernible. It almost always starts with good intentions, of course, but that does not make the end result any less deadly. Peterson's insights provide a clear mirror into which we can stare to face this issue within ourselves.

While I certainly don't subscribe to everything he says, Peterson says so much that hits home that I cannot ignore his call for pastors to commit to vocational holiness. Using the story of Jonah as his biblical paradigm, he invites us to wrestle with the constant pull toward Tarshish and away from the Nineveh to which we are called along with him.

Of the many books which can play a useful role in one's own "pastoral formation," this one tops my personal list.

Mic Thurber is ministerial director for the Mid-America Union Conference
7 Things You Can Do If You Want Things to Change … and No One Else Does

Being impatient, critical and blaming others is counterproductive. So what do you do?

So what do you do if you want things to change and pretty much no one else does?

- Your team doesn’t appear to be listening.
- The leaders or board above you are opposed.
- The culture in your organization is stale.

That’s a tough situation in which almost every leader finds themselves from time to time.

Clearly, you should pray. God uses our circumstances to push us closer to him. But what practical responses should you formulate?

Many natural instincts are unhelpful in situations like this. Being impatient, critical and blaming others is counterproductive.

So what do you do?

There are at least seven things you can do if you want to things to change and no one else does.

1. Cast Vision.

Nothing attracts people and resources like vision. And vision always precedes people and resources.

If you’re having trouble attracting people and resources to a better vision of the future, it might be because you simply haven’t cast a clear enough vision of a preferred vision.

It eventually becomes difficult not to follow a visionary leader. And if your vision is faithful to scripture and a sensible interpretation of where to head in the future, it will likely be compelling.

Will it always work? No. (See below for that.)

But far too many leaders quit before their vision is even articulated in any kind of compelling way.

You shouldn’t get angry at people for not following a vision you never told them about.

2. List All the Reasons You See for Change.

Maybe the change you want to make is obvious to you, but that doesn’t mean others see it.

So list every reason you see for the change. In writing.
You don't have to show it to anyone. Just write it out for yourself.

This will do two things:

1. **You'll become privately convinced of the strength of your argument.** Note: This cuts both ways. If there are few good reasons for the change, you could also talk yourself out of it (which would, of course, relieve your angst).

2. **You'll be more convincing when you talk about the change you'd love to see.** Not that you'd walk around saying, “And here's another reason ….” But if you’re cogent and make sense in conversation after conversation, you might change the tide of the discussion.

So grab a piece of paper or your Evernote, and make a list.

### 3. Change Yourself.

You're human. You'll be tempted to focus only on the changes you'd like to see.

But the best leaders also see a great opportunity in a stalemate. They focus on changing themselves.

A stalemate is a great opportunity to grow in character and skill. If you become the healthiest, most self-aware, kindest member of the team, people will be attracted to you and what you have to say.

And you won't be as busy trying to change them. Which might be a nice turn of events in some cases.

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Carey Nieuwhof is Lead Pastor of Connexus Church north of Toronto, Canada, blogs at www.careynieuwhof.com and is host of The Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast available for free on iTunes.

More from Carey Nieuwhof or visit Carey at http://careynieuwhof.com
"Change a few words around and I’d give this advice to any leader," says Ron Edmondson.

I love pastors. Each week, through this blog and my personal ministry, God allows me to partner with dozens of pastors, helping them think through life and ministry issues. I’ve learned that many pastors struggle to find people who will invest in them and help them grow as individuals, leaders and pastors.

Recently I had a pastor ask me for my “best advice” for other pastors. Wow! That’s hard to say. I've learned so much through the pastors who have invested in me and by experience. It’s hard to summarize all that I’ve learned. It could probably fill a book or two…but at least more than one blog post!

I put some thought into the question and decided to come up with a list of encouragement, one that I would give to all pastors, to answer his question. I’m sure there’s more (and you can help by adding yours), but this post is at least a start. Of course, wisdom is transferable to other fields, so change a few words around and I’d give this advice to any leader...some of them perhaps to any person.

Here are 12 words of encouragement for pastors:

Choose your friends wisely…but choose friends.

Don’t attempt to lead alone. Too many pastors avoid close friendships because they’ve been hurt. They trusted someone with information who used it against them. Finding friends you can trust and be real with means you’ll sometimes get injured, but the reward is worth it.

The church can never love your family as much as you do.

Your family needs you more than the church does. They can get another pastor. Your family doesn’t want another you. You’ll have to learn to say “no”, learn how to balance and prioritize your time, and be willing to delegate to others in the church. (You may want to read THIS POST from my friend Michael Hyatt on saying “no” with grace.)

If you protect your Sabbath day, your Sabbath day can better protect you.

You’ll wear out quickly without a day a week to rejuvenate. God designed us this way. Take advantage of His provision. Take time to rest. You may not rest like everyone else…for me rest doesn’t mean doing nothing…but you need time away from the demands of ministry regularly. Lead your church to understand you can’t be everywhere every time. You owe it to yourself, your family, your church and your God.

You have influence…use it well.
The pastorate comes with tremendous power and responsibility. It’s easy to abuse or take for granted. Don’t. Humility welcomes the hand of God on your ministry.

**No amount of accountability or structure will keep you from temptation if you’re heart is impure.**

Above all else, guard your heart. (Proverbs 4:23) Avoid any hint of temptation. Look for the warning signs your heart is drifting. Keep your heart saturated with God’s Word and in prayer.

**Let God lead.**

You can do some things well. God can do the impossible. Whom do you think should ultimately be leading the church? You’ll be surprised how much more effective your leadership will be when it’s according to His will and not yours.

More from Ron Edmondson or visit Ron at [http://www.ronedmondson.com/](http://www.ronedmondson.com/)