Family Fun Fair
By Matthew Vixie

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Read More
Armed Security: Good Idea or Bad?
By Arthur Blinci

The aftermath of the tragic deaths of nine church members in Charleston, SC continues to raise the question, what level of security should we have in our churches? News media reports indicate more congregations are considering the use of armed security guards or to involve armed church members to provide security during church services. (See: here and here)

Pastors and church administrators are asking Adventist Risk Management (ARM) to address the question: What should a pastor do if they learn church leaders in the congregation are considering the use of armed volunteers to enhance church security? Read More

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You have been in the same church for over 30 years, what have done to stay out of a ministry rut and how have you been able to stay relevant all these years?

If Isaiah 58:11 is going to become true for us, "You will be a well-watered garden whose springs will never fail," then we've got to read, we've got to read, we've got to read! I try to practice what I preach and read 7-8 books at a time. If you are an e-book generation read
12 e-books a year but for every e-book also add a p-book (paperback book). We have to reactivate the circuits in our mind. If we are totally dominated with the pattern of reading we all do today, skim-skim-hyperlink surfing, then we have untaught our brain the capacity to go deep. Deep reading, deep studying, and deep praying come out of this fountain of fresh information going onto the hard disk. Reading actually has the greatest capacity to impact our minds, our thinking processes, our very spirits and souls. There is only one way to stay fresh Sabbath after Sabbath, besides prayer - Reading is the only way to refresh the soul and the mind. Read More

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CALLED: David Franklin

I grew up in church, enjoyed church, participated in church, but I never really had a relationship with Jesus until late in high school. I was around 17 years old, when I realized I needed to actually encounter God and abide in Him in a way that I hadn't before-but I never wanted to be a pastor.

Now maybe that's the story for a lot of folks, but for me it was absolutely true. My plans were to work for a Fortune 500 company, be a marketing executive, make some money, have some power, and enjoy life. God had a different plan. Read More

JOIN THE DISCUSSION ON FACEBOOK

CALLED 3Q15 is Now Available

By Ivan Williams
Where were you when God called you into ministry? Maybe your call was a mighty shout from heaven. Perhaps your call was a slow steady affirmation from on high. What did you experience? What were you feeling?

In the latest issue of CALLED digital magazine we ask twelve pastors to relive their call for us. Each story comes in three versions. First there is a five minute video piece condensing the story into a short interview. Next there is the written version of the story, which summarizes the narrative arc. Finally there is the full uncut version of the video interview. Read More

JOIN THE DISCUSSION ON FACEBOOK

Events, Resources, Announcements

**My Moment of Truth**: Ed Keyes (Nevada-Utah Conference President) knew he had met his match when his daughter told him that if he didn't change his ways, he might not be around to play with his grandkids. Ed works for the Seventh-day Adventist church and knows all about the Adventist heath "advantage" where many Adventists are able to extend their lives approximately seven years beyond the average American, through a healthy, balanced lifestyle. But he wasn't living it. Weighing in at over 300 pounds, Ed knew that something had to be done. He had finally reached the tipping point.

**Korean D.Min. Cohort**: The Doctor of Ministry program at the Andrews Seminary is currently offering the opportunity for Korean-speaking pastors to do the doctoral program using their native language. A cohort
is forming now for a four-year curriculum in the Pastoral Ministry concentration. Topics of study will include church growth, spiritual and theological foundations, family ministry, and preaching. Written assignments may be done in Korean or in English. The program is subsidized by the conferences of the North American Division, making it very affordable! Pre-intensive assignments are underway now, with the first intensives to be at La Sierra, California in January. This may be a one-time-only opportunity--apply before the deadline of October 30! Call 1-269-471-3544 or email dmin@andrews.edu.

**The Millennium Project: Pilot Case Studies of NAD Churches Who Are Attracting and Keeping Young Adults (18-30)**

We need pastors and churches to be involved in a crucial research project that is being funded by grants from the General Conference, the North American Division and Andrews University. This research involves pilot case studies of NAD churches that are attracting, rechurching, and keeping young adults (18-30). The challenge that the Adventist church is facing today is that 50-70% of its young adults (18-30) are leaving the church. We are hoping that by studying churches that are attracting, rechurching, and keeping young adults and bringing them back to church, we will develop universal principles that any church can adopt to bring young adults back to their church. Our aim is to identify the culture and factors that are making these churches appeal to the younger generation. We will utilize a mixed methods approach (surveys, cases studies, observation, focus groups, guided interviews) with a strong emphasis on case study research. Read More

**Previous Resource Links:**

- Real Family Talk
• Longmont Church Elders Sentenced for Failure to Report Sex Abuse
• Self-Limitation: A Critical Leadership Characteristic
• Seven Key Reasons Your Church Attendance May Be Declining
• Seven Kinds of People You Can't Afford to Keep
• 4 Ways to Get a Grip on E-Mail
• 5 Tips for Leading Strong-Willed People

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It's a Sunday morning in September. A cool New England breeze is blowing as I hop into my car at 7:15. There are tables to be set up and a bouncy house to inflate. There's a swimming pool in the back seat of my car to integrate into the obstacle course at the annual Family Fun Day, hosted by the Merrimack Valley Adventist Church for the community.

Guests and members are met at the front by our youth – we want the community to see our best faces first! The teens not only greet our guests, but volunteer to give their car a free wash while they enjoy the activities. We provide a bucket for donations, and most are happy to help the kids raise funds for a worthy cause.

The action starts on the left with a yard sale. While moms and dads check out the goods, the kids hit the bouncy house. A variety of games are featured at different stations. Then there’s the animal show – snakes, lizards, turtles, alligators, and even a tarantula that kids can see, touch, and smell. The balloon guy is ready to entertain a long line of kids and parents with balloons twisted and shaped into animals and angels. Boy is he good! And of course there is plenty of good food. This is our chance to introduce our friends to veggie burgers, veggie hotdogs, and corn on the cob – hot off the grill!

This is a great opportunity for this pastor and church family to meet people from across our community. There’s the newly married couple who were out for a Sunday stroll and saw our sign. This is the first time they have ever tried a veggie hotdog and they are enjoying the free vegetarian lunch. This is also my chance to connect with a lot of church members I haven’t seen in a while.

All good things must come to a close, and by the time it is 4:00, I’m tired and ready for the clean-up. Chairs and tables go back on their racks. Hoses are put away and the obstacle course is taken down. The animals are put back in their cages. Left-over food from the grill is packaged up and sent home with different families. The youth are all smiles as they count their car wash money.

Today we have enjoyed an opportunity to make friends with our community families. And we have helped our community understand that we are not just a stuffy old congregation that worships in our church once a week and then leaves. We are here to serve. We are here to be friends helping friends become fully devoted followers of Christ.

Matthew Vixie is pastor of the Merrimack Valley and Billerica churches in Massachusetts
A North Carolina pastor wants to arm parishioners and train them to act as security guards in the wake of the June massacre at African Methodist Episcopal Church in South Carolina.

Melvin Clark, the reverend at Washington Missionary Baptist Church in Shelby, knows all too well that places of worship can be targets for attacks. He told NBC affiliate WCNC that he was held at gunpoint and taken hostage in his church by an assailant more than a decade ago.

More recently, nine members of a South Carolina church were gunned down during a Bible study in June, two churches in New Mexico were targeted by explosions in early August and two men were arrested in North Carolina last week after bringing a gun into a Charlotte church.

Clark said he doesn't want his church members to feel they are defenseless in case violence breaks out during one of their services, so he has decided to arm ten members of the church, who will act as security guards.

"People will begin to take matters into their own hands because they believe there is no plan in place," Clark told WCNC.

He is going to meet with local law enforcement at the end of the summer to iron out how to get the selected "security guards" properly trained and licensed.

Shelby Police Department Chief Jeff Ledford said he plans to host Clark and other local pastors for a church safety seminar. "Being on the same page and allowing our pastors to ask questions and work with us will be a key factor in all this going as safe as possible," he told NBC News.

"As far as arming people, I believe that people who are armed should be aware of the responsibility and liability associated with it," Ledford said, adding that church leaders ultimately get to decide whether to arm members of their church.

"Training and communication with law enforcement should be a vital part," Ledford said. Those who wish to become church security guards can be trained by police or through community college programs, he said.
Regardless of the methods they choose, Ledford said he thinks it's "as important for religious institutions to have an active shooter plan as it is for schools and businesses."

Currently, the Washington Missionary Baptist Church is outfitted with surveillance cameras and a system in which visitors must be buzzed in, but Clark hopes that his plan will make the church even more secure.
After Charleston, black churches straddle fine line between security, openness

Tyler Pager

(Video: Stephen B. Morton, AP)

373 CONNECT 21 LINKEDINEMAILMORE

About 30 people, retreating from a humid Tuesday afternoon in Washington, D.C., fill the pews for an early evening vacation Bible study at Allen Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church. A minister steps to the front of the sanctuary, both Bible and iPad in hand.

"Whenever you’re operating out of a pure and genuine heart, expect God to favor you," Rev. Ronald Wilson tells the worshipers.

Outside church doors, in the bustle and hum of a neighborhood called Anacostia, police collect evidence in the shooting death of a 31-year-old man, gunned down just a block away a few minutes earlier.

The shooting, although unrelated to the church, serves as a stark reminder of the nation’s persistent gun violence that two months ago hit closer than ever before when a white man killed nine people at a historic black church in Charleston, S.C. Now, churches such as Allen Chapel AME must confront their own vulnerabilities without undercutting what lies at the foundation of their faith — an open-door policy meant to create a safe haven in African-American communities.

CAN’T CHANGE THE GOSPEL

The long-standing practice and tradition of the churches, historically at the center of the black community, is to welcome all who want to pray. Anyone can enter the church for a Bible study or Sunday morning services, and that’s how it has been since the first AME church opened its doors in 1787. So when Dylann Roof, the 21-year-old charged in the Charleston shooting, entered Emanuel AME church on June 17, no questions were asked.

After the rampage, however, black churches contemplated whether the time had come to ask more questions when a stranger arrives. Many church leaders remain steadfast in keeping the church open, saying closing the doors would be antithetical to the church’s mission.

"To change the open-door policy would be to change the Gospel," said Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, pastor at Greenleaf Christian Church in Goldsboro, N.C., and president of the North Carolina NAACP. "That is not the way the black church has responded historically."

The church belongs to the Lord, said Rev. Faye Daniels, an associate minister at New Ebenezer Baptist Church in Columbia, S.C. As people of faith, Daniels said they do not have the authority to restrict access to the church.

"The church is a gathering of believers, who are positioned and postured for the sole purpose of drawing people in," she said. "To close the door and alter the open-door policy would be in total opposition to the whole purpose of the
church."

Short of closing the doors, churches are weighing other options. Since Charleston, churchgoers and leaders said they notice an increased vigilance among their members. It's not quite a sense of fear, they say, but people seem more cautious than they have in the past.

“We're still deliberate in carrying out The Great Commission, but I think there’s a keen awareness, and we’re more vigilant of our surroundings,” said Rev. Dr. J. Anthony Josey, an ordained itinerant elder at Washington's Allen Chapel AME, referring to Jesus' instruction to his disciples in the Gospel of Matthew to spread his teachings. “Now I think along with the welcome comes an era of vigilance. That sixth sense kicks in now, whereas before maybe we had become a little bit more complacent.”

USATODAY.COM

BEHIND THE BLOODSHED: THE UNTOLD STORY OF AMERICA'S MASS KILLINGS

STEPS FOR SECURITY

In the weeks after the Charleston shooting, AME leaders distributed a document entitled, “12 Considerations for Congregational Security.” Chief among the suggestions for improving church security is prayer, but the document also calls for creating a security plan and team, improving communication, developing relationships with local law enforcement and securing and monitoring the church’s entrance and exit points.
Rev. Ronald Wilson leads a vacation Bible study in July at Allen Chapel AME Church in Washington, D.C. Wilson is the minister to media and technology at the church. (Photo: Tyler Pager, USA TODAY)

Black leaders also arranged town hall meetings for churches to review safety protocols and connect church leaders with law enforcement officials. Lonnie Randolph, president of the S.C. State Conference of the NAACP, said more than 150 ministers and church members attended a meeting at a local high school in Columbia, S.C., a few weeks after the shooting. They discussed ways to beef up security, such as community policing and improving camera systems within churches.

"Knowledge is power, and we are trying to do what we can to empower churches," Randolph said. "It was an unfortunate event that took place, a very sad event, but we also know that this could have happened anywhere in America."

Some churches considered adding metal detectors and armed guards, Randolph said, but those steps have yet to gain traction. Church leaders say such measures are too disruptive and inconsistent with the notion of a church as a sanctuary for worship.

"There has to be a distinction between the church and an armed garrison," said AME Bishop Gregory Ingram, who is based in Philadelphia. "If every church had barbed wires and guards around it, it ceases from being a church. It becomes almost like a microcosm of all of things wrong in society, not a place with open arms."

Apart from the philosophical struggle, creating security plans for churches presents more practical challenges than other institutions, said Jiles Ship, president of Homeland Global Strategies, a New Jersey-based public and safety management and security consulting company. Ship, who spent more than 25 years in law enforcement, works frequently with black churches in the Northeast region.

The key for security with churches, he said, is being prepared and trained for all emergency situations including an active shooter, natural disasters and medical emergencies. Ship said he recommends churches establish a safety ministry to coordinate emergency management planning and assess risks.

USA TODAY

'Lone wolf' attacks are difficult to detect — and difficult to prevent

Most churches, Ship said, don't have security plans in place, and with roughly 350,000 churches nationwide, statistics on church security measures are not tracked. The perceived uptick in gun-related violence, however, has made churches more aware of the importance of implementing security plans, he said.

"We need to remember that the goal of the church is to reach out to those at all levels of society and to bring them into the church, so we cannot routinely screen out 'undesirables,' so to speak," Ship said. "As church security professionals, we must develop non-intrusive and low-key planning and techniques."

POLITICAL ACTIVISM REAWAKENED
Although physical security is one approach, many church leaders believe the way to avert violence is to address the underlying injustices that breed it.

For many African Americans, the church forms the center of their community. It is the place from which African Americans fought for their freedom and for civil rights. It is supposed to be a refuge.

“No public place is exempt anymore,” said Rev. Dr. Michael Bell Sr., the pastor at Washington's Allen Chapel AME Church. “Not a theater, not the church, not a school, not a college campus, not a mall. There is no place that is exempt from those kinds of incidents from happening.”

Roof’s actions have put the black church in a familiar position — back at the center of the battle against racism and injustices. When the AME church was founded, it was a leader in fighting slavery, and many churches served as stops on the Underground Railroad. The church also led civil rights efforts in the 1960s, but following passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, John Richard Bryant, the senior bishop of the AME church, said some leaders of black churches became more relaxed, as blacks felt race relations had improved.

Now, with the spotlight on police violence and systemic racism, church leaders are calling for black churches to tackle these injustices.

“The safest thing for the church to do is to address systemic racism, the racism that produced Dylann Roof. He wasn’t just a lone person,” said Barber, the president of the North Carolina NAACP. “It was the system and context and racism that produced him. If the church is going to be saved, it has to stand up and challenge that racism, whether it’s coming out of the mouth of politicians or where it’s rooted in the policies that are passed in our political processes.”
Pastor Bill Lee at Loudon Avenue Christian Church in Roanoke, Va., encourages civil discourse. He said he not only wants to have more conversation with his congregants about racial violence at Bible studies, but also with the community at large.

In Washington’s Eighth Ward, where Allen Chapel AME Church is located, Bell, the pastor, focuses on improving relationships among the black residents in the community. But Bell also reaches out to a predominantly white church in Springfield, Va., on issues of race relations.

One thing church leaders discourage: violent protests like the riots and looting in Ferguson, Mo., and Baltimore. The absence of violence following the Charleston shooting, church leaders say, painted a different picture of blacks in the media. Only a few days after the massacre, the victims’ families told Roof they forgave him when he appeared in a courtroom via videoconferencing.

“There was an opportunity for Christians, for African Americans to break the stigma that’s been attached to us when pain and suffering has been inflicted upon us,” said Josey, the ordained itinerant elder at Allen Chapel AME. “We’re Christians, and this was an act against the Christian community and not just the African American community.”

‘ALWAYS A PRIME TARGET’

About a week before the Charleston shooting, a man entered Allen Chapel AME Church for the 8 p.m. worship service. Upon arriving, he ripped off his shirt, and Bell, the church’s pastor, said he appeared to be on synthetic drugs. Bell said he tried to embrace the man but was pushed away. Bell then asked seven of the men in the service to surround the man as a gesture of support.

Bell described the experience as scary, but the service went on, the congregation remained calm, and churchgoers continued singing hymns to God. Bell called police after the service, and they took the man to the hospital.

The man did not harm anyone, Bell said, but he entered the church as anyone is allowed to. Just like Dylann Roof did. It’s a risk that black churches around the nation still take every day.

“It’s important for those of us in the black church to understand that we will always be a prime target to those who want to do evil,” said AME Bishop Reginald Jackson, who is based in Orange, N.J. “Therefore, that’s a reality that we have to face, and a reality for which we also have to prepare for.”

Follow @tylerpager on Twitter.

MASS MURDERS AT FAITH ORGANIZATIONS

Since 1963, 76 people have died in violence directed at faith groups.

Number of victims

SEPT. 15, 1963

Birmingham, Ala.
After Charleston, black churches straddle fine line between security, open doors.

**16th Street Baptist Church**

- **JUNE 22, 1980**
  - Daingerfield, Texas
  - First Baptist Church
  - 4 people killed

**JUNE 22, 1980**

- Daingerfield, Texas
- First Baptist Church
- 4 people killed

**AUG. 10, 1991**

- Waddell, Ariz.
- Wat Promkunaram Buddhist Temple
- 9 people killed

**AUG. 10, 1991**

- Waddell, Ariz.
- Wat Promkunaram Buddhist Temple
- 9 people killed

**MARCH 10, 1999**

- Gonzales, La.
- New St. John Baptist Church
- 4 people killed

**MARCH 10, 1999**

- Gonzales, La.
- New St. John Baptist Church
- 4 people killed (Three killed in church, one kidnapped and killed off site)

**SEPT. 15, 1999**

- Fort Worth, Texas
- Wedgwood Baptist
- 7 people killed

**SEPT. 15, 1999**

- Fort Worth, Texas
- Wedgwood Baptist
- 7 people killed
After Charleston, black churches straddle fine line between security, open... http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2015/08/15/black-churches-s...
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Armed Security: Good Idea or Bad?

By Arthur Blinci

The aftermath of the tragic deaths of nine church members in Charleston, SC continues to raise the question, what level of security should we have in our churches? News media reports indicate more congregations are considering the use of armed security guards or to involve armed church members to provide security during church services. (See here and here) Pastors and church administrators are asking Adventist Risk Management (ARM) to address the question: What should a pastor do if they learn church leaders in the congregation are considering the use of armed volunteers to enhance church security?

Adventist Risk Management understands this has been a question asked many times in recent months. Our first counsel to pastors – Please Do Not Allow this to occur in your congregation. ARM understands church members who ask this question only have the best interest and safety of their fellow believers in mind. However, there are numerous risks and legal issues, which must be carefully evaluated before an informed decision can be made by the local church board and conference.

Let's review seven issues that must be evaluated during the due diligence process:

1. Any consideration of this issue must first be made in counsel with the local conference officers and the conference attorney to review the gun use laws of your jurisdiction.

2. Has your conference established a policy that no firearms will be allowed on conference owned property? Your church is private property and in many states, the property owner can establish their property as a weapons free zone.

3. Does the individual who may be willing to provide armed security for the congregation have the proper license or concealed weapons permit and firearm liability insurance? State laws vary as it relates to gun licensing and whether a concealed weapon permit grants permission to the owner to have a gun in a house of worship.

4. What level of training in firearm use does the individual have and do they have law enforcement experience in the use of deadly force in a public assembly area?

5. Is the armed security service provided by a licensed and bonded security company?

6. If a pastor knowingly allows a church member to carry a weapon into the church for the purpose of providing armed security, this individual becomes an agent of the local church and conference through vicarious liability. Thus the actions taken by this individual could hold the conference liable for negligence and civil damages.

7. If your conference is insured through Adventist Risk Management’s general liability insurance policy, please be advised there is a Firearms Use Exclusion. This means the use of a firearm by either an employee or volunteer in the course of their duties is not covered under this insurance policy. In other words, the conference or the individual would be personally held liable for any legal actions or damages.

Does this mean armed security is forbidden at Adventist churches? No, however following appropriate due
diligence and obtaining local conference permission is essential before it is implemented at a local church. If armed security is going to be used special insurance should be obtained for security officer professional liability coverage. This policy is specifically underwritten and insured by the commercial insurance market. ARM’s account executive can assist your conference to determine availability and pricing. This is not a decision that can be made without careful consideration of the risks and costs.

A pastor’s first consideration should always be to establish a security plan and practice emergency drills with the congregation. (See NAD Best Practices – July 7, 2015) The U.S. Concealed Carry Association counsels congregations “to be proactive in the areas of awareness and to have several tested and practiced plans of action thought out prior to having to come up with one as an event (active shooter) unfolds.”[1] Church security professionals indicate, “The key for security in churches is being prepared and trained for all emergency situations including an active shooter, natural disasters and medical emergencies. Churches should establish a safety ministry to coordinate emergency management planning and assess risks.”[2] Likewise, ARM encourages all congregations to have a local church safety officer. To learn more on how to develop emergency plans for your church or how to provide training for your local safety officer, visit www.Adventistrisk.org.

Arthur Blinci is assistant to the president for Adventist Risk Management

Three Questions for Dwight Nelson

By Chris Estay

You have been in the same church for over 30 years, what have done to stay out of a ministry rut and how have you been able to stay relevant all these years?

If Isaiah 58:11 is going to become true for us, “You will be a well-watered garden whose springs will never fail,” then we’ve got to read, we’ve got to read, we’ve got to read! I try to practice what I preach and read 7-8 books at a time. If you are an e-book generation read 12 e-books a year but for every e-book also add a p-book (paperback book). We have to reactivate the circuits in our mind. If we are totally dominated with the pattern of reading we all do today, skim-skim-hyperlink surfing, then we have untaught our brain the capacity to go deep. Deep reading, deep studying, and deep praying come out of this fountain of fresh information going onto the hard disk. Reading actually has the greatest capacity to impact our minds, our thinking processes, our very spirits and souls. There is only one way to stay fresh Sabbath after Sabbath, besides prayer – Reading is the only way to refresh the soul and the mind.

If you can speak to all of the young Adventist pastors in the world in their first decade of ministry, what is the one critical thing you wished all they would do that would grow the rest of their career?

Without a question that is to develop a deepening prayer life. E. M. Bounds book Power Through Prayer is absolutely a truism in the universe “No prayer in the closet, no power in the pulpit. Much prayer in the closet, much power in the pulpit.” Look at Jesus getting up a great while before day. Drawing near to God and finding in Him our forever friend, going deep with him like Paul did, like Moses did, every great man and woman in the Book was a person of prayer.

If I can make one appeal to young pastors, it is that they begin the discipline of prayer in solitude and silence alone with God. Desire of Ages, page 83 sets the benchmark, “It would be well for us to take a thoughtful hour every day in the contemplation of the life of Christ.” That is the minimum, one hour with Him a day. This idea that I got five or ten minutes but it is quality time is rubbish. God’s not into quality time – He is into quantity time. When we were little kids we didn’t care if daddy spent three minutes of quality time with us we wanted quantity time with him rolling around on the ground. God is the same way He wants quantity time with you.

Rumor has it that you still have a few years left in your ministry. What do you plan to do during your last decade of ministry to keep growing as a pastor?

I have toyed with getting another degree. Specialize of going even deeper than I currently am. Nothing will expand your horizon like a new bibliography of required reading that you would otherwise not read. I am definitely going to
do the CEUs of Adventist learning – Come on its free! Ten to twenty hours a year, we can all do that.

Sometimes changing and radically shifting the context of ministry will bring growth. Our people have been very gracious of letting me preach for 32 years in the same pulpit, but God may say “Ok I have one more new environment for you that will look completely different than this.” If He says that, I am completely open to that. Wherever God wants me, I want to go deeper in my relationship with Him. I want to max out and go all out for God in my last decade.

Look at Moses the older he got, the closer he was with God. The older Paul got, the closer he got. John the apostle was just young John boy, 18 years old, but as he aged he became John the elder and kept drawing closer and closer to Jesus. If Enoch walked with God for three hundred and some years, you and I can go deeper with God the older we get. That is what I hunger for. I want that for you and for every pastor.

*Chris Estay is the pastor for the Sonoma and Novoto churches in California. Dwight Nelson is the senior pastor for the Pioneer Memorial Church on the campus of Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan*
David Franklin Interview

I grew up in church, enjoyed church, participated in church, but I never really had a relationship with Jesus until late in high school. I was around 17 years old, when I realized I needed to actually encounter God and abide in Him in a way that I hadn't before—but I never wanted to be a pastor.

Now maybe that's the story for a lot of folks, but for me it was absolutely true. My plans were to work for a Fortune 500 company, be a marketing executive, make some money, have some power, and enjoy life. God had a different plan.

When I was a senior in high school, I was accepted to the University of Southern California (USC) and told, "don't get a grade less than a C because if you do, we will have to revoke your acceptance." Unfortunately senioritis got the best of me—I got a D in an AP Physics class.

I got a call from the USC recruitment director. She told me, "I'm sorry, we can't accept you into the program, but, if you go to community college for a year and work on your prerequisites, we'll be happy to accept you in next year."

I agreed to this offer, but I was devastated. I had done well in school my entire life. I had a great GPA, and was president of my class. I went to the community college and while there I began to understand how to discern God's voice. I decided I wasn't going to go to USC after all, but I was going to attend Oakwood College.

Attending Oakwood was transformational. It was on those grounds that I deepened my relationship with Jesus Christ. I decided to study business, not yet discerning where God wanted me. I felt I was moving in the right direction.

When I arrived on campus, I prayed this prayer. "Lord, what I want is to get an internship with a company for two summers, and I want the internship to pay for part of my college education. Additionally, I want them to put some money in my pocket. When I'm done with school I want to get a job with that company, or a similar company, making $40,000 for the first year with an option in the second year to double that salary and be on a fast track to executive leadership."

In my first summer there, I received an internship at Coca Cola with an opportunity to work on their Coca Cola Classic marketing brand team, their prize jewel. They were giving me $10,000 in scholarship monies and they were putting another $5,000 in my pocket plus a whole host of other benefits.

After the first summer, God said, "I don't want you to go back to Coca Cola." I went back anyway. I worked and was successful, from an outward perspective or an outward appearance, but I wasn't at peace.

Back at Oakwood after that second summer, I found myself sitting on a friend's couch, feeling like the Spirit of the...
Lord had left me. It was the deepest emptiness I've ever encountered. It's weird, because there were people all around me, and yet I felt totally isolated. It was this sense of not having anything. It was dark and empty, and it's something that I don't ever want to experience again. I said, “God, whatever You want me to do, I'll do it.”

From that point, God started leading me into pastoral ministry. I'd love to say I accepted the call to pastoral ministry that very night, but unfortunately that was not the case. I was still hunting for a way to do what God wanted me to do, and yet do what I wanted to do.

I was in my senior year when another job offer came my way. I said, "Okay, God, I'm not going back to Coca Cola, but J.P. Morgan Chase is offering me an opportunity. You need Christian people in the financial community. Of course, this makes sense."

So I went to the job interview. As I was being interviewed, I heard the voice of the Lord speak to me again, saying, "I'm going to give you the job, but I don't want you to take it."

A few weeks later, I got a call from J.P. Morgan Chase. "Mr. Franklin, we'd like to offer you a position. We want to offer you $40,000 with a $6,000 signing bonus, and we want to put you in the Leadership Development Program so that in a year's time you'll double that salary and be on your way to executive leadership."

I was blown off my seat, to say the least—that God would orchestrate this in the exact way that I had asked, But the Lord had already spoken to me, “I'm going to give you the job, but I don't want you to take it."

So I told them, “I appreciate the offer but I have to respectfully decline.” I think God was saying to me, listen, I can do even more than you've asked. What's even more important is listening to My voice and discerning My will for your life. If you can hear Me, even in the midst of challenging circumstances, if you can sense My voice calling you, then you're going to end up in a much better place than what you have desired for yourself."

Here I was, a senior, in my second semester preparing to graduate, without a job. So, I said, "Well, Lord, whatever You want me to do, I'll do." I spent the next year doing mission work, going overseas, going all across the United States, preaching and teaching.

I found myself preaching one night, under the African sky in Zambia, and it wasn't going well. I said, "God, this is not for me. I don't want to do this." I felt so inadequate and ineffective—and He said, "Now I've got you exactly where I want you."

What I said in that moment was, “God, if You can use me like this, if You can use me when I feel like I'm at my worst, if You can use me even when I feel like I've failed, then Lord whatever you want me to do, I'll do it.” I experienced a deep sense of what it means to be covered by God's grace. It was that night, out in the middle of Choma, Zambia, that I accepted the call to ministry.

My pastor back home in California had seen God's call on my life and had invited me, a year prior to my time in Africa, to come home and be associate pastor at my home church. It took awhile but I finally picked up the phone and called my pastor. "I'm coming home," I announced. He asked, “What? You mean you’re coming home to visit?” I said, "No, if the opportunity is still open, I'd like to come home and work with you as your associate pastor. I feel like I've heard the voice of God speak in my life, and I want to surrender to God's voice."

I spent two years, as a youth pastor, at my local church in California, and then felt it was time to go on to seminary. I was continually running into situations that I didn't have training to manage or to deal with properly. I only had a few tools in my chest. My undergraduate degree was in marketing and business, and going to the seminary was an opportunity for me to actually have a theological degree under my belt, and really begin to rigorously wrestle with
some questions that had accumulated since my childhood. It would also allow me to explore the broader church and to really expand my understanding of the kingdom of God.

My first six years after seminary, I pastored in the Baltimore area. Presently, I am the lead pastor at Miracle Temple Church.

I'm so excited about what God is doing. My journeys and wrestlings have brought me into a special relationship with God. Now, as I walk through challenging circumstances and obstacles, there's this experiential memory—of my struggle accepting God's call in my life that helps me to understand that God is leading in any given situation.
Where were you when God called you into ministry? Maybe your call was a mighty shout from heaven. Perhaps your call was a slow steady affirmation from on high. What did you experience? What were you feeling?

In the latest issue of CALLED digital magazine we ask twelve pastors to relive their call for us. Each story comes in three versions. First there is a five minute video piece condensing the story into a short interview. Next there is the written version of the story, which summarizes the narrative arc. Finally there is the full uncut version of the video interview.

For some the call was a shout from heaven, and for others, a still small voice. Richie Halversen shares his bitter battle with addiction and how his utter reliance on God paved the way for ministry. David Franklin tells how God answered all of his prayers, but showed David a way that far exceeded his prayers. Jaime Pombo recounts how God validated him not only as a human being but as a servant of God. Lori Farr explains how God spoke to her in very concrete ways about how He had a second career in ministry waiting for her. Marvin Wray reveals reflects upon a lifetime of service to a God who loves people. Rodlie Ortiz remembers in graphical detail the ways that God used to get his attention. These are just half of the dozen stories in this edition of CALLED digital magazine.

But before you look at any of the stories watch the three minute film entitled 'Hearts Afire,' written and directed by award winning filmmaker Jason Satterlund. As you watch, see which character you can relate to, as each responds to his or her call.

CALLED digital magazine for pastors is available to read on most popular smart devices including tablet devices such as iPad and Android. An increasing number of phones are able to display the magazine as well. Do a search for “NAD Resources” on the Apple app store or Google Play and install the NAD Resource app. From there you can download current and past issues of CALLED with no subscription fee. If you prefer to read the magazine on computer you are free to download the interactive pdf or click on the article links below to read online.

Wherever and however your call came to you, I praise God that you answered that call and serve as a pastor in the Seventh-day Adventist church.
CALLED 3rd Quarter 2015 - Introduction

CALLED 3rd Quarter 2015 - Abraham Jules

CALLED 3rd Quarter 2015 - David Franklin

CALLED 3rd Quarter 2015 - Harold Altamirano

CALLED 3rd Quarter 2015 - Jaime Pombo

CALLED 3rd Quarter 2015 - Lori Farr
CALLED 3rd Quarter 2015 - Richie Halversen

CALLED 3rd Quarter 2015 - Marvin Wray

CALLED 3rd Quarter 2015 - Rodlie Ortiz

CALLED 3rd Quarter 2015 - Pranitha Fielder

CALLED 3rd Quarter 2015 - Matt Axford
CALLED 3rd Quarter 2015 - Stewart Lozenski

CALLED 3rd Quarter 2015 - Myron Edmonds

- CALLED 3rd Quarter 2015 - web version
- CALLED 3rd Quarter 2014 - website version
Ministry Partners

The Millennium Project

Pilot Case Studies of NAD Churches
Who Are Attracting and Keeping Young Adults (18-30)

We need pastors and churches to be involved in a crucial research project that is being funded by grants from the General Conference, the North American Division and Andrews University. This research involves pilot case studies of NAD churches that are attracting, rechurching, and keeping young adults (18-30). The challenge that the Adventist church is facing today is that 50-70% of its young adults (18-30) are leaving the church. We are hoping that by studying churches that are attracting, rechurching, and keeping young adults and bringing them back to church, we will develop universal principles that any church can adopt to bring young adults back to their church. Our aim is to identify the culture and factors that are making these churches appeal to the younger generation. We will utilize a mixed methods approach (surveys, cases studies, observation, focus groups, guided interviews) with a strong emphasis on case study research.

In Phase One we need to identify churches that are ministering effectively to young adults. This research will define young adults as those between 18-30. The criteria for churches that are ministering effectively to young adults is two-fold: (a) Young adults comprise a minimum 15-20% of active church attenders (b) over the last five years through baptism, transfer, rechurching of dropouts and/or churching of seekers the Young adult population in the church has grown by 3% in attendance

We would love to hear from pastors who believe that their church matches the research criteria:
kiddersj@andrews.edu | Kenley@andrews.edu
Longmont Church Elders Sentenced for Failure to Report Sex Abuse Allegations

I do not usually post specific stories about abuse. I felt it was important to post this one because it sends a warning message. If there is an accusation of abuse, the police need to be included, even when we do not want to do this. As leaders, we are liable when we have information and do not report it. Even more than being liable in the courts, we are liable before God if we sweep it under the carpet and the abuser finds another victim. This is serious business – with the courts and with God.

BOULDER, Colo. – Four leaders of a Longmont church have been sentenced for failing to report sexual-assault allegations against the church’s youth pastor in 2013.

The Boulder Daily Camera reports that Vinelife Church senior pastor Walter Roberson and executive pastor Robert “Bob” Young will serve 10 days in jail or on work crew, elder Edward Bennell will serve two days in jail or on work crew, and elder Warren Williams will perform 40 hours of community service.

All four men pleaded no contest to failure to report child abuse.

Prosecutors say the men failed to report allegations that then-Vinelife youth pastor Jason Roberson, 36, had an inappropriate relationship with a church member starting when she was 15 and continuing for seven years. Roberson pleaded guilty and was sentenced last year to two years in prison for sexual exploitation and stalking.
Senior pastor Walter Roberson is Jason Roberson’s father.

The church officials had a duty to report the alleged child abuse to law enforcement or human services officials.

The judge, seeking to send a message, exceeded prosecutors’ requests for sentencing.

“There was enough information that the parties should have made that report to law enforcement,” Judge David Archuleta said during Thursday’s sentencing hearing. “A message has to be sent that this cannot happen.”

For a Video link and the rest of the article go here.
Self-Limitation: a critical leadership characteristic
Self-limitation: a critical leadership characteristic

I am still processing the events of the past few weeks, trying to make sense of what has happened in San Antonio. My reflections lead me to a characteristic of leadership that has been not just neglected, but completely ignored for a very long time: self-limitation.

We have bought into the culture of ‘more’ – bigger is better seems to be the consensus. More programs we can report, more baptisms we can document, bigger churches we can build, larger attendances at evangelistic meetings, increase in tithe, higher enrolment in our schools…. This seems to be what we are striving for. Leaders have bought into this culture of “more and bigger” and have become hostages to the spell of growth and progress. So, my question is very simple: how big and how much more we need to be in order to fulfil our God-given mission?

Jesus, in His countercultural and completely counterintuitive approach to saving humanity decided that self-limitation is the only way to accomplish His mission (Philippians 2:5-11). He abandoned His divinity, limited his power, and restrained His influence. If we as a church had access to all the powers and resources Jesus had at his disposal – based on what I see now — I think we would have used it all. I am afraid that because we think big and more we no longer see the small and the seemingly insignificant. We live in a society that knows full well that bigger and more is not sustainable. We are using resources to the point that the generations after us will be deprived of basic human rights, including clean water, shelter, energy, healthy food and safety. The only solution for the world’s problems is self-limitation for the sake of another. But the world will not show the way. On the contrary, more and more – bigger and bigger – will continue to dominate the world economy and worldview. We know the consequences, but we all want more.

Could it be that the church needs to show the way, demonstrate how to shape the future? Is it time to practice holy self-limitation? Rather than buying into the globalized and incorporated institutional religion that glories in the size and numbers, we need to start seeing the importance of small and insignificant: small churches and communities, individuals who are struggling with day-to-day real issues, single mothers trying to provide for their families, teenagers who are asking what is the meaning of life and why is it that the church is so out of touch.

Imagine if during San Antonio discussions we exercised self-limitation! If the leaders self-limited their influence to promote their agenda. If ethnic voting blocs self-limited their power for the sake of the greater good? If my power to cheer or boo or clap was self-limited by indeed considering the other first. If we self-limited our own perspective and allowed the grace of respecting a different opinion; if we limited our need to compete and get our own way; if we gave up the “winners and losers” mentality.

As leaders in God’s church, we are called to make disciples, to create environments where disciples can grow. To facilitate processes where individuals (small and insignificant as they may appear to be) can accept Jesus’ invitation to follow Him. It will take mature leadership, a self-limiting leadership for this to happen. It will take leaders who will refuse to buy into “bigger and more” and will simply focus on one person at a time. It will take courageous leaders who will not be enticed into focusing on big and impressive numbers – but will be true servants, servants who are prepared to self-limit for the sake of someone else.
Historically, it is the self-limiting leaders who have created movements. Jesus, of course, is one of them. So is Mother Theresa, and Martin Luther King, and Gandhi, and William Wilberforce, and Nelson Mandela, and many others. Once upon a time we were a movement – not a denomination! Once upon a time we had leaders who self-limited for the sake of the movement.

Here are some characteristics of self-limiting leadership:

**Seven Characteristics of a Self-Limiting Leader:**

1. Voluntary self-sacrifice
2. Vulnerability
3. Being present to others
4. Voluntary powerlessness
5. Continual purification from self-centeredness
6. Humility
7. Openness to others

How many of the above characteristics do you deliberately nurture in your leadership style? How many of those characteristics are visible in the organisation you lead? How much of the above was manifested in recent meetings?

We are encouraged to be leaders like Jesus: “let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” Paul says (Phil 2:5). What kind of leaders? The text indicates the concept of self-emptying – Jesus made Himself “empty” so He could serve those He came to save.

My view is that as long as we rely on our positions and titles, our corporate structures and hierarchies to “do church” there will be very little “self-emptying” and thus very little disciple-making. This is a concept Baby Boomers struggle with, but I see glimmers of hope: young people who appreciate this idea and see the church through a different lens. They see people, not structures. They see needs, not policies, they see diversity as an asset rather than a threat, and they see a new way of impacting those who are suffering. But, it will take a voluntary self-sacrifice (“emptying”) from us who are in church leadership positions today to allow the next generation to step up and lead. Are we empty enough for this to happen? Am I?
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UPCOMING EVENTS

3 - 7 August 2015
Island Leadership Development Training - Samoa

13-14 August 2015
Ministerial Development Discussions - SQC
Seven Key Reasons Your Church Attendance May Be Declining

My five-year old grandson asked me how old I was. When I told him I would turn 60 in a few weeks, he responded: “I didn’t realize people got that old.”

Indeed, in 60 years, like any of us who have lived a few years, I have seen change, lots of change. And I am seeing change in local congregations faster than any time in my lifetime. One of the most disheartening changes I am seeing is the declining attendance in a majority of churches. I am asked repeatedly to diagnose and help with these challenges.

Though addressing the issue of declining attendance cannot be covered in a brief blog post, I hope it will be helpful to share some high-level perspectives. See if any of these seven reasons apply to your church.

1. **“Cultural Christians” no longer see the need to attend church.** “Cultural Christian” is really an oxymoron. I refer here to those men and women who once attended church for social, political, or business reasons. Most of them no longer feel it is necessary to be in church to be a regarded citizen in the community.

2. **Church members are attending less frequently.** I have noted in other articles how I see this development as potentially the greatest contributor to attendance decline. Three decades ago, a very active church member attended three times a week. Today we call those who attend three times a month an active church member.

3. **Expectations are lower for church members.** One of the reasons church members attend less frequently is that very little is expected of them in many churches. If we expect little of our members, that is exactly what we will get.

4. **Insufficient emphasis on groups.** This reality may be one of the most neglected areas of church life. Groups of all kinds – home groups, small groups, Sunday school classes, life groups, and others – are key to assimilation and greater commitment. The importance of groups must begin with the pastor and all other key leaders in the church.

5. **Inward focus.** In too many churches, the emphasis is on “me, myself, and I.” Some members are more concerned about the temperature in the worship center than the eternal destinations of their neighbors. The “me-focused” church is on its way to decline.

6. **No clearly defined process of discipleship.** Eric Geiger and I reported on this issue in our book, *Simple Church*. Growing churches are much more likely to have a clearly grasped and implemented process of discipleship than declining churches.

7. **No strategic plans for multi-venues or multi-campuses.** As I noted in my post Monday, the trend of multi-venue and multi-campus churches may be the most significant in church practices in the past three decades. Even smaller churches are now planning for more than one site or venue. Those churches not making such plans are more likely to be declining.

Decline in church attendance cannot be defined in seven simple statements. But these reasons are at least broad explanations of what is taking place in many of our congregations. I would love to get feedback from you on these issues.

Get these posts delivered to your inbox daily
Subscribe today and receive this FREE church facility audit!
7 Kinds of People You Can’t Afford to Keep

In leadership, you always face your share of critics.

Everyone has an opinion, and if you’re like me, you can get focused on keeping people happy, which is always a critical leadership mistake. Your church or your organization isn’t for everyone (here’s why).

Usually, the discussion at the leadership table will end up with someone saying:

*Look, we can’t afford to lose people.*

Sometimes that’s true.

Often, it’s simply not.

In fact, often the opposite is true.

The people you are most afraid of losing are the people you most need to lose.

Truthfully, you can’t afford to keep them.

**Who You Can’t Afford to Keep**

So who can you not afford to keep if you want your mission to move forward?

1. You can’t afford to keep perpetual critics.

2. You can’t afford to keep people who are opposed to everything.

3. You can’t afford to keep people who drain the energy and health out of a church or organization.

4. You can’t afford to keep people who contribute nothing and criticize everything.

5. You can’t afford to keep people who have no vision of what the future should be, only a vision for what the future shouldn’t be.

6. You can’t afford to keep people who put their own preferences ahead of your organization’s principles.

7. You can’t afford to keep people who always resist change.

Your mission is just too important.

So next time you face critics who are threatening to walk out the door, don’t ask yourself if you can afford to lose them.

Ask if you can afford to keep them.

It might completely change your approach … and your decisions.

- Print Version

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
4 Ways to Get a Grip on Email

“I don’t have all the answers and many of you reading this get FAR more email than I do, but I have managed over the last year or so to get to inbox zero virtually every day.”

Email. It’s a necessary evil.

Well, it’s not always evil, it can actually provide some great opportunities to communicate with people that we may not have any other way to communicate with. It saves us from having lengthy meetings and it helps us send quick messages to anyone around the world.

But,

As I talk to people, leaders especially, it seems like almost everyone is overwhelmed by it.

I don’t have all the answers and many of you reading this get FAR more email than I do, but I have managed over the last year or so to get to inbox zero virtually every day. It can be done. You don’t have to drown in the deep end of email.

Here are four ways to finally get control of that necessary evil in your life.

Schedule time for email.

This is one you may have heard, but it’s important. Don’t leave that email app open all day. Have certain times throughout the day, usually two, that you respond to email. That allows you to respond within the same day twice if necessary. Sure, you may have to send more throughout the day, but open up your email client, hit send and then shut it down. This keeps email from dominating your day and prevents you from being a slave to the “ding” of new email arriving in your inbox.

Never leave anything in your inbox.

Don’t just read an email and leave it where you found it. If you do, every time you come back to your email, you’ll have to process that same email … even if it’s just in your mind. Use a tool like Dispatch (iOS), Airmail (Mac) or any of a host of other clients that let you perform actions on your email. Send them to your task list, answer them, send them to evernote, just don’t leave them in your inbox.

Push work emails to only one spot.

Ever get to the point where you here that notification on your phone or see that notification bubble count up and get a bad churning in your stomach? If you’re a pastor, your thought is probably something like, “Oh no, what happened and where do I need to be.” To keep you from this, only have your work emails pushed to one device (other than your main computer). For me, this is my iPad. The way I see it, if it’s that urgent, they’ll call or text me. This is extremely helpful on the weekends!
Be cordial, but be short.

I don’t know where it happened, but it must have somehow become acceptable to either ignore an email or just send a snappy response back. Should you keep your responses short as you’re sorting out your inbox? Sure. Never, though, underestimate the importance of being cordial. Just leave with a “Thank You!” or a “Hope you have a good day” message. Be cordial, but be short.

What other email tips do you have?

Productivity is a passion of mine because the impact of our ministry is easily multiplied when we learn to work efficiently and effectively. That’s why I released *The Productive Pastor: A Guide to Getting More of the Right Stuff Done* to help pastors discover a better path. Go to theproductivepastor.com for more information.

- Print Version

Jonathan is the Communications & Online Pastor for Cornerstone Community Church in Orangeburg, SC. He is a young leader with a heart for people that have never encountered Christ. His passion is to lead the millennial generation to connect and grow with Christ. He graduated from Charleston Southern University in December of ‘08 and married the love of his life a week later.

More from Jonathan Pearson or visit Jonathan at http://jonathanpearson.net/
5 Tips for Leading Strong-Willed People

"Everyone responds best when they know what is expected of them."

Have you ever tried to lead someone who didn’t want to be led?

The same children that were labeled “strong-willed” by their parents often grow up to be strong-willed adults. Perhaps you know one. Perhaps you are one.

(I know one personally—me!)

But have you ever tried to lead one?

It’s not easy.

In fact, I’m convinced many strong-willed people end up leading just because they couldn’t be led—and yet they probably didn’t need to lead. But no one ever learned to lead them.

And I’m not sure I am an expert. But I have some ideas—since I’m speaking to my own kind.

Here are five tips for leading strong-willed people:

Give clear expectations.

Everyone responds best when they know what is expected of them. That is especially true of those with strong opinions of their own—shall I say—those of us more stubborn people. If you have a definite idea of how something needs to be done and you leave it as an undefined gray area—we will redefine things our way. Keep this in mind with strong-willed people: Rules should be few and make sense or they’ll likely be resisted or broken more often.

Give freedom within the boundaries.

Once the guidelines and expectations are established, allow people to express themselves freely within them. That’s important for all of us, but especially for strong-willed people. Strong-willed people need to know they can make some decisions—that they have freedom to explore on their own.

Be consistent.

Strong-willed people need boundaries, but they will test them. They want to know the limits of their freedom. Keep in mind they are head-strong. We’ve even labeled them—strong-willed. They aren’t the rule followers on the team. Make sure the rules you have—and again there shouldn’t be too many—are consistent in application. If it’s worth making a rule—make sure it’s worth implementing.

Pick your battles.

This is huge. Strong-willed people can be the backbone of a team. They can loyal, dogmatic and tenacious—all for
the benefit of the vision. What leader doesn’t want that? But those same qualities can be where the problems start also. Don’t cross a strong-willed person over issues of little importance to the overall vision of the organization. If you back them in a corner, they will usually fight back.

**Respect their opinions and individualities.**

Strong-willed people ultimately want to be heard (as all people do). They aren’t weird because they sometimes seem immovable. But they do resist leadership most when their voice is silenced. Learn what matters to them and give credence to their opinions—you’ll find a loyal teammate.

Be honest: Are you strong-willed? How do you like to be led? Have you ever tried to lead someone who didn’t want to be led?

- **Print Version**

Ron Edmondson is a pastor and church leader passionate about planting churches, helping established churches thrive, and assisting pastors and those in ministry think through leadership, strategy and life. Ron has over 20 years business experience, mostly as a self-employed business owner, and he’s been helping churches grow vocationally for over 10 years.

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