Against the Flow

Today, when a survival-of-the-fittest attitude seems to prompt many to not care about the needs others, Jesus calls His followers to go against the flow—to initiate a counter-cultural way of thinking and living that compels them to act on His behalf. Each week scores of members within the Pacific Union Conference provide “critical support” to thousands. We wish we could feature them all, but here are 4 churches who have committed their energies to doing what they can to bless and serve.

Watch the video

The Antidote

Anxiety is a corrosive tool of the devil. He uses it to destroy people’s sanity. Like pouring sand into a car’s engine, the devil uses anxiety to foul up our confidence and courage; to plague us with a multitude of concerns that imprison our faith and courage. Anxiety prevents us from fighting the battle that really matters—that of keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. The antidote for anxiety is found in Matthew 6.
It's Up to Me

by Leah Robinson

All my life, I have been a Christian. My Christian parents ended up working for the church and from the time I was a finger-painting rascal all the way through my stressed-out university years, I attended Christian schools. There were required worship gatherings, Bible classes to be taken, and youth group opportunities. My friends were Christian. My world was Christian.

Read the article

Be inSpired

inSpire is a new web community where Seventh-day Adventist members gifted in, and passionate about the creative arts, can share their ideas and creations in a collaborative way. If you are a creative type and want to be inspired by rubbing shoulders with other like-minded Adventist creatives who have a passion for sharing God's love, plan now to attend a one-of-a-kind gathering in Berkeley, Calif., April 26-28, 2013, at the Berkeley Adventist Church.

View details

Resources & News You Can Use

Does James Teach a "Salvation by Works" Gospel? - This is a great question, and it lies at the very crux of the Protestant Reformation! Are we saved by faith in Christ alone, or does our subsequent obedience also form part of the basis for our salvation? The Protestant church generally holds to the first view, and the Catholic faith to the second. Read full article

Healing Stream Ministries - Dr. Ervin K. Thomsen, a pastor for 38 years, is available to do seminars in local churches and other institutional settings. His presentations are designed to enhance spiritual health and prepare the way for natural church development, church growth, and evangelism. Check out his website for more details.

We "Miss You" Greeting cards - One of the things that keep people coming to church is warm relations with other members and other people. Ultimately people go where they are valued and loved. Every church should have an intentional plan for how to encourage and support members who are missing or away for long periods of time.

Internet Conference - This year's Global Adventist Internet Network forum offered several days of presentations on a mix of technology- and communication-related practices as the Seventh-day Adventist Church continues to bolster and further integrate its online presence. But amid the programs and workshops, many attendees say that key learning happens at meals and other sidelines of the conference. Read full article

Your Church Photo - If your church photo does not appear in our Pacific Union Conference Church archive, please do us a favor and send one to us via email

Pacific Union Recorder - Click here to view Recorder Archives.
The Antidote

Anxiety is a corrosive tool of the devil. He uses it to destroy people’s sanity. Like pouring sand into a car’s engine, the devil uses anxiety to foul up our confidence and courage; to plague us with a multitude of concerns that imprison our faith and courage. Anxiety prevents us from fighting the battle that really matters—that of keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

The antidote for anxiety is found in Matthew 6:19-34 where Jesus tells his followers to be "care-less" in a world that is obsessed with cares and worries. How can we not care when we are inundated with mega-reasons to care about everything?

In western culture we try to fill every waking moment of each day with activity. Productivity is closely associated with personal success and self-worth. This is why we’re gluttons for work and busyness. Our recreation and leisure activities are so activity oriented they leave us barren and exhausted. No wonder some scream: "Stop the world, I want off!"

Personal Touch

Do you feel stressed and overwhelmed? Are you filled with a sense of hopelessness? Do you feel like a loser because you often end up getting the short end of the stick? Welcome to reality. Life in the 21st century can be overwhelming at times.

Everywhere you turn someone wants more of what you’ve just run out of. There are unending bills, traffic jams, squabbling children and broken promises. You may be tempted to just check out of it all.

ER Heartache

I once went to an emergency room to visit a teenager who had overdosed on sleeping pills. Somehow, at an early age, she had reached the point where she lost all hope. She didn’t want to live! Waking up from what she thought was her final sleep was a disappointment.

People spend a lot of money trying to minimize their pain. Material wealth, alcohol, drugs (both legal and illegal), sex, entertainment—all are used to try and divert attention from their soul distress. Can we find sanity, joy, and rest, this side of the grave?

There are many ways to deal with stress. We can exercise, get more rest, try to bring more balance into our lives, be on time to appointments, and so forth. But finding relief from soul fatigue requires more than behavior modifications.
A Brighter Way

If your life is more of a burden than joy and you feel like calling it quits, listen to what Jesus says:

"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28).

"I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20).

David experienced soul fatigue more than once. But he found comfort in God and left these words of encouragement for you and me.

"The LORD is my shepherd; I have everything I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name. Even when I walk through the dark valley of death, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You welcome me as a guest, anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the LORD forever" (Psalm 23).

As you look to the future, why not consider the following suggestions:

1. Give God your brokenness and believe what He says.
2. Find a Christian counselor who can help you sort through your problems.
3. Get involved in helping someone else.

Rich DuBose is Director of Church Support Services for the Pacific Union Conference. All rights reserved 2012.
By Leah Robinson

All my life, I have been a Christian. My Christian parents ended up working for the church and from the time I was a finger-painting rascal all the way through my stressed-out university years, I attended Christian schools. There were required worship gatherings, Bible classes to be taken, and youth group opportunities. My friends were Christian. My world was Christian.

This doesn’t mean I was sheltered. I was not suffocated with the beliefs of my church and shunned from peeking out the windows. I’m lucky that I grew up in an environment that gave me a choice in how I lived my life and let me define my own relationship with God. That freedom is something I’m grateful for and I took advantage of. But now, only a few months after graduating from my university and for the first time in my life NOT being surrounded by a flood of Christian influences…that freedom is a little surreal.

What happens now with no Friday-night vespers at the university Church? What happens now that I don’t have praise songs and Bible classes and the influence of a huge Christian community? As a student, I even worked as an announcer at a Christian radio station, but now, I’m far away from everything and can’t do that job anymore. What happens now that I don’t have all that positive music surrounding my work life and that spirituality that seemed to come so easily as I interacted with my listeners? I’ve graduated. I’m free. So what happens now?

The fact is, we can’t twiddle our thumbs and wait for God to tell us the plan. Imagine if He simply called your phone and said, “Okay, so I have this fabulous opportunity for worship this week. Meet me on Tuesday evening on that favorite hilltop of yours. I’ve planned an epic sunset and have arranged for about 100 of my finest angels to be singing to you through the trees. Bring a blanket; I’m planning for a slight breeze. Oh! And your pastor will be there to preach to you as well so you can’t miss me. So excited! See you then!”

Get real.

Our relationship with God may actually take a little more effort than that to maintain. Through my school years, things were laid out for me. While I didn’t take this for granted at the time, it is very easy to see the difference between then and now. I can’t wait around for something to happen. It’s not up to my school or church to decide how I should pursue God; it’s up to me.

Check out James 4:8. It says, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”

The message is simple. God doesn’t want us to be “bump on the log” Christians — He wants us to actively seek him. So I challenge you today, as I challenge myself: draw near to God intentionally and He will draw near to you.
Does James Teach a "Salvation by Works" Gospel?

This is a great question, and it lies at the very crux of the Protestant Reformation! Are we saved by faith in Christ alone, or does our subsequent obedience also form part of the *basis* for our salvation? The Protestant church generally holds to the first view, and the Catholic faith to the second.*

There are two Bible verses in particular which have caused the question to be debated for many centuries. First, in Romans 3:28 Paul lays down the gospel message in its powerful simplicity: *For we maintain that a man is JUSTIFIED by faith apart from observing the law. Or apart from works of the Law* (NASB). That sounds like wonderful and liberating news, but it appears to be quickly contradicted by James. Here’s his observation: *You see that a person is JUSTIFIED by what he does and not by faith alone* (2:24). And he refers back to a callous man, a supposed Christian, who says casually to a destitute person: “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical need.

The key to this apparent dilemma is to realize that the Bible writers comprehended two distinct meanings for this word “justified”. The paramount meaning is that of “being declared righteous.” When you and I are judged, and God declares us righteous, or states before the universe that we are eligible to receive a heavenly home, on what *basis* does he do that? What is the legal justification for our salvation? It is the cross of Jesus Christ! We are *justified*, not on the basis of our obedience or our innate self-worth, but because God sent his son to die for our sins.

Paul affirms this idea again in Romans 5:1 where he writes, *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Again, this speaks to the cause of our salvation, or the root of our newfound peace with God—through Jesus’ death on the cross.

But a second meaning exists for the word *justified*: and that is to prove right, or to demonstrate validity. I make a certain decision, and later events justify or prove that decision correct. Imagine a CEO of a firm who announces to his workers: “We’re going to implement this new plan. In coming weeks, I think you’ll see that it improves morale and boosts our profits.” Sure enough, six months later everyone agrees that his action was *justified*. So the loving, obedient deeds we do as Christians are not a basis for salvation, but they do demonstrate or justify the reality that something has happened within our hearts because of Jesus’ gift of salvation.

Interestingly, even Jesus borrows this second meaning in Luke 7, when faced with criticism. He reminded the religious rulers that they had condemned the austere John the Baptist for his somber message of repentance. “He has a demon,” they said. When Jesus, in contrast, dined and fellowshipped with sinners, they called him a winebibber! But Jesus made the point that a prophet’s “fruits” would...
prove that his message was worthy. Notice how he says it in the King James Version: *But wisdom is JUSTIFIED of all her children.* In the NIV, we read it this way: *But wisdom is PROVED RIGHT by all her children.*

So both Paul and James agree that the firm foundation of our salvation is the cross. They further agree that healthy, vibrant faith will always be demonstrated in loving acts (Matthew 25) and an obedient life (John 14:15).

*Thanks to John Ankerberg and John Weldon for material from their book, *Protestants & Catholics: Do They Now Agree?*
Internet Conference Focuses on Integration, Best Practices

Global Adventist Internet Network event puts emphasis on user needs (Posted June 21, 2012)

BY ANSEL OLIVER, Adventist News Network, writing from Hong Kong

For church Web professionals attending an annual Internet conference, the real work gets done at breakfast. That's where advice is exchanged and conference speeches are dissected as attendees chat over tables, across aisles, or while coming and going from the restaurant at the Royal Park Hotel.

This year’s Global Adventist Internet Network forum offered several days of presentations on a mix of technology- and communication-related practices as the Seventh-day Adventist Church continues to bolster and further integrate its online presence. But amid the programs and workshops, many attendees say that key learning happens at meals and other sidelines of the conference.

“That’s where the real networking gets done,” said Andrew King, Web manager for the Adventist world church’s Communication Department, while leaving the buffet Friday morning.

King and colleagues in the Communication Department will soon establish a team to revamp the denomination’s home page, Adventist.org. The chance to have casual yet frank discussions with international experts helps them solicit input for upcoming projects.

About 160 participants from around the world gathered for the eighth such forum, held this year in Hong Kong. The forum is held in different world regions each year to better accommodate local church administrators and members. Compared to previous conferences, this year’s forum included larger delegations from the denomination’s Northern Asia-Pacific and Southern Asia-Pacific divisions, based near Seoul and Manila, respectively.

Presentations this year underscored the need for simplicity and focus in Web design and interaction. In separate speeches, both King and Adventist Risk Management marketing and communication manager David Fournier outlined advantages of ridding a site of historical baggage.

“The more information you have, the more careful you have to be about organizing it,” said Fournier, who was one of several participants urging a greater commitment to effective information architecture on denominational Web sites.

King said that new initiatives are notorious for making officials think that their organization needs a new Web site. “I can almost guarantee that the top stakeholders in the organization have not asked themselves, ‘Have market trends and the needs of our customers shifted, and should our current Web site be adjusted accordingly?’” King said, instead recommending that new initiatives be incorporated into an organization's existing site.

Others offered tips on facilitating better user experiences on the Web. During a sideline discussion Jesse Johnson, president of netAserve, which provides technology support to the Adventist Church, said links on a Web page don’t help the organization because it pushes away users.

“Instead, incorporate another organization’s content on your Web site, especially if it’s a local church Web site,” Johnson advised. “Users will enjoy the content and will feel stronger about your site and are more likely to visit your church.”

Daniel Jiao, communication director of the church’s Chinese Union Mission, based in Hong Kong, said people are increasingly using mobile devices to access the Internet. Indeed, at the end of 2011 there were an estimated 6 billion
mobile subscribers, representing 87 percent of the world’s population, according to a December report by the International Telecommunication Union.

Other leaders advocated for church communication and Web managers to design their Websites for mobile usage. “It may end up being a more simple site,” said King, “but if you design for mobile first, you’re reaching all of who your audience might be.”

Several participants offered evening presentations highlighting mass Internet evangelism projects in their own territories.

The Adventist Church in Germany and Austria last year held the Faith Simple project, an eight-week outreach series to postmoderns, with Internet broadcast discussions centering on the movie My Last Day Without You, created specifically for the project. The film features a young German businessman who travels to New York City on a difficult assignment, which forces him to examine his own life. Klaus Popa, one of the leaders of the series, said hundreds of discussion groups were held in homes and churches throughout German-speaking areas of Europe.

Adventist leaders in South America continue to tweak mass media evangelism events, finding that interactive campaigns with interactive components have proven better online response rates compared to events that are just streamed. For an increasing number of outreach events, respondents sign up on the outreach Web site or on Facebook to complete a Bible study. The challenge is making sure local pastors or members can follow up with the 4,000 responses from a recent event, a media manager said.

“If pastors or church members don’t contact them, they are less likely to join the church,” said Rogerio Ferraz, a project manager for the South American Division, based in Brasilia, Brazil. “People need that personal contact.”

In the Trans-European Division, based outside of London, communication leaders have established LIFEconnect, an online community where people can meet, share their life experience, and offer spiritual support.

Williams Costa, Jr., the Adventist Church’s Communication Department director and forum organizer, affirmed Adventist technologists, saying, “You are not just dealing with Web sites and platforms—you’re an important part of the church. Today, making easy content, stories, and testimonies—this can be used by the Holy Spirit.”

Videos of the forum’s presentations will be posted within a week on its Web site, gain.adventist.org. More information is available on the convention’s Facebook page, facebook.com/groups/giencon, and on Twitter at twitter.com/#!/gaincon.

—additional reporting by Penny Brink and Darryl Thompson