CHURCH IN THE COMMUNITY

By Stephen Cooper, ADRA TE Director

God has always had His appointed representatives to show His character and love in the community. It was for this purpose that He raised the SDA church and it is His purpose in calling you and I to be leaders.

How can we as leaders CONNECT with our church members and assist them as they interact with the community to uplift Christ in very practical ways?

Perhaps the following acrostic will offer helpful suggestions:

C - COMMITMENT to God and His Service – Connect with God through His Word, prayer, and meditation in finding what He would have you and I do in our respective communities. This relationship, essential for a Christian leader, is the basis of any positive association in the community. Jesus knew this - we see examples in the gospel where Jesus got up early in the morning and went to a solitary place to commune with His Father. Jesus had to have His quiet time with His Father. He recognized the importance of prayer to keep him in touch with His Father’s mission. We will not be able to help others without first being connected to the Life giver. Engaging in anything which we feel is important takes time, effort and commitment.

O - OBSERVE opportunities for service within our communities - social events, business meetings, school programmes, community initiatives. Sometimes we are so busy looking after ourselves that we forget about others and the real reason we are on this earth. Take time to reach out, to see what is happening in your community, listen to the hidden cries of someone in emotional pain, understand where someone is coming from, interact socially with our communities. Allow God to speak to you as you observe and follow His leading. Remember God has given us two eyes, two ears and one mouth. When we use our mouths, it is hard to observe. Let us use our eyes and ears at least twice as much as we use our mouths.

N - NON-JUDGEMENTAL – Connect without judging or condemnation while not giving up our values or principles. God has blessed us and provides us with understanding and insights into His Word. Unfortunately, at times this blessing has caused us to feel we are superior to other groups or individuals. This is not the case – we should not consider ourselves any better than the addict or drunkard. We are both loved by God equally. In actuality, being ‘keepers of the flame’ we have a solemn responsibility to uphold the standards and principles which have been given to us by God. To disregard them is to actually put ourselves in a worse position. It is important for us to leave the judging to God but to share with the community the love God showed us. No one likes someone who is always critical or judgemental. As a church supporting the community, let us show much love and less critical judging.

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= **NURTURE** church members and community. Principles for this are found in Christ's servant-leadership. "The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'" MH 144 This was no hurried process but that of leading the people along at a pace with which they could identify and respond appropriately. Allow the Holy Spirit to convince and convict others. Our responsibility is to humbly share what God has done for us. Allow the Holy Spirit to convince and convict others. Our responsibility is to humbly share what God has done for us.

= **EXEMPLIFY** the character of Christ to our church members. Following the principles of Christ's ministry includes not only the way in which one works but also who one is in Christ. The Holy Spirit will develop the needed fruits for us to be like Jesus — "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." Galatians 5:22,23 NKJV The familiar saying, ‘Actions speak louder than words’ is true and this influence of the leader encourages the church members to exemplify the fruits in their lives and to their community.

= **CARE** for the marginalized and oppressed, the addicts and depressed, the rejected and the broken-hearted, the searching. Also step out of your COMFORT ZONE in associating with those of wealth, power, great learning and influence. We have received riches, blessings and knowledge which are far above any earthly wisdom. If we will humbly share the goodness of the Lord, we will bring comfort and encouragement, leading to a desire in many to know the wonderful God we serve. We live in a secular society. We are not to copy their lifestyle and methods but seek to address the community needs in a real and lasting way. We are to uplift Jesus so that He will draw all men unto Him. John 12:32 refers to Christ's crucifixion but also has an application to our invitation to have people look to Jesus, accept Him as Lord and Saviour and be saved.

= **TENDER TEAMWORK** on social issues and needs in the community – Connect and support each other in different social ministries. The needs in our communities are many and each of us has a role in community work. It is sometimes difficult for people enthusiastic in their service for others and filled with good ideas to accept different ideas and work as a team but teamwork is crucial in exploring needs, methods and cohesive progress, ownership and loyalty in the church community. Micah 6:8 counsels us, "He has shown you, O man, what is good and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” Together in Christ our communities will be transformed.

"Make Christ's work your example. Constantly He went about doing good—feeding the hungry and healing the sick. No one who came to Him for sympathy was disappointed. The commander of the heavenly courts, He was made flesh and dwelt among us, and His lifework is an example of the work we are to do.―Manuscript 55, 1901. {WM 53.1} ♦

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy;
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

A good objective of leadership is to help those who are doing poorly to do well and to help those who are doing well to do even better.

Jim Rohn

There is no higher religion than human service. To work for the common good is the greatest creed.

Woodrow Wilson

Success has nothing to do with what you gain in life or accomplish for yourself. It’s what you do for others.

Danny Thomas

A good book for reading on meeting the community needs:

**Welfare Ministry**
by E G White
An experienced leadership trainer, Walter Wright, asked all the teams he had worked with for years what they would identify as important to their experience of working on a team. This is what they said:

1. Ownership of mission and strategies
   This was a major point. All in the team own the operation. Not just ‘the officers’.

2. Shared visions and dreams
   We should think out loud about everything we are doing so that we all know where we are going and why.

3. Communication and information
   No secrets, no surprises. Information is friendly. The more the team knows, the more it can do. Open communication builds trust.

4. Relaxed Relationships
   ‘I want to enjoy my work, and I encourage my team to enjoy themselves as well.’

5. Approachable Leadership
   The team wants to see the leader as open, available and approachable.

6. Trusting Relationships
   The team and the leader need to build mutual trust. But the team members also must do the same. Trust is built by openness (as opposed to secrecy, gossip, and back-stabbing) and an attitude of mutual respect between equals.

7. Vulnerability
   Admitting mistakes and learning from them is fundamental.

8. Delegation
   Delegating responsibility without interfering in details (i.e. micro-management) develops ownership and responsibility.

9. Ownership of results, not tasks
   Team members own the Division’s outcomes, the results, not just their own job descriptions. Therefore, a good team takes pride in the results of the team unit as well as their personal contribution. And when team members see something that needs to be done in order for the team goals to be achieved, they do it, whether it is their job or not.

10. Equality of status
    Each team member is important. You can build your own ‘empire’ and be part of a team. All are valued within their area of responsibility.

11. Freedom to make mistakes – once
   It is normal that all make mistakes. But we must learn from mistakes. The principle is therefore not to make the same mistake twice.

12. Ownership is more important than hours worked
   The focus is on results, not tasks or hours.

13. Commitment to a team approach
   Fitting into the team is an important qualification for holding a position. The evaluation of our work will be based on our ability to fit into and work as a member of the team, as well as on our individual competencies. All need to know that they belong. All need to feel valued and believe that they have an important contribution to make to the team’s success.

—Bertil Wiklander

I want to express gratitude for the great article on discipleship in this (July-August 2010) volume of your newsletter. If we who lead the church could see our members as leaders instead of as followers we would minister to them differently. Followers are expected to be cooperative, compliant and obedient. Leaders are trusted to take initiative and embrace the mission of the church as their own with a committed (not compliant) heart. Discipleship has as its goal the production of leaders—not followers. Accepting Jesus, prior to the discipleship process, qualifies us as a follower and our following is maintained by walking in the Spirit as our means of following him. The relationship between spiritual leader and disciple is a temporary follower/leader relationship as patterned by Jesus and the 12. The ultimate goal was the development of 12 leaders that would go on to disciple a multitude of member/leaders in the process of establishing the Church and growing the kingdom. Discipleship is preparation for leadership!

—Stan Patterson, PhD, Director of the Christian Leadership Center of Andrews University.
TO THINK ABOUT...
LEADERSHIP BEGINS IN THE HEART

No longer do I call you servants... But I have called you friends. John 15:15

What can a person do to manage and cultivate good relationships as a leader? It requires three things:

1. **Understand people:** Marketing expert Rod Nichols says, "If you deal with every customer in the same way, you will only close twenty-five percent to thirty percent of your contacts, because you will only close one personality type. But if you learn how to effectively work with all four personality types, you can conceivably close one hundred percent of your contacts."

2. **Love people:** Businessman Henry Gruland says, "Being a leader is more than just wanting to lead. Leaders have empathy for others and a keen ability to find the best in people... not the worst... by truly caring for others." You cannot be a truly effective leader unless you love people.

3. **Help people:** If your focus is on what you can put into people rather than what you can get out of them, they’ll love and respect you—and those attributes are great foundations for building relationships.

*The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader* ♦