ASSESSING PASTORAL COMPETENCY
The competent pastor
Who or what it is to be competent in pastoral ministry
David VanDenburgh

Cosmic signs through history
More on the relevance of cosmic signs in today's situation
William H. Shea

Revival and renewal in the North American church
A plan to bring about what the church most needs
George E. Rice

Needed: Balance in theology
The need to lay out the full sweep of the truth
James M. Hopps

Spiritual growth through family ministries
The relationship of spirituality and healthy family relationships
Gorden R. Doss

Recently ordained/commissioned ministers

Leading the church to visionary heights
The need for wisdom and patience when implementing a vision
Kim A. Johnson

Salvation: Faith versus works
Viewpoint
Reo M. Christenson
February 1998 issue

Thank you for the timely editorial, which I read after a challenging day in the field. It began with a 13-year-old girl's questions on the spiritual explorations of her close school friends . . . Next came questions regarding lack of church growth in both my churches from an ex-member I hadn't seen for weeks. Ralph C. Wood's article answered this beautifully! Keep up this excellent work!—Bill Blundell, Ayr and Home Hill churches, North Australian Conference.

- I agree with Ralph Wood ("The Fallacy of Getting Something Out of Worship") that worship is giving, not receiving. But from that point he dives into worship as if it is what happens on Sabbath morning in churches. What we do in church is entertainment, whether it is three hymns and a prayer or spiritual choruses, drama, etc. Church services are made up of performers and participants, whatever the format, whatever the material. This has little or nothing to do with worship. People like Wood are debating it because of their likes and dislikes. The debate has nothing to do with God's will.

- Abraham worshiped God without hymns or choruses, as did the other God-ordained leaders of the Bible. Their worship was their life, their behavior, their acting upon God's call. Community worship happens when a group of people act upon God's call to achieve God's purpose. Worship is obedience. When the church stops arguing about worship and moves as a community toward the goals God has set for it, then we will be worshiping.—Jim Gray, Pastor, New South Wales Conference, Australia, via e-mail.

Proclaiming the message fearlessly

Jac Colon's "Proclaiming the Message Fearlessly" (April 1998) is beautifully balanced and very insightful on the reason for the warning elements in the three angels' messages of Revelation 14. Colon demonstrates that to expose Satan's counterfeit versions of the gospel is perfectly compatible with God's love. When a young man put poison in a bottle of tablets in a drugstore some years ago, nobody considered it an act of legalism or lost love when the manufacturer withdrew all the tablets from drugstores nationwide and warned those who had bought this product recently not to use it until the problem was cleared up. This radical act was to protect life. In the spiritual domain, the three angels' messages pull all the spurious panaceas from the shelves of Satan's medicine shop and put him out of business by urgent warnings against his specious doctrines and devices. This clears the way to apply the genuine Balm of Gilead and bring people to a knowledge of the true Physician.

- It's time that we give the trumpet a certain sound in order that the soldiers of the cross may rally themselves to the good fight of the faith, once delivered to the saints. More of such present truth articles, please, that awaken us to the urgency of the hour and the distinctiveness of our message and mission.—Brian D. Jones, pastor, Berkeley Springs, West Virginia.

Salvation pilgrimage

I appreciated Woodrow Whidden's article, "Salvation Pilgrimage" (April 1998). It is refreshing to note that worship was one of the factors that helped him develop a biblical theology of salvation. He also mentions in the same context the use of doxology in our services. Unfortunately, some of our churches are leaving out this significant expression of faith in the Trinity. God has entrusted this church with the proclamation of a worldwide call to worship God as the Creator—a call to abandon false worship and to be among the true worshipers who "keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus" (Rev.14:6-12).

Visitors to our churches are more than likely to notice the absence of a corporate expression of our Trinitarian faith (such as seen in the singing of the doxology), thus leaving room for them to misjudge us and to surmise that we are no different from those groups who hold on to an Arian theology.—Chris Ederesinghe, Music Coordinator, Milwaukee Central SDA Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

August 1998 issue

- I try to read most of the issues of Ministry that come across my desk and appreciate them all. The August 1998 issue grabbed my attention. I hope that many of our younger pastors will look at it carefully. The articles were very informative and will find a place in a retirement notebook that I have been developing. When it is time to retire, I should know the right questions to ask to make sure that everything will be in order.—Ron M. Wisbey, Columbia, Maryland.

- The August issue of Ministry, discussing various aspects of retirement, I found most interesting, even though most of its information was years late for me. I especially liked Elder Delafield's article; it was written from a "been-there, done-that" point of view, and that is always a forceful approach. Let me share with you some wise words on the philosophy of retirement, spoken by Oliver Wendell Holmes on the occasion of his retirement from the Supreme Court bench at age 90, in 1931: "The riders in a race do not stop short when they reach the goal. There is a continued on p. 25
A matter of the heart

JULIA NORCOTT

Waiting for answers, I searched my soul and my mind. I considered my reasoning and my responsibility. As I thought about this situation, I decided my guide would be the golden rule. I would not always be able to follow it perfectly, but it would be my guide.

God never did give me direct answers when I prayed for discernment, and when I asked Him to help me to be patient and nonjudgmental, He helped me to have respect for my opinions. In handling this problem, I made mistakes, but God was with me and gave me courage that I did not know I had. I learned to depend more on His leadership than my own, and thus I found a quality of soul-peace that could only come from God.

During this stretching, growing time, I had to sort out many feelings. I thought about ego. I thought about ethics. When accusations were wrongly made, I felt the resulting human emotions. I felt anger. I had disappointments and hurts. I thought about the other person, my friend. Certainly these feelings are important, for without them we become mechanical. Yet in the midst of all this, I realized that integrity was the answer and that integrity is a matter of the will interacting healthfully with our feelings.

I searched for books on integrity. I wanted reinforcements for my actions. I already knew that if we are to do God’s work God’s way, we must start with character, so I searched my character.

Fred Smith, in his book Leading With Integrity, says that the church must be involved in character building. He says, “Leaders are responsible for modeling and encouraging character and integrity. Integrity starts with motive… I can,” he continues, “avoid being dishonest. Dishonesty is a decision.”

Reflecting on the culmination of everything I had learned, I realized that self-respect is an important key to integrity. Without self-respect a person cannot rely on personal character and thus lead others with integrity. Smith says that integrity is based on character. He insists that character is absolutely essential. He talks about the wisdom of one of America’s wealthiest investors at Harvard University who says that the three qualities he looks for in those with whom he will invest his money are intelligence, energy, and character.

Fortunately for us, God is the great strengthening of character. I do not believe that trials at work or elsewhere are gifts from God, but He can help us us these conflicts to strengthen our own character if we do not give up or give in to inappropriate compromise. We may hide under a facade of righteousness, but the God who sees every secret thing will one day hold us accountable for the way we deal with our responsibilities today.

As we thank God for letting us be a part of His work, as we thank Him for our comfortable environments and our Christian associates, let us not overlook the fact that what really matters is our hearts, our integrity. We may have to make hard decisions that hurt us, but will it not be great when one day Christ says, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21)?

Who is sufficient for these things?” (2 Cor. 2:16). The context of Paul’s question is ministry, and the implied answer is “No one,” including the apostle himself.

This is a point every pastor needs to keep in mind; for in a very real sense no human being is competent to hold ministerial office. We can always find faults with pastors. They never do enough, never finish the job, never do it as well as it should be done. Paul’s letters to Corinthian parishioners remind us that they were attacking his ministerial competency, and he agrees with them that he is not “equal to such a task” (2 Cor. 2:16, NIV).

So we should not be surprised when parishioners suggest that a pastor has failed in some way. Pastors are not sufficient for the task given to them. They never have been. They never will be. The human problem is too big, human nature is too disabled, human beings are too perverse for pastors to be “all things to all people,” even though pastors might try their best.

The Corinthians weren’t satisfied with Paul, and the Jews weren’t satisfied with Jesus. The people who are most vocal in their complaints about a pastor’s ministry may be the very people who most need to receive that ministry. We must beware of judging pastoral competency on the basis of how popular the pastor is. Popular opposition may not mean pastoral incompetency, just as popular acclaim may not mean that the pastor is doing God’s work. Pastors must not be put in the position of appeasing complainers or satisfying customers, or they may as well become shopkeepers. The essence of any professional is that he or she does not simply do what people want but rather what people need. Doctors won’t prescribe a drug or a therapy unless they think it is needed, no matter how much patients fuss and complain. The doctor must, for obvious reasons, make an honest diagnosis regardless of the anxiety it will cause a patient.

Having recognized this reality, however, we must also acknowledge that not all pastors are equally capable. A pastor may be capable of pastoring one church and not another, and this factor in itself has little to do with the question “Is the pastor competent?” We have, then, at least two questions to answer: First, is there some way to assess relative pastoral competency? Second, is there some way to determine whether what appears to be pastoral incompetency is instead a poor pastor-congregation match?
Competency and ordination

We know that not all pastors are equally capable. However, there should be some minimum competency without which no one should become a pastor. We should never ordain anyone unless we are sure of the individual's ability to pastor a congregation—to shepherd a flock adequately, to hold it together, to care for its needs, and to help it to grow. In part, ordination is the church's public recognition that God has called an individual for the pastoral ministry. Individuals may claim that God has called them to the pastoral office, but it is up to the church to determine whether they are correct in their perception of the calling. If the church determines that there is good evidence that God has, in fact, called that person to pastoral ministry, then the church moves ahead to ordain. If the church is not convinced, then there should be no ordination.

Two centuries ago John Wesley explained how the Methodist church should determine whether or not a person is called to pastoral ministry. Those examining candidates for ordination should ask three questions: (1) Does the candidate know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord? (2) Does the person have the gifts for ministry? (3) Does the person have fruit in their ministry?

The first question leads to an inquiry about the candidate's relationship with the Lord. Is it one of love, faith, peace, and joy? Does it involve knowing Jesus personally? Is it one of total commitment, involving a continuing walk with the Lord? If it is determined that the candidate does not have a healthy, growing, mature relationship with Christ, we should deny ordination, no matter how much evidence of "success" there might be.

The second question involves natural and acquired gifts or abilities to minister. Can the prospective candidates for ministry discern theological error? Do they know their Bible? How well do they communicate? What are their sermons like? Do they have skills in counseling, leadership, and interpersonal relationships? And so on.

The third question examines the record. What have the candidates done in ministry? What were the results? Is it really proper for the church to ordain a person who has never actually pastored a congregation? Anyone who claims to be called to minister must have borne fruit in their ministry. The fruit need not be merely numerical, but there are other factors that bear witness to a call to ministry.

Tests of competency

But suppose we have pastors who are accused of incompetence. How can we determine whether they are so or not?

Popular opposition may not mean pastoral incompetency, just as popular acclaim may not mean that the pastor is doing God's work. . . . The essence of any professional is that he or she does not simply do what people want but rather what people need.

One way would be to repeat the ordination examination (the one that should have taken place, and perhaps did not, prior to ordination). A committee of ordained pastors might examine the pastor in question on three fronts: personal spiritual health, abilities for ministry, and results. If it is determined that the persons would not at this point qualify for ordination, they would be given the option of finding a call out of the conference to another conference with fewer demanding standards or of early retirement/resignation/termination from the ministry. This would be analogous to a state licensing board revoking a license to practice (medicine, law, counseling). If the committee determined that the person was competent but unfortunately matched to the wrong congregation, they could recommend to administration a better match. The review committee should be composed of peers, not administrators and not laity. If the three questions cited above are the basis of inquiry, the church at large has adequate input into the process. If it is argued that employment decisions cannot be decided by peers, I would argue that the peer group is not deciding an employment question but the question of competency relative to licensure. If a given conference administration wishes to hire pastors certified by their peers as incompetent, they may certainly do so. If administration refuses to employ pastors deemed incompetent by their peers, I doubt any court would consider that unreasonable.

Ordination is the certificate of pastoral competency. If that competency is lost, ordination should be revoked. However, that is a serious decision that requires adequate review by a board of ordained pastors. Once revoked, the person may continue to practice ministry under a different kind of ministerial credential as an "unlicensed" minister, while working toward reordination. That decision would be up to conference administration and the executive committee. But there is no escaping the fact that pastoral competency and ordination are inextricably linked. They must go together or they both become farcical. "Incompetent ordained pastor" should be an oxymoron. If there has been no adequate ordination process to screen out incompetent pastors prior to ordination, we should certainly institute a process for reviewing ordained pastors accused of incompetence with the possibility of removing their ordination. To fail to do so would be irresponsible to the church and to the Lord and would be to hold a lower standard of professionalism than is held for the many professionals among whom we pastor.

Dealing with incompetent pastors

A question that many conferences face is too many pastors on the payroll. This means that cuts, if they must be made, must be made from among the less able workers. No amount of rhetoric can cover that stark reality. It is better to face it openly and hon-
estly. The most direct approach would be the establishment of a ranking system for pastors. Every pastor in the conference would be listed in rank order from the most competent to the least competent. Everyone would understand that release from work, if it must be done, would be done from the bottom of the list up. If it were argued that this is brutal, I would reply that this is what we do anyway, we just don’t admit to it. If we did it openly, people would at least know where they stand and could act to change their ranking.

If pastors are notified that they are ranked at the bottom of the list and that they are the ones who will be cut if financial exigency warrants, they might be induced to get some remedial help or take up another career or find another place to work. If they felt such a ranking was unfair, they could protest it by demonstrating just what it is they do with their time and why they have so little evidence of fruitfulness.

Assessing competence
What constitutes competency for a pastor? How can competency be assessed? The human resources department of one large North American conference suggests that competency consists in fulfilling one’s job description. Which job description? The conference job description: pastor the church, increase the membership and the tithe, keep people happy so they don’t bother administration with complaints? The congregation’s job description: be our shepherd, love us and care for us, visit us frequently, hold our hands through various crises, preach interesting sermons that don’t offend us, represent us worthily to the community, assure us that we are where we ought to be, keep our kids interested in the church for us, and manage the church well? The pastor’s own job description: be a successful pastor, be all things to all people, make everyone like you and think of you as a very spiritual person, don’t offend anyone if it can be helped, keep peace in the congregation, and make the church grow numerically as the chief indicator of your success?

Unfortunately, such is not the New Testament vision for Christian ministry. A brief review of the history of pastoral theology shows how the expectations of church and society have influenced the expectations directed at the pastor.

From the close of New Testament times to the Middle Ages, we see a transition in pastoral theology. The fathers of the early church envisioned the pastoral task as a shepherding task: to instruct and care for the sheep and to be wise and holy so as to love the sheep and provide for their welfare unreservedly. Gradually the formalization of priestly function led to a more sacrament-centered pastoral theology in which the pastor was a dispenser of God’s grace through the sacraments, and the disparity rather than the similarity of laity and clergy was emphasized. By the end of this period, the pastorate was much more akin to the Old Testament priesthood than to the New Testament model of every Christian a minister and a priest.

During the Middle Ages, the ministry became even more consolidated in bureaucracy and sacerdotalism. Pastors were either bureaucrats of the church or priests who dispensed the sacraments. Throughout this period, the concept of ministry was in dire need of reform.

That reform finally came with the Reformation. Luther’s emphasis on justification by faith as the “article of the standing or falling church” reformulated the ministry as it swept through the theology of the church. Pastors were transformed into proclaimers of good news and teachers of Christian duty.

The tendency to drift back to medieval pastoral theology was reversed by the evangelical awakening of the eighteenth century. Once again the necessity for pastors to be preachers of righteousness, patient teachers, godly examples of holy living, and zealous evangelists was held up before the church.

The rational and scientific age of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had its impact on pastoral theology. In essence, the social sciences subverted the role of the pastor. The pastor became a counselor, a manager and administrator, a social engineer, a recreation director, and a leader. The pastoral counseling movement threatened to take over pastoral theology. Liberal, humanistic, naturalistic presuppositions stripped the ministry of its supernatural aspects, even as they stripped God of His mystery.

The biblical job description for pas-
(Mack Tennyson) Written by a Ph.D. in accounting, this book deals with the question of church finances from a Christian perspective. It covers everything from biblical principles to providing practical financial advice for church treasurers, trustees, deacons, and the ministerial staff on everything from tax issues to filling out expense reports.

(George Knowles) Filled with everything from broad principles to tips on doing door-to-door evangelism, this book delivers what the title says. Written specifically for the laity, it's geared to teach people how to be effective soul-winners. It's really a book about personal evangelism and designed to instill confidence in readers that they can have a big role in winning people to Christ.

(Mack Tennyson) How to plan, prepare for, and make committees succeed is no easy task, but in this excellent study, the author gives numerous tips on the work of the committee itself. Covering everything from the issue of committee chairmanship to pre-meeting preparations, this book will be especially helpful to anyone involved in church committees.

(Jard DeVille) Written by a popular management and leadership consultant, this book is written with one purpose in mind: “To help you become more effective in leading other people to make a commitment of their lives to Christ.” Of course, formulas don't always work, yet DeVille focuses on principles, emphasizing such topics as interpersonal relationships and how crucial they are in witnessing.

Real pastoral competence

The apostle Paul, after acknowledging "that we are [not] competent in ourselves," states that "our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant" (2 Cor. 3:5, 6, NIV). Though no man or woman "is equal to such a task" (2 Cor. 2:16, NIV), God gives us competence. This competence consists in the ability to lift up Christ, “for we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:5, 6, NIV).

We may not gain notoriety as great pastors. We may appear ignorant or simple or rough. People may find fault with us and accuse us of incompetence, but none of that matters if only Jesus is lifted up so people can see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. "We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (2 Cor. 4:7, NIV). Some may look at the jar of clay and say "incompetent pastor" while others may see the treasure and say "Glory to God." We must determine whether the jar of clay is doing its job. If not, it is incompetent. If so, it is competent even though it is merely a jar of clay. And the job is not merely pleasing people or raising money or simply increasing the membership of the church, but the job of exalting Jesus so that people see the treasure, live for God and give glory to Him.
WORLD MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

- Inspirational Preaching
- Professional Growth Seminars
- Dynamic Worship
- Specialty Skill Tracks
- Language Group Seminars
- Exhibition Hall
- Bible Study
- Fellowship
- Special Programming and Seminars for PKs

Plan now to attend. Mark the date.

Watch here for more information.

June 25-29, 2000 • Toronto, Ontario • Canada

Ministers, Spouses, PKs, Local Church Elders, and Clergy of All Denominations
Numerous Old Testament texts affirm that the judgments of God were accompanied from time to time by cosmic signs. "I will give portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes" (Joel 2:30,31, RSV).

Joel's reference to the coming of the "great and terrible day of the Lord" does not initially refer to the Second Coming of Christ but to one of the several "Days of the Lord" that were, in fact, days of judgment. Amos tells the northern kingdom that, though they thought the Day of the Lord was a day of judgment upon their enemies, it was a day of judgment upon them (Amos 5:18-20). Joel's day of judgment was, indeed, a local event, evidenced by the fact that those to be saved from it were the residents of Zion and Jerusalem (verse 32). The judging of the nations in the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:1-3) refers to an event to occur in a local setting, arriving at a time relatively close to the season in which the prophecy itself was communicated.

An example of a cosmic sign accompanied by judgment may be seen in the plagues that fell on Egypt (Exodus 10). Other similar instances appear in Joshua's long day, which enabled the Israelites to render judgment on the Canaanites (Joshua 10:12-14).

Closer to home, the elements of nature fought against the Canaanites in the time of Deborah and Barak. In this judgment, the rain muddied the Jezreel Valley so that the Canaanite chariots were useless. An interesting judgment of a positive character occurred with Hezekiah, when the turning back of the shadow of the sun signaled to the king that he would live an additional fifteen years (2 Kings 20:8-11).

In the New Testament, the same features appear. Writing about the impending fall of Jerusalem, Ellen White said: "Signs and wonders appeared, foreboding disaster and doom. In the midst of the night an unnatural light shone over the temple and the altar."

Jesus, in His Olivet sermon, preached about signs in the heavens. He collocates those astronomical signs "immediately after the tribulation of those days." Then he refers to the sun being darkened, the moon not giving light, and the stars falling from heaven (Matt. 24:29). The contextual question is, To what tribulation and to which days is He referring?

There are two preceding tribulations mentioned in the Olivet sermon, a preliminary tribulation or persecution (verses 9, 10) and then—after the appearance of the Abomination of Desolation (verse 15), the "great tribulation" (verse 21). The same
Greek word is used for all these tribulations (Thlipsis). Historically these fit well with the preliminary persecution brought on by Imperial Rome and the great tribulation that occurred during the Middle Ages.

The situation with cosmic signs in the book of Revelation is more complex. In the first place, there are a series of cosmic signs in which the formulaic list becomes longer and longer after each successive judgment (Rev. 4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:17-20). None of these signal the same judgment. The first comes at the time of the Ascension, the second at the beginning of the trumpets, the third at the commencement of the pre-Advent judgment in 1844, and the fourth after the close of probation, just before the destruction of the earth and the second coming of Jesus.

More cosmic signs appear with judgments and plagues. In the fourth plague the sun scorches men, just the reverse of the darkening of the sun (16:8); in the fifth plague darkness descends upon the seat of the beast, the reverse of what happened in the preceding plague. Thus far at least six judgments in the book of Revelation are accompanied by or utilize cosmic elements.

The sequence under the sixth seal, therefore, will not be identical with any or all of the other cosmic signs in the book. The earthquake, the darkening of the sun, and the falling of the stars have their own point of reference. That point of reference comes first in the fifth seal, where the martyrs of the persecutions ask, How long until you judge, O Lord? (6:10). The signs revealed under the next seal occur in part to answer that question. They signal judgment upon the power that caused their persecutions. Thus far at least six judgments in the book of Revelation have accompanied or utilized cosmic elements.

The sequence under the sixth seal, therefore, will not be identical with any or all of the other cosmic signs in the book. The earthquake, the darkening of the sun, and the falling of the stars have their own point of reference. That point of reference comes first in the fifth seal, where the martyrs of the persecutions ask, How long until you judge, O Lord? (6:10). The signs revealed under the next seal occur in part to answer that question. They signal judgment upon the power that caused their persecutions. They also signal the judgment to come in 1844 when their earthly sentences will be overturned (Dan. 7:22).

An unnoticed feature of the sixth seal is that there are two earthquakes here, one at the beginning of the series and one at the end. The one at the end is described in different terms, “and every mountain and island was moved out of its place” (6:14). That takes an earthquake of cataclysmic proportions. That same earthquake is identified in Revelation 16:18 and 20, using some of the same terminology. That earthquake will occur at the end of the plagues will be the greatest earthquake the earth has ever witnessed, as the text says. That cannot be said of the earthquake at the beginning of the sequence in the sixth seal; it was only a “great” earthquake, not the greatest.

The question arises when the identification is made of that preliminary earthquake with the Lisbon earthquake in 1755. Why not some other bigger earthquake later? Why not some later and greater meteor shower? The answer is threefold: geography, sequence, and timing. The bigger and later earthquakes in China did not involve the nations of western Europe upon which the action in the book of Revelation centers. The biblical focus is upon the Near East and Europe. India is not included in the nations of Daniel 2. Earthquakes in China do not appear to be in the geographic purview of the arena of action covered in the book of Revelation.

The matter of sequence involves the series of events predicted under the sixth seal. None of the earthquakes in China were followed by a dark day and a meteor shower. The sequence is specific: earthquake, darkened sun, falling stars, not darkened sun, earthquake, falling stars or falling stars, darkened sun, earthquake.

The matter of timing, the third factor that makes this sequence of cosmic signs unique, has to do with the place in which they occur in the prophetic scheme of history. That sequence can be outlined as follows: (1) A great earthquake—1755; (2) The dark day—1780; (3) Judgment upon the beast—1798; (4) The falling of the stars—1833; and (5) Judgment beginning in heaven—1844.

Geography, sequence, and timing make this series of events unique and unmatched by any earthquakes or meteor showers elsewhere or at other times. Further prophecies in the book of Revelation go on to fill out the whole spectrum of events between these cosmic signs and the second coming of Christ.

Cosmic signs will attend the second coming of Christ but, with the exception of the final earthquake, they are not the cosmic signs described under the sixth seal. Rather, they are described by Ellen White in The Great Controversy. There she refers to the earthquake that occurs under the seventh plague. There she refers to the islands and mountains disappearing. There she gives a cosmic sign connected with the sun but it is the sun shining at midnight. These are not the cosmic signs of the sixth seal, which she described in chapter 17 of the same book. A historico-prophetic sequence of events takes place between that time in the past and the future great event. We have seen the former historically, and we wait for the future cosmic signs yet to come.

often find myself daydreaming while reading the Bible, and I project myself into the biblical story and live the experience I am reading.

Encounters with God, the joy of victory, the agony of defeat, listening to the searching words of a prophet—all become real and personal.

For example, enter the story of Nehemiah and Ezra as they lead Israel into one of the great revivals recorded in the Old Testament. Priests, Levites, men, women, and children willingly lay aside their personal interests in order to be led by these two men into the spiritual rebirth of the nation and the accomplishment of God’s will.

Nehemiah sets the stage: “Then those of Israelite lineage separated themselves from all foreigners; and they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for one-fourth of the day; and for another fourth they confessed and worshiped the Lord their God” (Neh. 9:2,3, NKJV).

As they worship, their failure as God’s chosen people is rehearsed within the hearing of all; confession is made. Acknowledging that God’s judgments are just, the leaders rededicate themselves to the work God has given them. To demonstrate their earnestness, in the presence of the assembly they draw up a covenant, a commitment, and put their seals on it: “In view of all this, we are making a binding agreement, putting it in writing, and our leaders, our Levites and our priests are affixing their seals to it” (verse 38, NIV). With that, God’s intent that Jerusalem be rebuilt happens with amazing speed.

This is the stuff great daydreams are made of and by which far-reaching revival and reformation is inspired. A recommitted leadership, rededicated pastors, a revived people, and the blessing of God produces a finished work. But upon awakening from such a daydream and facing reality, I have to ask, Can such a revival and reformation be realized within a church living in a postmodern society, moving into the twenty-first century?

Of course it can. It is a part of God’s promise and plan for the final generation. A revived people and a finished work under the power of the Holy Spirit.

An emphasis on spiritual renewal

By the time this issue of Ministry reaches you, almost every Seventh-day

George Rice, Ph.D., is pastor of the Annapolis and Triadelphia churches in Maryland.
Adventist pastor in the North American Division will be aware of the plan for a renewed commitment to the task God has called us to complete. Every church leader, pastor, and member is being encouraged to enter into an experience similar to that of the Israel of Nehemiah and Ezra's day. As these two men led Israel into spiritual renewal, affirming their intent by sealing a covenant with God, we are being challenged to do the same in the final year of both this century and this millennium.

It all began in March 1997 with a recommendation from a subcommittee at the ABC Managers' Convention that 1999 be named "Spirit of Prophecy Year." The recommendation also asked for the appointment of a committee to study ways in which Seventh-day Adventists in North America might be encouraged to read the works of Ellen White. The recommendation was approved by NAD leadership and, as the committee met, members quickly recognized that much more was needed.

First, it was suggested that our membership in North America needs encouragement to return to daily Bible reading. After a study and discussion of Nehemiah and Ezra's experience, it was decided that a commitment to reading the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy should lay the foundation for a genuine spiritual renewal. The committee recognized that a temporary, time-bound program to achieve these things was not sufficient; indeed, they saw that this spiritual renewal had to become a living experience that would last until Jesus returns.

Thus, the "Spiritual Emphasis Study Plan for the North American Division" was born. To accomplish its task, the committee laid out its agenda: (1) evaluate the challenges to be met in conceiving a division-wide revival, (2) consider all possibilities that might contribute to a revival based on the study of God's Word and the Spirit of Prophecy, (3) propose ideas to facilitate a commitment to meaningful study, and (4) submit for approval a final recommendation for spiritual renewal to Elder Alfred McClure, NAD president.

For the success of such a division-wide plan, it is necessary to have the support of church leaders. Upon Elder McClure's approval, the "Spiritual Emphasis Study Plan" was presented to the Union presidents, and they committed themselves to make the "Plan" the highest spiritual priority in their unions.

A model for revival

As the pastor of a two-church district, I could assume the attitude, "Here is another program coming down from the top that will only add to my work load and finally be lost in the crush of other programming. Isn't this, after all, just another top-down initiative?" But, I urge my fellow pastors—think it through. This is the model set by Nehemiah and Ezra's great revival.

As the pastor of a two-church district, I could assume the attitude, "Here is another program coming down from the top that will only add to my work load and finally be lost in the crush of other programming. Isn't this, after all, just another top-down initiative?" But, I urge my fellow pastors—think it through. This is the model set by Nehemiah and Ezra's great revival.
Want to train your church leaders?
Try Cross Training.

Cross Training is the monthly satellite workshop series on the Adventist Communication Network designed to train local church leaders and volunteer ministry coordinators. Through this effective yet inexpensive training vehicle, the North American Division provides leaders with job descriptions, creative ministry ideas, and cutting-edge resources for effective ministry in the local church. To participate in any of the following two-hour workshops, please register. Call 800-ACN-1119, ext. 6. Ask for a copy of our free video catalog. Hosted by Paul Richardson (right).

1999 Workshop Schedule

**Children’s Ministries**
- **March 13** - “Teaching Children to Love Each Other As a Response to Grace” - Especially for Children’s Ministries leaders, children’s Sabbath school teachers, pastors;
- Community - This program will clearly identify community building as a response to the grace of a loving God who wants children and youth to see faith actively lived through sharing with and being accountable to others in their neighborhoods, at church, and with people around the world.

**Adventist Community Services**
- **Community Impact Series**
  - **January 9** - Introducing the New ADRA Annual Appeal Campaign;
  - **March 13** - Heartbeat Training;
  - **May 8** - Disaster Response Training;
  - **October 9** - Helping People Find Jobs

**Evangelism**
- **January 9** - “Staying Power - Creating Churches Where Members Feel Valued” - Especially for elders, evangelism coordinators, Sabbath school leaders; Assimilation - What’s it like for new members to join your congregation? How can churches make new members feel at home and integrate them into meaningful church life?
- **October 9** - “Discovering 21st Century Ways to Reach Our Communities” - Especially for Personal Ministries leaders, pastors; Outreach - As we prepare for the new millennium, we must find innovative ways to share the love of Christ with our communities. How can we share the Adventist message and mission with seekers and interest them in joining our church family?

**Family Ministries**
- **April 10** - “Identifying Ministry Opportunities With Today’s Adventist Families” - Especially for Family Ministries leaders, pastors, elementary teachers; Diversity - This program will address the diversity of our church family today and discuss practical ways congregations can minister to our diverse needs.

**Health Ministries**
- **November 13** - “Lifestyle Initiatives For the New Millennium” - Especially for Health Ministries and Adventist Community Services leaders; Health - Join us to take a look at four health outreach programs effectively working in North America and choose one for your church to use.

**Sabbath School**
- **February 13** - “What Gets Twentysomethings Involved in Sabbath School?” - Especially for adult Sabbath school leaders, pastors, young adult leaders; Challenge - How can Adult Sabbath school classes actively attract and engage young adults into an intergenerational study setting that meets their needs without alienating other members?

**Youth Ministries**
- **May 8** - “There’s More to Youth than Sabbath School” - Especially for Youth leaders, Bible teachers, youth pastors; Activation - This program will profile effective programs that are providing innovative compassion ministries, mission experiences, leadership development, and unique nurturing ministries for today’s youth.

**Register today!**
**Workshop handouts are now free!**

Preventing Today’s Leaders for Tomorrow’s Church
Being ready to meet Jesus

Knowing that a spiritual renewal of the size and magnitude envisioned by the Spiritual Emphasis Study Plan committee is dead in the water without a commitment by church leadership and a support system, the following was done.

First, a written covenant was drawn up committing the signer to the daily study of the Bible and the writings of Mrs. White, prayer, sharing, and service. This covenant was given to the church leaders assembled for the NAD year end meetings last November. Time was given for the examination of Nehemiah and Ezra’s revival and of the role of leadership in the revival. Then the covenant was introduced. All the leaders were encouraged to sign the covenant as the initial step in following the counsel given to us and in beginning the revival that will see the church through history’s final events and into the kingdom. My union and conference presidents signed the covenant. Now it is up to us as pastors to take up the challenge, commit ourselves to a division-wide spiritual renewal, and to carry this experience to our congregations.

If the conference leadership and the pastors are behind the spiritual renewal, the battle will be more than half won. To aid the pastor, a pocket-sized book has been prepared, entitled Getting Ready to Meet Jesus. This is a practical “how to” guide for lay people. Its format follows the four points of the covenant—study, prayer, sharing, and service. The practical guide is followed by a “Bible Reading Plan for One Year” and a “Spirit of Prophecy Five-Year Reading Program.” It is hoped that this book will be one of several ingredients in the all-important support system that will be introduced into each NAD conference and church.

In the Chesapeake Conference where I pastor, once the “Spiritual Emphasis Study Plan” has been introduced to the pastors of the Conference, I, as a local pastor, will take it to the elders and church boards of my two churches. Our church boards and elders are leaders in their own right, and it is important that they accept the biblical model for revival in their own churches.

A division-wide revival must reach out to all entities of God’s work. The excitement of spiritual renewal must invade the literature, medical, and all levels of the educational work. Leaders within each of these areas, hospital administrators, classroom teachers, and others must be introduced to the biblical model for revival and must catch the vision and thus assume their responsibility as leaders. All of these people are members of local congregations, of course, and will be exposed to the call to revival as it is presented by their pastors. But leaders in other branches of the work must take up the call to spiritual renewal and customize it to fit their situations.

God is calling us as a church with all of our various branches of work to a renewed experience with Him. He is waiting to pour out the Holy Spirit in the latter rain so His work can be completed. He waits for a commitment on the part of leadership and a determination on the part of all who carry responsibility to take the momentum of revival and deep renewal to the people. God wants us, as leaders and pastors, to put a support system into place so as revival occurs it will not be just a brief flash-in-the-pan. Events in history demand closure on the great controversy. We have the model to accomplish closure under the power of God. NAD leadership is committed to the model. Now it is up to us, the pastors, to carry it to the people.

1 Review and Herald, Feb. 27, 1908.
5 Ellen G. White, Manuscript Releases 14 (Silver Spring, Md.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1993), 204.
When I was learning to drive, I loved to take my Volkswagen down old dirt roads and fishtail it just for fun. If I were not careful, there were times when I found it difficult to get the fishtailing car to straighten out.

James Hopps is pastor of the Bryan and Waller Seventh-day Adventist churches, Texas.

I would end up oversteering—repeatedly throwing the tail of the car back and forth in a furious attempt to get it straight.

This tendency is common not just among immature drivers but also among immature churches. The former can wind up in a physical ditch, the latter in a theological one.

As Adventists, are we heading toward a theological ditch? I’m thinking, in particular, of what is being called “Evangelical Adventism,” with its emphasis on justification by faith to the point of neglecting holiness and the fruits of the indwelling Spirit. I’m thinking of a “Christianity” that is rightfully accused of being powerless, fraudulent in its claims to change lives and transform characters. Dietrich Bonhoeffer called it “cheap grace”: “the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without discipline, communion without confession, absolution without personal confession and reformation. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”

I am always appalled by the immaturity of the polar positions, which appear in different packages. Though, no doubt, our acceptance before God is based solely on the merit of Christ crucified and not on the quality of our lives, the New Testament clearly shows that solid ethics and holiness are expected of mature and maturing believers (1 Thess. 4:1-12; James 4:1-12; 1 Pet. 4:1-11; 1 John 1:5-7). Every apostolic writer calls for holy living as the normative progression of the Christian faith. As one evangelical theologian puts it: “There are many pastors today who, for fear of being branded as ‘legalists,’ give their congregation no ethical teaching. How far we have strayed from the apostles! ‘Legalism’ is the misguided attempt to earn our salvation by obedience to the law. ‘Pharisaism’ is a meticulous preoc-
cipation with the externals and the minutiae of religious duty. To teach the standards of moral conduct which adorn the gospel is neither legalism nor Pharisaism but plain apostolic Christianity.\textsuperscript{2}

A penetrating question must challenge some of the well-meaning theological teaching that many of the best of us have espoused during the last few years: After all the preaching on justification by faith alone, how many people in the church are living holier, more obedient, and Christlike lives now than ten years ago? To be honest, I don’t see much improvement (myself included). What should we make of the fact that many after decades in the church display no hint of peace, kindness, patience, longsuffering, etc.? How should we deal with the reality that so many of our so-called mature believers, are still elitist, arrogant, slanderous, and mean-spirited? These things cause other believers to soundly argue that our religion and all the talk about faith and the Bible hasn’t done much for many of us. If this is so, and it appears to be, something is wrong.

**Balance in the true gospel**

As we enter a new era, we must endeavor to teach the balance that is found in full expressions of the gospel of Christ. This gospel includes justification by grace through faith alone and includes overwhelming security (John 10:28, 29). We must always teach security even during times of rebellion against God so that no one is tempted to revert to the teachings of the those known as the Judaizers (Gal. 3). Nevertheless, this gospel includes and requires maturity or sanctification. This aspect of the truth is not optional. Jesus Himself taught us that obedience to His commandments is the expected proof or evidence of our love for Him. We should never shy away from teaching that disregarding Christ’s commandments indicates a lack of love for him. To do this is simply to be genuinely biblical.

We must be careful, however, not to equate love for Jesus with salvation, since we are neither saved nor kept saved just because we love Christ. We must, as ministers of Christ’s gospel, stop swinging back and forth in our teaching; over-correcting in one decade the over-corrections of the previous decade. It’s time to straighten this car out. We must teach the gospel in its fullness. Not just pieces of it. And just as we must mature beyond fish-tailing in our driving, it is time for us as a church to do the same in our understanding, teaching, and living of the good news of the whole gospel.

A cross the denominational spectrum a remarkable range of specialized ministries offer family-life education. Seventh-day Adventist family ministry has much in common with the work of other Christian groups.

But do Adventists bring to family ministry anything unique or distinctive? The great controversy motif places Christian beliefs in a cosmic perspective. Adventist family ministry is distinctive because it sees family life issues as playing a role in the cosmic struggle between good and evil. For Adventists, family ministry has eschatological significance and urgency, and it offers fresh and effective strategies for the Global Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Adventist family ministry and the great controversy

The great controversy perspective brings God’s concern for good relationships into sharp focus. Yahweh is a God of good relationships whose character is expressed in heaven’s way of inter-relating. When Lucifer rebelled, he fractured relationships in heaven, and the greatest divorce of all time took place.

At Creation, the Sabbath and marriage provided a dual framework for human relationships. The Sabbath gave priority, structure, and protection to the way humans related to God. Marriage gave the primary human-to-human relationship that kept other relationships in correct alignment.

When Adam and Eve sinned, all their relationships were damaged. They hid from God because they felt alienated from Him. They felt alienated from each other and fought round one of the war between the sexes.

Sin undercut both relationships—Sabbath and marriage. God’s plan of redemption, explained to Adam and Eve after the Fall, was designed to restore harmonious relationships—with both God and each other. At Sinai God gave the written law as a guide to good relationships. The first four commandments govern the relationship with God, and the last six direct human relationships. Jesus summarized the two parts: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart . . . soul and . . .
mind,” and “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:36-39, NIV).

The gospel restores and empowers good relationships. Christ spent Himself and much of His time teaching His followers how to have good relationships. The apostolic letters carry the same emphasis (see Gal. 5:22ff as an example).

The three angels’ messages (Rev. 14:6-12) seek to restore relationships fractured by sin. God’s final community will experience and proclaim the restoration of both of Creation’s institutions—Sabbath and marriage—because they are equally enshrined in His law. Through the Sabbath God seeks to ensure closer ties between Himself and His people. Their loving human relationships are to be celebrated by Eden-style marriages. The best characteristic of the new earth will not be streets or crowns of gold but Godlike relationships enjoyed by all.

This thumbnail sketch of the great controversy shows the priority God places on the most intimate of human relationships as He works out His plan of redemption. First, He intends to restore the relationship between humans and Himself. Restoring Eden’s Sabbath facilitates a true faith relationship with Jesus Christ. Second, He intends to restore loving relationships between humans. Marriage, the primary human relationship, heads the list of relationships to be restored by the gospel.

Adventist family ministry aims to facilitate loving family relationships as the vital starting point to loving relationships with all of humankind. As Ellen White said: “The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian.” Having good relationships is vital both for personal salvation and for evangelism. Thus Adventists find in the great controversy theme a most powerful theological, eschatological mandate for comprehensive family ministry.

Adventist family ministry and dual end-time trends

The great controversy theme gives Adventist family ministry a distinctive optimism. Scripture predicts dual trends affecting families in the days preceding Jesus’ return. The first is a powerful downward family trend (see 2 Tim. 3:1-5). In this trend love and faithfulness disappear, to be replaced by selfishness and immorality. There can be little doubt that we are in the midst of this predicted downward trend.

On the opposite end of the prophetic spectrum, Malachi predicts a powerful upward family trend in which the hearts of family members will turn to each other in fresh love and faithfulness during the last days (Mal. 4:5, 6). Like all divinely empowered trends, the upward family life trend is more powerful than its demonic counterpart. This means that although the general picture of family life at the end of time is a sordid one, the Christian family will demonstrate a true intimacy and beauty of unprecedented quality.

Beyond Malachi’s promise, what evidence is there to support such optimism? First, modern advances in the behavioral sciences, especially when adopted with discrimination, offer an understanding of behavior and relationships unavailable to God.
previous generations. Second, dramatic advances in Christian family ministry have created a wealth of material offering insight and information not available even 20 years ago. Third, in past generations the social stigma of divorce and the financial dependence of women often created stable marriages out of necessity. The relationships of good Christian couples were not necessarily healthy even though divorce was out of the question. Today's changed social environment, in which divorce is considered an acceptable option and in which women can support themselves, makes good, stable marriage relationships a more authentic choice.

When I look at Christian couples whose relationships are stable and committed by choice, who are actually using available family life resources and who are indeed working on their relationships, I see some of the best marriages.

Adventist family ministry and growth in Christ

Adventist family ministry is distinctive because it plays a vital role in preparing Christians for the kingdom of God. When people become Christians, they embark on a lifelong journey of growth into the fullness of Jesus Christ. This growth process, sanctification, includes overcoming bad habits, developing good habits, developing Christian virtues and graces, sharing Christ with others, and developing an ever-deeper understanding of God's truth.

What about developing good family relationships? Does becoming a better spouse, parent, or family member have anything to do with sanctification? Have you ever noticed Adventists who are deeply concerned about behavioral perfectionism, lifestyle matters, doctrinal issues, or the faults of the brethren, while having miserable relationships at home? Have you known people who burn themselves out in God's service, while paying scant attention to their most valuable relationships?

Any definition of sanctification that leaves out growing, improving family relationships has to be seriously deficient. This is not to suggest that people who experience family conflict are inferior Christians. Judging another person's Christian experience by the way they relate to their spouse would be fruitless and wrong. Family relationships need to grow from the point at which they presently stand. Improving one's family relationships must not become a mere legalistic act.

Yet God is clearly concerned with the quality of our relationships, especially our marriage relationships, because marriage is the foundational human-to-human relationship. Marriage forms, constructs, and integrates our other relationships. Christ can do His best transformational from within marriage relationships. He wants Christian virtues and graces to reach their pinnacle in our marriages. A good marriage is a pivotal element of Christian experience and development.

Because sanctification includes growth in family relationships, family ministry stands at the center of the Adventist message. To be complete, the church's work of nurturing spiritual growth among its members must include comprehensive family ministry.

Adventist family ministry and evangelism

Adventist family ministry is distinctive because it is evangelistic. The concept of "felt-need evangelism" has received strong emphasis among Adventists. The idea is to minister to the needs people feel, thus gaining their confidence and making them more open to the gospel invitation and the distinctive elements of Adventism. Ellen White identifies this kind of approach as "Christ's method."

Probably the felt need most often addressed by Adventists has been the need for better physical health. What about the felt need for better family life? Look anywhere—east or west, north or south—and there is family stress and distress. Books of statistics could be compiled to demonstrate the scope of family fragmentation around the globe. Good marriages seem elusive these days. Yet the human heart cries out for the comfort and security that only good marriage can provide.

Consider the blows sustained by the family in recent decades. During the 1960s Western countries went through the "sexual revolution," and Christian family life principles were denounced as "old-fashioned." At about the same time many developing countries emerging into political independence denounced Christian family life principles as "colonialist." Then the gay community came out of the closet to promote its "alternative lifestyle." Political change in the former Communist countries has been accompanied by family upheaval. The AIDS crisis has had its own devastating effect on the family. It is not difficult to make strong arguments for the fact that vast proportions of the popular media have developed militant antifamily dynamics. The cumulative family fragmentation caused by these and other philosophical and social trends has been catastrophic to the home.

In the 1990s even secular people recognize that something has to change. Christians can see more clearly than ever that biblical family life principles offer the only safe path for people of all cultures. There is a new openness to evaluate family life traditions and to replace secular elements with solidly Christian patterns.

The intensity and scope of the felt need for good family life is every bit as great as the felt need for better physical health. Better family life is a global necessity around which the global church can unite for evangelism. Evangelists in Malawi, where I work, have conducted campaigns built around the motif of the family. The results have exceeded their expectations. People will walk miles to receive good family-life instruction. Similarly successful family-life evangelism has been done in other places. Family ministry offers a fresh, powerful approach to evangelism that addresses the deepest needs and most healthy desires of humanity.

Conclusion

Adventist family ministry deserves to take the same important place in Global Mission that it occupies in Adventist theology. Family ministry offers fresh, practical, and effective approaches to spiritual nurture within the church and in evangelism among the masses who await the gospel. God's family in heaven is eagerly awaiting the restoration of His family on earth.

1 John and Millie Youngberg, Rebuilding the Family Altar (Miami: Inter-American Division Publishing Association, 1994), 7.
3 Ibid., 143.
Recently ordained/commissioned

Ford; Peter (Vicki), pastor, British Columbia Conf., NAD

Francis; Nathaniel (Lyneth), pastor, North East, Papua Mission, SSD

Gabbert; Dan (Patsy), pastor, Dakota Conf., NAD

Garcia-Ramos; Andres (Martha Dzul), pastor, North Mexican Union Conf., IAD

Genun; Samson (Lynn), president, North East Papua Mission, SSD

Gill; Harvey Lee (Corinne), pastor, Texaco Conf., NAD

Gill; Jacob M. (Shashikala), pub. dept. dir., Northern India Union Sect., SUD

Goff; Timothy (Carolyn), Chesapeake Conf., NAD

Gomez; Frey (N. Hilda Escobedo de Gomez), pastor, South Veracruz Conf., IAD

Grant; Robert (Ramona), pastor, Carolina Conf., NAD

Hall; Kenley D. (Roshelle), Northern California Conf., NAD

Heita; Rogatiew (Sabine), pastor, French Polynesia Mission, SPD

Hitchcock; Chester (Cathy), pastor, Ohio Conf., NAD

Ikegawa; Chibuka (Ugohi), director, evangelism/communication, East Central Mission, Nigeria, AID

Ingino; Subin (Srinuan), pastor, Thailand Mission, SSD

Intepa; Suan (Or-Ratai), evangelist, Thailand Mission, SSD

Itsaringkarn; Rangsit (Attayasai), min. dir., Thailand Mission, SSD

Iwuala; Ignatius Chuwuima (Oluchi), district leader, East Central Mission, Nigeria, AID

Jaras; Walter Horacio (Glady's Beatriz), pastor, South Argentine Mission, SAR

Jimmy; Ezekiel (Jennifer), pastor, Madang Manus Mission, SPD

Jonakin; R. Mitchell (Karon), pastor, New Jersey Conf., NAD

Jones; Gregory (Jennifer), pastor, Arizona Conf., NAD

Kanthornpitak; Yongyoot (Jaenueng Saey), pastor, Thailand Mission, SSD

Karire; Risam (J. K. Kamie), pastor, Southwestern Uganda Field, EAD

Karwur; John A. (Altie Turah), ed. dir./Amicus Coordinator, SSD

Kelandonu; Jupiter (Norma Koagow), pastor, North Minahasa Mission, SSD

Kimba; Elisha Asate (Deborah), district leader, North West Mission, Nigeria, AID

Kirco; Mitko (Dimitrina), pastor, Bulgarian Union, EUD

Krushkin; Ilia (Dimitrina), pastor, Bulgarian Union, EUD

Labbe; Sr. Edmund (Joan), pastor, Northern New England Conf., NAD

Laoken; Kasen (Samorn), pastor, Thailand Mission, SSD

Lehoux; Walter (Viviana), pastor, Austral Union, SAD

Lo-Oata; Elijah (Jean), pastor, North East Papua Mission, SSD

Magan; Issyaku Aliyu (Maryamu), assistant district leader, North West Mission, Nigeria, AID

Maggay; Harrison (Orpa), pastor, Southern Mindanao Mission, SSD

Mambu; Moldy (Gladys), treasurer, East Indonesia Union Mission, SSD

Mamman; Marcelo (Maria Valeria), evangelist, Austral Union, SAD

Mann; Bryan (Valoree), Pastor, Central States Conf., NAD

Marquez; Enoc (Nohemi), Pastor, Arizona Conf., NAD

Martinez; Max, Pastor, East Puerto Rico Conf., IAD

Martinez-Santiago; Abel (Glady's Hernandez Oscar), pub. dir., Central Mexican Conf., IAD

Masih; Daniel (Asha), pastor, Northern India Union, SUD

Masih; Daniel (Naseem), pastor, Northern India Union, SUD

Masih; Kewal (Venus), pastor, Northern India Union, SUD

Masih; Salamat (Raj Kumart), pastor, Northern India Union, SUD

Massey; Ajit (Shamim), pastor, Northern India Union, SUD

Massey; Iqbal (Grace), pastor, Northern India Union, SUD

Massey; Nazir M. (Sharlet), pastor/Publishing Dir., Northern India Union, SUD

McIntosh; Rainford (Diane), pastor, West Jamaica Conf., IAD

McLauchlan; Jr. David R. (Shara), pastor, Texaco Conf., NAD

Middletett; Gregory (Shirley), pastor, Oregon Conf., NAD

Miller; Erin (Steve), pastor, Carolina Conf., NAD

Moker; William (Dorcas), Sepik Mission, SPD

Momongan; Josian (Anneke Turungan), pastor, North Minahasa Mission, SSD

Mookdasawan; Veerachai (Kaifa), pastor, Thailand Mission, SSD

Moolken; Boonrat (Raweewan), secretary, Thailand Mission, SSD

Morales-Lopez; Horiberto (Yolanda Mendoza), pastor, North Mexican Union Conf., IAD

Morrison; Kenneth (Robin), pastor, Illinois Conf., NAD

Moyer; Gary (Lisa), pastor, Carolina Conf., NAD

Mukar; Danee (Glenda), youth/children's ministries/family life, Madang Manus Mission, SPD

Munus-Larrondo; Ruben (Angelica), pastor, Carolina Conf., NAD

Nacorda; William (Marietta), pastor, Davao Mission, SSD

Namura; Samuel (Gowela), pastor, North East Papua Mission, SSD

Natividad; Pepito Ricarte (Mary June), pastor, Western Mindanao Conf., SUD

Navarro; Ray Andrew (Elisa Luz), pastor, Southern California Conf., NAD

Nembai; Samson (Rebecca), pastor, Western Highlands Mission, SPD

Norman; James (Angelica), pastor, South Central Conf., NAD
Although he didn’t see it coming, Pastor Benjamin Smith was nonetheless headed for a train wreck at that night’s Board meeting.

Nearing the end of his first year in a new district and his seventh year in the ministry, Ben saw himself as a visionary. The daunting demands of pastoring a rural, three-church district had not kept him from dreaming about a better future for his people. Fully committed to the bedrock principles of the priesthood of all believers, spiritual gifts, discipline, and body life, Ben had recently spent weeks chiseling out a master plan for his largest church. He fully expected the Board to endorse it. “Tonight will be the turning point,” he told his wife excitedly. “This stuff makes so much sense, and it’s scriptural. I know it will fly!”

Even though Ben had hardly shared his vision with anyone, he felt he could count on the support of a core of his leaders. Unfortunately, those key people were not quite where Ben projected them to be in their thinking. They were not prepared, at least on the night of Ben’s board meeting, to grasp the nuances of complex visions and paradigm shifts.

The head elder, Mark, had that very afternoon had a serious conflict with his new boss. Uncommunicative and authoritarian, the new man ran the office like a military camp, and Mark resented it. Office morale had plummeted. At a meeting things got more than a little testy, and Mark had left the office that afternoon hoping the evening Board meeting would finish early so he could collapse at home.

The day hadn’t been much better for Diane, the head deaconess. Her nine-year-old had spent the last four days in bed with a temperature hovering around 103°. Too little sleep and too much worry left Diane anxious and uptight. She planned to attend the Board meeting that evening only on condition that her husband would call if anything changed in her little girl.

Ruth, the Sabbath School superintendent, managed a local drugstore and routinely put in 60-hour weeks. She had been working on a special project at work since 6:00 a.m. and had stayed late to cover for an employee who suddenly got sick. She wondered how she was going to find time to pick up groceries, fix supper for the family, and still be at the board meeting by seven.

Besides distracted supporters, Ben would also have to deal with his aging church clerk, Betty. She had just that afternoon said to her husband, “That young man has got to learn that we serve a God of order. He forgot again to put the second reading in the church bulletin for a members transfer. And he never gives me the agenda for Board meetings ahead of time so I can type it up and get it out. Either
things get better fast or they can find themselves a new clerk!

Fred, the Personal Ministries director, planned his own disgruntled contribution for the evening’s agenda. He’d been on the phone since early in the day with two church elders. They were all deeply concerned about the new style of “dance-hall” music introduced during the song service on the previous Sabbath.

Finally, at 7:15 p.m., Ben rushed into the Board meeting with his tie slightly askew. He apologized for the delay and hurriedly set up the easel on which he had been on the witness stand under cross-examination. He promised Betty to be more organized in the future, and the whole Board begged Betty to stay on. She graciously agreed.

Emboldened by this crusty presentation, Fred then told the Board about the song-service episode. The ensuing discussion meandered and digressed from music tastes to overheads to the need for reverberation among young people. The Board formed a subcommittee to look into the matter.

By 8:55 p.m., Ben felt drained. Nonetheless, he prayed silently, sucked in a deep breath, and gamely began outlining his vision on the easel in graphic multicolor. By his third point, four Board members, including Diane, had excused themselves and left. Ben’s eye caught Mark looking down at his watch. Ruth raised her hand and commented, “Pastor, planning like this is overwhelming! We relish issues. They relish the forest and aren’t all that interested in twigs and leaves. Things like bulletin information and agendas are on the outer edges of their consciousness and far down their list of priorities. These details, however, will be very important to someone. It is therefore helpful if a visionary can delegate administrative details to volunteers who enjoy that ministry or find donors to pay for a part-time secretary.

2. Visionaries often see the future so clearly in their own mind’s eye that they underestimate the difficulty others may have in grasping the concepts. As a result, they often fail to appreciate the effort necessary to “sell” the vision to those around them. Vision casting usually requires patient, personal effort over an extended time.

Before any new vision or paradigm is brought to a vote, the key players should be visited and well-informed ahead of time. A key person may not even be a Board member but someone who is leading from the sidelines. Usually a retreat is a far better setting to discuss new visions than a Board meeting at the end of everyone’s hectic day. Even when people understand the vision, they will often need some kind of brief refresher course every one or two months.

3. People fall into three groups: visionaries, planners, and doers. To use a space analogy, visionaries decide where to go in outer space, the planners design the rocket, and the doers build it. All are vital. One group is not more important than the others, just different. If doers are placed on a visioning team, they will soon complain that “all this group does is talk, talk, talk!” On the other hand, if you put visionaries with a group of doers, they will complain that they are busy but haven’t got a clue where they’re going. Once pastors understand these differences, they can utilize each group more appropriately. Pastors who are not visionaries themselves can activate and support those in the congregation who are.

Pastors who do have visionary gifts can build a team of visionaries and planners around themselves to develop an initial consensus for change. Such a group, no matter how small, could then become the core of an ongoing strategic planning team that brings others into the process over time.

continued on p. 25
Once there was preaching that turned the world upside down.

CAN IT HAPPEN AGAIN?

Three of North America's most provocative preachers challenge the church's role in confronting today's culture through preaching—in a live, interactive seminar via satellite.

Pastor, teacher, churchwoman, scholar, writer, Marguerite Shuster teaches preaching at Fuller Theological Seminary.

Duke University professor William Willimon was named "one of the twelve most effective preachers in the English-speaking world."

Walter Pearson, Jr., speaker for the Breath of Life telecast, is a powerful preacher reaching diverse cultures on six continents.

Tuesday, April 20, 1999
10 AM-2 PM Pacific
1 PM-5 PM Eastern
Adjust for your time zone.

Ask your ministerial association, seminary administrator, church pastor, or chaplain coordinator for details on the downlink site nearest you.

For the nearest downlink site call toll free 877-721-3400

If you wish to sponsor a downlink site:
Call: 301-680-6509
E-mail: 112060.725@compuserve.com
Fax: 301-680-6502

Sponsored by Ministry Magazine
Leading the church to visionary heights

continued from page 23

4. For most people, “seeing is believing.” It is often better, therefore, to start implementing a vision in small ways first, breaking it down into bite-size pieces, without the need for bringing the entire game plan to a premature vote. Little successes become the “firstfruits” that give the vision credibility and help gain support from leadership in general. Any vote that is taken can be on a trial basis for a certain number of months to be reevaluated later.

5. In seeking change, it is vital to understand and respect a church’s culture. Culture is “what we value and the way we do things around here.” Learn the culture by asking questions and understanding the history. A visionary’s enthusiasm can lead him to inadvertently trample a church’s culture, looking like the proverbial bull in a china shop to an old-timer in the pew. Some toes are more sensitive than others. A pastor may need to spend a china shop to an old-timer in the pew. Culture is what areas of the culture are most amenable to change. Alienating people over the song service may subvert attempts to alter other more vital or essential areas of church life.

6. Someone has said, “The difference between a leader and a martyr is about six steps!” Visionary pastors are often in danger of running ahead of their people. When seeking to bring about change, they need to know how much is in their “goodwill bank account.” Goodwill is the trust and support of the congregation, especially leadership. Pastors need to understand how to make deposits in that account and what constitutes a withdrawal. Before initiating change, a leader needs to be sure there is enough goodwill in the account to avoid an overdraft.

7. Visionaries often get discouraged. In a high-task environment, visioning is too often undervalued. It can be very helpful for a visionary pastor to meet regularly with two or three mature, sympathetic church members for encouragement, honest sharing, and prayer.

As difficult as pursuing a new vision can be, the rewards are enormous. When your tenure is over, you will be glad if your people can say, “There is the person who helped us discover God’s vision. There is the leader who enabled us to dream great dreams and to see that amazing visions do actually come true.”

Letters

continued from page 3

little finishing canter before coming to a standstill. There is time to hear the voices of friends, and to say to oneself, ‘The work is done.’ But just as one says that, the answer comes, ‘The race is over, but the work is never done while the power to work remains.’ The canter that brings you to a standstill need not be only coming to rest. It cannot be while you still live. For to live is to function. That is all there is in living” (quoted in Catherine Drinker Bowen, Yankee from Olympus).—E. L. Becker, Loma Linda, California.

• The August issue of Ministry was one of the most practical in a long time. It met some needs of us retirees, and it alerted younger workers that retirement is on its way and they should start some specific planning. Keep up the good work, and I hope to see more articles from time to time. They are needed and appreciated.—Jack Harris, Troutdale, Oregon.

• I was surprised to find no reference to the matter of socially responsive investing in your August 1998 issue on retirement. While it is impossible to eliminate all exposure to questionable industries (i.e., gambling, tobacco, alcohol, pornography), I believe we are responsible to limit our engagement in certain sectors of commerce. Although cash accounts at a local bank might fund just as much “evil,” they do so indirectly. Stock investing, however, presents direct funding on non-Christian lifestyles. The numeric involvement in the case of mutual funds is fractional but nonetheless factual. The question is not of portion or proportion but principle.

How would “not equally yoked” (2 Cor. 6:14) translate into a Christian’s involvement at Wall Street? Is the Wall Street compatible with the “narrow street” (Matt. 7:14) of Christian living?

A discussion of the ethics of stock market investing, along the lines of “in the market but not of the market” (John 17:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:10) would have rounded off a very informative treatment of retirement.—Ingo Sorke, pastor, Converse, Texas.

• I just finished James Cress’s article about the retirement proposal. I also learned that he is following through with personal communications to those who might be involved in the decision at year-end meetings. Needless to say, I intensely agree with him and applaud his efforts. I am writing, however, because I believe his efforts in this matter represent something even more significant.

In my 30 years of ministry, I cannot recall such a forthright and, to be perfectly candid, heroic effort on behalf of the pastor. It has been my observation, often expressed of late, that the pastor has not one voice of advocacy throughout the ranks of our church. You mention the trend toward congregationalism we are facing. This juggernaut has decimated the front-line soldiers of the clergy. In terms of our ability to do creative, Spirit-led ministry, it is all up to a vote nowadays. But more sadly, the joy and sense of calling is missing in many instances.

Please congratulate Elder Cress on his courage and convictions and thank him for not forgetting us!—Lorenzo Grant, via E-mail.

• What a cover for your August Ministry magazine! Good-looking guy in his rocking chair enjoying life. Does he have a wedding ring on? (Or perhaps he is from Australia?) Does this mean that I can wear a wedding ring now that I am retired?—Bob Larsen, Henderson, Nevada.

Editorial remark: Only if you are indeed from Australia or England or . . .
Upon what does salvation ultimately depend? On our faith in and acceptance of Jesus as our Savior or on the good works that follow faith? This is such a well-worn question in Seventh-day Adventist circles that the answer may seem obvious. Once we accept Christ as our Savior, we will want to do His will, even if our good works aren’t what save us. We cannot possibly earn salvation, but we do express our loyalty and commitment to Christ by seeking, with God’s help, to walk in Jesus’ footsteps.

But there’s one problem. Biblical passages that deal specifically with judgment tell us that we are judged by our behavior. Not one passage says explicitly that we are judged by our faith in Christ, with good works trailing after. Isaiah 59:18: “According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay.” Jer. 17:10: “To give every man according to his ways, ... and according to the fruit of his doing.” Micah 6:8: “What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” Ezekiel 7:3: “I will judge thee according to thy ways.” Matthew 10:42: “Whosoever shall give ... a cup of cold water ... he shall in no wise lose his reward.” Matthew 16:27: “He ... shall reward every man according to his works.” Matthew 19:17: “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” John 5:29: “And [they] shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life.” John 14:21: “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me:—and I will love him.” Acts 10:35: “In every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.” 1 Corinthians 3:8: “Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.” Galatians 6:9: “Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”

Salvation: Faith versus works

REO M. CHRISTENSON

1 Peter 1:17: “Who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work.” Revelation 2:23: “I will give unto every one of you according to your works.” Revelation 14:12: “Here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” Revelation 20:12, 13: “And the dead were judged . . . according to their works.” Revelation 22:14: “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life.”

How shall we harmonize these passages, which emphasize works, especially in the judgment setting, with an equally formidable list of verses that emphasize the role of faith?

Reconciling the two positions

The task of reconciling the seemingly divergent positions is possible if we recognize two central facts: (1) God is just; (2) A great majority of those who have lived most of it since His birth. Even today, with all the technological advances in communication, the majority of the human race has not yet been exposed to gospel. Are all those who never heard the name of Jesus to be lost? How could they be held responsible for not having faith in Christ and yielding their hearts to One whom they have never heard of? Would we expect this from a God who, surely, is more just than any human being?

I have heard innumerable sermons and read innumerable articles proclaiming faith in Christ as crucial to salvation but which pass over this significant theological dilemma.

There is one way, I believe, that the doctrine of righteousness by faith can be reconciled with judgment by works. God is the source and inspiration for all that is good. He speaks through the Scripture and through the Holy Spirit. If those who have never heard of Christ respond to His Spirit as it speaks to them, a judgment based on behavior gives them the same opportunity for salvation as those who accepted the good news when it came to them. Does justice demand anything less?

Consider those who believe that faith in Jesus as their Savior qualifies them for salvation, with the understanding that such a profession will lead to appropriate behavior. Now, take a look at the religious landscape of America. Between 36 and 40 percent of Americans are churchgoers. A high percentage of these regard themselves as “born again” Christians. Most may accept Jesus as the Son of God who died for their sins; most, doubtless, believe in Him as their Savior. They are not insincere in this belief, even if their general behavior and lifestyle are little different from that of the average, decent, law-abiding unbeliever. If no one knew that they attended church, they would have little or no reason to suspect that they were Christians.

Accepting Christ

“Accepting Christ” must mean more, therefore, than mere verbal profession, church attendance, Bible reading, liberal giving, engaging in prayer, and active witnessing. The test of Christian commitment is not how much we attend church or read the Bible or pray but how we behave when not doing these things. This radical perspective meshes the teachings of Jesus with biblical verses about the judgment. Unless “accepting Jesus” significantly affects our total behavior, professing faith in Him is just sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. So if Christians, too, are judged by their behavior, that behavior demonstrates whether their acceptance of Christ was

Viewpoint articles are designed to stimulate thought and do not necessarily reflect the position of our editorial staff or of Ministry.
merely superficial verbiage or whether it penetrated to the core of their being. Thus the behavior criterion becomes equally applicable to persons who affirm they are Christian as to those who, whether wholly or largely ignorant of the good news, nevertheless welcome the quiet promptings of the Holy Spirit in their lives (See Romans 2:12-16.) God’s justice prevails in either life, and Satan cannot accuse God of unfairness.

Meaning of Christian behavior

Christian behavior, at its fullest, means more than is commonly recognized. In addition to loving our neighbors as ourselves, it means loving our enemies. It involves respecting all of the Ten Commandments and being honest and truthful in matters great and small. It means being a good listener and being as courteous to the “little people” as to “important people.” It avoids profanity and obscenity and has the humility to admit personal faults and the fallibility of our opinions. It manifests sexual integrity in all aspects of our living. It maintains a simple lifestyle so as to give generously to relieve human suffering and spread the gospel. It has the ability to meet adversity with a measure of cheerfulness and a continuing trust in God. Of course, no one fully lives up to all these Christian attributes, but unless our behavior is different from that of unbelievers, being a Christian is a rather empty way of life.

Few pastors stress the full spectrum of Christian behavior. They may emphasize kindness and compassion. But if they speak of sacrificial living or if they condemn nonmarital sex and divorce, they will make many parishioners so uncomfortable that some may migrate to churches that tell them what they prefer to hear.

How “good” must one’s behavior be to merit God’s ultimate mercy? No one can answer that question but God, who alone knows the heart and its predominant desire to seek what is good and right or its tendency to give primacy to hedonism, social acceptance, pride, selfishness, and greed.

God’s fairness

God will take account, of course, of our genetic endowment and social environment. Both these help determine our behavior, as well as our inclination toward faith. Some have a temperament and disposition that from birth incline them toward friendly, helpful, and constructive conduct; others have a rebellious spirit manifested at an early age. Some recognize their own specific sins more readily than do others; some fail more often but repent more freely. Only God can judge fairly, given all the diverse behavioral conditioning factors that exist.

It seems reasonable, therefore, to believe that God will receive into His eternal kingdom those who, given the best they knew and the genetic and environmental cards with which they were dealt, made obedience to His will the most important goal in their life.

But for those who nevertheless believe that the acceptance of Jesus and faith in Him overrules all the influence of obedience, works, and behavior and provides a single judicial criterion for determining our final fate, the question becomes, How much and what kind of faith must a believer have?

Faith ranges from a child’s simple trust to Jesus’ despairing cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Our concern is not that we have faith or don’t have faith. Faith exists on a continuum. Faith comes more easily to people with certain types of intellect and temperament than to others. This is a puzzling but indubitable phenomenon. Even for believers, faith fluctuates. It may flicker, then flame up, then fade, then revive. And do any of us doubt that faith faces far less resistance from those raised in Christian homes than those from devout Jewish or Muslim homes? Will God not take all this into account—by ultimately judging by some standard other than simply “faith in Christ”?

All of us must be cautious about quoting a verse, or a collection of verses, to “prove” a point. A single verse or even several verses strung together can be used to “prove” heresy. It is essential, then, in interpreting Scripture, to consider all verses that bear upon a given subject, to weigh them and their relationship to one another, as well as to consider their context. Jesus’ teachings and example can settle most controversies. These principles won’t
always provide full agreement, even for conscientious and open-minded scholars, but they do of course throw definitive light on our questions and understandings.

This concept is especially important when dealing with faith and works. Often we seize upon certain verses congenial to our theological tastes while ignoring or soft-pedaling verses that challenge a cherished view. None of us is immune to this tendency.

Paul and Luther

A further observation concerning background history may shed light on the issue of righteousness by faith. Paul stressed this theme because the Jews had placed so much rigid emphasis on the letter of the law. And the law they stressed involved minutiae pertaining to ritual observances having little or nothing to do with such virtues as love, kindness, and mercy. Does anyone really believe Paul would have written as he did about righteousness by faith if the theological thought leaders of his day were health-

fully insisting on the importance of faith, love, and good works? Surely he was responding to a tragic misreading of God’s will for human life. By stressing justification by faith as he did, he was weaning new Jewish believers away from centuries of theological misconception. If what might seem to be an overemphasis on faith (in some but by no means all of Paul’s writings), Paul was looking for the best way to bring about the radical reevaluation he knew to be so needful in the Jewish-Christian mind.

Similarly, Martin Luther was reacting to Roman Catholic preoccupation with rituals, relics, indulgences, purgatory, the invocation of saints, and Mariolatry. If the Catholic Church had been emphasizing the importance of faith, love, kindness, forgiveness, etc. as “works” of obedience, would Luther have preached as he did? Certainly not.

Similarly, recent Seventh-day Adventist stress on righteousness by faith involving a certain neglect of specific obedience may well be an overreaction to a traditional legalistic emphasis on obedience in Adventism’s past. A moderate reaction would have been salutary, but once again the pendulum had swung too far. For many writers and pastors today, obedience in the best sense of the word is often viewed as a footnote to God’s love, mercy, compassion, and forgiveness.

The recent trend, it should be added, also seems to correspond to the post-modern theological drift throughout Protestantism toward de-emphasizing obedience while dwelling on the theme of God’s love and mercy. Pastors, in these member-competitive times, are closely attuned to the sensitivities of the pew.

Whatever our reaction to the line of thought presented here, it is hardly deniable that the times and trends of today’s church and today’s world certainly call for some careful thinking and reevaluating of our positions in this well-traveled yet crucial arena of theology and behavior.

Reo M. Christenson, Ph.D., is professor emeritus of Miami University and lives in Miamisburg, Ohio.

---

You Can Understand the Bible

(Fernon Retzer and Mike Speegle) This 32-page booklet is designed to help laypeople study and understand the Bible. Done in short, quick, and easy-to-read segments, this is an excellent tool to help those with no background in Scripture get a good start on reading the Word of God for themselves. Great for small groups that want to learn more about Bible basics, especially new or potential members.

General Conference Ministerial Association Resource Center
12501 Old Columbia Pike ● Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600
Phone: 301-680-6508 ● Fax: 301-680-6502 ● Web site: www.ministerialassociation.com
Also available at your Adventist Book Center

US$6.95 + 15% S&H
Along with Peter Prime, our new Associate, I recently was privileged to participate in a historic ordination service, the first-ever on the Caribbean island of St. Maarten. The conference president, Jansen Trotman, and his team constructed a meaningful program that demonstrated high spirituality and careful planning. They did it right!

Sufficient time was allocated for the program so that no one felt hurried, yet thoughtful attention to various details avoided a marathon. This well-planned service was unlike another ordination I recently endured that lasted almost four hours. Other elements that contributed to the success of this high day included:

Preparation. Advance planning was evident throughout. Items such as certificates, flowers, printed programs, etc., were in place so that the spiritual atmosphere was not ruined by a hurried rush of last-minute details. Rehearsal of various parts of the program assured a smooth-running service.

Examination of candidates. Rather than a theological investigation which young pastors might remember more as an inquisition, the conference leadership took time to affirm the candidates in their ministry. Noting that the decision to ordain them had already been voted, the leaders emphasized the serious undertaking of ordained ministry plus joy in service. Sharing of common-sense, practical ideas for success in ministry was emphasized much more than attempts to "trip-up" the candidates in theological briar patches.

Inclusion. Emphasis was placed on pastoral spouses and family. For example, during the examination, a group of pastoral wives joined the spouses to discuss their role and privileges in team ministry and to affirm their value. Spouses and children were also introduced as part of the ministry team, and their needs and potential were included in the sermon. A warm welcome to team ministry from the Union’s shepherdess coordinator, appropriate gifts, and flowers recognized the unique ministry of each spouse.

Tone. A reverent atmosphere was evident as all the pastors in the conference, along with their spouses and other guests, were led in solemn procession through the auditorium to specially-designated seats. The large crowd of members, many who were experiencing their first ordination service, clearly understood that this was a solemn and deeply spiritual occasion. The platform was prepared in advance to function effectively for the various elements of the service.

Worship in music. Appropriate, well-rehearsed musical presentations enhanced the beauty of the service. The pastors had joined together to form a chorus which sang at the time of welcome. Likewise, the conference's pastoral wives prepared a musical feature emphasizing God's call to take the gospel to the world. Carefully selected hymns involved the audience.

Presentation of the candidates. A brief biography, coupled with a special escort for each couple by another pastoral couple whose ministry had impacted their lives, highlighted the introductions. Expanded biographical material was presented in the printed program.

Sermon. Pastor Prime’s message was spiritual and relevant; it emphasized the privileges, challenges, and high calling of ministry, and it was concise. He demonstrated the fact that a sermon need not be everlasting in order to be immortal.

Prayer. The ordination prayer included all the ministers who gathered around the candidates to affirm the Lord’s calling in the lives of their colleagues. As hands were laid upon the pastors, emphasis was placed on the church’s recognition of heaven’s call much more than on any mystical conveyance of status, privilege, or authority.

Charge and welcome. Both of these elements in the service utilized some of the resources available in the Seventh-day Adventist Ministers Handbook. However, the presenters wisely selected from the resources rather than incorporating every item and unduly lengthening the program. The spouses were also charged and welcomed.

Candidate’s response. Rather than preaching another sermon, which is too often the case when candidates are asked to respond, the emphasis was on joyous anticipation of service and appropriate recognition of parents, teachers, mentors, and others whose influence had led the candidates to this special event. Again, brevity and appropriateness were evident.

Presentations. Certificates and gifts were presented to the candidates and their families along with flowers and tributes from those who best knew their ministry. Even the various churches where each ordinand had previously served were included. Some churches presented a meaningful testimony, plaque, or letter describing the positive impact made by the pastor in their midst.

Celebration. At the conclusion of the program, following the greetings extended by pastoral colleagues, anyone who wished to greet the newly-ordained pastors and their families were welcomed to join a receiving line in which joyous reunions mingled with happy recollections and plans for the future.
BOOK REVIEW


*Daughters of God* is designed to be an encouragement, inspiration, and affirmation to women around the world. Ellen White recognized that it was not always possible to reach the ideal in many areas of life, but she always emphasized that the ideal was worth striving for.

The compilers of this book have endeavored to include counsels that will lead women to aim for the best in whatever walk of life they find themselves, be it personal or professional.

While much of the material is drawn from previously published sources, not all of those sources are readily available. This new book makes it easily accessible to all. Some previously unpublished materials also appears in this volume.

Knowing that every woman is of inestimable value in the sight of the heavenly Father, it is the hope of the Ellen G. White Estate that church members around the world will gain new insights and blessings from reading this volume. We urge that each division plan to translate it as soon as possible.


*Ellen White’s World* is a fresh and rather new approach to the “Sitz im Leben” of Ellen G. White’s times. The subject is presented in two sections, focusing on the periods before and after the Civil War. The tension before, “What it meant and what it means,” is successfully demonstrated as the reader unfolds the different issues at stake in the contemporaneous society of Ellen G. White.

In a simple and yet well-documented style, the author provides the reader with a basic information that was not accessible before. Well-chosen pictures help to better visualize the world of the nineteenth-century in the United States.

The author follows the present trend, which calls for a permanent endeavor to consider the internal and external context of the thoughts and writings of Ellen G. White. However, a specialized bibliography about the times dealt with is not provided by the author. Furthermore, the book gives illuminating insights on how much Mrs. White may have been ahead of her times, namely in such areas as health and education.—Teofila V. Ferreira, Associate Director, Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, Maryland.


*Messenger of the Lord* is a new, extensively documented study of Ellen White’s life, teachings, and major related issues. The first part provides the reader with comprehensive insights about the person in her own time. The author also develops successive major areas of concern, namely on the Seventh-day Adventist Church organization and its theological tensions in general, as well as health and education issues in particular. Sections on internal and external criticism are extensively dealt with, endeavoring to help the student to a better understanding of the role of Ellen White during the early years of the present Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Dr. Herbert E. Douglass has chosen an apologetic approach to his study, intended to be a manual to be used by Seventh-day Adventist colleges in America and elsewhere. It is enriched by an introduction to the study of Bible prophets and prophecy, as well as a comprehensive display of Who’s Who in the Adventist world of Ellen G. White. An appendix section on relevant issues and a selected bibliography, close the 586-page manual.—Teofila V. Ferreira, Associate Director, Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, Maryland.

---

**SEEDS ’99**

A Church Planting Conference

Come to learn & share . . .

- Natural Church Development
- 8 Tracks: Qualities of a Healthy Church
- 100 Seminars on Church Planting
- Young Adult/Youth Seminars
- Spanish Language Seminars + Translation of Plenaries
- For Laity, Pastors, Administrators

How to Plant and Grow Healthy Churches

June 8-12, 1999
Andrews University

Call . . . 1.800.255.7568
Special Offer!

For a limited time, receive a copy of Mark Finley’s *Persuasion: How to Help People Decide for Jesus*, free with every new subscription to *Elder’s Digest* or *Ministry* magazine.

*Persuasion*, written by one of the church’s most successful soul-winners, deals with helping people make the most crucial decision of their lives. Totally Christ/cross-centered, Finley reveals some of the experiences and challenges that he faced in his years of ministry and what he’s learned from the Lord in reaching souls. Each practical principle is coupled with real-life applications.

Yes, please rush me my FREE copy of *Persuasion* by Mark Finley. My new subscription for ☐ *Elder’s Digest* and/or ☐ *Ministry* is enclosed.

**Elder’s Digest**
- ☐ US$9.95 (1 year)
- ☐ US$25.00 (3 years)

**Ministry**
- ☐ US$29.95 (1 year)
- ☐ US$30.95 (1 year; Canada/overseas)

Subscriptions to *Elder’s Digest* and *Ministry* make wonderful gifts!

Payment Type: ☐ Check  ☐ MasterCard  ☐ Visa

Credit Card Number ____________________________ Exp. Date ___ / ___

Name ________________________________

Address ____________________________________________

City ____________________ State _____ Zip Code ______

Phone (______)_________ - _______________________

Mail payment to:

General Conference Ministerial Association Resource Center
12501 Old Columbia Pike • Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600
Phone: 301-680-6508 • Fax: 301-680-6502 • Web site: www.ministerialassociation.com

Let *Ministry* move with you! Send address changes to Jeannette Calbi, *Ministry*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, Maryland 20904, or E-mail us at calbij@gc.adventist.org. Please notify us eight weeks in advance.

Moving?

Please print clearly:

First Name ___________________________ Middle Initial ______ Last Name ___________________________

Old Street Address ____________________________________________

City ___________________________ State _____ Zip Code ________ Country ___________________________

New Street Address ____________________________________________

City ___________________________ State _____ Zip Code ________ Country ___________________________
Please—use the Window!

It's here—the most fertile and exciting evangelistic window of opportunity in modern history—

You've heard the concerns...Y2K and computers crashing, economic panic, political instability, and religious intolerance. Hunger for Bible prophecy will reach an unprecedented apex in the Fall of 1999! Join Amazing Facts and the North American Division in this epic satellite adventure as evangelist Doug Batchelor shares the blessed hope of our soon-coming King!

Seize this rare opportunity. Register today to host this historic satellite event from the world's capitol to your community. Invite your friends to learn what the Bible really says about the future. Using God's word, Doug Batchelor will address the spiritual needs and concerns of humanity on the brink of eternity.

Please—use the window!

Get ready for NET '99 from New York City!

October 15 through November 13, 1999

- 24 vivid and practical presentations!
- Direct gospel preaching with prophetic emphasis.
- Dynamic state-of-the-art multimedia graphics.
- Effective, user-friendly, low-cost evangelism for your community.

Advertising handbills only $39 per thousand until April 2, 1999. HURRY!