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April 1999 issue

Thank you for including Damsteegt's article ("Scripture Faces Current Issues"). I applaud your willingness to present a viewpoint which, as your editorial note affirmed, differs from that of the hermeneutical principles reported in the March 1999 issue.

I've read the article with disbelief and disappointment. Does the content of this article reflect the consensus of the faculty at the Adventist Seminary? If not, should there be a disclaimer to that effect? If so, should some supporting documentation be included? As one reads Damsteegt's defense for a biblical hermeneutic, one finds that it is not widely supported by Adventist biblical scholars. Should not that be indicated?

As for the decision at Utrecht: Were the delegates aware that they were deciding upon a church-approved system for understanding/interpreting Scripture or upon a matter of granting local autonomy to divisions of the world church which would allow them to operate in harmony within their cultural/social mores?

Might there be wisdom in pursuing further the debate within Adventism regarding biblical hermeneutics by inviting competent Bible scholars to respond to Dr. Damsteegt's arguments? Might there also be value in surveying the thinking of Adventist Bible scholars, pastors, teachers, and administrators regarding their current views of how one ought to study/interpret/understand the Bible? What hermeneutic is actually being used by those whose professions require a consistent and defensible method for determining "present truth" from passages written millennia ago within dramatically different cultural/social settings? Acknowledging that a tension exists may be the first step in encouraging dialogue.—Jim Kaatz, president, Association of Adventist Forums, San Diego chapter, San Diego, California.

- After reading Damsteegt's article, the heart of the matter seems to be: Did Adventists in the past always "oppose the appointing of women to the office of Elder or Pastor"? If this question were asked in a truth-seeking court of law, the verdict may rest more on history than on hermeneutics. After all, what we do is more convincing than what we say we do.

Unfortunately, Damsteegt failed to mention that Ellen White carried ministerial credentials.

Hermeneutics out of the seminary may not be a reason for going round in circles, but a method of interpreting Scripture that makes sense to an increasingly literate and informed church membership.—Jeff Webster, pastor, Nowra, New South Wales, Australia.

- In my quest to understand the Bible's call for modesty in jewelry usage, Damsteegt's argument that abstinence is dictated because we are living in the antitypical Day of Atonement doesn't help. The Israelites "afflicted themselves" by not wearing jewelry, not drinking alcohol, not working, not having sex, and by fasting and wearing sackcloth. Damsteegt argues that we can pick from this list what we think is "still relevant." Why just the jewelry and not the sackcloth? He might say that it's because the New Testament teaches abstinence from jewelry. Really? Why, then, does the New King James Bible translate 1 Peter 3:3: "Do not let your adornment be merely outward." Sounds like moderation, not abstinence.

Damsteegt implies that the no-jewelry part is still relevant today because it fosters an attitude of pride-fighting humiliation. If we wore sackcloth today, that would be very humbling. Why one and not the other?

But I have a greater concern with his Day of Atonement parallel. The Israelites practiced this "affliction" for the whole day. Are Adventists, since our whole life is lived during the antitypical Day of Atonement, to afflict ourselves for a whole lifetime?

Finally, the Israelites afflicted themselves primarily because of their concern for their high priest. He was standing as their intercessor in the sanctuary. They were fearful that he would not be accepted. If he were struck down, they were without hope. We have a better High Priest who is perfectly acceptable. Although our hearts must continually be humble in Jesus, we in contrast can have lives of joy, celebration, and hope because our hope is secure in Him.—Terry Pooler, pastor, Apopka, Florida.

- Your editorial note preceding Damsteegt's article is seriously misleading. You claim that after the 1995 General Conference Session in Utrecht you adopted a "self-imposed moratorium on articles dealing principally with the question of women's ordination." However, apparently you lifted the moratorium for articles advocating ordination for women, such as "Proving More Than Intended" (March 1996) and "Utrecht: A 'Providential' Detour?" (October 1997). The editors of Ministry may claim that, in their opinion, these articles did not deal "principally" with women's ordination.

continued on p. 29
Openness of identity

JAN PAULSEN

But “identity” is even more specific than that. Hence, some believers choose one community in preference to another. When I enter the pulpit to deliver and interpret the Word, it is most important that I remember that before me sit individuals who have come to recognize their identity as belonging to this particular community of faith rather than to some other.

How are we at disclosing and expressing our identity?

I am not thinking primarily of the evangelist who, in planning his strategies, chooses initially to focus less on who he is than on what he has to say, although he also needs to know for himself, fully and honestly, why he makes that choice. Nor am I thinking of the person who chooses not to use the opening fleeting moments of a first contact to focus on “who I am,” either because “in 30 minutes when the flight lands we shall be going our separate ways” or because a broader communication surface needs to be established before “identity” becomes an issue. No, I am thinking more of our relationships and contacts over the longer haul—the long-term nurture of our identity and the deliberate way in which we choose to express, or not to express, our identity. Yes, I am thinking of such ministries as come from our pulpits, classrooms, institutions, and services.

Why should not the identity of the deliverer of those ministries, services, and messages be clear? And why should there be any tension between the declared identity of the deliverer and the identity of that which is being delivered? Why should a worshipper in the pew, listening to the sermon, wonder whether this is an Adventist, Baptist, or Lutheran church? Or whether the material for today’s sermon came from yesterday’s newspaper or a textbook on psychology? This is a Seventh-day Adventist church. Let the message reflect that identity. It is the Word of God that is being proclaimed. Let the biblical identity show. It is the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that is being trained at this institution. Let that community’s identity be reflected in what I as a theologian or historian or counselor teach. Surely, this goes without saying. It is reasonable. It is also honest.

Over the longer haul, identity is either affirmed or denied; it is not just forgiven. Identity ignored becomes, by default, denied simply because, with the passing of time, it no longer accurately reflects who we are. Something has happened along the way. It may say who we used to be, but somehow we have moved beyond that, and we do not comfortably wish to continue to be identified quite the way we used to be. And something happens to the journey that lies ahead; it becomes marked by disaffection and distance, and we become strangers to what we used to be.

This is traumatic when that happens to us individually. It is destructive when that happens to our community as a church or to the various services or ministries we provide. At the end of the day, we all need to know who we are and where we belong. A “halfway house” may be a point in transit; it cannot be a permanent home.

Is it important that one is clear about one’s identity, about “Who am I?” and “Where do I belong?” Yes. One’s survival may depend on it. Failure to find it and assert it leads to the lonely life of a stranger. And that, clearly, is no way to live.

Jan Paulsen, Ph.D., is president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
The saints who comprised the Advent movement were enthusiastic, focused, and determined—but not organized. A.W. Spalding describes the decade following the disappointment as “a time of chaos in Adventist circles.”

“Couldn’t we accomplish the mission more effectively if we were organized?” some wondered. “Take care that you do not seek to manufacture another church,” others warned. “No church can be organized by man’s invention but that it becomes Babylon the moment it is organized.”

Faithful Adventists on both sides advanced persuasive arguments. However, as early as 1850 Ellen White received instruction regarding order in heaven. Again in 1853, the Lord showed her that “order should not be neglected.” By October 1862, seven conferences were organized. Thirty years later, Ellen White wrote from Australia to the 1893 General Conference delegates, clarifying the need for organization. “As our numbers increased, it was evident that without some form of organization there would be great confusion, and the work would not be carried forward successfully. To provide for the support of the ministry, for carrying the work in new fields, for protecting both the churches and the ministry from unworthy members, for holding church property, for the publication of the truth through the press, and for many other objects, organization was indispensable.”

The issue was settled. God’s will was clear. We must organize.

Tithe? What’s that?
If few become ministers today for the money, even fewer did so in the early Adventist church. James White wrote in 1858: “Satan seems to have the control of the purses of the church, with very few exceptions. Repeated disappointments are saddening and discouraging our preachers. They have generally moved out expecting to be sustained by their brethren in their arduous work; but their brethren have often failed to do their duty. . . . Disappointment has been the sad lot of our preachers, and now several of them are much sunken down in poverty.”

How could ministers who labored for God be supported? White had a brainstorm: Each believer, he suggested, should give to the church an amount equal to the annual taxes on his prop-
Use of tithe

All churches organize in whatever way they deem best to fulfill their mission. Once Adventists decided to organize officially, how we did so was crucial.

Consider tithing. Sooner or later, most churches adopted a tithing plan. They quoted “I will... pour you out a blessing” with the same vigor and conviction as Adventists did. The manner in which we handled the tithe, however, was unique. It grew out of our unswerving passion to take the gospel to the world as quickly and efficiently as possible.

In the nineteenth century, other churches employed the term “tithe” to refer to all church giving. Tithe was spent for any church-related purpose. Local churches dispensed tithe as they saw fit, which may or may not have included supporting mission fields. Ministers were paid from tithe to pastor already-established churches.

Adventists considered “tithe” and “offering” as two different funds. Tithe was for the support of the ministry; offering for the support of all other church causes. Local churches sent all tithe to the conference. The conferences dispensed the tithe to fulfill the Great Commission locally as well as in mission fields. Ministers were paid from tithe to be evangelists and church planters. Tithe was also used to support a thin layer of administration to coordinate and support the front-line evangelistic work of the church.

Protestant churches hired ministers to serve already-established churches as their pastor. Adventists did not. Early Adventist leaders decided that the best way to fulfill our mission was to spend the tithe for salaries of full-time workers who would be evangelists (win souls) and church planters (establish new churches).

Here’s how it worked. A gifted, dedicated minister went into an area that needed the Adventist message. He procured a hall or pitched a tent and started preaching. New converts were organized into a church. This evangelist-turned-Church planting priority

Early Adventist leaders weren’t impressed with resumes. Application forms were useless. Interviews were short and focused. References were valuable only as they pertained to church planting experience and potential. Anyone who aspired to preacherhood in the Adventist Church must first demonstrate his call to ministry by the raising up of a church.

“In no way can a preacher so well prove himself,” James White wrote, “as in entering new fields... If he be successful in raising up churches, and establishing them, so that they bear good fruits, he gives to his brethren the best proofs that he is sent of the Lord.”

“If they cannot raise up churches... then certainly the cause of truth has no need of them,” he intoned, “and they have the best reasons for concluding that they made a sad mistake when they thought that God called them to teach the third angel’s message.”

Our largest church, Battle Creek, did not have a settled pastor for many years, but was led by dedicated lay persons. Ellen White advised, “There should not be a call to have settled pastors over our churches, but let the life-giving power of the truth impress the individual members to act, leading them to labor interestedly to carry on efficient missionary
work in each locality.”11

The work of church planting, in fact, was so central to Adventist life that General Conference President A. G. Daniells urged conference presidents to occasionally drop out of office and spend a year raising up new churches! Spontaneous explosion resulted. The effect was astonishing. Adventism grew so rapidly in North America that we were the envy of the Christian world. Every denomination said they wanted to reach the lost. Adventists not only said it, but we structured to make it happen.

The falling away
As late as 1912, the Adventist mission was still advancing with unparalleled power. In March of that year, A. G. Daniells made an assessment and a prediction. “We have not settled our ministers over churches as pastors to any large extent. In some of the very large churches we have elected pastors, but as a rule we have held ourselves ready for field service, evangelistic work and our brethren and sisters have held themselves ready to maintain their church services and carry forward their church work without settled pastors. And I hope this will never cease to be the order of affairs in this denomination; for when we cease our forward movement work and begin to settle over our churches, to stay by them, and do their thinking and their praying and their work that is to be done, then our churches will begin to weaken, and to lose their life and spirit, and become paralyzed and fossilized and our work will be on a retreat.”12

Sadly, Elder Daniells’ words were prophetic. Adventists fell away from the system of dispensing the tithe for front-line evangelistic work and embraced the flawed practice of other churches. The result was a loss of evangelistic fervor. Spiritual weakness set in. Church members, used to working with passion for the lost, now came to depend on the minister. Dedicated volunteers, used to praying and working to help start the next new church, sat back and warmed the pews.

Evangelism, once the heart-pulse of every saint, ceased to be a way of life in the local church. Evangelism, once a mandate that possessed every believer, was redefined as a once-in-a-while event performed by someone hired by the church members. Tragically, it became the almost-exclusive domain of the professional.

Resources were increasingly spent for pastors to hover over churches that had reached their plateau. Fewer and fewer means were available for front-line evangelistic work. Church planting, the evangelistic lifeblood of the Church, ground to a virtual halt. The explosive evangelistic movement was stilled.

Reestablishing a church planting movement
In the 1870s, Adventists planted one new church a year for every 1.7 pastors; today it takes 123 pastors to plant a church.13 A lot of time has passed since those early days. So long that none of us personally remembers what it was like. Today, reestablishing the North American Division as a church planting movement seems radical, outrageous, and illusive. Yet we must start. We must recapture the vision, retrieve the mission, and redeem the time.14

Peter Drucker states that the purpose of organization is to make weaknesses irrelevant.15 Our major weakness today is creating outreach-focused churches that grow and reproduce, churches that win unreached people. We need churches that hold our message high while presenting Adventist truth in a way that attracts thousands to Jesus. Properly organizing the vast resources of the Adventist Church can and will make this weakness irrelevant. Strategically seizing the potential of nearly a million Adventists in North America can and will reignite the vision.

Four crucial steps
First, acknowledge that all churches eventually plateau. And that the plateau factor will continue to frustrate our efforts to grow existing churches.

For years, we have not been aware of this. We have made repeated, vigorous, and well-meaning attempts to make existing churches larger only to find that no matter what pastor we assign, how much money we spend, or what evangelist conducts a series, the church remains at its plateau. Through a reaping crusade we often experience a temporary surge in membership, but as time passes, the increase dissipates.

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trying to get bigger itself; or Maximum impact—deciding to give birth to a baby church. When it gives birth, the parent church quickly grows back to its original size while the baby church grows to maturity and reaches hundreds of the lost.

Second, assign some of our finest, most gifted and dedicated ministers to the work of planting churches. We should start churches any way we can, but our primary method should be to hire full-time workers for the pivotal work of planting churches. Recharting that course will make us a Great Commission movement once again.

What about lay pastors for new churches? If it is difficult for a pastor to lead a church to win souls, imagine how challenging it is for a lay person. Without training in church administration, theology, soul-winning skills, or managing volunteers—not to mention having to hold a full-time job—most lay-led churches plateau quickly. Whenever an exceptional lay leader emerges, let him or her lead a new church. But to recapture the soul-winning zeal of the early days, Plan A must be to place our “best and brightest” into this work.

Third, adopt a financial plan that enables us to start churches without disrupting the other good things the Church is doing. This can be done with a two-step process.

1) Each conference and/or union commits seed money for church planting. How much? The more the better, but the amount really doesn’t matter. Ideally, each conference will have at least enough to hire one full-time church planter.

2) Each conference and union invests some of the “fruit” from each new church into future church planting projects. Once the system is set up, the principle of the harvest takes over and assures future funding.

“The creation of a thousand forests,” Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, “is in a single acorn.” Our greatest impact comes, not from the number of seeds we plant, but what we do with the seeds we have. Tracking tithe from a new church separately and investing an equivalent amount into future church plants will assure that church planting will never lack for funding.

Fourth, establish strategic systems to assure high levels of church-planting success. Include the following:

1. Vision casting. Paint the big picture for church leaders—from the local church to the conferences and unions—to help them grasp the powerful potential of planting new churches.

2. Demographics. Collect and organize data from communities and churches to identify the “hot spots” for new churches.

Our greatest impact comes, not from the number of seeds we plant, but what we do with the seeds we have.

3. Assessment. Evaluate and identify the very best persons to lead church plants. Criteria include gift mix, personality, leadership skills, character, and denominational loyalty.

4. Conception. Aid church planters and core groups in designing healthy, balanced, outreach-focused churches. A flaw in the fetus results in a flaw in the child—a healthy fetus results in a healthy child.

5. Support/Training. Offer events and resources to provide whatever a new church needs to retain its vision, stay on track, and achieve its purpose.

6. Reproduction. Urge each new church to become a parent church, at the appropriate time, so that each church continues to be fruitful unto the third and fourth generation.

Let’s go for it!

Should we organize? We settled that issue long ago. We organized to harness the awesome energy and commitment for souls toward a single goal. To more quickly and efficiently take the gospel to the world. Our single motivation was the Great Commission.

Today’s issue is: Will we organize for explosive evangelistic growth?

Adventists are restless, hopeful, and eager. They love Jesus. They are proud of our message. They believe that the coming of Christ is soon. They care deeply that so many remain lost. They stand ready to sacrifice to fulfill the Great Commission.

The ingredients are in place. God’s presence is promised. The potential is huge. In the footsteps of those who pioneered this movement, let us realign our resources, readjust our priorities, and recreate the wave that will once and for all wash across this land and usher in the return of Jesus the King.

4 James White in Review and Herald, April 8, 1858.
5 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 James Nix, Memorable Dates from Our Adventist Past (Silver Spring, Md.: North American Division Education Dept., 1989), 71.
9 James White in Review and Herald, April 15, 1862.
10 Ibid.
11 Ellen G. White in Atlantic Union Gleaner, January 8, 1902.
12 Ibid.
13 An address to a ministerial institute in Los Angeles, California. Quoted in Russell Berrill, Revolution in the Church (Fallbrook, Calif.: HART), 41.
14 North American Division Year-end Committee Resolution, 1996.
16 The Mid-America Union has such a plan in each conference and at the Union. For details call the MAU church planting office (402-484-3000).
Most North American Adventist church members act as if they are living in a Christianized country. That’s a big mistake.

Only ten percent of the population of the United States are “biblical Christians.” The percentage of unreached in Canada is even greater. Our message must penetrate the urban masses that we have neglected for so much of our history.

Nearly all Adventist clergy of the nineteenth century were evangelists and church planters. This was a key in their success. If Adventist pastors today were to raise up new churches at the same rate as their nineteenth-century counterparts, they would need to plant approximately 1,822 new churches each year. In actual numbers, nineteenth-century Adventists planted more churches each year than North American Adventists did during the first half of the 1990s. In the 1870s our pioneers raised up an average of 42 churches each year; in the early 90s, 27 churches per year. In the 1870s it took two pastors to plant one church each year, but in the early 1990s—it took 122 pastors to raise up just one church!

Something needs to be changed—and fast.

SEEDS

Church planting is, once again, receiving major attention in the North American Division (NAD). The SEEDS conferences over the last few years, with their heavy emphasis on church planting, have helped turn the tide. While North America averaged only 27 churches per year in the first half of the decade, the number has dramatically increased since SEEDS ’96. Between SEEDS ’96 and ’97, NAD planted 135 new churches, or an average of 9 per month for the 15-month period. The rate increased again between SEEDS ’97 and ’98. During those 10 months, another 125 churches were planted—an average of 12.5 per month.

This change, however, is only a be-
beginning. The pace needs to continue to accelerate because of the hugeness of the harvest.

How did nineteenth-century Adventist pastors plant so many churches? The answer is simple. None of them served as located pastors over churches. All churches were taught to care for themselves, leaving clergy free to evangelize and plant new churches. That was a mission-driven organization. In contrast today, most of our resources are channeled into existing small churches.

Adventism's unique tithing system was constructed to support this church-planting movement. Because no clergy served a local congregation, all tithe was returned to the conference to support the church planters. This system served the Adventist Church well throughout the nineteenth century.

The change
As the twentieth century dawned, North American Adventism began to copy the popular Protestant model of clergy over churches. At first, we placed them over our largest churches, and after the death of Ellen White, we began placing them over all churches. A. G. Daniels and Ellen White vigorously opposed settled clergy. Ellen White's demand that Adventist churches not have settled pastors stemmed from two principles: the need of the harvest and the health of the local church. She felt churches that needed a pastor over them to survive were weak and Laodicean; churches without clergy dependency, in contrast, were strong and vibrant. She was emphatic in her God-given opinion: "There should not be a call to have settled pastors over our churches, but let the life-giving power of the truth impress the individual members to act, leading them to labor interestedly to carry on efficient missionary work in each locality. As the hand of God, the church is to be educated and trained to do effective service. Its members are to be the Lord's devoted Christian workers."2

"The churches are dying and they want a minister to preach to them. They should be taught to bring a faithful tithe to God, that He may strengthen and bless them: they should be brought into working order, that the breath of God may come to them. They should be taught that unless they can stand alone, without a minister, they need to be converted anew, and baptized anew. They need to be born again."3

These two statements enunciate Ellen White's two basic reasons for a non-pastor-dependent clergy: mission and church health.4 Even H.M.S. Richards, writing in the 1950s, indicated that when he began his ministry, they looked upon churches needing pastors as decadent.5 After the death of Ellen White, North America slowly began to add pastors over churches. The more pastors were added over churches, the weaker the churches became, until finally a mission mind-set nearly disappeared and the pastor's chief responsibility became the care of the saints, who have ended up not being cared for. It is simply impossible for today's pastor to provide the kind of quality care needed by most congregations. The ultimate result has been every

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little church wanting to have its own pastor to nurture them, while the mission of Christ goes unfulfilled. As Roland Allen has observed: “Where churches are helped most, there they are weak, lifeless, and helpless. . . . Nothing is so weakening as the habit of depending upon others for those things which we ought to supply for ourselves.”

A new beginning

It’s time, therefore, to return to a role for pastors in harmony with Adventist heritage. That role must be mission-driven. When clergy work with existing churches, their role should be that of the trainer/equippier (Eph. 4:11-12). However, such a role works best in churches with over 150 in attendance. A clergy person may be needed for coordination and training. Below 150, the presence of clergy tends to create weak churches, as well as emaciated saints.

In such an environment, what should happen to small churches with under 150 in attendance? Should they be closed? Absolutely not. Many of them can be vibrant centers for the nurture of God’s people and the outreach of His kingdom. Rather than close them, free them to care for themselves, much like the small churches of early Adventism. Create districts of 10, 15, or even 20 churches, and provide clergy on a consultation basis rather than for the performance of ministry. According to Ellen White, the churches will be healthier. Even Adventist eschatology argues that churches will not have pastors over them in the final crisis. People will need to exist on their own then.

Why not now?

In January 1999, I presented this concept to a group of lay people and pastors in a small North American conference of under 5,000 members. With over 10 percent of the attending membership present, the group enthusiastically embraced the concept and asked

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early all Adventist clergy of the nineteenth century were evangelists and church planters. This was a key in their success.
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Radical surgery

This may seem like radical surgery. In reality, it is a return to our mission-driven roots. Some may wonder if clergy could be persuaded to be a district leader of 20 churches. However, 20 churches should be easier to handle than two or three churches. When a pastor has only five churches, each of them still expects the pastor to do everything, but when there are 20 churches, everyone knows it is impossible to depend on the pastor, and therefore, lay people will be more open to accept their God-given role. Actually, the pastor in this role would need superb administrative skills, for the person would act not as just a pastor, but as a mini-conference president.

If we are serious about our mission, we must address the absorption of our resources in the small church that rarely grows. What is suggested here and expanded in my books is one suggestion. However, there may be other equally valid ideas. Whatever direction our church moves must lead us back to our heritage and forward to the accomplishment of our mission. It is high time for mission to be the compelling motivation for all that the North American church does. Let us begin to become a mission-driven, church-planting movement now.


4 For a more detailed account of early Adventism’s view of clergy, see the author’s book, Recovering an Adventist Approach to Life and Mission in the Local Church (Fallbrook, Calif.: HART, 1999).


7 See Revolution in the Church, Radical Disciples for Revolutionary Churches, The Revolutionized Church of the Twenty-First Century, and Recovering an Adventist Approach to the Life and Mission of the Local Church. Published by HART.
It's raining. You stand in the church foyer, greeting Sabbath worshipers at the close of the service. You spend a moment visiting with a friendly, middle-aged couple lingering near the door.

You learn that they are camping in the area for the weekend. Looking across the foyer, you catch your wife's eye and know she's thinking the same thing you are. There is no way you are prepared for guests this Sabbath. Uncomfortably, you visit with the couple until they finally leave for their campsite.

Your son frowns as he hears you invite a new, young family over for Sabbath dinner. As they leave to get their coats, he explodes. "Dad! I thought this Sabbath, it was going to be our family for dinner. We have someone over every Sabbath. Now I'll be stuck sitting in the living room all afternoon while you talk with those people."

Do either of these scenarios sound familiar? If you minister a small congregation, as we do, you may find yourself providing weekly hospitality ministry, whether or not it fits with your schedule or family needs. You and your church want the visitors to your communion to leave feeling enriched by the warmth of your Christian fellowship. Yet too often, the pastor and the family are, by default, the primary providers of Sabbath hospitality ministry for guests. I know. On numerous occasions I have been a guest in small churches. I have experienced the gracious hospitality of many a pastoral family. I have also survived through times when it seemed that the hospitality ministry of our church was falling too heavily on my shoulders.

Now the good news. You and your small congregation can provide a full-time, fulfilling hospitality ministry without leaning too heavily on any one family. Your members will enjoy increased fellowship with one another. Your visitors will leave feeling warm, well-fed, and enriched. Your church will be known for its friendliness.

You don't need a lot

Before you begin to tune me out thinking that you don't have the personnel or facilities necessary for such a ministry, let me share a description of our church. We are a congregation of around sixty members. Forty to fifty actively participate, including our children. Our church building has no...
kitchen, no fellowship room. We transform our attached school classroom into a makeshift fellowship hall every Friday and turn it back into school before Monday morning.

Our church hospitality ministry started with the typical, monthly fellowship meal held at the church. However, many in our group were concerned when visitors would show up on a Sabbath when there was no fellowship meal. Sometimes one of us was prepared to take the guests home. But too often, their Sabbath visit ended at the door of the sanctuary with a handshake and a feeble wish for a happy Sabbath.

Our second step toward a more complete hospitality ministry was to appoint a hospitality coordinator who recruited a group of seven volunteer families. Six of these families were assigned in pairs to one Sabbath a month. The seventh family was responsible for the fifth Sabbath on any month that had one. The second Sabbath of each month was still reserved for the fellowship meal at the church. The hospitality teams were responsible for providing a place for the meal and for planning and "anchoring" it. Anchoring meant preparing the basics of a meal for their families and potential guests. Any additional church members who wished to attend were asked to contact the host families for menu assignments so they could contribute. Rather than try to limit the meal to guests, we actually encouraged our members to join in, thinking it would be a time of friendship-building both within the group and with guests. This plan proved to be very popular and gave us lots of quality time to visit in the homes of our members. As time went by and more families became interested in the ministry, additional members were added to the hospitality teams to lighten the load for everyone. Meals were well attended by members, who looked forward to fellowshipping in the various homes. Visitors also expressed real appreciation for the hospitality they received.

However, the very success of the program created new problems for us. Host families began to express feelings of overwork at the pressure of preparing house and food for such a huge group on a monthly basis. (Some Sabbaths would find more than 30 people crowded into the dining facilities of a small family home.) Some host families began to show strain and talk about taking a break from the program.

We were seeing so many benefits. Members were establishing strong friendships that were nurtured each week. Guests left with the feeling that someone across the dinner table had taken the time to really talk with and listen to them. Our members had proved to be very hospitable. We couldn't let the program dwindle and die due to burnout. And so, our hospitality ministry had to evolve a little further. It's what we're using today, and it is working well.

**Participation**

Our hospitality meal coordinator composed a list of general menus for us to use on a rotating basis. They are:
- Week 1— Mexican
- Week 2— Hoagies
- Week 3— Haystacks
- Week 4— Italian

Second week of month: Potluck

Other menu ideas we have considered or tried are: casserole dinner, soup and salad, and Chinese.

The menu for the month is posted on the church foyer bulletin board and in the announcement section of each week's bulletin. Members who stay to eat are asked to bring a complete Sabbath meal, according to the menu. The meal is held in the church each week, and all members and visitors are encouraged to stay and eat with us.

There are many advantages to this plan.

1. No one family is stressed by having to do extraordinary house preparation for a large crowd. However, the school teachers do have extra work in getting the room ready for Sabbath, and often in putting the room back together for school. Each family brings only one complete meal, no more than they would prepare for their own use.

2. Each family works from the same menu, which makes planning and preparation easier and the resultant meal more appealing.

3. Our members are developing good friendships much faster than would happen during the formal time available during organized church meetings.

4. Our visitors frequently express happy surprise over the pleasant time they spent with our church family. We have received cards and comments weeks and months after a visit telling us how much our hospitality meant.

5. Regularly attending pre-members are given assignments in the hospitality program. We need and appreciate their contributions, and the pre-members quickly become a valued part of the group as they shoulder responsibility. Currently, our hospitality coordinator is a pre-member.

6. A family, even the pastor's family, can be out of town for a Sabbath or plan a Sabbath afternoon outing with the family without worrying that guests will be neglected. With the hospitality program running smoothly, there is always food and fellowship for church visitors.

Church hospitality is a valuable ministry. If everyone in the congregation catches the vision and joins the hospitality team, guests, members, and pastoral families can all truly enjoy the experience.
We were young, newly married, and happy. But we also sensed that something was missing in our lives—something fundamental and basic. We tried to please God, but guilt constantly plagued all our deeds, even the best ones.

We desperately wanted to get rid of the guilt because it marred our dream of inner happiness. For a while we thought that maybe guilt was just part of Christian “happiness.” That was until these words stopped us cold: “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1).

We finally saw the right picture. We faced the total inadequacy of our existence. The Lord helped us to understand that the only way to Christian happiness was complete surrender to Jesus, a full reliance on what He had done for us. Because we longed for forgiveness and peace, we dared to give our inadequacy to Jesus. On our “passports” to heaven Jesus didn’t glue the real picture of ourselves, but a new picture, a picture of Himself and His perfect righteousness.

Joy and peace far beyond our dreams filled us. We then knew we were right with God because Jesus was our substitute. Salvation was no longer a vague, abstract, theological theory, but a practical reality. God loved us—not for what we were—but for what He is! Through this wonderful, liberating truth, our dream of inner happiness became true.

The next question was, what now? What about our future? What were we going to do with this wonderful truth? Then our local church pastor asked: Have you ever thought of pastoral ministry?

Of course not!

But the question stayed, lingering on the edge of our consciousness, day and night. God had put a fire into our bones. We tried to quench it, but all our dousing was in vain. We wrestled with God; we tried to negotiate—but the next thing we knew, we were both studying theology at Newbold College, England. God wanted us to tell others about the happiness and freedom in Christ we had experienced.

Thus began our team ministry.

Team ministry

The principles of our teamwork took shape during our studies. From
Newbold we moved to Andrews University. Although we took the same theology courses, we chose different topics to study in each class. We learned to concentrate and work together in the same room. We learned to share homemaking duties. We also learned to endure the stress which comes as two persons in the same room study simultaneously for a graduate degree. It was important for us that both succeed equally well. We each had strong points, and we assisted each other in our struggles with our weaker points. There was no competition or jealousy. What we learned in those college years formed a basis for a growing experience in team ministry.

From Andrews University we returned to work in Finland. Finland has a long history of wives working with their husbands in ministry; indeed, the church employs many wives. Thus, it was not unusual that we entered ministry together as husband and wife. The only difference was that, in our case, we both had the same formal education.

We began our team ministry, inexperienced and carrying the load of several churches. Yet that never stopped us from pursuing our main interest: soul winning. At that time, during evangelistic campaigns, Klaus did the preaching, for that was his gift, while I was better at visiting with people and getting them to make decisions for Christ. God has given me the gift of persuasion and motivation.

Sixteen years ago, when we began, women didn’t have the same possibilities to serve in the church as they do today, which is why the responsibility for church ordinances and much of the church administration fell on Klaus. We worked around these limitations the best we could. Besides my Sabbath preaching appointments, midweek meetings, and counseling sessions, I used my gifts in organizing church programs, motivating laity, finding new talents in people, and encouraging them to use their talents for God’s glory. I held seminars—for deacons and deaconesses, for child workers—on how to make a friendly call. I taught and instructed members for church offices on how to make worship services more meaningful and how to facilitate gathering.

Who does what?

Although we both are interested in evangelism and pastoral work, we have never struggled over who does what. Each situation determined our roles. In an effective team ministry, you need to know each other well enough to work effectively. You plan together, you change appointments in emergency cases, and you know exactly how the other wants you to do it. In this kind of team ministry there are always two hearts rejoicing or weeping together. Our work requires a total commitment from both, and a sound and healthy self-reliance on the part of each. There is no room for competition; there is room only for mutual support and cooperation, so that each one wants the other to succeed. If this spirit prevails, the ministry will be a joy.

Currently we work as a pastor-evangelist team in Tampere, Finland. We co-pastor the Tampere church, the largest church in Finland. In addition, Sibrina, with commissioned ministerial credentials, pastors a medium-sized church in the same city. Her role before she received credentials was a mixture of pastor and pastor’s wife. Her new role gives us the possibility to broaden our ministry. In fact, this spring she ran an evangelistic effort that culminated in both of us performing numerous baptisms.

A fascinating opportunity

After 16 years in team ministry, we still believe that God has called us to work together. Our team ministry has given us a fascinating opportunity to serve God, who has time and again provided the strength needed for any situation. We know we can face the untrod ways of life without fear, for He is with us. We want to encourage all couples in the Lord’s work to create their own team ministry, one that suits their specific gifts, family, timetable, and church. A humble spirit, a willingness to be taught of God, and a denial of self are the crucial prerequisites. The rest, if it’s the Lord’s will, will fall into place, in time, with prayer and supplications and surrender.
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World Ministers’ Council in Papua New Guinea

Six hundred pastors and more than four hundred pastors’ wives from Papua New Guinea Union Mission met June 27-July 4, 1999, for a World Ministers’ Council at Kabiufa Adventist Academy near Garoka, Papua New Guinea. Pictured above are some of the pastors as they participate in a small-group discussion during a seminar presented by Pastor Samuel Telemarc (not pictured).

Bicycle purchased for volunteer pastor

Cliff Morgan (below left) and Jika Ume (right) stand with a bicycle purchased to help Ume in his work as a volunteer pastor in Papua New Guinea. Mr. Morgan is a retired high school teacher from Australia who, with the financial help of caring people in his home country, coordinates the volunteer “mission pioneer” program to grow churches in isolated areas of the South Pacific Division. Ume is one of the division’s 250 volunteer pastors, 126 of whom are in Papua New Guinea. Ume cares for six church groups. Last year he baptized 46 people; this year more than 60 are enrolled in his baptismal classes. To contribute to this plan, send an e-mail to Cliff Morgan at morganev@powerup.com.au

Friedensau University celebrates 100th anniversary

It is November 18, 1899. An ordinary early winter day in central Germany, the last leaves on the trees cracking with frost, people shivering from the chill of the persisting cold. For most people it is business as usual. But for the Adventist Church in Europe, and particularly in Germany, this is a very special Sabbath: the teachers and students, the community of Friedensau, and its guests from everywhere are celebrating the goodness of God, singing songs of praise, listening to words of gratitude. Two world wars had swept over Friedensau, almost destroying what had been a prospering school, and the communist regime had brought new problems and new challenges. Then the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 had opened the door for a new beginning. Since then Friedensau has reached university status and state recognition for all its academic degrees on the masters’ level. Students from more than twenty countries give the campus an international flair. They are enrolled in theology, social work, developmental therapy, music, or German study programs—all which provide many opportunities for young people to find not only jobs but meaning in life.

Many things have changed between 1899 and 1999, and rightly so. However, the old inscription on the wall of the first school building is still there, reminding students, teachers, and visitors of the reason for Friedensau’s existence: “Go ye in all the world…” This is Friedensau’s legacy, a reason for celebration and for responsibility.—Johann Gerhardt, Ph.D., dean, School of Theology, Friedensau University, Germany.
My husband and I arrived in Sydney in February 1998. Our mission was to work among the Aboriginal peoples of Australia.

We hardly knew anything about them, except seeing a few television shots of people, painted with zebra-like stripes, wild in actions and appearance. Our local library was of little help: we found much about Australia, its discoverer Captain Cook, its colonial dominion under Great Britain, but little or nothing about the Aboriginals. Under a cloud of ignorance, we took up our responsibility.

We planned to conduct Amazing Facts seminars—a 27-lesson series on essential Adventist beliefs. Working with us was the only official Adventist pastor of Aboriginal descent in all of Australia—George Quinlin. We conducted two seminars in Sydney: one in Redfern, a drug-infested, downtown slum area; the other in a nearby town, Dee Why, at the Tongan Adventist Church. In Redfern, the attendance was poor. We were told, “If you want to be heard and accepted, dress casually. No necktie or suits.” We tried. My husband gave up his suits. I gave up my high heels. The attendance, however, did not improve.

Curiosity reigned in Redfern: many came just to look at the Black American preacher and his wife. Because of our age (78 and 68), we were looked upon as “elders,” a title of authority used in their culture. The Aboriginals addressed us as “auntie” and “uncle.” They used this endearing and respectful term instead of Brother and Sister, or Mister and Missus. They referred to themselves as “black-fella.” The Europeans were “white-fellas.” We were received as “black-fella”—a term of solidarity.

We soon learned, however, of their resistance. Not to us, but to the book from which we taught—the Bible. This they viewed as the “white-fella’s” book! They were puzzled and inquired as to why we were teaching from a book which our oppressors, as well as their own, professed to believe and live by. We took time to examine with them the contents of the Bible, identifying nations, cultures, and individual characters whom God used, blessed, and further, recognized and honored by recording their history in His Book.

We found an ideal setting for such a study on a Sabbath afternoon of the annual Aboriginal Camp Meeting at Mirriwinni Gardens Academy, where people from various areas had gathered. This resulted in establishing the truth that God loves all people equally and is no respecter of persons. People appreciated this message, and during our six-month stay no one confronted us...
Why resistance?

After spending three months in Sydney, we traveled north along the Pacific Rim to Kempsey. Here we better understood their resistance to the “everlasting gospel.” Church attendance in Australia is generally poor; only three percent of the population attends church regularly. The percentage is even smaller for the Aboriginal population. Though many Aboriginals will identify themselves as Seventh-day Adventists, they are not at all familiar with Adventist teachings; they have never visited an Adventist Church or been baptized. But if their parents or their grandparents were born or reared on an Adventist Mission Reserve, they staked their claim to be Adventists.

Regretfully, over the years, Aboriginals have suffered much at the hands of those responsible for the reserves. The only Christianity they had seen was the one reflected by their inquisitors. They’ve come to the point today where they ask, “Is there anything, anyone, we can trust?” Resistance to Adventists as opposed to other churches was due to our insistence on true repentance and a new lifestyle, based upon the Bible and the Bible only, and brought about by the inner-working power of the Holy Spirit.

An understanding of history enables one to see why Aboriginals have been slow to embrace Christianity. The Aboriginals of Australia are, by nature, kind, gentle, and extremely shy. Even Captain Cook, during his first visit, was unable to arouse their interest with his many trinkets, mirrors, and colored beads. They are a caring people with an ardent fidelity to family. To lose a child was like being unable to breathe. To lose their land was like being unable to bear or produce children.

They have rescued shipwrecked victims, welcomed visitors, treated and cared for them, made them feel part of the family camp, and even encouraged them to set up their own family and dwell in their land. But the feelings of the visitors toward them were not and, still today, are not the same. The Aboriginals were subjected to a long history of deprivation, violence, abuse, and injustice. Their land was invaded and confiscated; their water holes were seized, while other sources nearby were deliberately poisoned. Attempts were made to destroy their family structure. Their children were denied proper education. Even citizenship was denied until 1967. Medical care is poor, and average life span today is a brief and troubled 45 years.

In addition to these, the Aboriginals suffered from their own personal and cultural problems. Addiction to tobacco, alcohol, and drugs rules their personal lives and their homes. Marriage of girls below the age of 12 is common, produc-
ing its own social problems.
So when, into this community, the gospel comes with its radical demand for change in lifestyle and beliefs—especially when that gospel is proclaimed by people who can be easily identified with the Aboriginals' social, economic, and political oppressors and exploiters—there is a hesitation to respond to the gospel. Those who are sincere about their eternal salvation could see the need to turn to God. Others preferred a religion where they could “eat their cake and have it too.” One couple in particular had been coming every evening to our seminar. They dedicated their child and later requested baptism. We visited their home and expressed our joy at their decision. However, we told them that they could not be baptized until they were legally married. They came back to the seminar once more. Again we visited their home to encourage their return. They felt we were trying to “tell them what to do,” and they would have no part of it. They never returned.

Rodney (not his real name), on the other hand, was different. During the second week of the seminar, as he was passing by our meeting place, he heard singing and wandered into a back pew. High on marijuana, it took him a while to realize he was in a church. Feeling uncomfortable, he rose to leave. Our colleagues encouraged him to stay. This was “just the place” he needed to be. He went back to his seat. The next evening Rodney returned and sat in the front row. He never missed another meeting. He later testified that after the first night he had not touched marijuana again. With courage and prayer, he was able to solve other personal and social problems he had, and soon he was baptized. From the first night there was a change in Rodney’s life. And his testimony to “come and see” brought out his mother, sister, and two older children. They heard, believed, surrendered, and were baptized even before Rodney’s life permitted him to be baptized. God used his witness to open the door of others in the neighborhood.

Lay involvement
Lay members took active part in the seminars, visiting homes and inviting the people to attend the meetings in Kempsey. They distributed handbills announcing the time, place, and topics for discussion. They brought in friends and family members. One of the lay members was Garth, a local elder and a talented guitarist. He regularly worked with children and youth and had quite a repertoire of “action” songs. Each evening he had the adults singing with gusto.

Then there were students from the Mirriwinni Gardens Aboriginal Academy who came by the busload because the teachers wanted to be involved. We also visited the academy at least once each week. Many of these students were later baptized.

Then there was Auntie Judy. We first met her at our seminar in Redfern. There she told us about her Monday night Bible study group with 25 to 30 young people in attendance. She invited us to come to Port McQuarrie, about 20 miles north of Kempsey, where she was holding her weekly Bible study in a high school gym. We visited the group and invited them to join us in the seminar to be held at Kempsey. Auntie Judy packed her car every night, sometimes an additional car or van, and brought all those who wanted to come. Among those baptized at the end of the meetings were Judy’s husband, two sons, a daughter-in-law, and other family members. Auntie Judy’s maiden name is Quinlin, and there were at least ten who were baptized with that name. Without such lay involvement, the seminar could not have been successful.

We held baptismal services each Sabbath during the last four weeks. Each Sabbath saw the church filled to capacity—often beyond. A total of 34 were baptized in Kempsey.

New life seemed to flow into the Aboriginal community. Pastor Illimo Tulevu, from Fiji, the shepherd of this little flock, exclaimed, “This church has never been filled like this before!”

God made it possible. He loves the Aboriginals of Australia as much as He loves anyone else, and He is just as determined that they and others everywhere are among the firmament of the chosen ones.
Christmas on ACN

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For more information on ACN’s First Wednesday, call 800-ACN-1119, ext. 7, or visit their Web site at acnsat.org.
Though Adventists have long had an interest in religious liberty issues, many ministers remain ignorant of current religious liberty trends.

In most cases, unless the minister has a specific interest in this narrow field, most just don't have the time to delve into the topic. Yet, considering that our whole freedom to worship and preach is based on the principles of religious liberty, it doesn't hurt for ministers to have a basic understanding of what's been happening in the religious liberty arena. Who knows when, someday, this information could come in handy, especially as we approach the final days when, according to Scripture, religious liberty will be a thing of the past.

First freedom

Free exercise of religion has been described as America's "first freedom." This idea arose, in part, because the two religion clauses are, indeed, the very first two clauses of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. A second reason why free exercise of religion is a "first freedom" has to do with its fundamental importance to the American experiment. Free exercise was one of the main motivations (along with economic opportunity) that drew the first settlers to our shores. Baptists, Catholics, Puritans, Quakers, and others came over seeking a land where they could practice their religion without the persecution that ravaged Europe for long and bloody centuries.

Dating back to 1791, the religion clauses have played an important role in preserving the independence and vitality of all faiths, major and minor (and, in more recent years, they have been extended to protect unbelief, even atheism). They provide that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...." The first clause articulates the disestablishment or anti-establishment principle; the second safeguards free exercise. While neither clause has been interpreted in an absolute sense, they have provided substantial and significant protections that have, ideally, placed religious freedom beyond the whims of majoritarian rule.

Sherbert versus Verner

Through over a century of case law, the Free Exercise Clause was interpreted by the United States courts to require government neutrality toward religion. One could not be punished because of religious belief, and religiously motivated conduct that conflicted with law could be punished only under certain conditions. Though hardly foolproof,
and with some noticeable failures, these clauses nevertheless worked reasonably well to protect religious freedom, especially in the twentieth century.

In 1963 the Free Exercise Clause arguably reached its zenith in *Sherbert versus Verner*. This landmark free exercise decision involved a Seventh-day Adventist discharged by her South Carolina employer for refusing to work on Saturdays, even though her employer knew that Adventists took the fourth commandment injunction, to rest on the seventh day, as seriously as the other nine.

After being terminated, she could not find another job because she would not work on Saturdays. When she filed a claim for unemployment compensation benefits under the South Carolina Unemployment Compensation Act, the request was denied. State law said that an applicant did not qualify for benefits where he or she failed, without good cause, to accept available suitable work when offered. The law made no exemptions for religious beliefs. Refusing to violate the Sabbath wasn’t “good cause.” She got a lawyer, and her case went to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled that the state imposed an unconstitutional burden on her right to the free exercise of religion. South Carolina, the High Court ruled, didn’t prove an overwhelming interest that justified this substantial infringement of her constitutional right. In other words, the state didn’t, in fact, have good reason to deny her the benefits.

Under this holding, the proper inquiry is whether the contested law substantially burdens a religious practice; once it is determined that it does, the next question is, Is this burden justified by a compelling government interest? Can the government prove that practice is so bad that it should not be allowed? If a law cannot pass muster under this standard of review, a religious exemption is constitutionally required. This standard is called, in legal jargon, “strict scrutiny.” Though hardly flawless, it was nonetheless an important safeguard for the free exercise of religion.

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**Attention Preachers!**

The Annual H.M.S. Richards Lectureship on Biblical Preaching will be held at Andrews University on Sunday, Oct 24 and Monday, Oct. 25, 1999!

**Featured Speaker: Elder Morris Venden**

Morris Venden is currently serving as associate speaker for the popular Voice of Prophecy international radio broadcast. A gifted preacher and author of more than 30 books, Venden has served as senior pastor of some of Adventism’s largest churches, including those at La Sierra University and Pacific Union College. His sermon tapes and many books have presented the biblical message of righteousness by faith in dozens of countries. A humble man of God, Venden brings to the lectureship a unique and effective preaching style, developed over many years.

**SCHEDULE & TOPICS**

**Sunday, Oct. 24, 1999**

1:30 P.M. Lecture #1

*“Preaching that is Alive and Well”*

7:30 P.M. Lecture #2

*“Preaching to Lost Sinners”*

**Monday, Oct. 25, 1999**

11:00 A.M. Worship & Preaching Service

*“Preaching for God Like the Devil”*

3:00 P.M. Lecture #3

*“Preaching for God Like Jesus Did”*

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Employment Division versus Smith and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act

In 1990, all this was radically changed by the U.S. Supreme Court, the same body that first established it. In the case, Employment Division versus Smith, a Native American employed as a drug counselor in Oregon lost his job because—he had taken peyote. Upon termination, the counselor applied for unemployment benefits but was denied them due to the reason for his termination. He sued, and the case went to the U.S. Supreme Court.

This time, however, the results weren't so positive. In a 5-4 majority opinion authored by Justice Scalia, the Court held that states can regulate general conduct and, therefore, no religious exemptions are required. In other words, unless it can be proven that a law was written specifically to stop a person's religious practice, then a law applied across the board, to everyone, cannot be challenged in court on free exercise grounds. There was no more constitutional right to a religious exemption, the Supreme Court now ruled. Thus, overnight, many of the protections of Sherbert were, by one vote, lost.

Exemptions could be granted, the Court ruled, but only if the appropriate legislature was willing to grant them.

What did this mean? Imagine, for example, a mandatory autopsy law that required the autopsy of an Orthodox Jewish victim of an automobile accident, in direct opposition to the sincere religious beliefs of Orthodox Jews against autopsies. Or a case where a government prosecutor seeks to compel a clergyman to discuss the contents of a penitent's confession. Or the Internal Revenue Service litigating against the Society of Friends (Quakers) for refusing to attach the wages of their employees who refused—for religious reasons—to pay the military portion of their federal taxes.

All these were real cases, and under the Smith standard the free exercise rights of the plaintiffs were greatly curtailed because they no longer had the protection of the courts. Religious people now, instead, had to beg politicians for rights which heretofore had been guaranteed to them by the Constitution.

As a result of Smith, a coalition of civil liberties organizations, churches, and non-Christian religious groups—more than 50 organizations in fact—took their concerns to Congress. The result? In 1993 the Religious Freedom Restoration Act ("RFRA") was passed by Congress, providing a federal statutory standard akin to Sherbert versus Verner. More specifically, RFRA prohibited government from placing a substantial burden on a person's exercise of religion—even if the burden resulted from a rule of general applicability—unless the government could demonstrate that the burden "(1) is in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest; and (2) is the least restrictive means of furthering that . . . interest." RFRA applied to any branch of Federal or State Government, to all officials, and to other persons acting under color of law and included "all Federal and State law, and the implementation of that law, whether statutory or otherwise, and whether adopted before or after [RFRA's enactment]." President Clinton signed it into law in November of 1993.

City of Boerne versus Flores

Unfortunately, in 1997, the City of Boerne versus Flores provided an opportunity for the Supreme Court to overturn RFRA. In Boerne, the Catholic Archbishop of San Antonio applied for a building permit to proceed with renovation and enlargement of a church in Boerne, Texas. Local zoning authorities denied the application pursuant to the local historic preservation ordinance. Subsequently the Archbishop filed suit challenging the denial under RFRA. The case went to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled that RFRA was unconstitutional on the grounds that the law itself exceeded congressional power. The U.S. Supreme Court opined that, while Congress certainly has the power and authority to enact legislation enforcing the constitutional right to the free exercise of religion—its power is only preventive or "remedial." Hence statutory enactments extending the interpretation of the Free Exercise Clause exceeded congressional power. The Court ruled that Constitutional interpretation is for the Judiciary, not the Congress.
Where now?

With some exceptions, religious freedom is now left to majority forces in Congress and in the legislative bodies of the states. This means that minority religions—without enough numbers to wield any kind of elective clout—can be left with little or no free exercise protections. How ironic, especially when the Constitution was designed to safeguard freedom of religion for all, not just those who have power at the ballot box! Arguably, it is precisely minority faiths that require constitutional protection, because the majority faith is often adequately protected by legislative bodies.

City of Boerne versus Flores does not mean that the cause of religious freedom is over. On the contrary, defenders of religious freedom are looking at options to help restore free exercise rights, everything from using the commerce clause to protect religious freedom, to an amendment to the U.S. Constitution, to various state RFRA's, in which each state writes its own "mini-RFRA."

Related to these matters but looking beyond America, arguably the most challenging and important global religious liberty question has to do with the extent to which religiously motivated conduct should be exempted from the application of general law. More and more secular observers ask whether religion deserves special treatment. Essentially the question is "Why shouldn't we all play by the same rules?" This question has to do with how law reflects the wider issue of religion-based exemptions. It asks if there should be such exemptions at all, and if so, why they should be granted. What is there about religion that justifies or requires such exemptions, and what are the public policy implications of granting them? It is significant that these questions are being asked at all. How they are answered during the next decade may be even more pivotal for Seventh-day Adventists and other Christians.

Whatever the outcome, events in recent years should show just how dangerous it is to take religious freedoms for granted. We can go to bed one night fairly secure in our religious rights, only to wake up the next morning to find our religious practices are no longer protected. Ministers of every denomination, no matter how large and electorally powerful, need to be concerned, because once the principle is in place that removes protections from any group without compelling reason, it can only be a matter of time before every group is jeopardized.

6 42 USCA § 2000bb et seq.
7 117 SC 92157 (1997).
What a convention! Imagine! Really prioritizing pastors. South American Division (SAD) leaders recently conducted a week-long consultation and training process for ministerial secretaries, shepherdess coordinators, and administrators from each of their unions and conferences.

This historic session, which dealt with specific pastoral issues, was coordinated by Alejandro Bullon, SAD ministerial secretary; Jose Viana, associate ministerial secretary; and Vasti Viana, AFAM (Shepherdess International in SAD) coordinator.

In order to focus right on target, practicing pastors, evangelists, and ministerial-training theologians were invited. They provided real-life interaction between administrators, pastoral practitioners, teachers who prepare pastors for ministry, and ministerial secretaries who nurture pastors and their families and coordinate ongoing professional growth.

Division president Ruy Nagel and his wife, Evelyn, hosted the event and demonstrated their personal commitment to prioritizing pastoral issues by attending all the plenary sessions and personally leading several discussion groups.

Ministerial Secretaries and Shepherdess (AFAM) coordinators from the South American Division attend one of the seminars.

While specific training focused on the role of ministerial secretaries, the objective remained constant—how to best train, recruit, encourage, and care for pastoral families.

General topics included: pastoral spouses, homes, and families; field-based continuing education; ministerial internship and supervision; working relationships between ministerial secretaries and administrators; church discipline; theological school curriculums; interaction with clergy of other denominations; training of laity elders; resources for pastors; and job expectations for ministerial secretaries.

Emphasis was on practical application. Following each plenary presentation, working groups were assigned specific issues which grew out of the topic, and these groups were expected to return with specific recommendations for implementation, such as action recommendations on evangelism and assimilating new members. Another topic on church discipline produced concrete recommendations for processes which involve congregations, pastors, and conference leadership.

Theology professors interacted with administrators and pastoral leaders to better integrate practices into the ministerial training program and to develop innovative ways to mentor young pastors with an intentional, rather than accidental, internship process.

Outstanding resources that SAD has produced for pastors to train local church elders will bless the entire world church as the developers share their insights through our own resource center. Bimonthly issues of Ministry, along with quarterly productions of Elder’s Digest and Shepherdess Journal, unify the major language and national groups of the division.

The division president encouraged pastoral spouses with accolades, unique gifts, and acknowledgment of their important role for the church and their homes. Conference and union Shepherdess coordinators (AFAM) discussed with Vasti Viana, Margarida Sarli, Evelyn Nagel, and Sharon Cress (pictured below, left to right) a variety of opportunities and challenges for ministry families. Sara (Mrs. Alejandro) Bullon presented a seminar on sexuality and the pastor’s family.

Aggressive and creative evangelistic plans for the future created an exciting atmosphere as the various conferences and unions reported on God’s leading in the past and their objectives for coming months. Specific times allotted for recreation, fellowship at meals, and a special concluding banquet created increasing appreciation for the contributions that various individuals bring to ministry.

Why am I taking the space and time to report this event to the world church? First, because it is encouraging evidence of church leaders placing priority on pastoral ministry. Second, because this is an excellent example for others to follow.

One of the senior union presidents remarked that he had never attended such a remarkable event in his entire ministry. He, along with other conference and union leaders, pledged themselves to more effective ministry with their pastoral colleagues.

Our church will grow and enhance its mission only to the extent that we work together to prioritize pastors.
Letters (continued from p. 3)

Then why not allow those opposed to women's ordination the same privilege? Damsteegt's footnotes reveal that he is not only challenging the oversimplified analysis of the hermeneutical issues regarding jewelry and women's ordination (the two illustrations cited in the March 1996 article), but he is also responding to the article's distortions of his presentation at Utrecht. Doesn't an author have a right to rebuttal when his positions are misrepresented in *Ministry*?—Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, Ph.D., Ann Arbor, Michigan.

- The hermeneutics employed by Damsteegt and those who agree with him are not literalistic as opposed to principled, as he suggests. His article reveals that he does not take the text as it reads but interprets extensively.

  For example, Damsteegt's interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11-14 is based on the assumption that Paul is addressing the problem of women's ordination—or at least, women serving in pastoral offices. This is highly unlikely since these were not issues.

  If this passage is not discussing professional ministry, then what is the issue? This is not easy to determine because Paul assumed that his readers were acquainted with the problem and, therefore, did not supply background detail.

  This is not to say that the passage favors women in pastoral positions. It is simply to note that it is directed to other concerns. Women as pastors and the subject of ordination will have to be decided on the basis of other Scriptures, not 1 Timothy 2.—Roger L. Dudley, Adventist Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

- I didn't know whether to laugh or cry when I read Damsteegt's article. I have never seen such hermeneutics—I guess if we are going to use his rule of interpretation about jewelry and the Day of Atonement, we had better all quit working, abstain from sex, and fast until the Lord comes. Also, our pastors should wear linen underwear.

  In the matter of jewelry, why don't we ever quote Ezekiel 16, where God says, I gave you the noserings, bracelets, earrings, etc. When is the church going to grow up and look for principles rather than little prooftext rules?—Jenny McBride, pastor, Catalina Hills Fellowship.

  - I will admit to being projewelry. Would it kill our Adventist scholars to admit their own biases? No one could read Damsteegt's periscope on jewelry without sensing that he is desperately looking for "biblical" ways to buttress his anti-jewelry agenda.

    He says, "We need to determine which part of the type is still relevant for the Christian and which is not." And of course, he finds that the jewelry part is still binding while the sex and labor parts *curiously enough* aren't?

    He then proceeds to grossly mischaracterize the Isaiah 3 passage. Consistent with this argument, it would be the "proud" who had gone back to using hand mirrors, special undergarments, and turbans, perfume, and perfume boxes.

    I also have to wonder just how "confused" the "weaker" brothers are about jewelry. It seems that the only Christians weak enough to stumble over the jewelry issue are Adventists. Perhaps the truth is that non-Adventists *should* refrain from wearing jewelry because we Adventists aren't mature enough to handle their liberty.—James M. Hopps, pastor, College Station, Texas.

- I have valued *Ministry* magazine's past excellent contributions in support of Seventh-day Adventist scholarship. However, your editorial comment on Damsteegt's article appears altogether inappropriate. Even if one might not agree with everything he espouses, it has to be recognized that it is a position that won the support of the clear majority of delegates at the last GC session in Utrecht. I am referring here to the Adventist official position on hermeneutics, as reflected in the approved 1986 document "Methods of Bible Study." Sad to say, one of the articles in the March 1999 issue of *Ministry* magazine clearly espouses a position that is against the spirit and content of the official church's position on hermeneutics, part of which states that "even a modified use of this [historical-critical] method . . . is unacceptable to Adventists."

  Such editorial remarks are not healing in nature, nor are they loving in spirit, a characteristic that used to be associated with *Ministry* magazine.

  —Frank M. Hasel, Ph.D., Seminar Schloss Bogenhofen, Germany.

- I doubt that this response will be printed in *Ministry*, but I want to express my opinion in regard to your editorial note on Damsteegt's article. For you to say what articles are more representative of the position of the church on biblical hermeneutics is rather amazing. Why don't you let readers decide who is right and who is wrong? There are among God's people in the world church many who went to school too, and who feel insulted when you try to tell them what is the real Adventist biblical hermeneutics.

  It is a pity to have people in such positions as the one you have, who are supposed to serve and represent the whole church, but who boldly express their biased opinion favoring the feminist party above the rest of the believers.—Antonio Arteaga, Th.D., Riverside, California.

Editorial Note: *Thank you for quoting me correctly when you say I talked of a "more representative" position when it comes to the Adventist church and hermeneutics. An open-minded reading of the introductory editorial in the March issue would not allow the projections articulated in one or two of the above letters. Correspondence on this subject is closed.*
Ministry to the hospitalized

Ministry to the hospitalized has a positive influence. In our district in Gloucester, England, we as a church take the chapel service Sunday mornings at the local hospital on times arranged with the chaplain.

A number of church members arrive an hour before the service. They collect patients who have previously indicated their interest in attending the service. Within the thirty minutes allotted to us, we provide a caring ministry through hymns, musical items, pertinent prayers for patients and staff, and words of encouragement from Scripture.

Not only do we feel that we have contributed to our community, but we also help the patients recognize that God makes a difference in life. —Pastor Richard Daly, Hempsted, Gloucester, England.

Increasing the mission to children

From the experience of our church family, here are some principles that can increase the mission of children's church.

1. Hold children's church on a quarterly basis for the whole church instead of sending the children somewhere else. This challenges the church family to remember and take part in its mission to reach every child with the love of Jesus.

2. Prayerfully create a children's church team that will coordinate each children's church. Select people who radiate the love of Jesus and love for the children. Find those who understand how to plan an age-specific worship for children.

3. Choose a theme for the service that will draw children to the love of Christ, the friendship He offers them, and the life-giving principles of God's Word.

4. Invite the community children who attended Vacation Bible School and their parents to attend children's church.

5. Involve the children in leading out in worship. Let them take part in announcements, prayer, scripture, skits, special music, etc.

6. Plan a rehearsal on the Friday evening before so that the children will feel comfortable with their part in ministry.

7. Purchase special bulletins that will be attractive to children.

8. Create a bulletin board that will feature the theme of children's church. Place it in a highly visible location to catch the eye of all who come to church.—Don MacLafferty, pastor, Hollan, Michigan.

Make the funeral service meaningful

To make a funeral service meaningful, follow a simple three-step method: honor the dead, comfort the bereaved, and proclaim the Scriptural meaning of death and life. Within this outline, you can fit in the eulogy, musical selections, and other details.—Rev. William More, New Village, New Jersey.

Listening to God's Word

Here's a new plan to listen to God's Word. Buy a complete set of Holy Bible audio tapes. In the absolute privacy of your home—alone or with family—take time daily, however long you decide, and "listen" your way from Genesis through Revelation. You will hear anew the Word of God. You will renew your understanding of the Word of God. You will refresh your acquaintance with the various personalities, practices and biblical histories of the Word. You will learn new nuances of emphasis and professional pronunciation. You will find yourself both relaxed and renewed for your ministry because the Word has spoken to you.—Michas Ohnstad, North Branch, Minnesota.

Revisable photo church directory

For the Sunnyvale Seventh-day Adventist Church Directory a member used a digital camera and two vertical fluorescent lights to take the photos. Then he processed these along with the words in a computer using Adobe 4.0 software. Then he printed the pages on one side and inserted sets of two pages back to back in double-clear plastic pages in the #50138 Cardinal Custom Show File Display Book. Four double-plastic pages were left blank so that the directory can be revised or added to at any time.

Since no photos were sold to pay for the directories, the directory cost each recipient only $5.15—much less than having professional photographers do the photo work and sell pictures. And it was all done in one session per shot.—Pauline W. Phillips, Centralia, Missouri.

Helps to better your ministry

- **Need to Slow Down**, a new four-color brochure, provides a quick overview of the Sabbath and Seventh-day Adventists. Its goal is to share the truth with casual interests as well as those who are more serious. It would be good to use with NET '98 interests. A sample brochure and prices may be obtained by calling (800) SDA-PLUS (732-7587).

- **Seed Planters**, by Gale Hendrick, is a step-by-step way to start a new church. Used as the textbook for the first Seed Planters Conference, this manual is the most detailed one the Seventh-day Adventist Church has produced on church planting. Price: US$19.95. Available from AdventSource (800) 328-0525.

- **The Voice of Prophecy Discover Video Series** is available for the introductory price of US$129.00 per set, two sets or more US$99.00 each (plus shipping and handling). Each set includes 13 tapes of Bible studies.
with Lonnie Melashenko (designed to accompany the Discover Bible Lessons). Orders may be placed by calling the Voice of Prophecy (805) 955-7611 (closed on Fridays).

- The Health Connection is offering Community Health Assessment Software for half price until October 31, 1998. You pay only $149.00 for each of four programs: Your Health Age, Your Coronary Risk, Your Stress Profile, and Your Fitness Score. Questionnaires, report forms, and educational guides are available for another $22.75. Custom-made backdrops for health fairs are also available for about $450. For more information and orders call (800) 548-8700. Visit Health Connections web site at: http://www.healthconnection.org.

- Welcome: Your Church Family Album is a beautiful heirloom memory book to give to newly baptized members. In 104 pages, with 200 illustrations, the book describes who Seventh-day Adventists are and what new members can expect from the church and share with the church. Gift boxed and ribbon wrapped, US$24.95 (ten percent discount for ten or more). Contact your local ABC or HART Research at (800) 222-2145.

- All Power, with Leo Schreven, is a new audio seminar that focuses on the disciplines of Bible study, prayer, goal setting, overcoming addictive behaviors, problem solving strategies, positive thinking, achieving financial security, building relationships, and more. You’ll be strengthened and blessed as you follow these dynamic presentations and fill out the workbook pages. US$89.00. Contact your local Adventist Book Center or HART Research at (800) 222-2145.

- Idea Exchange. Help us connect Adventists involved in outreach ministry. Send items for sharing to Rich DuBose at dubose@earthlink.net

NAS Electronic Library
The NAS® Electronic Bible Library: The Logos Library System™ (LLS) is an electronic standard allowing publishers to share a common display, search, and retrieval engine for electronic editions of their books. Electronic reference works sharing the LLS standard may be displayed on the screen along with any other books sharing the same standard, regardless of the publisher. As you build your personal electronic library, you can identify compatible products that are guaranteed to work seamlessly with the NAS® Electronic Bible Library by looking for the Logos Library System™ logo.

Windows system requirements: Requires Windows 98, Windows 95, or Windows 3.1; 486 SX or higher, minimum 8MB RAM (16MB RAM recommended); 20 megabytes free space on your hard drive; the NAS® Electronic Bible Library supports most CD-ROM drives and sound cards.


Life Application Study Bible
It makes the Bible live in two ways. First, Life Application Study Bible in the New Living Translation has a commentary on each page on selected verses, explaining their meaning and applying them to everyday living. Second, the translation is in today’s language. It’s like reading your favorite magazine. In a preface the publishers say: “With 40 million copies in print, The Living Bible has been meeting a great need in people’s hearts for more than thirty years. But even good things can be improved, so ninety evangelical scholars from various theological backgrounds and denominations were commissioned in 1989 to begin revising The Living Bible. The end result of this seven-year process is the Holy Bible, New Living Translation—a general-purpose translation that is accurate, easy to read, and excellent for study.”

The Bible is available from Bibles At Cost (800-778-8865) for $24.95 plus shipping, rather than the list price of $40.00.—Daniel R. Guild, Newbury Park, California.
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