Acts 17:6,7

There is another
King—Jesus.

Caesar, say the
saying of
the scribes
and Pharisees:

All do wrong;
those who do
righteousness
are called
righteous by
the law and
the Prophets.

Uspide down
these that have
the world are
turned.

Uspide down
These who have
come to the
Hills are
upside down.

wont:

Philemon.

The world

is straight

and these

have the

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Seven steps

"Seven Steps to Restoring Your Church" (January 1999) was very timely. Currently we have guest ministers because we have lost our founding pastor who directed The Gillette Chapel for 50 years. This article strengthened our faith to know that there is hope for our small church.—William H. Stortz, Gillette Chapel, Gillette, New Jersey.

Why add a new service?

Charles Arn ("Why add a new service?" January 1999) makes a reasoned case for reaching the unchurched through additional worship services. While I can agree with the need for new services and new congregations (the ministry of which I am a part), I question some of the underlying values and motives.

Rather than being a group of people living a life of shared discipleship and engaged in a number of activities, church continues to be a gathering of people in a building for a provided service. Discipleship as a value or goal, either in my life or in the life of new attendees, is primary. As such, the goal is for our growth, to get them to come to our (new) service, and to contribute financially.

New services, Win notes, will activate inactive members, by "attending the weekly service." Is this our goal? Is this discipleship? Corporate worship can be an important part of discipleship, but certainly not the limit.

The final reason presented for the two main growth strategies—new congregations and new services—is to "assure the future of a denomination." Now I am glad to be an Adventist and proud of our heritage and I would like to see Adventists prosper. But if that is why I am living among an unreached people group, halfway around the world from my family and familiar life, then I would like to be on the next plane home.

If our motives for evangelism, outreach, or any other activity are self-preservation and a large attendance figure of "active" members, discipleship will be minimal.—David Dill, Chiangrai, Thailand.

Women in ministry

The book review ("Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspective" January 1999) caught my immediate attention. In some quarters of our church here, the creation of the Adventist Women's Ministries Department has proved to be a bitter pill. Among the laity there is great fear that our church has been infiltrated with strange doctrines from other churches, especially the Roman Catholic Church. The clergy are apprehensive of being slowly made to succumb to the issue of women's ordination.

Right now the work of the dynamic Dorcas Society has drastically slowed down. There could be other reasons for this state of affairs, but at the top of the list is the creation of Adventist Women Ministries Department.

The book is apparently quite scholarly and promises to have some features that could quench certain doubts in regard to women's ministries. My sincere appeal is that whoever is responsible in circulating that book should ensure that it is made available to and obtainable by ministers and laity in developing regions like ours.—Pastor Webster Chabe, District Pastor, Luanshya, Zambia Union, Zambia

Keeping the Seventh-day

I appreciated the July 1999 editorial. It is good to see some different approaches to the question of the Seventh-day Sabbath keeping. One other text that could have been also used to show the existence of a Sabbath law before Sinai is Genesis 26:5 where God explains that His covenant promise to Abraham is "because...Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."—Donald E. Casebolt, M.D., Farmington, New Mexico.

The editorial series you have just begun on the Sabbath issue is very timely. The first article was fresh and very well reasoned. I believe our ministers will greatly profit from your approach. Thank you so much.—Steve Willsey, associate pastor, Spencerville Seventh-day Adventist Church, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Because Jesus lives

Pastor Hyveth Williams's article "Good News from the Grave" (March 1998) lifted me up, and I have come to realize even more than before that because Jesus lives, I do not have to grieve like those with no hope. My husband died eight months ago and he was a great lover of truth.

My sincere thanks and appreciation to Pastor Williams and may God continue to bless you all.—Joan Derrick Griffith, Associate Registrar, Caribbean Union College, Port of Spain, Trinidad.
If there were such a thing and perhaps there is as a survey designed to measure which specific aspects of pastoral practice produce the most stress in the pastor, what feature of ministry would your answers identify?

Looking back over my years as a pastor and as a ministerial secretary (a consultant to pastors) I would say that some of the most difficult times are those that have to do with finding just pathways through the divorce situations that come to virtually every congregation.

The degree of seriousness such struggles take on depends a great deal upon the primary attitudes of a particular congregation and the amount of significance or meaning attached to divorce in the congregation and in the value systems of a denomination at large. Many “conservative” Christian groups including Seventh-day Adventists, alarmed by skyrocketing divorce rates in the world at large and among their own members, have acted to strengthen the stand that many already have taken against divorce. Debates about the biblical legitimacy of divorce and thus the way the Christian should deal with divorcing couples are quite common among us.

In raising this issue I’m sure I’ve already at least stirred some interest. Perhaps you’re wondering what position or direction I will take when it comes to this loaded question and how much trouble that might generate for me among the general readership of this journal! But let me unsettle you by taking a quick swerve to the left or right, which is it? and come to a halt on the berm of this rather potholed road. It’s altogether too easy, isn’t it, for us pastors to be suckeried into debates over this and kindred matters while the truly critical issues go untended? Let me clarify where I’m going, and quote (with permission, but with names withheld) excerpts from some letters that recently came into my possession.

I find it impossible to believe that I should become so concerned about what I will call necessary ecclesiastical and theological considerations, that I all but forget the absolutely essential human, Christian, and pastoral realities that cry out to my soul in divorce situations. Am I first of all a “churchman” or am I a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ?

“I am recently divorced; my husband of 15 years just walked out. . . . Loneliness, depression and a great deal of questioning as to why I am here are day-to-day issues . . . .”

“My marriage of nearly two years, at times appears to be headed for divorce. The truth is, I don’t have anyone to discuss it with.”

“I believe the bitterest part of my marriage break-up . . . centers around the total shut-out by my fellow church members, people I’d grown to love and with whom I’d fellowshiped for years. I was devastated by the hostility, rudeness, and judgmental attitudes of those who really knew nothing about what was happening in our home . . . and who censored me in my pain . . . . It really hurts when the pastor also rejects you and talks about you behind your back.”

“I am a struggling Christian Adventist. Since my divorce, I have felt out of place everywhere I go, especially to church, where family issues are highly important . . . . I felt everyone had deserted me; my parents, church members, of course, my husband, my children, co-workers, and even God. I felt totally alone . . . . My life is a mess. I so want to seek God first . . . .”

“The separation and divorce were not my decisions and I remember wondering how God could let me hurt so much . . . . Several years after [the divorce] I met another church member in the parking lot of a local store. She too had just divorced and we talked right there for a long time. She was verging on a breakdown but had found a divorce support group in another denomination and felt she was getting help. Surprisingly, she is still a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.”

These words grasped at my soul and my pastoral conscience. They were not written to “the Church” or as a complaint against the system, but are genuine expressions of what people have gone through and are going through in our churches. As I read them, I realized quite dramatically that in far more than one divorce situation I have been involved in, I have been too preoccupied with the theological rightness or wrongness of the divorce, the guilt or innocence of

continued on p. 30
William H. Willimon, STD., is Dean of the Chapel and professor of Christian ministry at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

Derek J. Morris, D.Min., is a professor in the school of religion, Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee.

Derek J. Morris: I would like to begin with the glorious accusation in the book of Acts, brought against Paul and Silas, which says that these Christian preachers had “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6). What can we learn about preaching, from this experience?

William H. Willimon: The book of Acts has a paradigm for our work. In Acts, Christian missionaries are moving into the world, telling the story of Christ. Each time it’s told, it has a little different emphasis, but it’s still the same story. And sometimes the world responds positively, as in Acts 2. But many times, the response is nothing but a beating and a trip to jail. When you say “Jesus Christ is Lord,” it tends to throw other lords into disarray. It did with Herod when Jesus was born, and it does with Caesar in Acts. The result is opposition and rejection. The thing I love in the Acts drama is that the Christian missionaries don’t care. They’d love to have their preaching accepted, but they tell their story regardless. For every story of evangelistic success, Luke usually follows with stories of failure.

DJM: So preaching that turns the world upside down doesn’t inevitably lead to success as people count success. There may be baptisms in one setting and beatings in the other.

WHW: That’s right. In Acts, they seem more worried about getting the story right than anything else. You don’t know whether Luke is more excited about being rejected or being accepted. He loves to tell a story of success: Peter came out, said just a few words to them, they were pricked to the heart, and asked “What can we do to be saved?” Luke loves to tell of the thousands who were saved. But he also tells that these preachers were willing to suffer rejection. In fact, I think it’s a discredit to my preaching that I don’t preach the gospel well enough to get more rejection.

DJM: We don’t hear that honest warning very often. But the record is...
clear: Preaching that turned the world upside down has some rather unpredictable results. In the book *Preaching to Strangers*, which you co-authored with Stanley Hauerwas, you warned that “Christian conversation with strangers can be dangerous.” What other dangers does the preacher face, besides rejection?

WHW: In attempting to speak to the world as Christ commands us to, sometimes we fall into the world, face down. The world gets us. Jesus tells us to go out and get the world. Then He tells us, “You be careful; they’re out to get you!” One danger I face when preaching to strangers is that in my earnest efforts to spread the gospel, I end up offering less than the gospel. Or I try to crank the gospel down to something that anybody staggering off the street can get in five minutes. Or I try to say, “Let’s see, are you interested in self-esteem? Well, salvation is something like that.” Or, “Would you like to feel better about yourself? Well, Jesus can help you.” I think we need to keep being reminded of how odd it is that we preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The world has lots of ways of reminding us: “Hey, you people are kind of on the fringe of what success looks like.” That’s a good thing.

D JM: I hear you saying that preaching that turns the world upside down is not simply a restatement of the popular gospel of the culture. We need to boldly proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, even when it may seem odd or strange to others. Can you give us an example?

WHW: Yes, there’s one in Acts 17. This passage is sometimes used as a great example of Paul getting “down and dirty” with the Athenians. He quotes from some of their poets. He talks about this altar to an unknown God. Then, as he ends his sermon, he says, “This god that you grope for, I proclaim to you as the One whom God has raised from the dead and the One who shall come and judge everybody.” This gets the Athenians scoffing. There may be a lot of evidence out there that nature is beautiful and orderly, like the snowflake and all that—but there isn’t any evidence out there for the resurrection. And at the end of that sermon in Athens, some of Paul’s hearers say, “That’s the stupidest thing we’ve ever heard!” Only a few are converted, in-

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**We should not be surprised when our Christian description of what’s going on in the world clashes with the culture’s understanding of what’s happening. The world doesn’t know it’s terminal. The world thinks it’s invulnerable and eternal. The world thinks we can keep going upward and onward.**

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including Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris. Pretty small pickings for one of the greatest speeches in the New Testament.

D JM: In your book, *The Intrusive Word*, you suggest that, when preaching to the unconverted, “our preaching ought to be so confrontational . . . that it requires no less than a miracle to be heard.” How can preachers be confrontational without being offensive?

WHW: When we confront people, we’re doing so in the name of the Prince of Peace, the Slain Lamb. As Christians, we don’t have any means of working other than with words. We’re not allowed to pull the sword on somebody and tell them to be converted. The only thing we’ve got is the foolishness of preaching. Words can be powerful, even if they present a different kind of power. I remember someone telling me that she was offended by my sermon. And I said, “I was too.” She said, “Really? I thought you liked it.” And I said, “We don’t preach this stuff because we like it. We preach it because we’ve been told to preach it.” Christianity confronts every culture, including the first culture in which it found itself. We should not be surprised when our Christian description of what’s going on in the world clashes with the culture’s understanding of what’s happening. The world doesn’t know it’s terminal. The world thinks it’s invulnerable and eternal. The world thinks we can keep going upward and onward.

Years ago, I was in a campus discussion on nuclear arms. One group said, “We’re going to blow ourselves to bits. We’re sitting on a nuclear keg, and the fuse is lit. We’re going to blow away life as we know it.” The other group said, “No, the Russians have got the bomb; we need the bomb. We’re defending life as we know it.” The other group said, “We’re going to blow ourselves to bits. We’re sitting on a nuclear keg, and the fuse is lit. We’re going to blow away life as we know it.” And I said, “You know, it’s nice that both of you agree that the issue is surviving and that the mutual question is how best to survive. But as Christians, we don’t think we’re going to survive. We actually believe God is not linked to the American way or any particular way. God has no great investment in whether the world as we know it lasts for a thousand years, or not.”

D JM: You suggest that “preaching becomes invigorated when . . . Jesus gets loose again, and people come out of the service stunned.” What does that look like?

WHW: Once I did a retreat for students who had heard of Jesus but were
not yet ready to follow Him. About a dozen people attended. I did all kinds of things. The first night I just showed them the Gospel of Mark, done by an actor who just recited it straight. When we were through, this guy with long hair and tears in his eyes said, "Boy, Jesus is cool. I knew right from the beginning that they were going to kill Him. I mean, I just knew it." And I said, "Really?" He replied, "You know, I understand why they killed Him, because you just can't go around saying stuff like that without people wanting to kill you." There, in a certain wonderful moment, Jesus broke loose. When someone says he can't sleep at night and he feels guilty over his behavior, I just sit there in awe. It's amazing that God can get through, because we've got such wonderful defenses against God. I just give God the glory when those defenses crumble.

DJM: That's powerful! Where do you find the courage to keep delivering God's outrageous truths to people? You mentioned that you haven't been beaten recently, but people may beat you verbally or respond with scoffing or patronizing disinterest. Where do you find the courage to continue to preach in a way that turns people upside down?

WHW: I have to admit, I'm very well protected. I'm in a bishop appointed system, you know. I was talking to a group of Southern Baptist pastors about courage in the pulpit. Three hundred Southern Baptist pastors get fired every month. It takes courage to speak up. Walter Brueggemann suggests that if you're a coward by nature, that's OK. God can still use you because what you can still do is get down behind the text! Just get down behind it and push it out there in front of the people. You can still say something like this: "Can you believe that God said that to us? What does God want out of us now? You're the ones who showed up here in church today and said you wanted to hear God's Word, so here it is!" Then the preacher can make a bold application and say, "This is not necessarily what I'm saying, but I believe this is what the text is saying." I love that! But courage is also found in the text itself. A lot of times when people come and criticize something I've said, I sit there and say, "Lord, I can't believe You've done that to me. I mean, I'm the most compromised, cowardly person in the world, but You've actually made me courageous for 20 minutes. That is a miracle! Thank You. I can't believe You did that!" When God turns the world upside down through preaching, it's not a disaster; it is an act of grace.

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LIFE AT ITS DARKEST!

It’s a wake-up call for American clergymen.” So concluded pollster George Gallup after a recent poll of 1,200 adults revealed that most Americans want spiritual comfort in their final days, but only one-third believed that members of the clergy would be helpful in providing it.

Robert L. Veninga, Ph.D., author of four books on grief and stress management, is a professor in the School of Public Health at the University of Minnesota.

Now the questions are: How can ministers help those who are dying? How can they provide comfort when life is at its darkest?

Here are four areas of concentration. All of them have been suggested by patients who themselves have faced death and interacted with clergy at the same time.

Talk about death

When pastors avoid talking about death, most patients are puzzled. “We have a wonderful pastor,” said an 86-year-old man. “He visits me every week. He prays with me. But for some reason, he doesn’t acknowledge the seriousness of my situation.” A female patient, age 47, stated, “I have a wonderful priest. But when he comes to visit, we seldom talk about what is important. We talk about the Minnesota Twins baseball team, and we talk about people in the parish. But we never talk about my death.” After a long pause she continued, “I know I’m dying. Aren’t priests supposed to talk about these things?”

Yes, clergy should be able to talk about death. Yet, frequently they don’t. Why? Clergy may not be aware of the gravity of a patient’s medical condition, particularly if the patient is not in a hospice. But even if they are aware, they may prefer to communicate about pleasant things, hoping the patient’s spirit will be lifted by their presence.

I say this with some feeling: Patients believe that their pastor will help them to understand and come to terms with death. Therefore it is important that ministers converse with patients about their death.

How is this to be done? Questions such as, “What has your physician told you about your illness?” or “Do you feel that you will get better?” are soft ways of getting at hard issues. In other instances it is best to be direct and ask whether they would like to talk about death. A pastor who is very effective in ministering to the dying put it this way: “When I bring up the subject of death, it is uncomfortable. But most people respond positively. They ask questions, and I listen carefully. I never rush these conversations, because I know that we’ll be talking about the most tender part of their lives. When I leave, there is a new, deep bond between us.”

As Elton Mayo, M.D., once observed: “One friend, one person who is truly understanding and who takes the
trouble to listen to us as we consider our problem, can change our whole outlook on the world.”

Talk about regrets

It may seem strange to focus on regrets, but it is important. I once asked a 44-year-old man dying from lymph cancer, “Do you have regrets?” “Quite a few,” he replied. “I never made much of my life.”

“Have you ever talked about your regrets with someone you trust?” I inquired. “No, I’ve always been too ashamed” was his response.

Fortunately, he was able to talk about his regrets with a hospital chaplain who brought understanding and comfort. This much is true: Most people come to the end of their life with regrets, or what might be termed “unfinished business.”

What constitutes “unfinished business”? I first heard the following description when interviewing a nurse who had over twenty-two years of experience in hospice care. “The one thing I have learned is that there is an ‘easy’ death and a ‘hard’ death,” she said. “When people die ‘hard,’ they struggle. And when people die ‘easy,’ they have their unfinished business completed.”

“What is the unfinished business that needs attention?” I asked.

“It varies from one patient to another,” she said. “Some need to see that their lives have been a success even if there was failure. Some need to resolve anger toward a parent, a child, or an unfortunate happening. And sometimes the unfinished business is simply letting go of the anger they feel toward their illness.”

The nurse then told me of a man who was brought to the hospice one day before his sixty-first birthday. “When Bill was admitted, I sensed his anger. He was hostile, abrupt, and very restless. When he fell asleep he would moan as if something terribly wrong had happened. So I asked him if everything was OK. It was then that I knew he had some unfinished business that needed to be completed if he were to die an easy death. His physical signs were rapidly deteriorating. But he wouldn’t die. He wouldn’t let go. It was as if there was something deep within him that would not permit death. I talked to his son: ‘Something very deep is bothering your dad. I don’t know what it is. Unless it is resolved, your father will never die in peace.’ His son’s eyes filled with tears. The family secret was about to be told. ‘I have a sister who lives in Baltimore, Maryland. My dad disowned her nine years ago because she married someone of another race. From his point of view, she committed the unpardonable sin. He said he would never forgive her.’ When I heard that confession, I knew what his unfinished business was all about. I told the son to call his sister and tell her to get to Minneapolis as fast as possible.

“Five hours later she arrived. I went with the son and daughter to their father’s room. For the first time in nine years he saw his daughter. He said nothing, just stared at her. Then he opened his arms to his daughter and, with all the strength that was left in that frail body, he hugged her. She brushed away his tears and sat on the bed. They said nothing for the longest time. Finally he looked into her eyes and said two words that freed him forever: ‘I’m sorry.’ There were many tears. They held one another and talked about old times. The dad learned that he was a grandfather, and there was much laughter. I checked his vital signs later that evening, and they seemed stronger. But then an amazing thing happened. Around 10:30 that night the father said that he was very tired. But he didn’t want the children to leave the room. I sensed what was about to happen and told the son and daughter to stay. Each child held one of his hands. And then he died. But his expression was serene. The bitterness was gone. Grievances had been resolved. All unfinished business put to rest.”

“All of us have unfinished business,” said the nurse. “You have it, and I have it. And most patients have it. It is impossible to die in peace unless the...
unfinished business is put to rest.”

How do we help patients resolve unfinished business? The prerequisite is to build strong, authentic relationships with the members of our congregations. We must listen with our hearts as well as our heads. Avoid judgmental comments. If we do these things, moments of vulnerability will appear—moments in which patients allow us to see into their hearts. It is then that patients will confide their regrets and their hopes. It is in such a relational atmosphere that their unfinished business can be put to rest.

Celebrate life

We now come to a third suggestion in helping patients who are dying. Celebrate life! How do you celebrate life? There is a place in pastoral visits to talk about joy—those wonderful topics that light up the room.

How do you discover these topics? “I try to be very observant when I go into a patient’s room,” says one physician. “I look for pictures of family, a periodical on the dresser, a picture on the wall. Once I went to a patient’s room to deliver unsettling news. I observed a copy of *In-Fisherman* by the side of his bed. Within moments we were talking about his favorite fishing lake and memories of catching a large pike. A bond quickly developed between the two of us that has sustained us through tough times.”

When you focus on topics that bring a smile to a patient’s face, you celebrate life. But you also celebrate by affirming that his or her life has meaning. Shortly before writing these words, I visited with a former colleague at the University of Minnesota. He had been retired for ten years and had recently been diagnosed with a serious illness. Before leaving I mentioned his many accomplishments. To my surprise, his eyes welled with tears. “When you are at this stage in life, you look back on your career and you see a lot of missed opportunities. I probably could have done a lot more with my life than what I accomplished.”

When serious illness strikes, patients often do “negative thinking.” The focus is not on the joys in one’s journey. Nor is it on one’s accomplishments. The focus is on the detours, potholes, and dead-ends. When that happens it is important to guide the conversation gently in a different direction. When I reminded my friend of the new programs he had started and the lives of students he had touched, a smile came to his face. He started thinking not about lost opportunities but about his success. And when he reflected on his accomplishments, serenity returned.

It is important for people to actually verbalize that which brings joy. Consider a 77-year-old, self-reliant farmer. Never sick, he was terrified by the technology to which he was connected in these final days of his life. He wasn’t a man of many words. He didn’t want to discuss his medical condition or talk about his faith, although I sensed that it was strong. What he did want to discuss, however, was his farm.

“What are you most proud of?” I asked. Without hesitation he said: “My land!” I must have looked puzzled, for he said, “I can tell by your expression that you aren’t a farmer because every farmer knows that the land is everything. Now, my farm didn’t have good land. I was told that it was the worst in the county, and forty years ago my banker told me that I couldn’t make anything of it. But I took classes on how to farm. I learned how to fertilize and how to rotate crops. I learned which crops grew best on the land and which to avoid. Five years ago, I had the best corn yield in the county.” He paused and flashed a grin: “That’s not too bad for a farmer with a sixth-grade education, is it?”

Not bad indeed! As he talked, he could barely contain his enthusiasm.
The pride was unmistakable. And the joy of life could be seen clearly.

Everyone needs to feel good about their lives, and they need to know that they are leaving a legacy. Louis Pasteur, the pioneer of immunology, lived in an era when thousands of people died of rabies. For years Pasteur had worked to develop a vaccine. Just before he began experimenting on himself, a nine-year-old boy, Joseph Meister, was bitten by a rabid dog. The boy’s mother desperately wanted Pasteur to experiment on her son. For ten days Pasteur injected Joseph with the serum he had developed, and miraculously the boy lived. Decades later, of all the things Pasteur could have etched on his headstone, he requested three words: Joseph Meister Lived.

I cannot overemphasize this point: All of us want to know that our lives mattered. We might not be a Pasteur, but we are parents, managers, salespeople, and teachers. We are electricians, attorneys, and clergy. And each of us wants to know in our heart of hearts that our lives made this world a better place in which to live.

Focus on faith

And now to the last suggestion: Focus on any unresolved issues relating to faith. Some individuals don’t want to talk about faith, and their wishes should be respected. But most people want their pastor to focus on their spiritual health. How may one do this?

The starting point is to love people for who they are. Love has an incredible power to heal our wounds. When you love someone, they sense your acceptance, and it frees them to discuss their hopes and regrets, dreams and failures. It also enables them to talk about their faith and the questions they have about their future.

Most people have questions about faith, particularly in the weeks and months prior to death. In most instances it is their pastor who can best provide the needed guidance. True, the work of physicians, nurses, and other members of the healing team can bring resolution to many of life’s questions, and family members usually provide support and comfort. But in my experience, most want to converse with their minister about their spiritual journey—provided there is a caring, compassionate relationship.

Why do individuals wait until their deathbed to address important questions? “I never had the time to become involved in church,” said one man. Said another: “Frankly, I never stopped to ask questions about God because I felt there were no answers.” “For me,” said an 18-year-old boy dying from bone cancer, “it was never cool to be part of a church crowd.” Whatever the reason, these people had not made a serious inquiry into the meaning of faith. With death at the door, however, there is a strong need to inquire about the riddles of life.

What are the dying asking for when they inquire about faith? It varies from person to person, but, as we discussed earlier, most want affirmation that their life has mattered. And most want assurance that their Creator will see them through their darkest hour.

For example, a 44-year-old mother of three was diagnosed with stage III skin cancer. The cancer spread quickly, and she was brought to the hospice to die. She worried about her children, and wept when thinking about her husband, a gentle man who loved her deeply. Yet she seemed serene.

“Do you know what gives me the greatest joy?” she asked. “It’s not my friends, although they are wonderful. It’s not my family, although I wouldn’t trade them for anything in the world.” Her eyes welled with tears of gratitude: “It’s that I know that I am loved by God and that nothing will ever, ever separate me from that love.”

That is what faith is all about. Although not everyone reaches that level of acceptance, many do—especially if guided by a compassionate pastor. What can you say to the person who is dying that might make a difference? Consider these marvelous biblical promises: “I have known you from the beginning of time. You belong to me and I belong to you. You are the one I love and on you my favor rests. I have molded you from your mother’s womb. I have carried you in the palms of my hands and protected you in the shadow of my embrace. I look at you with infinite tenderness and I care for you with more tenderness than that of a mother for her child. I have counted every hair on your head and I will guide your every step. Wherever you go, I will be with you and wherever you rest I will watch over you. I will give you food that will nurture your body and a drink that will quench your thirst. I will not hide from you. You know me as your own and I know you as mine. You will always belong to me. Wherever you are, I will be there too. Nothing will separate us.”

1 Robert Veninga, “The Search for the Sacred: How to Find New Meanings in Your Career,” The Journal of Nursing Administra-
tion, January 1996, 4.
A s a fresh, idealistic young theology graduate just out of college and ready to conquer the world for God, I was excited when I was assigned to intern with the man regarded as the best pastoral trainer in my conference.

Pastor James Fields was an enthusiastic pastor who believed in evangelism and in the importance of pastoral visitation. His district included two churches, one in the capital city, where the conference office was located, and another in a small town about twenty miles away. The smaller church, of course, became my responsibility and also my training field. During the nine months I was to work there, it would benefit from two evangelistic series. The first would be conducted in the fall of the year by a conference evangelist, the second in the spring by me.

Pastor Fields had a Rolodex file filled with the names of anyone who had expressed interest in the church or its programs for the last dozen years. Early that fall I found myself making the rounds, six days a week with a stack of cards reflecting the Rolodex file, knocking on doors, talking to people, giving them a flyer, and inviting them to the upcoming evangelistic meetings. Most people thanked me politely, shut the door, and, I suppose, deposited the flyer in the nearest wastebasket.

But not Sonya.

She came to the door of her small low-income apartment. When she found out I was an Adventist pastor, her eyes lit up and she invited me inside. I met each of her five children, ranging in age from three to eight. Sonya had Adventist relatives, was recently divorced, and realized that her life needed a change. She told me she definitely wanted to attend the meetings but didn’t have a babysitter or transportation.

I soon found myself in the role of taxi driver. My wife and I would ride in the front seat of our little two-door Dodge, with Sonya and her kids in the back. We quickly realized that Sonya hadn’t read *Dare to Discipline* or any other parenting books. Discipline and family decisions proceeded by the “volume method.” Whoever could shout the loudest got their way.

But Sonya enjoyed the meetings. Pastor Fields and the evangelist noticed how interested she seemed and placed a red metal tab on her Rolodex card, signifying that she was a definite prospect for baptism.

The house guest

One day, when I went to give Sonya her Bible study, she introduced me to Brian. “An old friend,” she said. He’d fallen on some rough times, had ended up in jail (through no fault of his own, of course), and had just been released. He needed a place to stay... just for a couple of days... that’s all.

Dismayed (and naive), I said that
I understood. I said no more, deciding that she knew the potentially compromising moral situation Brian was introducing. Sonya was, after all, a grown woman; older than I, in fact. She was attending the meetings and church services and would come to an appropriate decision when it came to Brian. She'd be all right, I told myself.

I did tell Pastor Fields and the evangelist about Brian, and they agreed to see Sonya. After their visit they assured me that Brian would be moving out.

He didn't. He was involved in several minor car accidents and came back telling Sonya how certain people were out to get him. He said they had been trying to run him off the road and were threatening his life. He had decided that he would have to "lay low" for a while longer... at Sonya's house. And so she let him stay on.

Meanwhile, the evangelistic series was closing. Pastor Fields and the evangelist were convinced that Sonya understood the church's doctrines well enough for her to be baptized.

The infection

It was then that Sonya came down with an infection, the type that can be transmitted only through sexual contact. When Pastor Fields learned about her problem, he and the evangelist had a long visit with her. They came away saying that she was still a good candidate for baptism. A woman living with a man to whom she wasn't married, a good candidate for baptism? Had she grasped even the rudiments of the gospel? I'd heard some disquieting stories about baptisms during evangelistic meetings, but I never thought that my two heroes—this pastor and evangelist—would be the main actors in one involving me.

I was the one who had been working most closely with Sonya, and so I summoned the courage to say that I didn't feel she was ready for baptism yet. The facts were, however, that the only other baptismal candidate was a thirteen-year-old girl who was frightened of water. So there was the possibility that she would back out of her decision for baptism at the last minute, leaving us with no visible fruit from the campaign. So Sonya had to be advanced into the baptismal font.

Being an intern working with an experienced pastor and a respected evangelist, and having already been put in my place for expressing some of my thoughts to the evangelist, I didn't argue. I sincerely felt that, after all, these were seasoned men and I was there to learn from them, not they from me.

So Sonya was baptized.

She attended church only a few times after that. When anyone went to pick her up for church, she simply wasn't ready. She'd come to her door, obviously just out of bed, with a crying child or two tugging at her clothes. And Brian would often stand passively in the background. When I stopped by, they would politely visit with me. But nothing seemed to make a difference, and nothing changed.

Hindsight

All this happened more than a quarter century ago. Recently I met Sonya's brother, who has been an effective worker in the church for years.

"Whatever became of Sonya?" I asked him.

"She moved away," he said. He described her children, now grown into adulthood. "She's a grandmother who enjoys taking care of her grandchildren while one of her daughters works."

"And Brian?"

"Oh, he stayed with her for 20 years; then one morning he just got up and left, and she's never heard from him since. We don't know why he left, but we think it was because all the kids had grown up and there were no more welfare checks coming in. It seems he was afraid he would have to go out and get a job. The truth is, all those years he just used Sonya and the children for a meal ticket."

Then Sonya's brother went on to describe how Sonya and her children had undergone two decades of serious abuse and mistreatment from Brian and how now they had nothing but wounds and grief to show for the years he had lived off of them. So much more had lain beneath the surface when years before we had gone ahead and baptized Sonya, ignoring the underlying problems that haunted her. Instead, we had been consumed with our own need to produce face-saving statistical results for the evangelistic campaign.

As I listened, anger welled up inside me. First, there was anger at myself. Then anger at the evangelist and at the "system" that sometimes seems more interested in numbers than authentic results. And I could not restrain myself from asking the question, What if...?

What if we had been genuinely courageous and challenged Sonya about her need to break out of an immoral and toxic relationship, being sure of her faith in Christ and His life-transforming love, before we baptized her?

What if someone in the church had taken a real interest in helping Sonya bring her life under God's control?

What if we had integrated Sonya deeply into the church family and enrolled her children in church school as part and parcel of her entry into the church? Might she have met an eligible man who could have helped her raise her children to the glory of God and their ultimate good?

What if as a church we had different, more comprehensive ways of measuring "success"?

What if...?

Pastor Fields moved on to a conference leadership position and has recently retired.

The evangelist ultimately moved on to a conference presidency.

I, too, have moved on and have served my church at many levels, including the General Conference. We've all moved on. Except Sonya.

*Peter Postle is a pseudonym, as are all the names mentioned in this true story.
A PERSONAL CONFESSION

I am an Adventist minister, long retired. As I look back over the years of my ministry, I recognize with pain a serious fault that undermined all the earnest service I attempted to give. Though blind to it then, I see it now and confess it to my fellow ministers, with the hope that my confession will help someone see the same fault in their own character and thus be spared the remorse that I feel.

I gave my life early to the Lord and, as I grew up, remained happy to be known as a "good boy." I also responded early to my call to ministry and was ordained after several years of varied service. Proud of my theological training, and pleased when called to a position of influence, I thought myself superior to my peers, though really all I had been given was superior privileges, nothing more. As one naturally serious, I intended to serve God with complete sincerity. Looking back, however, I see that my main goal was to be personally successful. That was my priority. Carrying out the Lord's immediate purpose was, for me, secondary. In short, my sin wasn't some sexual deviancy or some secret vice that is socially unacceptable. Instead, I was grossly self-centered. What is worse, I didn't know it at the time.

I cared more about what good people thought about me than what God did. I wanted the praises of men more than the praises of God. This is such a dangerous sin, because it is easy to hide it from others and even easier to hide it from ourselves. While I was outwardly living an acceptable life and retaining a good reputation, my inward thoughts were often unworthy thoughts of self, of success, of praise. I cared about myself and my good name more than God and His good name. I would, in my mind, constantly link what was best for me as being what was best for God. Now and again I would venture to the limits of what God's standards of conduct were, sometimes even transgressing them if I thought doing so would work to my advantage. I would then justify my actions by telling myself that what I was doing I was doing for God. Few people are more potentially dangerous, or self-deceived, than those who believe that whatever they do they are doing "unto the Lord."

"Not the amount of labor performed or its visible results but the spirit in which the work is done makes it of value with God."1 "In the light from Calvary it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven."2

Looking back, however, I see that my main goal was to be personally successful. That was my priority. Carrying out the Lord's immediate purpose was, for me, secondary. . . . I was grossly self-centered. What is worse, I didn't know it at the time.

I confess this failure along with the loss it has cost in my life and ministry. All I can do in the face of it is to lean the whole weight of my soul on the merits of the One who died for sinners, of whom I am chief.

I wish now with all my heart that I had made these basic truths the foundation of my ministry 40 years ago. When Jesus said that one must "deny himself," I had always assumed He simply meant that one must practice self-denial for charitable purposes. Doubtless, that is partially true. But it never occurred to me that what He also meant was that I had to eliminate self-veneration, self-will, and in a word, my pervasive self-centeredness. That's why the Bible talks about the need for a person to die before he or she can have life. Reflecting now on what I could have been, as opposed to what I actually was, I fervently wish I had known for myself the depth of meaning in Paul's words, when he cried out: "I have been crucified with Christ: the life I now live is not my life, but the life which Christ lives in me."3 (Gal. 2:20, REB).

However much I wish I could, I cannot reclaim the lost years. Instead, all I can do is throw myself upon the wonder of God's grace and love for me and plead for others to learn from an old man with sadness in him for what the young minister in him years ago failed to see: To live for Christ is to be dead to self. For, truly, as the Lord said—only by losing our lives will we gain them. I wish now with all my heart that I had made these basic truths the foundation of my ministry 40 years ago. When Jesus said that one must "deny himself," I had always assumed He simply meant that one must practice self-denial for charitable purposes. Doubtless, that is partially true. But it never occurred to me that what He also meant was that I had to eliminate self-veneration, self-will, and in a word, my pervasive self-centeredness. That's why the Bible talks about the need for a person to die before he or she can have life. Reflecting now on what I could have been, as opposed to what I actually was, I fervently wish I had known for myself the depth of meaning in Paul's words, when he cried out: "I have been crucified with Christ: the life I now live is not my life, but the life which Christ lives in me." (Gal. 2:20, REB).

Editorial comment: This highly meaningful confession is made the more profound by the quality of life and service that stands behind the writer and, thus, what he has written.

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*So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.*

Hebrews 10:35 NIV
We all have limits and boundaries. Some are physical, others are emotional. Physical boundaries are easier to identify than those that are emotional, which are often quite vague and unconscious.

Ministers have a need to define them both, or burnout may be the result. In fact, one of the major causes for emotional struggle in ministry is unclear boundaries. "In a culture where whirl is king, we must understand our emotional limits," says Richard Foster. Further, along with physical and emotional limits we also have mental boundaries. These may be even more difficult to identify than where our emotional limits lie.

This talk about limits may cause some well-intentioned people to respond by nobly quoting passages such as Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (NKJV).

If such a use of Paul's words was justifiable in the literal sense implied by such claims, it may also be possible to breathe under water, fly like an eagle, or go four months without food! Clearly we cannot read more into Paul's statement than he meant. Even in the application of such a promise there are limits. The truth is, of course, that we simply cannot live our lives without natural boundaries. Indeed the physical, emotional, and mental limits that are ours have been set by Christ Himself.

Drawing the lines
Who, in fact, applies the boundaries in the daily life of the pastor? The work itself? The pastor's family? God? Those we serve? A pastor seems especially vulnerable to bending to the demands of the people. This vulnerability is not as strong in other lines of work. For example, when a patient goes to a doctor, the doctor has far more control over when he or she sees the patient, and the amount of time spent with the patient than the pastor has in the case of the parishioner.

This article invites the pastor to take much more initiative in the boundary setting that goes on in his or her daily life. In initiating this, here are some leading questions, along with some loaded ones: Do you make yourself available at appropriate times, or do you allow others to interfere with family,
personal, or devotional time? (Would you run to solve a problem if someone passed you a note in the middle of your sermon?) Are you someone who is so subject to the desire to be liked or to prove yourself as a person and a minister that you are constantly violating crucial boundaries until they are virtually nonexistent in your ministry? If so, you are in dire need of the boundaries we are speaking about.

Imagine attempting to play volleyball without the guidance of the designated dimensions for volleyball court lines. To play the game with any ultimate enjoyment or effectiveness, we must know where the lines are or what the rules of the game are. This reality applies to almost any sport. You must know where the lines are in order to play effectively.

The challenges

Ministry has never been easy. But today ministry is more difficult than it ever has been, for a number of reasons:

• We live in a post-Christian and postmodern world. The concern to know the truth or adhere to specific values has been eroded. People believe truth is relative and have abandoned the idea of absolute or definitive truth.

• Consumerism rules! Feeling has largely replaced thought or reason. People just want to feel good. We may feel that we are missionaries in a foreign culture. This makes ministry difficult.

• Seen through the eyes of much of contemporary culture, Christian ministry appears foolish. Paul spoke of the foolishness of preaching, but more and more we may speak of the foolishness of ministry. We do not have the respect that used to be a part of Christian ministry. The things that matter most to us mean little to many others. People believe that ministers are out of touch with real life and are unable to deal effectively with the issues of today.

• There is a serious lack of trust. The calling and credibility of the minister has been tarnished by some high-profile clergy who have been less than honest, moral, or caring.

• Then there is the bottomless pit of need that the pastor encounters daily. The numbers of people in need, personality issues to be dealt with, problem solving, preaching and teaching to be done. It all seems beyond us sometimes.

• Today church members express a wide array of varying opinions. Often these opinions end in serious conflicts into which the pastor is drawn and beneath which he or she may be buried. Managing conflict in which the pastor is all-too-often personally involved has become a way of life in many churches.

People have many more options than they used to have. The vast array of entertainment and career and family alternatives vie for people's time and attention, and often the church seems to be left to last.

All these factors and many more have filled the task of ministry with challenges that stretch pastors beyond the boundaries of ordinary ability, sometimes leaving them gasping for their professional, emotional, and spiritual breath.

What can the pastor do in the face of these challenges? How can we bring pastoring back within healthy parameters? Here are ten strategies that have worked for me and have been helpful in bringing me back to playing within the lines.

Plan of action

1. Focus on spiritual formation. Spend time in worship, prayer, medita-
tion, and with spiritual friends. Ask, What shapes me? Let God give you what you need each day. It is not what happens around us that matters nearly so much as what happens in us.

2. Have roots of detachment. Be able to step back from the chaos. Develop a hobby. Play a sport or exercise. Spend time with your family. Do not allow your calendar to be consumed by ministry. Schedule family, social, and recreational appointments as well.

3. Watch what you eat. We need to move away from the philosophy that says, “If I like it, I’ll eat it; if it feels good, I’ll do it; if it tastes good, I’ll drink it.” Eating well brings us to the point of feeling better.

4. Speak positive words. Keep a positive attitude. Henry Ford said, “Whether you think you can or you think you can’t, you are right!” Attitude is a choice. Choose to live positively no matter the challenges. And concentration camp survivor Victor Frankel said, “Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s way.”

5. Get addicted to being good to yourself. On the surface, this may seem contradictory to our calling. It is not. We must give ourselves permission to enjoy the life God has given us. We may reward ourselves after completing a difficult task. We must also be good to our families and reward them for their patience and support.

6. Make time for an occasional retreat alone. It can last a few hours, a whole day, or even a week. Make time for meditation, reflection, study, or planning. We must allow God to refresh and transform us. We must continue to grow so our ministry will grow. We cannot give what we don’t have.

Balance
These ten things have helped me to find my boundaries, to play within the lines, to attain a more balanced lifestyle, and to have a more effective ministry. “Boundaries define us. They define what is me and what is not me. A boundary shows me where I end and someone else begins, leading me to a sense of ownership.”

We all live our lives and make our decisions based on priorities. For those committed to vocational excellence, one goal stands alone: the work we were called to, the work of the church. But that work may only be done properly when the time we devote to it is in balance with the rest of life. Balance is necessary and attainable, but only with effort.

When we play the game of life and ministry within the lines, we find it much easier and more enjoyable.

3 Henry Cloud and John Townsend, Boundaries (Zondervan, 1992), 29.
Cosmology deals with the structure and origin of the universe. As a scientific enterprise it endeavors to answer questions about the universe through the application of physics and other relevant disciplines.

This endeavor demands a certain objectivity of the scientist. That is to say, the scientist should not be excessively influenced by his or her religious and philosophical presuppositions.

Modern cosmology had its origin in the 1920s when the American astronomer Edwin Hubble found that almost all galaxies—Milky Way systems like our own—show a so-called “red-shift.” That is to say, the color of the light we receive from a galaxy is redder than when it left that galaxy. The simplest way to interpret this is by assuming that this is a manifestation of the Doppler effect: a light source moving away from an observer on earth will look redder than it did at its source. When Hubble started to interpret his observations, he did not immediately rely on the Doppler effect for an explanation because he wanted to keep open the possibility of alternative explanations.

Models of the universe into which the new findings could be fitted included one by Milne and another by Lemaître, both of which allowed an expanding universe. The idea of an expanding universe agreed with Einstein’s theory of General Relativity (GR). Although there were other viable models, since Hubble was eager to include GR in his explanation, he soon abandoned his initial reservations, adopted the Doppler effect as a valid explanation and concluded that most galaxies are moving away from us. Thus, the term “expanding universe” came into being.

Further steps suggested themselves quite easily: If today the universe is expanding, then it must have been smaller in the past. In the light of this, moving back far enough in time, one would arrive at a moment when the universe had some minimum size from which it expanded. It seemed that in this way it was possible to arrive at the beginning of time. Christians soon recognized this as a possible way of understanding the opening statement of the Bible, “in the beginning God . . . .” Dating this beginning was more complicated. It required the measurement of both the rate of the expansion and its possible variation in time. Since the light from distant galaxies requires long periods of time to reach us, the observation of such distant galaxies allows us to determine the rate of past expansion. However, the
telescopes available to Hubble in the 1930s were not powerful enough to see objects at very large distances and, consequently, the first estimates of the age of the universe came out at around two billion years. For Christians prepared to see the first two verses of Genesis 1 as distinct in time from the rest of that chapter, this did not cause alarm. Even the later construction of larger telescopes and the subsequent better estimates of the age of the universe as some 15 billion years did not immediately cause too much concern for many Christians.

The Big Bang theory

Concerns were raised, however, when details of the now widely adopted Big Bang theory were worked out (see box on page 23). It soon became clear that this theory was on course to allow long periods of time not only for cosmological structures but also for biological evolution to have ample time for its slow developments and changes. Besides that concern, however, an important objective difficulty for the Big Bang is immediately apparent: Basic to the theory is the sudden expansion of so-called “primordial matter.” But what is the origin or source of this matter? Although a number of complicated hypotheses have been suggested, no satisfying answers to this question have yet been found. In the light of this, at the start there is ample room for a creative act outside the realm of scientific or physical observation.

Now another interesting aspect in the Big Bang presents itself. After the rapid expansion of the esoteric particles composing the primordial matter that lasted only a fraction of the universe’s first second, conditions were ripe for the production of the better-known building blocks of the cosmos—constructive chemical elements. These elements were produced in pairs. Each normal particle came with its antiparticle, both containing the property to destroy the other in a flash of radiation, upon encounter. In the highly dense conditions of the early universe such encounters could not have been avoided and, as a result, all matter would have been annihilated by antimatter, making it forever impossible for the known chemical elements to be produced. The only way to avoid this would have been for a surplus of normal matter over antimatter to have been produced in the first few seconds. It is possible, in fact, to estimate fairly accurately what the surplus should have been. For every one billion pairs of matter and antimatter particles, one more normal particle was needed.

There is no good physical explanation for the presence of this asymmetry. Nor does one feel comfortable suggesting that nature has a preference for asymmetry. Thus, one must ask the question, what or who caused this needed asymmetry?

Chemical elements needed for star and life formation

Another question is raised by the Big Bang theory. After the first three minutes, and as a result of the rapid cooling due to its expansion, the universe became too cold for the formation of chemical elements more complex than the very simplest: hydrogen and helium with a small admixture of deuterium, lithium and beryllium. Since most natural matter on earth is composed of more complex elements such as oxygen, nitrogen, carbon, calcium, and silicon, one must ask how and when these more complex vital chemical elements were formed. Astrophysics—that is, physics applied to stars and galaxies—has discovered an answer. Stars shine through a series of nuclear reactions deep in their hot interiors. In these reactions, part of the hydrogen and helium is used to build the more complex atoms.

Stars are formed from large clouds of gas in space when the gas contracts due to the action of gravity. In this contraction the density of the cloud increases, and with it comes a rise in the cloud’s temperature. This rise continues until the moment when conditions are just right for the ignition of the nuclear processes that produce both the stellar radiation and the more complex atoms. However, for clouds of gas to contract, at least two conditions need to be fulfilled.

First, the gas needs to have certain inhomogeneities—regions where matter is slightly more dense than elsewhere—so that these can be the centers for gravity’s star-contracting action. Since the universe’s primordial matter was spread out very evenly during the period of inflation, it was not obvious how these inhomogeneities could have arisen.

To investigate this situation the Cosmic Background Explorer Satellite (COBE) was launched in 1990. Its task was to measure the amount of radiation produced from different parts of space when the universe was only some three hundred thousand years old. At that time the temperature of the universe had already decreased from its initial high. As mentioned earlier, further expansion since then has cooled the universe to much lower temperatures. The COBE measurements of this temperature show that the temperature is not the same in all directions. Where it is slightly higher, it betrays the existence
of slightly denser matter, just enough to allow gravity to do its work of contracting clouds of gas into stars. Again, while it is unclear how these inhomogeneities formed, their presence provides important support for the Big Bang theory; unless, of course, one invokes an apparently necessary act of God to introduce the inhomogeneities into an otherwise perfectly homogeneous medium.

Second, at the time stars and galaxies were formed, the expansion of the universe must not have been so rapid that the outward-directed expansion could not be overcome by the inward-directed action of gravity. On the other hand, the expansion must not have been too slow, because in that case gravity would already have overcome expansion, and the universe would not be expanding and could even have collapsed into itself before now. Thus, the force behind the original expansion must have been subject to some very fine tuning: one part in $10^{49}$ (i.e., a 1 with 49 zeros) is what is needed. Again, one is constrained to ask what or who was responsible for such incredible fine-tuning?

Assuming, with Big Bang cosmology, that at some time during its existence the universe brought forth stars, it becomes relatively easy to conceive how things developed further. Deep in the interior of stars, hydrogen is burned at very high temperatures and slowly converted into helium. When most hydrogen has been used up in this way, the core of the star collapses, and its temperature rises dramatically. At this heightened temperature, helium is ignited and forms carbon. From here, successive stages of nuclear burning produce the chemical elements up to iron.

More complex elements beyond iron are formed when massive stars explode at the end of their existence as energy-generating entities, that is, when stars "die." Dying stars return much of their matter to the environment. At this point such matter is no longer composed of hydrogen and helium only. Through the dying process it has been enriched with other, more complex, chemical elements. The gas that has been returned to space can give rise to the next generation of stars when, again, gravity contracts gas clouds into energy-generating objects. Each time a star is formed from a gas cloud, some matter at the periphery of the cloud is not captured by the star but remains in orbit around it and can form planets. In this way it is possible to understand how planets composed of iron, nickel, silicon, manganese, etc. can form in a universe originally composed only of hydrogen and helium.

** We would do well to heed Albert Einstein's famous statement, "Science without religion is lame, and religion without science is blind," and integrate more fully these two areas of knowledge. 

In all of this, could it be that there is some connection between the way human beings came into existence and the chemical elements essential to life, which according to the Big Bang theory were made deep inside stars? Might there be some connection between the process of star making and the "dust of the ground" referred to in Genesis 2:7 and its role in the advent of human life? When one considers the way stars came into being in terms of the Big Bang theory, could this suggest a plausible path for the process of biological development? Could the scenario painted by the Big Bang theory be something initiated and guided by a Creator, thus outlining a complete description of how life on earth came into being?

This is not the place to discuss the shortcomings of the theory of biological evolution. Suffice it to point out that we have just identified an additional hurdle for this theory to negotiate when we noted that biological evolution is a non-self-starter if it is not preceded by physical evolution—the formation of elementary particles as the building blocks of all matter. Along with this we have noted that, by its nature, biological evolution also depends on chemical evolution—the production of the more complex chemical elements essential to life. If one would like to believe that the above processes are just the way God acted in His creative works, then it becomes necessary to accept the long time scales of billions of years required for bringing these processes to completion, an option not contemplated by the Genesis account when it deals with the origin of life.

** Problems with the Big Bang theory**

The credibility of the Big Bang depends on the solidity of its supporting pillars. The first among these are the redshifts. If these are to be interpreted as a Doppler effect then the conclusion of an expanding universe seems inescapable. But it must be remembered that Hubble's choice of the Doppler effect for the explanation of his observations was based in part on philosophical arguments. Hubble assumed the validity of GR and of the so-called Cosmological Principle (CP).

Recently, however, GR has come to be questioned by the discovery that faraway galaxies are receding faster than predicted by Einstein's original theory. It seems that, while gravity attracts over large distances, at the very large distances we find in the universe, it turns into a repellent force. This requires the addition of the so-called "cosmological constant" to the law of gravity and, thus, a revision of the Big Bang theory. It is not yet clear how the Big Bang will come out of this process.
The CP postulates that, generally speaking, the universe looks the same from every location within it. At the same time it is reasonably assumed that the laws of science as we have come to know them on earth operate in the same way throughout the universe and at all times. While this is the only assumption one can make if sense is to be made out of our astronomical observations, it is a philosophical assumption and it does introduce a form of uniformitarianism that would seem to exclude divine intervention in the affairs of the cosmos.

Another problem with the choice of the Doppler effect to explain the redshifts is that these can also be produced in different ways not requiring a recession of the galaxies. Among these, theories of tired light may hold some promise. The idea is that a photon—a single packet of light—on its long travel through the universe will suffer some interaction with particles in space and thus lose some of its energy. This loss of energy manifests itself as a redshift. Since space is not empty—although very sparsely populated with only a couple of hydrogen atoms per cubic meter—the farther the photon travels, the more it becomes redshifted. That’s exactly what is observed. Unfortunately, tired-light theories have not been given the attention they merit because of the early popularity of the Doppler effect as an explanation for the redshift. This popularity has in fact caused a neglect of many alternatives.

As mentioned earlier, probably the most serious shortcoming of the Big Bang is its inability to go back to the very beginning of time and space. While the condition of the universe seems to impede our looking back further than when it was already three hundred thousand years old, theoretical extrapolations have allowed scientists to pronounce upon much earlier conditions right to the first second. However, limitations imposed by physical theory do not allow us to analyze what happened in the very first tiny fraction of a second. It seems that what happened during the first $10^{-43}$ seconds (a number with 42 zeros behind the decimal point) will forever remain a scientific mystery. Thus, the question about the origin of “primordial matter” is not answered. And it does not help to say that primordial matter was made out of energy because that only begs the question, where did that energy come from?

God’s revelation on origins

For the Christian who wants to base his faith on God’s revelation in the Bible, there is plenty of scope. Despite its desire to be a theory that explains everything, the Big Bang has so many weak points that there is still ample room for God to play His role. Not that this is the way we should introduce God into our thinking about origins, because if at some future date science answers some of these questions, we might be forced to abandon part of our way of explaining God’s role in the creation of the universe. Our relationship with God should not be based on His ability to answer our questions about the universe (although the ultimate answers do rest with Him) but on the kind of God He is as revealed at Calvary and in His dealings with His creation.

Of course, such a view of God does not answer all our questions about the origin of the universe. What exactly happened during Creation week, especially on the fourth day, is still a mystery. Science says that the sun is some five billion years old. The Bible seems to suggest that our sun was created at about the time our earth was. A similar question concerns the rest of the universe, the stars and galaxies. As long as we do not possess the scientific knowledge that we have been promised will eventually be ours after we have arrived safely in God’s eternal kingdom, and as long as we are still struggling to find the correct interpretation of many a Bible passage, these questions will not be answered. But our look at the Big Bang does allow us to say “it ain’t necessarily so.” We would do well to heed Albert Einstein’s famous statement, “Science without religion is lame, and religion without science is blind,” and integrate more fully these two areas of knowledge. Thus, more progress is to be made when we interrogate the universe, not about its origin, but about the One who designed and created it. Because that is how “the heavens declare the glory of God” (Ps. 19:1).

Hot Big Bang (or standard) model

A brief description

- The universe is about 15 billion years old;
- It started with rapid expansion (inflation) of super hot and dense “primordial matter” consisting of subatomic particles such as quarks and anti-quarks;
- The subsequent phase of expansion caused a gradual cooling;
- As the temperature dropped, other particles were formed within the first three minutes; electrons and positrons, protons and anti-protons, neutrons, and finally hydrogen, deuterium, helium, lithium and beryllium (the primordial elements);
- During the first 300,000 years the universe was opaque; matter and radiation were in equilibrium;
- After 300,000 years, when the temperature had reached about $3000^3$ K, the universe became transparent;
- Finally, galaxies, stars, and planets formed.
CHRISTMAS
CHROMOSOMES

A Christmas sermon

To the average eye, they were simply peas, and no one gave them much thought as they were grown, harvested, cooked, and consumed. But Austrian monk Gregor Mendel thought he noticed discreet but definite differences between the peas that grew in the monastery garden.

He began experimenting with tall peas and short peas, with red-flowered peas and white-flowered peas. He observed and recorded how distinctive traits are passed on from one generation to the next and how in each kind of pea certain characteristics are more dominant than others. From his studies, Mendel became the father of what is known today as genetics.

Those who followed Gregor Mendel built on his foundation. Men such as James Dewey Watson, Francis Crick, and Maurice Wilkins, who won the Nobel Prize in medicine and physiology in 1962 for their discovery of the molecular structure of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), used Mendel’s findings in their research. By using Father Gregor’s foundational studies, they discovered that one can take a cell from a plant or an animal and extract from it the chemical DNA that governs all the physical and mental characteristics of the whole organism. The DNA from two totally different organisms, such as a mouse and a lion, may be extracted and grafted together resulting in a mouse that roars!

The implications of modern genetics

That, of course, is an oversimplification of recent scientific breakthroughs that we hope will make life better for all of us. In reality, we know that things are not always that simple.

Dolly, the genetically engineered sheep that attracted worldwide attention not long ago, demonstrates how far we have traveled in our understanding of genetics. She also reminds us that there are some serious ethical implications involved in genetics, as there are for any technology involving something as basic as life and the essential characteristics of species. The amazingly rapid rate at which other cloning experiments have been carried out—whether with cattle in France or with the cloning of 130 mice in Eastern Europe—is astonishing and to many, quite disconcerting.

Each new report raises the issue of
human cloning, with all the attendant promises, such as the potential for organ replacement and the replenishing of other defective body parts. Who wouldn’t want to save the life of a dying child by developing a replacement body part for the one that has failed? On the downside, however, there is the fear that, in the wrong hands, horrendous abuses could visit us as we seek to develop some form of human super-race. Thus, each new report also reinforces our urgent need to examine this issue not only from a scientific perspective but also from a theological and ethical one.

Christmas chromosomes

But what does all this have to do with this article’s title about Christmas? Simply this: Christmas is when Christian human beings celebrate what they have seen . . . “His glory,” the glory of the One and Only (Greek: monogenes), who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (see John 1:14). That Greek word, monogenes, is a compound of mono for “sole, only, no other” and genes for “gene, generation.” It tells us that the only Person ever born with God’s genes was God’s one and only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Monogenes, a word with obvious genetic overtones, is a beautiful word to describe the miraculous genetics of the first Christmas. John, in his Gospel, uses it to say, “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son (monogenes!), that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life . . . Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son [monogenes!]” (John 3:16, 18).

In John’s first epistle we find it again: “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son [monogenes!] into the world that we might live through him” (1 John 4:9). Christmas is ultimately about God’s stupendous love sent down to be among us in God’s One and Only, Jesus.

The angel told Mary, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). God on High implanted His own Son in one of us named Mary! God, remaining divine, became human.

So, the first Christmas was 2,000 years ahead of modern genetic science. Gregor Mendel may be called the father of genetics, but the astounding knowledge and genetic initiative of God is beyond our abilities. Jesus, God was dramatically transformed into a human being. The uniting of the divine and the human produced a miracle. This serves to demonstrate how we might also undergo sensational changes through His power and presence. There is nothing in our lives that God through Christ’s Spirit cannot transform. He knows every temptation we experience because He, as a man, experienced them. He knows what it means to be human and to be victorious over the pain and trial of human existence. No sin and no situation is beyond His redeeming grace. He alone can transfigure sinners into saints.

Through Christ some people have undergone transformational changes that have turned the course of human history. We may think of people of antiquity like Francis of Assisi, once a reckless playboy but then a saint. There is also our contemporary, Chuck Colson, once a political hatchet man and now a great evangelist and apologist for Christ. Add to them the names of thousands upon thousands of other men and women delivered from destructive habits, corrupt living, and deep hurt. In Jesus, relationships once broken are restored. Thousands upon thousands of altered lives are models of hope for us. They show us that God can take anything negative in our lives and deliver us to conquest over it all.

Conclusion

No doubt, from the days when Brother Gregor was studying peas in the garden to the cloning of Dolly and on to this moment, humankind has made incredible strides in genetics and in the study of the secrets of human life. But the greatest genetic miracle was the incarnation of the Son of God, who in human flesh offered Himself a sacrifice for the world’s sin, and entering our dilemma, transformed us into His likeness. Whatever wonderful benefits genetics will ever bring, none can compare with that of the “Monogenes” of God being born into and dying for the sin of a fallen race.

In the Christmas chromosomes, we have a gift that will last forever.
As an attorney, I have represented church entities in many cases involving illicit sexual relationships between ministers and parishioners.

In doing this work I have noticed a similarity in the events and in the patterns of behavior that repeat themselves in these unfortunate and terribly painful lawsuits. What are some of the common factors and, more significantly, what are the best solutions in these no-win situations?

The typical scenario

The pastor is busy in the church and the community. His wife, meanwhile, may have been busy attending to her own needs, such as the pursuit of an educational degree because the children are grown and no longer require so much of her time. Or she may be preoccupied with an illness of her own. Whatever the particular specifics, the wife is spending less time with her pastor husband, and a significant, though not necessarily an obvious, emotional distance has developed in the pastoral marriage.

In his work, the pastor finds himself counseling a female parishioner who complains about her spouse. She is not appreciated by her husband, who is too busy working or too domineer-

ing or does not perform his share of the family responsibilities. She wants more from him.

In an attempt to help the woman build her self-esteem, the pastor may compliment her smile, her hair, or some other attractive physical attribute. As the counseling progresses, the pastor may also sympathize, implying that the husband could have noticed the value of his wife who deserves more attentiveness and sensitivity.

The parishioner listens and wonders why her husband does not recognize these qualities the pastor recognizes. The counseling continues, and she becomes infatuated with the pastor, valuing his sympathy and recognition of her attributes. Each session ends with prayer and also a pastoral hug. In Western society, hugging by pastors is acceptable. However, in the counseling sessions, the hugs may get a little longer and a little more affectionate. The mutual hug is, perhaps, the most physical contact either party has recently had with a member of the opposite sex.

A little touching, with slight sexual overtones, may begin, even though it
may still be seen to be within the limits of propriety. However, this tends to move further. I have discussed the issue with ministers and, to my surprise, many believe that sexual touching, even oral sex, is not adultery. This type of thinking soon culminates in visits to the parishioner's home or another place that allows the pastor and parishioner "to better discuss their concerns." They may travel in their cars to meet at these locations because the pastor claims to not have time to go to the church office. Many excuses are utilized to enable the pastor and parishioner to be alone.

Although some pastors do recognize the vulnerability of anguished parishioners and may purposely and premeditatedly take advantage of them, this is rare. Generally, the pastor is excited that someone as nice as this parishioner is attracted to him. He often does not consider the far-reaching consequences of his indiscretion.

Once they become sexually involved, both pastor and parishioner realize the wrongness of their behavior. They may try to terminate their involvement, though by this time they are physically attracted, and so the relationship continues. At this point either the parishioner and/or the pastor may, because of their guilt, disclose their activities through some comment, admission, or involuntary slip. Thus an investigation may ensue.

Ultimately, the parishioner may feel that she has been exploited and claim that damage has been done to her and her spouse. Understandably, the husband feels that the pastor should be punished. He may want revenge. A lawsuit may be initiated. The woman and husband sue the pastor, the church, and, possibly, church officials. The church may be implicated in such a lawsuit through a claim of negligent supervision of the pastor, the charge being that the church knew, or should have known, of the pastor's propensities.

Prevention
As a pastor or clergy, do you recognize yourself in any of the above stages? Are you counseling a parishioner who fits into the categories discussed above? Of course, those stages and categories are not all-inclusive (see attending box).

If you do recognize yourself in a similar situation, you should discuss the matter with your spouse, a trusted colleague, or church officer. You must acknowledge, immediately, that conditions exist that could lead to unintended indiscretions, along with unmitigated agony and loss to you, your family, your church, and of course the one with whom you are in danger of becoming involved and her family. You should attend a continuing-education class on pastoral counseling (or something similar) that will give you better insight into avoiding such a far-reaching mistake.

I have spoken with many psychologists and psychiatrists. Knowing their own vulnerabilities in these areas, they are concerned with the lack of training that pastors receive—that if received would better enable them to recognize individuals with the kinds of disorders or circumstances that make them and the pastor emotionally susceptible. Improper counseling by a pastor, especially in the inappropriate venues in which such counseling often takes place, tend to make the pastor particularly prone to indiscreet behavior. No matter how good his intentions, in all of this a pastor can end up seriously injuring a parishioner. Most often, when there is an emotional problem, the pastor can best help the parishioner by working in conjunction with a trained counselor, who would be most effective in providing the parishioner with the needed psychological counseling, while the pastor would be most effective in providing the needed spiritual and ecclesiastical counseling.

When confronted about an extra-marital relationship, pastors generally acknowledge their involvement but also tend to give a variety of excuses. What-
Going out with a bang

DENNIS CAMPBELL

When I answered the phone, it was an invitation to conduct a double funeral for an older couple. Tragically, while they had been doing errands, the husband had lost control of their car and crashed into a stone wall. They had both been killed in the accident. The couple had been members in my previous church district but had since moved to another town. The children were calling to ask me to conduct the funeral.

It was a beautiful summer morning when I arrived at the funeral home. The owner of the home was out of town; however, his daughter was on duty. Because it was a double funeral, the hall was crowded and a bit warm. The couple had lived full, healthy lives, and this fact seemed to ease the sorrow and sense of loss always felt at funerals.

Two hearses were needed to conduct the couple to the cemetery, and after the service we set out on the 80-mile journey to the cemetery. Some followed the customary procession; others who knew the way went on their own. I had conducted services before in that same cemetery, and as I got closer I was pleased to find that the busy country road had been widened and straightened extensively during my two-year absence. As I sped along enjoying the sunshine and the smooth, new pavement, I nearly missed the entrance to the rural graveyard. Braking sharply, I turned into the drive, drove up over the knoll in the front of the cemetery, and joined a few family members who were already there. As we waited under the shade of a big maple tree, I was able to revisit with family members. Although we could not see the highway from our position, we could hear the cars and trucks as they passed.

After half an hour, we heard traffic approaching, followed by a short screech of rubber and a sudden crash! Giving each other that “Oh no! It couldn’t be!” look, we dashed for the road. Topping the knoll, we saw the first hearse with its rear door smashed in! The new (borrowed) hearse was a few feet behind it. Its grill and radiator were crushed and dented, its hood was buckled like a chalet roof, and antifreeze was running down onto the new pavement! Surveying the scene was a group of thoroughly mortified morticians!

Although no one was hurt, the problem was that one hearse would not run, and the door was smashed shut on the other. We black-suited mourners ushered the family aside and pried open the door of the lead hearse with tire irons. The couple were then delivered to the graveside.

I tried to keep a straight face as I delivered my five-minute committal sermon and prayer to the not-so-serious gathering. The embarrassed morticians apologized profusely to the family but they received laughter from the grown children of the deceased couple. “Dad would have loved it,” one said. “It’s a shame he wasn’t able to enjoy it” said another. “If Dad could have planned it this way, he would have.” As we walked to our cars, one person commented, “He’s the only person I know who has gone to his grave from a car accident—twice.”

Dennis Campbell is the pastor of the Keene, New Hampshire, and Brattleboro, Vermont, Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Sexual involvement

continued from previous page

ever the circumstances, the fact remains that such discreet and sinful actions can snowball with effects far beyond the two parties sexually involved. If the pastor rationalizes the belief that sexual touching is not adultery, he needs to know that such a fatuous belief will not make much difference to his family’s hurt and embarrassment or his church’s disillusionment and its discipline of him. The pastor must recognize that sexual indiscretion, of any kind, will eventually be discovered and can very likely destroy his ministry and his personal and family life.

Churches need to be more responsible in these situations, and this means not merely transferring ministers to another church when they have been sexually involved with a parishioner. Because of the potential liability to the referring church or conference, the conference will generally terminate the pastor’s employment and, possibly, annul the ordination.

I very strongly recommend to my church clients to terminate the offending pastor and not allow him further opportunity to victimize others. There are too many good candidates for the ministry to retain or transfer a minister who has proved himself a risk.

If as a pastor you have an inclination to become sexually involved with your parishioners, get out of the ministry. Eventually you will be discovered and thus become the cause of much damage to others besides yourself. In addition, and possibly saddest of all, you will compromise your personal integrity and the trust extended to you by your church and your family.
Getting through to people

JAMES A. CRESS

Engaged in a relational worship experience with their Creator and Savior, Jesus Christ. Many others are somewhere in between.

How we say what we say can motivate our listeners to find both an enhanced anticipation of worship and also an active behavioral follow-through. But again, we will accomplish little or nothing if we don’t get our message through their preoccupation barrier.

Motivational appeals, which use words that focus on the priority motivations of your hearers, pierce the preoccupation barrier. Your message gets through to them because you are “speaking their language.” This is much easier to do if you speak to a single individual and if you know what preoccupies their attention and which of these five basic issues motivates them. More logically, however, you should conclude that any audience to whom you preach will have people present from each of these groups.

Most speakers over-rely on words and phrases which emphasize their own, personal emotional priority. However, by utilizing words, phrases, parables, illustrations, and visual aids within the same sermon that appeal to various motivational backgrounds, your presentation becomes stronger than if you relied only on those words which appeal to your own motivational orientation.

For example, it would be of little value to describe heaven as a place for intergalactic space ventures if you were speaking only to a self-preservationist. While such descriptions would appeal to a romanticist, your self-preservationist listeners would be much more encouraged and moved by texts which assure them that there will be no sickness, pain, death, or sorrow in God’s coming kingdom. Likewise, money-motivated hearers might be intrigued by streets of gold and gates of pearl, but the achievement oriented would be much more interested in opportunities to expand their intellectual pursuits or to discuss unanswered questions with their Lord.

Speaking “motivational language”

Wise speakers select a variety of approaches to appeal to various individuals in their audience and thus have greater potential for piercing the preoccupation barriers of more people.

Some have misunderstood the use of motivational appeals and concluded that if you say the right thing to the right person, you can guarantee their positive response.

I disagree with this assumption because it strikes at the very foundation of free choice. I do believe, however, that if you say the right thing to the right person, you can guarantee that they will hear you. Why? Because you are “speaking their language.”

I recently experienced this reality in a large crowd of individuals who were all speaking another language. Suddenly my ear tuned to one person, a stranger, who was speaking English. That individual’s voice was no louder or more distinct than anyone else in the crowd, but I “heard” them because, literally, they were “speaking my language.”

Just as Jesus told the parable of the sower whose seed was distributed on various types of ground which represented various spiritual attitudes and response readiness, so our preaching will more effectively communicate what we intend to say if we pierce the preoccupation barrier of our listeners by employing a variety of motivational appeals.

Very individuall we associate with is surrounded by issues or activities that preoccupy their thoughts and prevent our communication from getting through. Such issues may include work, health, study, family problems, entertainment, sports, or “the cares of this world.”

In an earlier Pastor’s Pastor we noted that humans respond to five basic motivations: money, recognition, self-preservation, romance, and achievement.

How our motivations function

All of us have each of these basic motivations present in our daily lives to a greater or lesser extent, with one typically dominant. A crisis may shift our priority, but afterwards we will tend to revert back to our basic mode.

For example, if we are all together on a sinking ship, the romance-motivated individual would not exclaim, “Whee! What an exciting new experience!” That person would immediately shift their priority from romance to self-preservation. But after the ship’s passengers are rescued and safely delivered to port, the romance-motivated person will revert to being primarily moved by the new and exciting, expanding the severity of the trauma at sea into a tale of grand adventure and imminent near-death.

After rescue, money-motivated passengers will calculate the financial reward a lawsuit against the ship’s owners might bring. Self-preservationists will vow never to travel by ship again.

What motivates the average listener

What motivates the various attendees at your worship services? No doubt some show up just from force of habit. Others are truly engaged in a relational worship experience with their Creator and Savior, Jesus Christ. Many others are somewhere in between.

How we say what we say can motivate our listeners to find both an enhanced anticipation of worship and also an active behavioral follow-through. But again, we will accomplish little or nothing if we don’t get our message through their preoccupation barrier.

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Divorce  continued from p. 4

one or the other of the couple, the opinions of significant local and corporate church leaders, the potential negative effect the divorce may have in my congregation and on my ministry and the fires of congregational controversy I might have to fight.

That is, I have been more concerned about those realities than I have about the agony of the divorcing couple themselves, the rending disorientation of children who may be involved, the bewildering death of love even while love lingers, the excruciating fear of the present and the future, the guilt, the palpable sense of personal failure and the literally awful sensation of loss and aloneness that almost inevitably comes with divorce, which is all too often crowned by the rejection and destructive judgment of fellow church members and others. And this, of course, covers only a part of what a divorcing person faces.

The question is, What is our ruling attitude and objective as pastors, when we deal with families who are going through divorce? I find it impossible to believe that I should become so concerned about what I will call necessary ecclesiastical and theological considerations, that I all but forget the absolutely essential human, Christian, and pastoral realities that cry out to my soul in divorce situations. Am I first of all a “churchman” or am I a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Ideas on visitation

From my 38 years of experience in pastoral visitation in two parishes, I can say that visitation in 1999 is quite different from the past. Today visitation demands appointments because of multi-functional life of family members. A great frustration is the visit to shut-ins (those who claim they are unable to attend church) only to find out that he or she is at the hairdresser, a party, the doctor’s office or visiting a friend.

True, visitation is most important in pastoral care. I ask every new person or family joining the church to reserve an evening for a visit from the pastor. I inform the people that pastoral care is available to them when needed. Many parishioners today do not care to take time for a pastoral visitation in their home. Yet they do want to have a sure feeling that their pastor is a caring person who is available when needed. Every visit should have a specific purpose; otherwise the pastor is not using his or her time wisely. Meaningful visits in the home may include: new members, off to college, illness, newly married, family reunions, new home, graduations, etc. Visitations make possible a caring pastoral ministry.

—Peter Mealwitz, Grace Lutheran Church, Elyria, Ohio.

Ministry for senior singles

An idea we have found very effective is the use of a contact person for all our senior singles. We endeavor to have the name of a neighbor, friend or family member, on the entry of each single, even those over fifty. Our pastoral care members watch each married, family reunions, new home, graduations, etc. Visitations make possible a caring pastoral ministry.

—Peter Mealwitz, Grace Lutheran Church, Elyria, Ohio.

Memorial Day Sabbath

This year for Memorial Day Sabbath we included as a bulletin insert the names of all church members who had died since I came as pastor ten years ago. (I was shocked at the number: 45)! Then we purchased one long stem red rose for each and placed them in individual vases as a floral display on our communion table in front of the pulpit.

At the close of my message “Manna for Mourners” based on the beatitude “Blessed Are They That Mourn,” I simply read the names while the organist played an appropriate hymn and concluded with the benediction.

The congregational response indicated great appreciation.

—Charles Mitchel, Palm Springs Seventh-day Adventist Church, Palm Springs, California.
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