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MY EVENTUAL ESCAPE FROM THIS SELF-DESTROYING PIT . . .
AROSE OUT OF TOTAL DESPERATION AND SELF-LOATHING.
I FULLY ADMITTED MY HELPLESSNESS AND PAIN, AND
AGONIZED AND STRUGGLED AND WRESTLED WITH GOD

For the past months, Ministry has been printing articles on sexual impurity. I was especially moved by the “Open Letter From a Struggling Pastor,” regarding his addiction to pornography. It was honest, true to real life, and very, very painful because it all too accurately described my situation for over 20 years in the ministry.

It is still painful to remember the guilt feelings and loss of self-worth that accompanied the disparity between my profession and my practice, not to mention the need to keep secrets from my trusting and faithful wife. It became an ongoing struggle to neatly compartmentalize my life into two spheres: the shepherd of the flock, soul winner, conservative lifestyle, loving husband, and in the other compartment, a fantasy world of lustful desires and images.

I found that in the classic struggle of Romans 7, it was always the evil which I would not do that I ended up doing, because of “another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind.”

My eventual escape from this self-destroying pit of sin did not result from any courageous stand I made, or any kind of self-help or self-esteem programs. It arose out of total desperation and self-loathing. I fully admitted my helplessness and pain, and agonized and struggled and wrestled with God over one issue, “Lord, make me willing to be willing.” When finally I was really willing to burn all the bridges to the past, alluring fantasy life (and it really felt like plucking out my eye), I asked God to work a miracle in my weakened, debilitated will and willpower. It didn’t happen overnight, and God didn’t remove the desires from me, but there was a change. God began rebuilding the pathways of my mind, and only by His strength could I walk past certain magazines and books.

From the perspective of several years later, it is like the difference between an exhilarating mountaintop and a smoky swamp. It still takes regular prayer and watchfulness, but our God is still able to perform miracles of healing and restoration. He even helped me to be completely honest with my wife. Let us give Him a chance, by our choice to surrender our most “darling sins” to His mighty power.

A very practical book dealing with this problem is Every Man’s Battle, by Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker, published by Waterbrook Press. It is available through Amazing Facts.

—From “a humbled and repentant pastor.”

As I read the “Open Letter From a Struggling Pastor” (August 2004), I was thrilled with your willingness to be open and honest and print it. This is a very real issue in our church with both the pastors and laity. I believe that it is one of the biggest ways the enemy of souls is attempting to take down God’s church. While it is a huge issue, it is not an unbeatable one. We serve a God who is bigger than immorality.

I am a pastor and my wife a counselor. Together we have begun a new ministry in our conference working to help couples restore their marriages. The materials were developed by a Baptist pastor in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He was overwhelmed with struggles members of his church were facing in the area of divorce and marital issues. He prayed, asking God to show him how to help them. I believe the material he developed is inspired.

While this material is not directed specifically at the pornography issue, pornography is one of the major barriers to a close marriage. To date this year (2004) we have worked with 21 couples or singles. Only a small percentage of them have not had pornography as an issue to deal with.

The type of counseling that we do is totally different than the normal psychological counseling that one would get in a normal counselors office. It is biblical, and most of it is done in prayer allowing Jesus to do the revealing and healing. It is not done over an extended time period. We usually take a couple for four days in a row and spend approximately four hours with them each day. This might seem a major investment of time, but if you consider how much time we as pastors spend in little chucks attempting to mend homes, it is well worth it. The real dividends are paid when you see a couple in church, who, a week before, were ready to divorce, now sitting with their arms around each other basking in an

continued on page 30

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March 2005

MINISTRY
How much has he actually changed his mind?

British philosopher, Oxford professor, and former leading apologist for atheism Anthony Flew probably regrets having announced his change of mind. I say this because the news that he has sacked his high-profile and long-standing atheistic views to embrace the idea of some kind of being acting behind the origin of life and cosmos, may be driving traditional Christians to triumph more than the situation actually merits.

Unfortunately, Flew’s realization, at age 81, that an intelligent purposeful god of some sort has acted and is acting in the universe is, as all his previous views have been, based upon scientific observation and, of course, philosophical postulation. The truth is that in this Flew is not far distant from many contemporary religious thinkers who, perhaps without actually meaning to, end up attempting to establish the existence and creatorship of God through basically the same means; a means that has its place, but not exclusive of divine revelation.

Consistent with this, what’s most interesting to me about Anthony Flew’s experience is that the evidence that seems to have been most influential in nudging his change from atheism to a species of theism goes something like this: The highly organized complexity of the DNA configurations needed to engender human life, as they are observed on this planet, seem to demand the presence of an intelligent designer who also possesses the power to bring his designs into being. (For more information on Flew, do an Internet search on Google using the key name “Anthony Flew.”)

To those who have come to trust in the reality of divine revelation, it is rather obvious that human beings, unaided by such revelation, do not have—and by the nature of things certainly will never have—sufficient perspective, insight, and thus interpretive skill to be able to conclusively trust their take on issues like the origin of cosmic being and consciousness, even if they use their most sophisticated ways of observing and thinking.

We have repeatedly seen the most plausible ways of explaining reality proved wrong, and we’ve seen too many changes of mind not to know that there must be other better ways of “knowing.”

We’ve come to realize that what is known is obviously so partial and continues to be so incomplete that, given the complexity of the universe, and the fact that “Someone” intelligent and purposeful must have been in existence to design and create it, it is the highest privilege of humans to somehow come into communication with this Someone.

The truth is that the struggles of Anthony Flew are, to one degree or another, the struggles of all who have felt the tug of our science and matter-dominated age.

As many Seventh-day Adventists know, during the last three years especially, representatives from the church’s scientific, educational, and administrative circles have met to wrestle with the issues that recent naturalistic, scientific thought have brought to bear upon Christian faith.

It was not the purpose of these councils (three international conferences in the United States and a number of other more localized meetings around the globe) to change our minds about the foundational givens of a more literal, biblical, creationist faith. However, the need has increasingly been felt for a round-table dialogue that would help to clarify issues and bring into a more penetrating light what we and our community of faith are in fact facing, and how we might better relate to such challenges among ourselves, especially in our educational institutions and local churches.

In this Ministry issue, we are beginning to give a comprehensive report on the results of this dialogue. You will notice on page 1.5 the transcript of a welcoming and summative speech given by Church General Vice President Lowell Cooper at the outset of the third and final international conference in Denver, Colorado, last August. Dr. Cooper ably handled the challenge of coordinating this complex dialogue process.

In this issue, you will also see largely untouched transcripts of two related actions, growing out of the three conferences, taken by appropriate Church bodies (pages 19 and 21).

Most significantly, during the next year or more, Ministry will be publishing, at the rate of at least one article per month, edited versions of some of the papers that were presented at the three international conferences, and some that were presented at the other venues. While these article-papers will be almost exclusively representative of the official positions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on the issue of origins, they will be highly informative and helpful in facing the challenges that any pastor may encounter these days in his or her ministry.

Willmore D. Eva

March 2005
Pastor and physician: prescription for effective team ministry

He was 65 years old. Decades of smoking left him with laryngeal cancer. A laryngectomy ensued, destroying his ability to speak. The plastic amplifier managed to translate guttural rumblings into intelligible sounds. But the cancer had recurred and, in its relentless march, had surrounded and invaded the esophagus, making swallowing impossible. We inserted a feeding tube into the stomach via the abdomen, and attempted to provide adequate nutrition.

As days went by, the physical deterioration was obvious; analgesic requirements increased, but the pain seemed invincible. Each morning I would walk to the surgical wards with the nihilistic hope that I would find an empty bed with a message from the night staff that the patient had "peacefully passed away." As day after day passed, I—an impressionable, idealistic, and exuberant young intern—was beginning to painfully learn the limitations of modern medicine.

After rounds one day, I returned to the bedside and drew the curtains. The desperate look of pleading in my patient’s eyes was punctuated by pathetic grunts. With trepidation, I asked: "Is there something unresolved that’s worrying you?"

The steel-blue eyes brimmed with tears as he communicated his unreadiness to die and his unresolved battle with guilt and fear. I shared the simple steps of confession, forgiveness, acceptance of Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, and salvation which is full and free. We wept, and together prayed.

His physical pain dissipated; he fell asleep for the first time in days. Six hours later, he was dead.

What he really needed


A recent article in the Journal of the American College of Surgeons enunciated the need of caregivers to empathize with the dying patient.1 Apart from the needed therapy related to diagnosis, there should also be careful attention to listening, understanding, and helping.

Are physicians equipped to handle these aspects of wholistic patient care? It has been insightfully suggested that “empathy can and should be the end and the beginning for all who care for the dying.” In the struggle with the clock, increasing patient loads and increasingly regulated medical practice environments, is there help in these things for the physician? Is there a pattern, an example?

Of course. “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’”2

Physicians and clergy working together

Certainly, physicians by themselves can apply spiritual principles in healing and treating, but a blended ministry approach can further empower such a ministry through the physician’s close cooperation with clergy.

The biblical commission reflects a blended ministry: “And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sickness, and to cast out devils” (Mark 3:14, 15). Similarly, combined ministry is referred to in Luke 9:2: “And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.”

We so readily become absorbed by the depth of the world’s need! It is a given that, in the helping professions, it is difficult to limit the number of parishioners helped, or for that matter, the number of patients seen.
We need to guard against the trap of living up to the adulations describing how hard we work, or that people simply cannot cope without our help or service. It is important to be appreciated, but equally important not to rise to the bait of ego-boosting, which pushes us further into the vortex of overcommitment, burnout, and thus poor service.

The blended ministry approach may offer some solution to the paradox of the need for total commitment in service, and the much-neglected ingredient of balance.

Establishing doctor-minister partnerships

Establishing working partnerships is important, and a proven partnership is that of the physician-pastor team. This cooperation represents a formidable influence, both inside and outside of the church.

There are the time-honored ways in which this team has functioned in the past, which include lifestyle interventions and initiatives.

Specific avenues that can benefit from the input of a dedicated physician include weight and stress management programs. Smoking cessation programs enjoy increased credibility when health professionals participate.

Christian physicians are able, and often equipped, to participate in education and prevention thrusts relating to alcohol, tobacco, and drug use. Physicians can support Women's Ministries by presenting on women's health issues; nutrition and risk factor modification programs can be meaningfully enhanced by the input of physicians. These are all initiatives that can be of benefit both to the local congregation and to the community (both in-reach and out-reach).

While traveling on the west coast of the United States, I had the wonderful experience of meeting firsthand with various physician-pastor teams. All these groups shared one very obvious characteristic: an effervescent esprit de corps and an unashamed zeal to serve Christ.

Some conversions to Christ resulting from these partnerships had been triggered by the patient asking to be referred to a minister, not to any minister, but the specific minister who worked with their physician. Often this interest and request had been initiated by a prayer offered by the physician at the sickbed before surgery, or a kind word instead of abruptness when called in the middle of the night.

An important team ingredient

An important ingredient for the successful functioning of the pastor-physician team is an open communication between team members.

The agenda needs to be clear, the objectives defined. Under these circumstances, physicians and pastors will regard each other not as threats but as allies. As talents and abilities are blended and multiplied, the results can be astounding.

In the two churches we have had the privilege of serving, we have teamed up into a blended ministry pastoral team with results and blessings which can be attributed only to God. We witnessed spiritual growth in the Sabbath School, prayer meeting, and church attendance.

In the one church, a blended ministry program had been in place for more than twenty years. We saw a substantial growth in church membership as well as acceptance of our church in the community. A second church was established in the area over this time period. Prejudice had earlier been rampant there. It had fostered to the point that, for 15 years, permission to obtain a second church site had consistently been refused.

The blended ministry program and a Christian medical practice helped break down prejudice. Not only was there growth in the church and the stature of the pastoral-physician team, but a steady and consistent Christian influence was felt in the entire community. This resulted in invitations to fill the pulpits of other denominations on occasion, and to counsel and pray positively with local leaders and community decision-makers.

There is another important aspect to the physician-pastor team approach: The physician is drawn into an integral role in soul winning as well as discipleship. At the same time, the subtle (and sometimes not-so-subtle) distractions of busy clinical life can be kept at bay.

An important key to sustained and productive church attendance is knowing that you belong and are useful. This in turn encourages a renewed striving to find ongoing personal spiritual growth, something both physicians and pastors need!

The expressed need for spiritual direction when dying

In his article titled "The Spiritual Needs of the Dying Patient," Daniel Hinshaw has described the renewed need people are sensing and expressing when it comes to reclaiming and reasserting the spiritual dimension in the face of death. He then elegantly discusses the various aspects of the spiritual needs of the dying patient and their family. There is a need to recognize the spiritual suffering and then to alleviate it.

In doing this, Hinshaw asserts that one of the tools is the taking of a spiritual history, which includes the question: Do you have a faith? He goes on to say that central to this approach is having and showing respect for the patient's values, autonomy, and vulnerability, and making referrals to chaplains or spiritual directors when appropriate and with the consent of the patient. Perhaps the most important principle for the caregiver is to know himself or herself: "You can't address a patient's spirituality until you address your own."3

The care of the dying patient can be enhanced by an appropriate and sensitive cooperation between physician and clergy. Prognosis can temper expectation, and the cooperation between pastoral and physician caregivers can facilitate the complex process of terminal care.

The minister is uniquely equipped continued on page 29
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Another effective resource from
Corporately facing up to sexual infidelity

Editorial note: This is the final installment of Ministry’s eight-part series dealing with pastoral sexual infidelity, that began in January 2004.

When I was 13, news of adultery in my native village church hit me with herculean force. I wondered what it meant to be a member of a Bible believing church. All my arguments for Christianity vanished as my fellow villagers taunted me, saying that my religion could not create better citizens than could the secular Communist society in which we lived. The question presented itself with compelling force: Is there any hope for marriage here on this earth?

Today, as we look at the increasing trend of sexual infidelity inside the church and among its ministers, the same questions of identity, relevance, and hope for the church, its ministry, and Christian marriage face us. Perhaps our young people face it even more pointedly than those of us with a few more years of life under our belts.

In this essay we ask: What kind of church would it take to stave off immoral behavior and make faithfulness and purity in relationships an attractive reality? What corporate self-concept, what level of intimacy with God and His Word would yield a community that began in January 2004. When did sexual infidelity begin to be a problem in the history of the church? We could go back to the Bible and find many examples. The last time I checked, the book of Judges had about 30 different individuals who committed adultery. Joseph had to stand up to his master’s sexual demands. But from the time of Joshua and Judges until the book of Amos, the Bible does not speak of any specific instances of adultery. Then we get to the book of Amos, where he says, “Are you not to know that I the Lord am he? I have stretched out the heavens, I have spread them out like a tent-cloth and spread them over all the earth” (Amos 4:2). It is clear that God is not satisfied with mere appearance or legalisticness in relationship to His people. He desires a totally faithful people, and that means that a totally faithful church.

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In the world

The truth is that in a very important sense, Christians are not yet home, and this is of capital importance to us. In the words of Jesus, His disciples “are in the world” (John 17:11) but “not of the world” (verse 14). Unsettled and without sovereign borders, they, though united as one body, live geographically scattered throughout the world where they do not belong (John 18:36). While living with their neighbors, they are called upon not to live just like them. They are called to be “strangers and exiles on the earth” (Heb. 11:13, RSV). In this environment, infidelity is openly promoted, rather than sexual fidelity in marriage. Here is how this promotion presents itself:

1. The centrality of the individual. The church is plunged into a society of disconnected individuals. It is not as much the proverbial village that raises a child as it is television, the internet, or the street. This is the outcome of the long march of history.

Starting with humanism in the Renaissance, aided by the corruption of the Reformation’s stress on the individual’s direct access to God, through the affirmation of the primacy of reason in the Enlightenment, and finally the personal, political, and economic freedoms that have evolved in Western democracies, we come today to the postmodern radical individualism where self is the center and its own authority.

Accordingly, all institutions, including marriage, are here to serve “me.” My priorities, my aims, my methods, my needs must be satisfied. Personal preferences are the standard when it comes to deciding what is right. Personal experiences are the standard of what is real, and personal desires are the touchstone for what is best.

In such a climate, if my priorities, aims, or needs are not met, staying married makes no sense. If the contrary is the case, and you cater to my needs, only then are you seen to love me, only then are you worth being loved in return. The one-flesh union, the “until death do us part,” the “forsaking all and keeping yourself only for her” are retro categories today. This same self-centeredness and all that goes with it are part and parcel of the minister’s adultery too.

2. The individual as the creator of truth. One basic difference between the individualism of the seventeenth century and the modernism of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is the issue of truth. Truth is not out there anymore in quite the way it used to be. It is not an objective locus, exercising influence and convicting human minds and hearts. Truth is not to be discovered, it must be created; it is not to be heard but intuited. And the difference is enormous.

“People who discover truth and people who create truth think and behave in quite different ways. Logically, truth makers are bound by their own rules.”

And because human opinion fluctuates, so will rules of conduct and commitments, including our marital vows. Thus they are made vulnerable and remain unprotected from the hazard of morphs and mutations.

Competition and friction between truth makers is to be expected, and divorces can be avoided only by some kind of carefully designed “loose” relationship. Hence, for instance, the popularity of the custom of cohabitation. This kind of “truth making” is also a key ingredient when it comes to sexual infidelity.
3. An incredible burden. But life is no easier now than it used to be. The radical freedom of this radical individualism yields radical aloneness. The fair-weather spouse is not there when you’re under the weather. He and she have their own needs to tend to, and if the partner cannot meet them, then they are free to look elsewhere for someone who will.

Vulnerable and insecure to the core, the contemporary Adam rejects the expert diagnosis, “It is not good for man to be alone” (Gen. 2:18). He is too obsessed with self to fully trade his freedom for one-flesh unity.

But there is yet another burden: responsibility without accountability. The idea of arbitrating between different versions of truth, life aims, priorities, and allegiances may seem great until someone else’s truths, aims, priorities, and allegiances cross or cancel yours and there is no one to appeal to, because neither partner in the partnership is accountable to anyone.

Even at the height of an affair, the incredible burdens of aloneness, vulnerability, and liability terrorize the human mind, perhaps especially that of the adulterous pastor.

4. Sex overload. One profound and continuing element amidst all this shifting of self-centered subjectivism is sex. It is charged with the task of helping men and women discover and develop themselves. Unrestrained gratification without consequences has always been an irresistible temptation, but today it is a culturally sanctioned norm.

In this context the very idea of betrayal is meaningless. Mathews and Hubbard describe the situation in this way: “Sexuality is separated from relationship; a sexual act can be separated from its content and consequences. Sex is only sex; it is emotional candy; it is a body-based ‘natural’ adrenaline high; it is comfort—it helps me make it through the night.’ . . . Sexual expression is biologically justified; whatever my body finds pleasurable and gratifying is morally acceptable.”

The trouble is, unbridled sex is addictive, not liberating. One recovered pastor confesses: “This is about life and death. The only way I could live another day was to be in an inappropriate sexual relationship. . . . My addiction was destructive to my health, and my marriage, and my career. My addiction gave me many dreadful days. It also kept my heart beating until I found recovery.”

5. Replacement toys. Unable to find true answers to their plight, postmodern men and women grasp for the virtual toys offered by our consumer culture. “Television provides what is in effect a virtual community, one that people may enter without effort, commitment, or risk and leave without being missed or grieved.”

Soaps and sitcoms talk to us, make us laugh and cry. In absence of a deep marital love and intimacy, virtual chat rooms, interactive Web sites, and Internet pornography provide a virtual community replete with sex, or something like it.

But this cannot do either. Lonely, burdened, insecure, and addicted to self, many men and women opt for dope or other more desperate measures. Without lifelong belonging, human identity is deconstructed and dissipated.

Not of the world

God alone has the means to heal and keep our marriage unions safe in a society of disconnected individuals.

1. An integrated community. God has called us out (1 Cor. 1:2), as an assembly (James 2:2), a household (1 Tim. 3:15), and a people for Himself (Rom. 9:25, 26). What is our task? It is to manifest what the power and saving grace of Jesus can do to men and women. In His love for the world God did not spare His Son, nor His church as an integrated community; He placed them here so that self-centered individualists have a chance of belonging. Belonging in two ways.

First, interpersonally. Just like an organ in a body is joined to another by blood vessels, nerves, connecting tissue, and joints, “So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (Rom. 12:5, RSV, italics added). I cannot mind my own business without affecting your
business, because I as an individual am part of your business.

Second, corporately. Each person belongs to the whole body of Christ. My speaking, touching, and fantasizing affects you, and the entire body. “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Cor. 12:12-27). What I do under the cloak of night impacts my church. How I treat my spouse or my church organist in private is the church’s business: Both of us are “individually members of it [Christ’s body].”

Today’s church must act responsibly as an integrated community in spite of the discomfort and vehement opposition of some of its postmodern members.

2. A disciplined community. Because of this organic closeness, someone will sense when I’m tempted, unless one or neither of us are really members of each other. Church will be a more secure environment for our sexuality and our marriages when God’s will, not our personal needs, guide our conduct; when we take seriously our responsibility for others and the entire body; when we’re willing to risk sharing with our spouse, and a friend of the same gender enough.

Consequently, our deficiencies, our weaknesses, outlooks, reactions, and vulnerabilities will be gender specific. These idiosyncrasies are our God-given right. It is not a matter of majority rule, nor is it dependent on who holds the reins of power.

My church can help prevent adultery when, as a part of its ministry, it provides an aggressive and thorough Christian formation about gender identity and relations by including: (a) information about our own sexuality, and about myths and stereotypes; (b) the opportunity to learn about the other gender and their unique characteristics; (c) an energetic and studied affirmation of biblical teachings about safe maleness and femaleness countering popular distortions; (d) premartial counseling that is adapted to every stage of life. Two or three brief sessions during the month or two before the wedding is merely a formality; it’s not enough.

Christian parents must know that children learn what a husband, a wife, and a marriage actually are through the daily interactions that pass between parents. It is the church’s privilege to positively influence the content of those lessons. A more intentional instruction about marriage, about sex and sexual identity, is essential during the most sensitive and most opportune time of puberty. A safe church will nurture marriage and home life, being “insistent in season and out of season” (2 Tim. 4:2) just like the media is, only better!

4. An obedient community. Business as usual means more and more scandal and less and less reason for people in the surrounding culture to join the church. But the church is called to do her Master’s bidding.

During seminars on the “Ethics of Church Discipline” I am often asked: “When did you last hear of any church being involved in church discipline?” (Meaning: “No one does it, so this is not an issue anymore.”)

The implications of such a question are serious indeed. First, it implies that no church engages in disciplining its members, even though that is not true. It also indicates that the internal, informal culture of the church (tradition) has become normative. It means that because some churches are indifferent to the pain and despair of those who are in the grips of sin, God, too, must be unconcerned.

When Paul urged us not to “conform” to this “age” (world), but to “be transformed,” he did not refer only to the world outside the church. “This age” (aion) is inside as well. Tares will always be inside, even to the moment
of the eschaton. But should the tares become the standard?

Notice the paradigmatic shift in the new way some thought leaders do their thinking. In the name of relevancy they begin from the situation in the world that they want to address. Inadvertently, perhaps, they adopt the frames of mind and presuppositions that operate in the surrounding world culture and thus transform theology to make it contextually inoffensive.

But such inoffensive theology risks being ineffective too. The prophetic tradition of the Bible teaches us to start from biblical/theological presuppositions and then confront the social issues with God’s Word, yet in a culturally sensitive manner. Our beliefs and our identity must challenge postmodern criticism and postmodern presuppositions, precisely because of relevancy. We must trust God’s Word. Our mission will not be irrelevant when we stay within the biblical hermeneutical paradigm.

5. A transformational community. The church is called to be a change agent—the salt, and the light within its own walls—before it can impact the world. If we wish to become a community that can guarantee safety for our marriages, we must become known as a people who invest time, energy, talent, and means for the task.

Christian marriage is not perfect because a Christian man and woman join in holy matrimony. Weddings are beginnings. Marriage is the place where saints-in-process open themselves, as in no other context, to another trusted, “madly-in-love-with-you” person, whose destiny is intertwined with our own.

Spouses need the church as a home. Society is too disconnected. Inside the church their tensions, fears of estrangement, doubts, jealousies, temptations are shared with trusted brothers and sisters, who will not rest until the issues are solved. The church must be different from the world, and intentionally so.

6. A community of resident aliens. But is this thing about a different church realistic? Can such a community ever see the light of day? Who is willing to care as deeply, to be as involved in the traumas of others? Don’t we all have enough struggles of our own?

Then too, who is willing to let others come this close into our very private chambers anyway? Am I dreaming? No, but here is Jesus’ dream: He wants His church to be without wrinkle, holy and spotless.

With this goal in view He sends us to those of our community who privately mourn our marital failures, who are terrified to share our dreadful secrets, those whose hearts are like “unwanted aliens” just coping to survive. He is aware of children of sexual infidelity whose capacity to love deeply and trust their spouses is all but gone.

Some of them have asked me some agonizing questions: “Is it worth it to fall in love and marry someone and then live in constant fear of divorce? Believe me, I know what my parents went through. Where can I go to get rid of this anxiety, this distrust of myself and this doubt about marriage?” What can we answer? Where do we send them? And where do we send a pastor or his wife?

7. A community of spiritual resources. We must first point people to Jesus Christ Himself. No one can accomplish what a close walk with Him and His direct influence can accomplish. No one contends for us like Michael, our Prince (Dan. 10:21). We are privileged to invite people into closer contact with His church. There they can connect with people of all ages, all levels of education and experience.

Paul is aware of the richness of these resources in the church, and he urges Timothy and Titus to engage everyone in some form of service (1 Tim. 3; 4; Titus 2:1-15; 3:1-11). This is why spiritual gifts are given. Marriage enrichment seminars, for example, teach skills such as communication, conflict resolution, and sexual responsiveness. Our marriages must stay in connection with their home, which is the church, the body of Christ.

But in the case of an actual affair, or adultery, so much more is needed. Spiritual resources such as prayer, fasting, solitude, meditation in God’s Word, forgiveness, confession, and worship are needed to survive such ultimate trials. If these habits do not exist, we become vulnerable and weak without knowing it.

There are also para-church organizations that provide highly professional help to victims of pastoral sexual abuse. See box above for a partial list of Web sites and addresses.

To summarize, a Christian marriage, with its unique characteristics, must be lived “in the world,” but it must not be “of the world” that promotes self-gratification and self-centered individualism. The Christian church is challenged to construct a community that will give proper support to godly marriages and homes.

“Men and women can reach God’s ideal for them if they will take Christ as their helper. What human wisdom cannot do, His grace will accomplish for those who give themselves to Him in loving trust. His providence can unite hearts in bonds that are of heavenly continued on page 30
A re-fellowshipping* process for the morally fallen: 
an administrative approach

Editorial note: During the past year, several articles and editorials have appeared in Ministry dealing with sexual wrongdoing by Christian ministers. Another of these, titled “Corporately Facing Up to Sexual Infidelity,” appears on page 8 of this issue and is written by Miroslav Kis. This article may be seen as both complementary and alternative to some of what Ministry has recently published. Neither Dr. Birch nor Dr. Kis have been privy to one another’s work when it comes to the articles by them that appear in this issue of Ministry.

Within three months of my first assignment as a conference president, the phone rang and I received news that every church leader dreads. A church elder informed me that a young woman claimed that she had become sexually involved with her pastor and needed help.

I was devastated. The pastor and I had been college mates, members of the same graduating class, colleagues in ministry. When I confronted him, he admitted his wrongdoing and resigned from ministry. Within days, his marriage disintegrated. His wife felt betrayed and his children were bewildered. The church family was in a state of mourning and confusion, not to mention the struggles through which the young woman was passing.

I was inexperienced, deeply pained, and broken. This man and his family were my friends. I shall never forget the hurt of that experience.

How does a church leader relate responsibly and graciously to all affected by a catastrophe of this magnitude?

Church policy

The Working Policy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists defines the administrative process that applies once a minister experiences a moral fall.¹ The Church Manual defines the disciplinary process that applies to dealing with all members who are guilty of this kind of wrongful behavior.² The preponderance of material and the tone in these statements would appear to safeguard the reputation and credibility of the church.

Certainly, the church must protect her image. Yet, while the church takes steps to protect her reputation by disassociating herself from the sin of her wayward children, should she not also take commensurate steps to sincerely demonstrate her compassionate motherly image in behalf of the wrongdoers at the same time?

One notable statement in the Church Manual points us in the direction of where this article is heading: “If a member falls into sin, sincere efforts must be made for reclamation. If the erring one repents and submits to Christ’s discipline, he is to be given another trial. And even if he does not repent, even if he stands outside the church, God’s servants still have a work to do for him. They are to seek earnestly to win him to repentance. And, however aggravated may have been his offense, if he yields to the striving of the Holy Spirit and, by confessing and forsaking his sin, gives evidence of repentance, he is to be forgiven and welcomed to the fold again. His brethren are to encourage him in the right way, treating him as they would wish to be treated were they in his place, considering themselves lest they also be tempted.”³

A recovery process

What is the typical climate associated with the conversation that a conference president or church leader has with a pastor who experiences a moral fall? Obviously, it’s always awkward and quite tense. Every pastor who finds himself (or herself) in this situation will be acquainted with the church’s position on moral failures. The discussion typically cen-
ters around a review of administrative matters, resignation implications, ordination credentials, family issues, remuneration, and so forth.

Yet the wrongdoer’s emotions, judgment, guilt, losses, are also frantically at play at this moment. He’s most likely rationalized by now that in God’s sight he’s forgiven. He believes, hopes, maybe expects that the church will take the same position and reinstate him. The wise church leader will very sensitively journey with the wrongdoer through this emotionally charged terrain.

Here, I suggest, is where the president or church leader needs to inject into the conversation the tone and intent of the church manual’s appeal as stated earlier. The suggested tenor for such a conversation may go something like this:

“Joe, let me now share with you what I, and the church, would like to do with and for you: We’d like to help you find your feet again as soon as possible. I want to ask you to please work with us to let the Holy Spirit put wind back in your sails again. I’m talking about how the church can support you and your family through this crisis. Joe, I want to appeal to you to submit yourself to the authority of the Holy Spirit and the church as we make a spiritual journey together at the end of which we may all be winners…”

The president or church leader then proceeds to outline an intentionally participative process involving the fallen brother and the church. Each has an important part to play. The end goal shall be to achieve the spiritual recovery of the wrongdoer. The process will be positive and cooperative, aimed at achieving forgiveness, and lead to the wrongdoer’s rehabilitation in the community. The road map outlining this process will take time to traverse, and include the following, which are not necessarily listed in order:

♦ A mutually agreed upon statement to the church about the pastor’s resignation. The statement will include some reference to an ongoing participative process that has been agreed upon by the conference leaders, the local church, and the fallen minister aimed at his and the family’s rehabilitation in the community

♦ The establishment of a mutually agreed upon accountability team who will immediately start working with the fallen pastor, and their times of meeting

♦ A willingness to submit to the authority of the Holy Spirit and the church, including voluntary censure while the process is taking place

♦ Commitment to truth-telling and nondeception

♦ The identification and removal of attitudinal barriers (facing people; nonwithdrawal from the church)

♦ Pastoral care meetings with the spouse and family to work through their mutual pain

♦ Formal counseling that is made available for a period of time

♦ Prayerful care and coaching about the need and benefits of repentance, confession to the involved and injured parties, receiving God’s forgiveness, the church’s forgiveness, and self-forgiveness

♦ Relating to the church family—withdrawal from leadership roles; facing criticism, innuendos

♦ Consideration about relocating to another area, if desirable

♦ Retooling or training for different employment

♦ Rehabilitation in the family and the church

The fallen brother will almost certainly struggle upon first hearing about the process. Of course, it may not be necessary or helpful to outline the entire process initially, but only the broad strokes. He will need time to reflect on the invitation to undertake the journey, and may be given a specified time to think about it. An early time should be set when to meet again.

At the time of this meeting, the invitation to take the prescribed journey needs to be presented again and the benefits of entering into the proposed process. At this time the pastor needs to be assured that he is valued, notwithstanding the seriousness of his mistake. He needs to feel drawn into the arms of both the corporate and the local congregation. He must not be allowed to escape. This is a critical moment!

What if he stiffens, as is often the case, against your embrace? The conference’s refusal to reinstate him in ministry despite his apology may be interpreted as harshness and indifference. His rationalizations and self-justification may inhibit the relationship you’re trying to maintain with him. He may try to make it impossible for anyone to connect with him, even cutting off all means of communication via conversation, telephone, or email.

Such actions call for persistent and ongoing attempts to communicate with the offender. Our Lord insists that we cannot cast him aside.

It behooves every Christian leader, even in this kind of setting, to follow the counsel of Jesus, which clearly calls for persistence when dealing with someone who has sinned: “Go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along . . . If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector” (Matt. 18:15-17, NIV). Had Jesus been heeded more in the church, how many fallen brothers might still have shared our community life?

The foregoing presupposes that thorough prior study would already have been given to the process as proposed before implementation. The mere application of the Working Policy in relation to the morally fallen, even when undertaken in the kindest manner possible, too often simply dispatches them into oblivion.

Personally, I would like to see a spiritually redemptive process, fully studied, shaped, and published as the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s for-
When is restoration achieved?

Assuming that an accountability process akin to the above proposal has been implemented, when, or how, may we be confident that the goals of heartfelt repentance, forgiveness, and rehabilitation have been achieved?

This will largely depend on the attitude and teachability of the fallen person. What do his accountability partners discern about what's in his heart? What is the testimony of those he associates with most closely—his spouse, children, family? What is discerned by the church community with whom he has cast his lot since his fall?

Commenting on Saul's conversion, Ellen G. White discerns some important principles that the church must ever bear in mind about the proper use of authority in directing sinners in the way of life. "When Saul [Paul] asked, 'What wilt Thou have me to do?' the Saviour placed the inquiring Jew in connection with His church, there to obtain a knowledge of God's will concerning him." Meanwhile the Holy Spirit also directed Ananias to be the church's mouthpiece, seek out Saul, witness the restoration of his sight, and being filled with the Holy Spirit. Can any lesson be learned from this early church experience? Yes, indeed: "Many have an idea that they are responsible to Christ alone for their light and experience, independent of His recognized followers on earth. Jesus is the friend of sinners, and His heart is touched with their woe. He has all power, both in heaven and on earth; but He respects the means that He has ordained for the enlightenment and salvation of men; He directs sinners to the church, which He has made a channel of light to the world."

This role of the church should still apply today. Despite her feebleness and defects, the church, particularly the local congregation, is the divinely ordained theater where the community's collective spiritual discernment and physical proximity to the wrongdoer can authenticate his contrition or otherwise.

The congregation is most suited to observe the nature of a wrongdoer's relationship to his congregation, his teachability and spiritual intuitiveness. The body of which he is a part knows best, whether, when, and how a wrongdoer's influence and spiritual authenticity can be affirmed and restored.

Restoration and/or reinstatement?

Finally, does restoration of a fallen pastor equate with reinstatement to gospel ministry? The General Conference Working Policy insists on a blanket no. However, if the process as suggested in this article is sincerely attempted, might the Holy Spirit not in some cases show us a different way?

I submit that if the suggested process would be sincerely followed to discover how much God's grace can still teach us; and, if a fallen brother sincerely participates in such a process with a contrite and teachable spirit; and, if in due course the congregation can authenticate the wrongdoer's spiritual rehabilitation through submission to the process, what else might then preclude him from reinstatement to gospel ministry other than a working policy?

If the Working Policy shall be indefinitely and infallibly applied without regard for what the Holy Spirit can achieve with a formerly fallen brother, as here proposed, would that not imply, regrettably, that the Adventist ministry could not accommodate David either, the former murderer/adulterer, or Peter, who denied our Lord? Yet, I shall always marvel that by God's grace, not policy, they were reinstated and resumed their calling.

*This word is borrowed from an esteemed colleague, Don Livesay, president of the Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. He reported in his November PresReport, a monthly newsletter from the president's office, about meeting with a local church in business meeting where the congregation dealt with their former pastor's moral fall. He applauded their redemptive attitude. He also noted: "As I reviewed the Church Manual on the subject of church discipline, I noted that the section titled 'Removal from Membership' no longer uses the word 'disfellowship.' This is a significant statement about our Church's journey in the area of discipline. There are times a person should be removed from membership but I believe this should be done with the attitude of re-fellowshipping that person into the church rather than disfellowshipping someone from the church."

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3 Church Manual, 182, 183. (Quoting Testimonies, 7:268.)
4 A practical and general discussion about such a process is available on CD from the Willow Creek Association in the Defining Moments series titled When a Staff Member Falls, with Nancy Beach and Michael Simone, featuring Bill Hybels. Web site: www.willowcreek.com; Tel. 800-570-9812.
Editorial note: The following address was given on the opening night of the third and final International Faith and Science Conference held by leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on August 10-29, 2004 in Denver, Colorado. While similar more local conferences were held in venues around the world, this August conference marked the climax of a three-year, three-meeting series convening so that Adventist scientists, educators, and theologians, along with Church leaders, could openly discuss the implications of contemporary scientific discovery and related worldviews upon the Christian faith and more specifically upon the faith of those, such as Seventh-day Adventists, who believe in a recent, literal seven-day, special creation. The well-paced remarks published below provide an effective orientation to the work and function of the three international conferences and especially of the final and most definitive Denver convocation.

It is a pleasure to welcome you to Denver. This conference marks the conclusion of a three-year series of consultations on issues in faith and science—particularly those relating to our understanding of the origin of life on our planet. Some, perhaps most of us, have had the opportunity of participating in previous conferences in various parts of the world. Others are here for the first time. So perhaps it is well to spend a few moments this evening to consider why we are here, what we will be doing, and what is expected of this concluding conference.

Why are we here?

Seventh-day Adventists value both the knowledge which comes by divine revelation and that which comes from human observation, research, and discovery. We treasure these as gifts of a wise and loving Creator. We are students of Scripture, drawing our worldview, our moral and spiritual reference points from its teachings. We are also students and beneficiaries of science, embracing advances in knowledge and technology. The practice of science in fields such as agriculture, communications, ecology, and space exploration have occasioned enormous changes in the way we live. When our children get sick, we pray over them and we take them to the doctor. We plead for God's healing power in their lives and we give them medicines which science tells us will be helpful in dealing with their illness.

In many areas of life these two sources of knowledge appear to be in harmony. Advances in scientific knowledge often confirm and validate the views of faith. However, in regard to the origin of the universe, of earth, and of life, we encounter two very contradictory worldviews. Claims based on a study of Scripture are often viewed in stark contrast to claims arising from the scientific methodologies used in the study of nature. This tension has a direct impact on the life of the church, its message, and witness.

We celebrate the life of faith. We advocate a life of learning. Both in the claims of Scripture and in the orderly processes of nature we see indicators of the Creator's marvelous mind.

Since its earliest days the Seventh-day Adventist Church has encouraged the development of mind and understanding through disciplines such as worship, education, and observation. So it is not surprising that at times our conclusions differ and our interpretations vary. We come along the path of learning from different starting points, from different directions and at different paces. For some the answers to questions about origins are a certainty. To others the answers are more elusive and call for investigation and discovery through scientific research.

Reports in the public media concerning the rapid advances in scientific knowledge, particularly in the natural and social sciences, are generally framed within certain assumptions about origins. These realities bring into greater prominence, within the church, the question of how to reconcile the differing explanations of origins offered by faith and science.

No one can deny that within the church itself there is a variety of views about origins. Perhaps this should be expected. Is it fair to say that every Seventh-day Adventist belief invites study and reflection? Our belief statements are couched in such brevity. There is opportunity for investigation, questioning, and probing the dimensions of what each belief means and how it is to relate to life in our time. But such opportunity does not create room for emptying our beliefs of their content. In saying what we believe we must also be clear as to what we do not believe.

The Seventh-day Adventist understanding of origins affects and informs other dimensions of church life. The early chapters of Genesis have enormous importance for the life of the church. If we look to the Genesis record only to debate questions about 6 days and 6,000 years, we deprive ourselves of many priceless treasures. It is from our belief in and about Creation that we...
Problems With a Purpose

God uses problems to shape our godliness. We learn His will from reading the Bible, and He teaches us through our life circumstances.

Jesus warned that we would have problems. We encounter different kinds of problems:

- Temptations. Satan works to draw us away from God and to weaken our character. Temptations call for resistance. Jesus' own first line of resistance was Scripture.
- Trespasses. Other people's sins may wrong us. Trespasses against us call for forgiveness. "Forgive one another even as God, for Christ's sake has forgiven you."
- Troubles. Our own choices are often to blame for our troubles. Proverbs helps us acquire the wisdom to avert many of these problems. Troubles call for repentance.
- Trials. God tests us to draw us closer to Him and to strengthen our character. Trials call for us to relax and trust God.

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Rick Warren

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derive an understanding of who we are, how we relate to each other and to our world, what our mission and message is. Our view about the Creation story permeates and informs all our other views about life.

For these reasons church leadership sees wisdom and value in exploring the theological and scientific implications of various views of Genesis 1–11. The questions that will engage our attention are not new nor is this conference an attempt to resolve them once and for all. We are not here because the Seventh-day Adventist Church is uncertain about its beliefs.

Acknowledging questions and exploring their implication should not be seen as a threat to one's spiritual life. Our task is to engage in interdisciplinary dialog that identifies the contributions and limitations that both faith and science bring to our collective understanding of our life, our universe, and our destiny.

There are several reasons which suggest that it is appropriate to review what our belief in Genesis 1–11 involves and how it can best be expressed and communicated.

Philosophical reasons: There is the ever-present challenge of defining the relationship between theology and science—or faith and reason. Are these two streams of knowledge in partnership or in conflict? Should they be viewed as interactive or are they independent nonoverlapping spheres of knowledge? The dominant worldview in most modern societies interprets life, physical reality, and behavior in ways that are markedly different from the Christian worldview. How should a Christian relate to these things?

Theological reasons: How is the Bible to be interpreted? What does a fair reading of the text require of a believer? To what extent should knowledge from science inform or shape our understanding of Scripture and vice versa?

Scientific reasons: The same data, from nature, is available to all observers. What does the data say or mean? How shall we arrive at correct interpretations and conclusions? How do we differenti

cate between good and bad science? Is science a tool or a philosophy?

Nurture and education of church membership: How is a church member to deal with the variety of interpretations of the Genesis record, accompanied by various theories of origins among theologians, pastors, scientists, leaders, teachers in our educational system? What does the church have to say to students who find in their educational curriculum ideas that conflict with their faith? Maintaining silence concerning such issues sends mixed signals; it creates uncertainty and confusion and provides fertile ground for unwarranted and dogmatic views.

Developing a living faith: Clarification and reaffirmation of a Bible-based theology of origins will equip members with a framework for dealing with challenges on this topic. Our understanding of Scripture needs to engage with the issues of the day. The Faith and Science Conferences are not convened simply for the intellectual stimulation of attendees but as an opportunity to provide orientation and practical guidance for church members. We cannot pretend to keep our beliefs in a safe place, secure from all challenge. If we do so, they will soon become relics. Our beliefs need to be engaged in meeting the problems of the day so that they remain a living faith, otherwise they will be nothing more than dead dogma.

"There is a strong prima facie case for re-examining the claimed cognitive content of Christian theology in the light of the new knowledge derivable from the sciences. . . . If such an exercise is not continually undertaken theology will operate in a cultural ghetto quite cut off from most of those in Western cultures who have good grounds for thinking that science describes what is going on in the processes of the world at all levels. The turbulent history of the relation of science and theology bears witness to the impossibility of theology seeking a peaceful haven, protected from the sciences of its times, if it is going to be believable."

It is for reasons such as these the church leadership took the initiative to convene a series of discussions about
faith and science issues and their impact on the life of the church. Thus the three-year time frame during which several conferences have been held in various parts of the globe. Our purpose has been to bring together a group of scientists, theologians, and church leaders in a collective dialog. We expect that about 140 persons will attend this conference—with roughly equal representation from the three groups mentioned.

It should come to us as no surprise that the very existence of these dialogs is a source of considerable uneasiness on the part of some—maybe even some who are here in Denver. There is on the one hand a foreboding that discussing doctrinal issues may lead to a watering down of our faith, that somehow the package of beliefs will be damaged, or perhaps that we shall soon find ourselves on a slippery slope with nothing to hang on to. On the other hand there is a nagging fear that we shall disparage learning, scholarship, and enquiry in order to preserve our beliefs from close scrutiny.

I have the confidence to believe that this group in Denver is sufficiently responsible to preserve us from either extreme.

So, why are we here? Not just for personal pleasure or continuing education. Representing various disciplines in church life we’ve been invited to:

♦ Become conversant with the issues and their effect on our collective life and witness.
♦ Collaborate in developing appropriate responses that will be of value to the church.

What we will do

In many ways this conference will be unlike those that have preceded it. In the earlier conferences our purpose was to become informed about the evidence and the arguments that support or challenge our belief in a recent special Creation. Thanks to a host of contributors there is a huge supply of scholarly papers dealing both with theology and science. Most of these can be obtained through the Geoscience Research Institute (www.grisda.org).

We begin our work session with a time of review and reflection on the information and ideas covered in earlier conferences. On Sunday we will spend our time listening to and discussing summaries of the theology and science questions that we’ve explored. This will be followed on Monday morning by looking at some of the implications that various ideas or theories about origins have with respect to other areas of life and belief.

When one deals with such matters in the life of a community it is inevitable that related issues arise. We cannot separate our beliefs from the ways that we put them into practice. Several such questions immediately come to mind:

♦ The ongoing place of scholarship in the church. How does the church maintain the confessional nature of its teachings while being open to further development in its understanding of truth?
♦ Educational models for dealing with controversial subjects and the ethical issues involved for teachers and church leaders. How shall we teach science courses in our schools, colleges, and universities in a way that enriches rather than erodes faith?
♦ What ethical considerations come into focus when private conviction differs from denominational teaching? How does my personal freedom of belief interface with my public role as a leader in the church? In other words, what are the ethics of dissent?
♦ Administrative posture and processes in dealing with variations in or re-expressions of doctrinal views.

What is expected of us

The last portion of the conference will focus on arriving at consensus regarding a report, recommendations, affirmations, or appeals that can be forwarded to the General Conference president. The Organizing Committee has been tasked with the assignment of preparing a report which the General Conference president will include with his report to the Annual Council 2004. (The General Conference Executive Committee authorized this series of conferences and rightfully expects a report on what has been done.)

We are inviting you to be a part of that report—to help create it. Accordingly there will be several periods during our time together when we shall break into smaller groups to discuss a number of questions, consider recommendations, or propose actions that the church might take in response to these matters.

We have not come to this conference with a prescribed outcome and report. Obviously we have some thoughts in mind but we seek a collective engagement in preparing a report. Our vision at present is that the report will contain a narrative section that describes what we have done over the three years. We suggest that the report may have a section on affirmations followed by a section of recommendations. Not a long list of general recommendations that will get filed away in some archive as an historical artifact. Instead we invite you to help create nothing less than an action plan for the entire church that addresses matters such as:

1. What can be done to help us, and indeed the whole church, deal with sensitive topics in our faith community? Have these conferences helped us toward that end? What can be done to help us avoid the irresponsible use of science to validate Scripture—or to avoid the denigration of faith in order to accommodate some theories of science? How can we carry on a helpful dialog without resorting to caricature and innuendo towards those who hold other views? What are the things that hold us together even while we differ?
2. What can be done to provide
nurture and education to our members so that they will have a robust faith grounded in Scripture while living in a world that increasingly views science as the preferred, if not only, source of knowledge?

3. Is there anything more that should be done to assist Seventh-day Adventist students in dealing with educational curriculum, especially in the natural sciences, that may challenge their faith commitment?

4. What can be done to support and encourage those who teach theology and the sciences in our schools? One of the Organizing Committee members remarked recently that we have long considered the religion teacher in our schools as one of the key individuals in our educational system. Has not the time come for us to recognize that the science teachers in our schools are at least equally critical to the success of our educational endeavors?

5. How can we support Seventh-day Adventist scholars, scientists, and theologians to engage in public discourse about the two dominant and competing worldviews in our day? Or is our dialog to take place only within our community of faith? Is there a place, on the issues of faith and science, for Seventh-day Adventist scholarship in the public forum? How can we give it more visibility?

Is this too big a challenge for us to undertake at this brief moment together? The Organizing Committee feels this is too overwhelming—but it must be done and we need to begin somewhere. Obviously, there cannot be a sense of finality to the need for dialog on the questions that brought us here. But let us resolve to make a beginning rather than to shrink from so large a task.

**In summary**

It is a privilege to have each of you as partners in this journey over the next few days. The Organizing Committee has looked forward both with anticipation and anxiety to this event. We hope you will find the physical accommodations adequate and the schedule not too burdensome. We have every confidence that our time together will be beneficial to us individually but also to the church of which we are members. We believe that once again a conference of this nature can be conducted with openness, honesty, civility, and respect.

It can only be to our advantage that we learn to speak with humility about origins. There are far more questions than there are undeniable answers. Let us be firm about what we can know while recognizing that in pressing further questions we also draw closer to a wonderful and impenetrable mystery.

“Among the pieces of memorabilia found in Charles Darwin’s belongings after his death were two letters from his wife Emma. Her cautionary counsel is applicable for us as well: ‘May not the habit in scientific pursuits of believing nothing till it is proved, influence your mind too much in other things which cannot be proved in the same way, and which if true are likely to be above our comprehension.’ Charles Darwin made a notation on each letter. On one he wrote, ‘God bless you. C.D. 1861.’ The other has this note: ‘When I am dead, know that many times, I have kissed and cried [sic] over this. C.D.’”

This International Faith and Science Conference begins with the celebration of the Sabbath. Here, in worship, adoration, and study we find faith and reason in their highest partnership. Let us come together to learn, not only from each other, but from Him who is the source of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding.

“I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see every thing else.”

Lowell Cooper is a general vice president for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Silver Spring, Maryland.

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3. C. S. Lewis (1898-1963), *Is Theology Poetry?*


AN AFFIRMATION OF CREATION:

Report of the Organizing Committee of the International Faith and Science Conference

VOTED, To record the presentation of An Affirmation of Creation—Report of the Organization Committee, which reads as follows:

An Affirmation of Creation


Introduction

The very first words of the Bible provide the foundation for all that follows. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. . ."—Gen 1:1

Throughout Scripture the Creation is celebrated as coming from the hand of God who is praised and adored as Maker and Sustainer of all that is. "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands."—Ps 19:1

From this view of the world flows a series of interlocking doctrines that lie at the core of the Seventh-day Adventist message to the world: a perfect world without sin by His death and resurrection; the spread of sin, decay and death created not long ago; the fall of our first parents; the sacrifice of the Lamb; the second coming of Jesus Christ, our Creator and Redeemer; and the ultimate restoration of all that was lost by the Fall.

As Christians who take the Bible seriously and seek to live by its precepts Seventh-day Adventists have a high view of nature. We believe that even in its present fallen state nature reveals the eternal power of God (Rom. 1:20), that "God is love" is written upon every opening bud, upon every spire of springing grass.”—Ellen G White, Steps to Christ, p 10

We train students at our colleges and universities how to employ the scientific method rigorously. At the same time, we refuse to restrict our quest for truth to the constraints imposed by the scientific method alone.

The Question of Origins

For centuries, at least in the Christian world, the Bible story of creation was the standard explanation for questions about origins. During the 18th and 19th centuries the methodologies of science resulted in a growing understanding of how things worked. Today no one can deny that science has made a remarkable impact on our lives through advances in the areas of agriculture, communication, ecology, engineering, genetics, health, and space exploration.

In many areas of life, knowledge derived from nature and knowledge from divine revelation in Scripture appear to be in harmony. Advances in scientific knowledge often confirm and validate the views of faith. However, in regard to the origin of the universe, of the earth, and of life and its history, we encounter contradictory world-views. Assertions based on a study of Scripture often stand in stark contrast to those arising from the scientific assumptions and methodologies used in the study of nature. This tension has a direct impact on the life of the Church, its message, and witness.

We celebrate the life of faith. We advocate a life of learning. Both in the study of Scripture and in the orderly processes of nature we see indicators of the Creator’s marvelous mind. Since its earliest days the Seventh-day Adventist Church has encouraged the development of mind and understanding through the disciplines of worship, education, and observation.

In earlier decades the discussion of theories on origins primarily occurred in academic settings. However, philosophical naturalism (wholly natural, random and undirected processes over the course of time) has gained wide acceptance in education and forms the basic assumption for much that is taught in the natural and social sciences. Seventh-day Adventist members and students encounter this view and its implications in many areas of daily life.

In its statement of fundamental beliefs the Seventh-day Adventist Church affirms a divine creation as described in the biblical narrative of Genesis 1. "God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made ‘the heaven and the earth’ and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His completed creative work. The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was ‘very good,’ declaring the glory of God.”—Gen 1; 2; Ex 20:8-11; Ps 19:1-6; 33:6, 9; Ps 104; Heb 11:3

Reasons for the Faith and Science Conferences

Because of the pervasive and growing influence of the theory of evolution, the General Conference Executive Committee (2001 Annual Council) authorized a three-year series of Faith and Science conferences. These conferences were not called to modify the Church’s long-held position on creation but to review the contributions and limitations that both faith and science bring to our understanding of origins.

The principal reasons that led to the convening of these conferences involved:

1. Philosophical questions: An ever-present challenge exists in defining the relationship between theology and science, between that of faith and reason. Are these two streams of knowledge in partnership or in conflict? Should they be viewed as interactive or are they independent, nonoverlapping spheres of knowledge? The dominant worldview in most modern societies interprets life, physical reality, and behavior in ways that are markedly different from the Christian worldview. How should a Christian relate to these things?

2. Theological questions: How is the Bible to be interpreted? What does a plain reading of the text require of a believer? To what extent should knowledge from science inform or shape our understanding of Scripture and vice-versa?

3. Scientific questions: The same data from nature are available to all observers. What do the data say or mean? How shall we arrive at correct interpretations and conclusions? Is science a tool or a philosophy? How do we differentiate between good and bad science?

4. The issue of nurture and education for Church members: How is a Church member to deal with the variety of interpretations of the Genesis record? What does the Church have to say to those who find in their educational curriculum ideas that conflict with their faith? Maintaining silence concerning such issues sends mixed signals; it creates uncertainty and provides fertile ground for unwarranted and dogmatic views.

5. Development of living faith: Clarification and reaffirmation of a Bible-based theology of origins will equip members with a framework for dealing with
challenges on this topic. The Faith and Science Conferences were not convened simply for the intellectual stimulation of attendees, but as an opportunity to provide orientation and practical guidance for Church members. The Church cannot pretend to keep its beliefs in a safe place, secure from all challenge. In doing so they will soon become relics. Church teachings must engage and connect with the issues of the day so that they remain a living faith; otherwise they will amount to nothing more than dead dogma.

The Faith and Science Conferences

Two International Faith and Science Conferences were held—in Ogden, Utah 2002 and in Denver, Colorado 2004—with widespread international representation from theologians, scientists, and Church administrators. In addition seven of the Church’s thirteen divisions conducted division-wide or regional conferences dealing with the interaction of faith and science in explanations about origins. The Organizing Committee expresses appreciation to the participants at these conferences for their contributions to this report.

The Ogden conference agenda was designed to acquaint attendees with the range of ways in which both theology and science offer explanations for the origin of the earth and life. The agendas for conferences in divisions were determined by the various organizers, although most included several of the topics dealt with in Ogden. The recent conference in Denver was the concluding conference of the three-year series. Its agenda began with summaries of the issues in theology and science, then moved on to several questions regarding faith-science issues in Church life. These questions included:

The on-going place of scholarship in the Church. How does the Church maintain the confessional nature of its teachings while being open to further development in its understanding of truth?

Educational models for dealing with controversial subjects and the ethical issues involved for teachers and Church leaders. How shall we teach science courses in our schools in a way that enriches, rather than erodes, faith?

What ethical considerations come into focus when private conviction differs from denominational teaching? How does personal freedom of belief interface with one’s public role as a leader in the Church? In other words, what are the principles of personal accountability and the ethics of dissent?

What are the administrative responsibilities and processes in dealing with variations in, or re-expressions of, doctrinal views?

Scholarly papers by theologians, scientists, and educators were presented and discussed in all the conferences. (The Geoscience Research Institute maintains a file of all papers presented at the conferences.) The Ogden and Denver conferences involved at least some representation from every division of the world field. Well over 200 persons participated in the conferences during the three-year period. More than 130 attended the Denver meeting, most of whom had attended at least one other of the Faith and Science Conferences.

General Observations

1. We applaud the seriousness and dignity that characterized the conferences.

2. We noted the strong sense of dedication and loyalty to the Church that prevailed.

3. We experienced that even though tensions surfaced at times, cordial relations were maintained among the attendees, with fellowship transcending differences in viewpoint.

4. We witnessed in these conferences a high level of concurrence on basic understandings, especially the normative role of Scripture, buttressed by the writings of Ellen G White, and the belief by all in God as beneficent Creator.

5. We found no support for, nor advocacy of, philosophical naturalism, the idea that the universe came into existence without the action of a Creator.

6. We acknowledge that the conflict between the biblical and contemporary worldviews impacts both scientists and theologians.

7. We recognize that tension between faith and understanding is an element of life with which the believer must learn to live.

8. We observe that rejecting contemporary scientific interpretations of origins in conflict with the biblical account does not imply depreciation of either science or the scientist.

9. While we found widespread affirmation of the Church’s understanding of life on earth, we recognize that some among us interpret the biblical record in ways that lead to sharply different conclusions.

10. We accept that both theology and science contribute to our understanding of reality.

Findings

1. The degree to which tension exists regarding our understanding of origins varies around the world. In those areas where science has made its greatest progress in society, the questions among Church members are more widespread. With the advance of science across all societies and educational systems, there will be a corresponding increase in members wondering how to reconcile Church teaching with natural theories of origin. Large numbers of Seventh-day Adventist students attend public schools where evolution is taught and promoted in the classroom without corresponding materials and arguments in favor of the biblical account of origins.

2. Reaffirmation of the Church’s Fundamental Belief regarding creation is strongly supported. Seventh-day Adventist belief in a literal and historical six-day creation is theologically sound and consistent with the teaching of the whole Bible.

3. Creation is a foundational pillar in the entire system of Seventh-day Adventist doctrine—it bears direct relationship to many if not all other fundamental beliefs. Any alternative interpretation of the creation story needs to be examined in light of its impact on all other beliefs. Several of the Faith and Science Conferences reviewed alternative interpretations of Genesis 1, including the idea of theistic evolution. These interpretations lack theological coherence with the whole of Scripture and reveal areas of inconsistency with the rest of Seventh-day Adventist doctrine. They are, therefore, unacceptable substitutes for the biblical doctrine of creation held by the Church.

4. Concern has been expressed regarding what some see as ambiguity in the phrase “in six days” found in the Church’s statement of belief on creation. It is felt that the intended meaning (that the six-day creation described in Genesis was accomplished in a literal and historical week) is unmentioned. This situation allows for uncertainty about what the Church actually believes. Further, it provides room for other explanations of creation to be accommodated in the text. There is a desire for the voice of the Church to be heard in bringing added clarity to what is really meant in Fundamental Belief #6, Creation.

5. Although some data from science can be interpreted in ways consistent with the biblical concept of creation, we also reviewed data interpreted in ways that challenge the Church’s belief in a recent creation. The strength of these interpretations cannot be dismissed lightly. We respect the claims of science, study them, and hope for a resolution. This does not preclude a re-examination of Scripture to make sure it is being properly understood. However, when an interpretation harmonious with the findings of science is not possible, we do not allow science a privileged position in which it automatically determines the outcome. Rather, we recognize that it is not justifiable to hold certain teachings of Scripture hostage to current scientific interpretations of data.

6. We recognize that there are different theological interpretations among us regarding Genesis 1–11. In view of the various interpretations we sensed a high degree of concern that those involved in the Seventh-day Adventist teaching min-
istry conduct their work ethically and with integrity—by standards of their profession, the teachings of Scripture, and the basic understanding held by the body of believers. Since Seventh-day Adventists recognize the importance of their work, there is an ever-present need to continue the study of Scripture, theology, and science in order that the truths we hold constitute a living faith able to address the needs of our time.

5. We affirm that our limited understanding of origins calls for humility and that further exploration into these questions brings us closer to deep and wonderful mysteries.

6. We affirm the interlocking nature of the doctrine of creation with other Seventh-day Adventist doctrines.

7. We affirm that in spite of its falleness nature is a witness to the Creator.

8. We affirm Seventh-day Adventist scientists in their endeavors to understand the Creator's handiwork through the methodologies of their disciplines.

9. We affirm Seventh-day Adventist theologians in their efforts to explore and articulate the content of revelation.

10. We affirm Seventh-day Adventist educators in their pivotal ministry to the Church. The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church identified in Revelation 14:6, 7 includes a call to worship God as Creator of all.

**Recommendations**

The Organizing Committee for the International Faith and Science Conference recommends that:

1. In order to address what some interpret as a lack of clarity in Fundamental Belief #6, Creation, the historic Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the Genesis narrative be affirmed more explicitly.

2. Church leaders at all levels be encouraged to assess and monitor the effectiveness of our ministry to students to receive a thorough, balanced education focused on our historic, biblical position of belief in a literal, recent, six-day Creation.

3. Students and teachers at all levels be educated to understand and assess competing philosophies of origins that affect the whole planet, as an important key to understanding earth history.

4. We call on all boards and educators at Seventh-day Adventist institutions at all levels to continue upholding the Church's position on origins. We, along with Seventh-day Adventist parents, expect students to receive a thorough, balanced education that is scientifically rigorous and provides a basis for understanding the biblical doctrine of Creation. The purpose of education is to form the whole person, including the mind, heart, and character, by the power of the Holy Spirit. We pray that students will be equipped to respond to the challenges of our time with faith, wisdom, and courage.

5. We urge church leaders throughout the world to seek ways to educate members, especially young people attending non-Seventh-day Adventist schools, in the issues involved in the doctrine of creation.

6. We call on all members of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist family to proclaim and teach the Church's understanding of the biblical doctrine of Creation, living in its light, rejoicing in our status as sons and daughters of God, and praising our Lord Jesus Christ—our Creator and Redeemer.

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**REFERENCES**

1. East-Central Africa Division, Euro-Africa Division, North American Division, South Pacific Division, Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, Southern Asia Division, West-Central Africa Division.
Vessels in time: 
Lynn H. Wood Archaeological Museum grand opening

The opening of the Lynn H. Wood Archaeological Museum on the campus of Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee, establishes a major state-of-the-art museum of biblical antiquities from the Middle East. On display are over two hundred pieces of art and objects from the William G. Dever Near Eastern Collection, one of the largest technical collections of Near Eastern artifacts in North America today. Dr. Joel Sarli, a contributing editor of Ministry, had the opportunity to visit the museum and interview its curator, Dr. Michael G. Hasel, director of the Institute of Archaeology and professor of Near Eastern studies and archaeology, and Giselle S. Hasel, who served as the designer and art director for the museum.

Joel Sarli: Dr. Hasel, a natural question that comes to mind is why there is a need for a new exhibit on the archaeology of the Middle East?

Michael G. Hasel: Americans today are visiting museums more than ever before. Some statistics show that 3 out of 5 Americans visit at least one museum every year. Yet despite this increased interest in museums, there has been no state-of-the-art museum exhibit on the ancient Near East from a biblical perspective. The Lynn H. Wood Archaeological Museum is unique in the southeastern United States because it provides, for the first time, a cutting edge exhibit that aims at bringing the biblical world to life. It has been designed to have a broad appeal to our Western culture which finds its roots in the ancient Near East. The essential aim of the exhibit is to authenticate the Bible and bring its world to life in a three-dimensional way. That makes this museum unique in its mission.

JS: What kind of objects and artifacts are on exhibit?

MGH: We are exhibiting for the first time to the public one of the largest teaching collections of ancient Near Eastern artifacts in North America. The strength of the collection is that we have complete sequences of pottery forms from the Early Bronze Age, the time of the patriarchs, all the way through the Byzantine period. That means that for 3,500 years of history we are able to trace the development and changes in lamps, dippers, juglets, bowls, and other forms. There are also unique artifacts, such as letters written in cuneiform from Ur in Mesopotamia, a clay brick from Babylon inscribed with Nebuchadnezzar’s name, weapons of copper and iron, and even a clay chariot that is over 4,200 years old. Together they connect us tangibly to a world that many of us have only read about in the Bible.

JS: Where do the objects come from?

MGH: The collection was legally exported from Israel in the early 1970s. There are also imported artifacts from Egypt, Babylonia, Persia, Syria, Greece, Cyprus, and Anatolia.

JS: How are the artifacts displayed?

Giselle S. Hasel: Over the last five years of planning and design, we visited dozens of museums around the world and studied the latest in museum design theory. The result is that while artifact assemblages are grouped in chronological order, we chose to focus on only one aspect of ancient life for each period. The theme for each case was chosen based on a major characteristic of that time such as urbanism, ruralism, domestic life in the highlands, and fortification. Together the exhibit forms a tapestry of how ancient life was experienced.

JS: I noticed as I went through the exhibit that there was a great deal of artwork and photography to illustrate each period in history. Why is that necessary?

GSH: Museums today are designed to be experiential. We want visitors to see groupings of artifacts in their context. So the exhibit contains a stunning display of over 200 photographs, illustrations, maps, and original artwork that set the objects in the original context and show how they were used.
Museums today are highly interactive, and we wanted people of all ages to have a captivating and educational visual experience.

**JS:** What are some of the interactive elements?

**GSH:** The introductory map is a highly technical audiovisual tool with over 400 fiberoptic lights and a synchronized audio introduction to the exhibit. There are five videos that focus on the ancient world and explain with graphics what archaeology is and why it is important. They enlarge on how pottery was made in different periods and how these techniques are connected to biblical imagery found in the Bible. The exhibit also includes a life-size room typical of an early Israelite house with a working loom for creating cloth and other objects that allow visitors to visualize how people actually lived and what their daily routines were like.

**JS:** That sounds like quite an endeavor.

**GSH:** It certainly was. We are very thankful for outstanding consultation and help from other museums and experts in the field. This was an effort that included contacting many other museums and people in the museum community who were very generous in their help and willingness to contribute advice and insight. In the final phase we also hired one of the top three museum design companies in the country, Design Craftsmen, to step in for case manufacturing and specific design questions. Their expertise was invaluable.

**JS:** How do you hope this exhibit will impact students and the community?

**MGH:** The museum provides an invaluable resource for students at Southern Adventist University and other surrounding colleges and universities. Southern currently offers the only B.A. degree in archaeology in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and it is one of only two such degrees in North America that is offered from a Christian, biblical perspective. So it specifically serves this program. It also serves the wider community as an educational tool for church groups, elementary and secondary schools, and tourists that visit Chattanooga, which is at the heart of the Bible belt and has increasingly become a major tourist destination.

**JS:** Have you received many visitors?

**MGH:** In just two days over our opening weekend, November 12-13, we had over 1,000 people come through the exhibit. We certainly hope that this trend continues.

**JS:** How can people obtain information on the exhibit?

**MGH:** The Lynn H. Wood Archaeological Museum can be reached at 423-236-2030. Our Web site address is: <archaeology.southern.edu>

Michael G. Hasel, Ph.D., is director of the Institute of Archaeology and professor of Near Eastern studies and archaeology at Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee.

Giselle S. Hasel is an art designer.
When pastors are hospitalized

Delmar S. Smolinski and William E. Rabior

Every pastor is unique and has unique needs. So, a one-size-fits-all kind of ministerial approach to pastors who are hospitalized simply does not work, nor would we even attempt it. As hospital chaplains, we always try to tailor our ministry to a sick pastor’s personality, spirituality, and the circumstances surrounding his or her hospitalization.

The fact is that pastors are certainly not exempt from the need to be hospitalized. We regularly see them admitted to our hospital or other hospital facilities for a variety of reasons. In recent years, for example, we know of pastors who have been hospitalized for bypass surgery, congestive heart failure, and pneumonia. They regularly come in for chemotherapy and radiation therapy to treat cancer. Pastors are involved in motor-vehicle accidents and other kinds of accidents which can sometimes result in long-term hospitalization. For example, one of our clergy colleagues, a fellow hospital chaplain, became a quadriplegic following a diving accident over thirty years ago and still deals with chronic infections and skin breakdown.

Pastors are hospitalized because of abdominal pain, prostate problems, aneurysms, strokes, and uncontrolled diabetes. They come in for cardiac workups which may include heart catheterizations and stress tests.

Sometimes, the hospitalization is a direct result of substance abuse and/or mental illness, and even burnout. The truth is that pastors are not immune from illness.

The challenge of the context and convalescence

While all of these negative health situations give rise to diverse medical needs and corresponding treatments, they also bespeak a common concern: how to acknowledge and support each pastor during and after hospitalization. A primary and critical component of that common concern is the context of their being hospitalized. We need to look at the context before we offer any concrete suggestions for ministering to a sick pastor.

When a pastor is sick or injured and hospitalized, he or she experiences a major shifting of roles. One pastor expressed it this way in a newspaper interview about his bishop going into long-term treatment for leukemia: “The difficulty in coping with something like this is during the 20 years he has been here, he has been a man of tireless effort and energy. . . . We have come to take for granted his overall health. It’s only when something like this happens that we recognize the reality of our own mortality. He has been very healthy. I’m sure it has taken the wind out of his sails. He has a very arduous path with respect to the treatment ahead of him. . . . His biggest difficulty will be stepping away from his responsibilities here and stepping into his role as patient.”

This “stepping away from” and “stepping into” means going from health to sickness, from being a healer to being the one in need of healing, from being pillar of strength and support to a position of weakness and vulnerability.

It means changing from conversation leader/participant to feeling not up to expending energy in conversation, and yet perhaps also feeling a sense of failure for not being able to converse. It means feeling down about losing a leadership role and the sense of self-esteem that accompanies it.

A hospitalized pastor shifts from the role of caregiver to one of care receiver. He or she may find it extremely difficult to ask for or to accept help from others—certainly the loss of one’s personal independence does not come easily. Such a pastor may be going from a successful organizer of ministry to becoming a disappointed, frustrated, or angry victim of disrupted plans and schedules. We have wit-
nessed all three reactions among hospitalized pastors.

**Questions to be addressed**

As we stated above, every hospitalized pastor is unique with unique needs. Accordingly, a number of questions should be addressed before any visitation is proposed or attempted.

Is the pastor’s health condition recoverable, potentially recoverable, or terminal? Does the pastor have family, a close colleague, or some person who has Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care—someone to serve as a surrogate spokesperson for medical affairs, if necessary? If so, that person probably will need to be consulted regarding visitors.

Has the pastor stated a preference regarding visitors—who and how many, if any at all? Nursing staff and hospital security personnel can facilitate any limitation on visiting, if needed. Sometimes a pastor may need “permission” from hospital staff such as a doctor, nurse, or chaplain to know that at times it is necessary and appropriate to limit visitation.

It is important to determine whether a pastor is able to communicate or not, confused or not. Is dementia present? If so, is it slight, mild, or severe?

Has the pastor been hospitalized for preventative diagnostic testing, minor surgery, or critical illness/injury? Is the hospital stay going to be short- or long-term? Is the hospitalization going to be local or out-of-area? Is the pastor young, middle-aged, or of senior status? Is he or she newly assigned or longtime established?

A final question of context might address whether a given visitation is being done out of genuine concern or mere curiosity.

These questions and issues of context need to be evaluated beforehand, if visiting a pastor is going to be not only reality-based and appropriate but also effective and beneficial in terms of conversation and prayer. It is important to know whether a visitor converses and prays about a this-world recovery or final, eternal healing.

**Who should visit the hospitalized pastor?**

When it comes to visitation by church members, some hospitalized pastors enjoy them and welcome them. They have a kind of open-door policy, where any church member is welcome. The hospital room practically becomes an extension of the parish office—sometimes to the detriment of the patient. We have seen hospital staff having to intervene to put a stop to the flood of visitors who were doing the sick pastor more harm than good by their presence.

On the other hand, some hospitalized pastors consider visits by church members an intrusion and actually do not want them. They may be too polite to say so, but the truth is, they resent them. They want and need their privacy during their time of sickness, and the fact is, they have every right to this position. Sometimes they simply are too sick to have visitors and need to conserve their energy.

When it comes to visiting a sick pastor, some churches carefully control who shall visit, thereby limiting the number of people who go to the hospital. Often, pastors are grateful for this approach. The congregation usually wants to know how the pastor is doing, so many churches use the church bulletin or parish newsletter for health updates, always with the pastor’s permission.

Visits by fellow clergy are also viewed differently by different pastors. Some hospitalized pastors enjoy these visits, look forward to them, and encourage them. Others, however, want visits only from a superior such as a district superintendent or bishop and perhaps a few close clergy friends, and no one else. For such a pastor, less is really more—the fewer clergy visitors, the better.

**Making the pastor’s hospital stay better**

We offer the following suggestions...
designed to make a sick pastor’s hospital stay smoother and better.

First, do not automatically assume that a pastor wants to be visited. He or she may want the time spent in the hospital to be a private experience for the most part. Hospitals are places where a person’s privacy is often compromised, and having people looking on, even if they are well-meaning, can only make a difficult situation even harder. Often, the only thing a hospitalized pastor desires is to have the prayers of the congregation and his or her privacy respected.

If visits are allowed they need to be kept short and during hospital visiting hours. Sometimes church members visit their pastor long after visiting hours, thus preventing the pastor from resting and sometimes disturbing a roommate as well.

We need to be aware, too, of telephone overuse. Some hospitalized pastors are not visited in person by church members, but the telephone in their rooms keeps ringing. Once again this prevents the pastor from getting much-needed rest, and there may be a need to help the pastor limit his phone calls.

Prayer for a sick pastor is always something good and desirable, but prayer does not necessarily warrant a trip to the hospital. We frequently remind patients, families, and visitors that prayer knows no geographical boundaries. It can reach anywhere and everywhere.

When anyone is in hospital little things can mean a lot. Cards, letters, flowers, and photos last far longer than a conversation. They can be valuable signs of support and provide ongoing encouragement to a sick pastor, even long after being discharged from the hospital.

The pastor’s family is also likely to need some attention, especially if the pastor is sick for a long period of time. Members of a church can be of great assistance by providing such things as food, babysitting services, snow removal or lawn maintenance, and other kinds of help. When in doubt, ask the family, especially the pastor’s spouse, what is needed.

When a pastor is hospitalized, rumors can run rampant, and sometimes even gossip may rear its head. Unfortunately, on occasion we have seen one or both originate with the sick pastor’s clergy colleagues.

Both rumors and gossip tend to travel with the speed of wildfire and can do immeasurable harm. Both are difficult to stop once they start, so all who know the sick pastor have a moral obligation to practice what has sometimes been referred to as “the ministry of holding your tongue.” A sick pastor and his or her family are likely to be overloaded with stress. Having to fend off rumors or gossip only makes their coping even harder.

Awareness of what the pastor might face

It is important to remember too, that a serious sickness can sometimes change people. Depression, for example, is a frequent companion of sickness, and since depression is a whole-person event, a sick pastor may be affected not just physically and emotionally, but also spiritually.

Sick pastors commonly report that they find it difficult to pray. Especially during a prolonged illness, they may even experience a crisis of faith during which God seems distant or even absent—a phenomenon sometimes referred to as “the dark night of the soul.” Pastors who are ill often identify in a special way with the sufferings of Jesus in Gethsemane and on the cross, and are able to come to a renewed appreciation of their ministry to God’s people.

As chaplains, we find that pastors need pastoral care during such times. They need compassion, understanding, gentle encouragement, and especially, someone to listen to them in a nonjudgmental way, as chaplains are trained to do. They do not need to be told that, if they had more faith, they would quickly recover, or to be made to feel guilty about being depressed and discouraged. They need to be loved and accepted for who they are, where they are at, and affirmed at every opportunity.

Sometimes, too, pastors will need help in facing their limitations and their own personal mortality, since for some seriously sick pastors, recovery is unlikely. At other times they may need support in facing and making lifestyle changes that are conducive to good health.

We find that the psalms are continued on page 30
Comfort in our coming King

JAMES A. CRESS

Planning one funeral for three mourning families to be attended by several thousand brings unique challenges, not the least of which is attempting sensitivity to the extraordinary pain of private grief lived out in the framework of public mourning.

When my youngest brother, Dave, was tragically killed in a plane crash along with four colleagues, responsibility for planning a joint memorial service fell to my brother John and me, graciously assisted by Chaplain Greg Ellis. While nothing planned in only two days could be perfectly executed, I believe the Holy Spirit helped us assemble a service which spoke to the hearts and minds of our families as well as to those whose grief attended ours.

With the decision to combine the services of the “resident” conference leaders, the reality of three individuals memorialized in one service required aspects more like a state funeral than personal memorials. Circumstance forced individual preferences to be sublimated into a unified program with strict time lines that bordered on harsh when we contemplated only a few moments to honor each full life.

Unified theme. Our desire to express confidence and hope led us to select a uniquely Adventist perspective, “Comfort in Our Coming King.” We began with a processional entry of conference employees and their families to the tune of “Lift Up the Trumpet.” We also learned that, regardless of instructions to move at a rapid pace, it takes about twenty minutes to seat 800 individuals.

Unique music. Conference academies presented extraordinary tributes. Each family selected instrumental and vocal presentations plus congregational singing ranging from great hymns to bluegrass spirituals, the fellowship of “When We All Get to Heaven” sweeping into “We Have this Hope,” and the plaintive lone bagpiper closing with “Amazing Grace.” Three additional verses inserted into the great hymn “O God, Our Help in Ages Past” marked the solemn occasion and our confident anticipation of resurrection:

O Christ who hast prepared our place / And promised to return / Awake our loved ones from their sleep / and with them, take us home.

Creative Christ, come work anew / Build up thy church on earth / and when Thy labor is complete, / Sabbath us in thy rest.

Enfolded in thy Spirit’s care / Mark clear their place of rest / Flow with our tears Thy latter rain / We trust Thou leadiest best.

Understanding affirmations. Each family selected an individual to eulogize their loved one, and the words of Scripture consistently spoke comfort, constancy, and assurance of God’s love. Homilies by Gordon Retzer and Don Schneider centered on trust and concluded with hope. Humorous recollections were juxtaposed against poignant experiences such as Dave’s seven-year-old daughter Meredith fingering a simple tune made glorious by Brennon Kirstein, who surrounded her efforts with his unbounded piano skills and Pastor Ken Rogers then thanking her for “helping Pastor Brennon play so beautifully.”

Unsung support. Church, government, business, and professional groups ministered in extraordinary kindness to make certain that facilities, sound, printing, videography, transportation, hospitality, and myriad details were flawlessly executed. These “behind-the-scenes” ministries remain anonymous but not unappreciated.

Unfinished business. In response from our family, John, Pam, Sharon, and I thanked each participant, noting that we have a family business of preaching assurance in the second coming. Our appeal that each believer is also “in the family business” was intended to motivate attendees to focus more earnestly on preparing people for Jesus’ return.

Urgent priorities. As each mourning family was escorted out through the huge crowd, fellow ministers lined the aisles with their Bibles raised in solemn salute, signaling the preeminence of proclaiming the Word to bring hope and assurance to all who mourn and yearn for eternal life.

Understanding compassion. Condolences poured in from so many friends, colleagues, and even strangers. Charles Bradford encouraged me when he shared these words of comfort: “Hope bears our spirits up. We are not parted forever, but shall meet the loved ones who sleep in Jesus. The Life-giver is coming. Myriads of holy angels escort Him on His way. He bursts the bands of death, breaks the fetters of the tomb, the precious captives come forth in health and immortal beauty.”

Unfulfilled dreams deferred. During my final telephone conversation with David about a week before his death, we had planned for all three brothers and our families to come together next year at Thanksgiving. We had not selected the location, but we knew the date. Now we await a glorious reunion, not knowing the date but absolutely certain of the location. Please meet with us there in Jesus’ kingdom.

1 Ellen White, Youth’s Instructor, April 1, 1958.
Ministering to the mentally ill pastor

All his life, the young seminarian had been the model of success: good grades, good relationships, good work ethic. In seminary, he began to experience intense anxiety, depression, pervasive fatigue, insomnia, digestive problems, and blurred vision.

As his anxiety mounted and his depression deepened, he contemplated suicide. Fortunately, his family was alerted and intervention took place. The young man was hospitalized in a psychiatric facility where he would spend four months and then more time recuperating at home. He returned to seminary studies, graduating summa cum laude.

That seminarian was Harry Emerson Fosdick, one of America’s most outstanding preachers and first minister of New York City’s famed Riverside Church.

Fosdick’s bout with mental illness had a permanent and positive impact upon his ministry and those to whom he ministered. During his time of darkness, Fosdick would say: “I learned to pray not because I had adequately argued out prayer’s rationality, but because I desperately needed help from a power greater than my own. I learned that God, much more than a theological proposition, is an immediately available resource.”

Looking back at his bout with mental illness, Fosdick said: “While it was the most hideous experience of my life, I have learned to be grateful for it.”

Important insights

Fosdick’s experience throws light on two important realities. First, clergy are not immune to the stresses and struggles of life and can, like anyone else, fall into the grip of a mental illness. Second, ministers who have experienced a form of mental illness can become highly effective wounded healers and spiritual leaders.

When a minister faces his or her own mental demons, it is vital that the church reach out with empathy and compassion. Here are some guidelines for church leaders who want to minister to a pastor struggling with mental illness.

Dos and don’ts

Do be aware of the signs which may indicate a mental illness. While these are hard to pin down, the signs often include marked personality change, difficulty coping with problems and daily activities, excessive worries, prolonged depression, changes in sleeping and eating patterns, extreme anger and hostility, abuse of alcohol or other drugs, self-destructive actions, and/or impulsive or erratic behavior.

Don’t be confrontational. Approach the minister in a spirit of humility, kindness, and love. The minister may be invited to meet with a very small group—two or three mature people is ideal—to discuss the matter. More than three can be intimidating for a pastor and can make him or her feel ganged up on.

Do be respectful. Respect that the pastor with a mental illness should have the primary role in recovery because he or she has the mental illness.

Don’t criticize or moralize about their behavior. For example, a highly depressed person may tend to sleep a lot. It is not helpful to tell them they are lazy and not putting enough into their work.

Do state the problem, as you perceive it, clearly and precisely.

Don’t demand. Indicate that you want to explore options and solutions together with the pastor. It can help to come up with two or three options, allowing the minister to choose what is most comfortable.

Do assist the pastor in understanding there may be consequences if agreed options are not followed. Again, present this using non-threatening, collegial words and expressions.

Don’t become impatient or have unrealistic

Victor M. Parachin

write from Tulsa, Oklahoma.
wrong" (1 Cor. 13:4, 5, TEV).

Do consult with a professional who can guide you into positive and effective ways of dealing with the situation. This could be persons such as a denominational staff person with training in crisis intervention, a social worker, or a psychologist.

Don’t think that one meeting or conversation will resolve the entire matter. Plan to have a few follow-up meetings to continue the conversation and provide ongoing support.

Do generate hope and hopeful attitudes. Reflect on this biblical insight: “When hope is crushed, the heart is crushed” (Prov. 13:12). Do all you can to foster hopeful attitudes because without hope depression will deepen into despair. It is always helpful to convey optimism and the expectation of a successful outcome. Even if the matter is at a crisis level, try to spotlight areas of encouragement.

Consider this wisdom from psychologist H. Norman Wright, author of Crisis Counseling: “It is important to foster hope and positive expectations. Do not give them false promises, but encourage them to solve their problems. Your belief in their capabilities will be important. This is a time when they need to borrow your hope and faith until theirs returns. You expect the crisis to be resolved in some way at some time, and you expect them to work and be able to solve problems. It is your approach and interaction with them that usually conveys this rather than making blanket statements to them.”

Don’t abandon the pastor after meeting with him or her. Continue to help manage the illness by:

► Being emotionally supportive and patient
► Expressing compassion for what the minister is experiencing without claiming to understand all of it

► Keeping the relationship as unchanged as possible
► Remaining available throughout the treatment

Prayer

Of course, it is vital that those seeking to minister to a mentally ill minister pray not only for their pastor but for themselves, to have both courage and wisdom as they search out to reach out and help. The following prayer, originally written by the Lakeshore Mental Health Institute, Knoxville, Tennessee, is a good model:

O God, whose circle of care includes all, encourage us and our families, that we might cope faithfully with mental illness. Deepen our understanding. Teach us patience. Increase our capacity for empathy and acceptance. Help us not to be victimized by the stigmatizing attitudes of the uninformed and uncaring. Enable us to share the journey to find strength in partnership with others, to build together a community of support and healing. So nurture and sustain us in Your love and understanding, that we may act wisely and serve compassionately, to relieve suffering, provide care, and offer help. Amen.  

Pastor and physician

to care for the spiritual concerns of both patient and family, resulting in a win-win scenario.

I have no doubt that blended ministry is effective. After all, it has its origins in divine inspiration and example. Are we going to apply it more broadly and enthusiastically?

“Medical missionary work is a sacred thing of God’s own devising. . . . Those who cooperate with God in His effort to save, working on the lines in which Christ worked, will be wholly successful.”

As a minister, why not share this article with your selected physician, or if you’re a physician, with your selected pastor; and see where it takes you both?

3 Hinshaw.

March 2005

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When pastors are hospitalized

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particularly valuable prayer aids during sickness. For example, echoing the words of Psalm 130, a sick pastor can truly pray, “Out of the depths I have cried to You, LORD; Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication” (NKJV). Perhaps more than any other prayer form, psalms capture the range of moods a pastor may experience during hospitalization.

When the pastor returns home

Give the pastor a chance to recuperate after returning home. If he or she has gone through major surgery or a serious illness, a full recovery may take months. We have seen pastors rehospitalized, because they returned to an active ministerial life before they were completely ready. Recovery takes time.

Similarly, keep your expectations of a recovering pastor realistic. He or she may experience reduced energy levels and function in a less-than-optimal fashion for a long period of time. Don’t expect things of a recuperating pastor that he or she cannot produce. Overly high and unrealistic expectations only lead to frustration on the part of the pastor and everyone else as well.

In conclusion, because of who and what they are as ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ, all pastors are looked upon as healers. When pastors are hospitalized, however, they take on a new identity. Now, they are wounded healers. Depending upon the nature of the illness, a hospitalization may represent a genuine turning point in the life of a pastor. Hospitalization can bring times of tribulation, testing, but also triumph. It can be a sacred time in which God’s hand upon the pastor is very evident.

The two of us as hospital chaplains are careful to respect a pastor’s dignity during and after hospitalization. We never approach a pastor with our own agenda. Instead, we try to listen and learn, and take our cues from what is being said by both the pastor and the family. In our visits to hospitalized pastors, we see ourselves as privileged instruments of God’s healing power, and we are always aware of the possibility that either of us could be the next patient in a hospital bed.

Letters continued from page 3

new relationship. It is all about Jesus, not us. Our dining room table has become holy ground to us.

There are a number of counselors around the country who are doing this type of counseling. If pastors are interested in learning more about the philosophy of the author of the material (John Regier) or the materials themselves, the Web site is biblicalconcepts.org or biblicalconcepts.org.

I know that my life has been changed by this material, and I have watched as God has revitalized the lives of some of my colleagues in ministry through this ministry. Don’t let anyone tell you there is no hope. There is if you are willing to be totally honest and open with yourself, God, and your spouse.

—Pastor Bruce Hayward, Village Seventh-day Adventist Church, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Sexual infidelity continued from page 11

origin. Love will not be a mere exchange of soft and flattering words. The loom of heaven weaves with warp and woof finer, yet more firm, than can be woven by the looms of earth. The result is not a tissue fabric, but a texture that will bear wear and test and trial. Heart will be bound to heart in the golden bonds of love that is enduring.”

Miroslav Kis, Ph.D., is professor of ethics at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Genuine medical missionary work is bound up inseparably with the keeping of God’s commandments, of which the Sabbath is especially mentioned, since it is the great memorial of God’s creative work. Its observance is bound up with the work of restoring the moral image of God in man. —Testimonies, vol. 6, pp. 265, 266

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3 Matthews and Hubbard, 45, 46.
5 Matthews and Hubbard, 53.
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In his lectures as in his life, the word shines. Dr. Robert Smith, Jr., is a much-loved professor of Christian preaching at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama, and a regular Bible teacher at the historic Allen Temple AME church in Cincinnati, Ohio. He earned a Ph.D. from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and the necessary life experience as a husband, father, pastor, and civic leader.

Her 17 years as a missionary in war-ravaged southeast Asia tested her confidence in Scripture. Her 17 years as a college teacher of Bible and biblical languages gave her the chance to plant those life lessons in a new generation. Dr. Beatrice Neall is a much-published author and ministry leader with a special passion for nurturing women in theological education. She has also served on many commissions for the Seventh-day Adventist Church dealing with doctrinal, ethical and curricular matters. In retirement, she continues to teach English to refugees using the stories of the Bible.

His scholarship in Old Testament studies and Biblical languages has earned him accolades in Canada, the United States, and Europe. His editorial role with the New Living Translation of the Bible illustrates his commitment to practical uses of Scripture. Dr. Daniel Block is a professor of Old Testament Interpretation at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, an expert on the Biblical book of Ezekiel, and a passionate participant in the life of his local Baptist congregation.

Dr. Ivan Blazen's warmth and wit have endeared him to more than three decades of undergraduate and seminary students. A long-time professor of New Testament at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan, Blazen now teaches religion at Loma Linda University in southern California. He holds a Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary, and a deep faith in the relevance of the Bible to the practical concerns of everyday life.

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