TWO MINISTRIES, ONE MISSION
Recently HOPE was privileged to partner with Pastor David Resendes in designing and mailing a custom handbill advertising his series of meetings conducted at the Ardmore, OK church.

Following is Pastor Resendes follow-up report to the Hamblin’s HOPE team:

“The LORD really BLESSED!!! We had a good number of people coming, some were those we’ve been working with for a number of months or even a couple years. There was one influential couple that really enjoyed the meetings and want to see if we can present to more people in the community. There are people that want to start coming to our church. And so far, we have six people who want to be baptized!!! The people from our church who have come have been revived and it has given our own members another perspective on evangelism. Also, the sound/light tech we hired from the theatre we rented is a pastor from another denomination and these meetings reached him. We gave him a couple gifts - one being the “Desire of Ages” - he already read the first six pages (during the meeting). God is calling him back!!!

Thank you so much for the Handbill, slides and ads. I really appreciated your help.”

—Pastor David Resendes
Ardmore SDA Church
CONTENTS

06 Two ministries, one mission
What can be done to bring pastors and teachers closer? Why is it important that we do so?
George R. Knight

10 God’s promised gift: An urgent appeal for revival, reformation, discipleship, and evangelism
Do we realize that all heaven waits to pour out the Holy Spirit in infinite power for the finishing of God’s work on earth?
2010 Annual Council

14 Dealing with criticism from parishioners
Ten suggestions that aid in handling something that every pastor will face.
Amofah A. Asamoah

17 Theological diversity: A threat, an asset, or what?
Is it really such an enormous problem, as many seem to think, that Adventist thinking has become much more diverse than it used to be? Is it really such a threat?
Reinder Bruinsma

20 Reflections on the future of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America: Trends and challenges (part 1 of 2)
How is the Seventh-day Adventist Church doing in terms of growth, finances, and Christian education?
David Beckworth and S. Joseph Kidder

24 Matthew 16:13–20: Jesus’ warning to His disciples
If Jesus came to earth to reveal the Father, then why would He not want His disciples to tell others that He was the Messiah?
Younis M. Sadiq

28 Planning evangelistic strategies
Seven suggestions that have universal application for the pastor who wants to succeed in evangelism.
Joe A. Webb

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All submissions must be received no later than MAY 31, 2011.
It’s not new, but it’s needed

At the October 2010 Annual Council of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists,* several actions were taken, but one item in particular was the focus of this gathering. This was not a major policy issue or an emphasis on a program. Rather, this item was a call for revival and reformation. Some may say, “This isn’t new, I’ve heard this before.” But before you stop reading, give me a few moments to expand upon this item was a call for revival and an emphasis on a program. Rather, this item was a call for revival and reformation. Some may say, “This isn’t new, I’ve heard this before.” But before you stop reading, give me a few moments to expand upon this and then you’ll be ready to respond.

Yes, we can correctly state that this call for revival and reformation does not come as a new plea, but the truth is, just because someone repeats something does not mean that the item cannot be considered important. We repeat many good things—anniversaries, birthdays, family events, church celebrations, to name a few. Such events bring us joy. Likewise, the call for revival and reformation should also bring us joy. The roots for this call are in the Bible and throughout the history of the Christian church. Whenever God’s people have responded, the church has been blessed.

In this issue, you will find helpful material on this topic: an urgent appeal, initiatives, broadcast information, and resources, for example. However, in this editorial, I want to focus on two aspects of revival and reformation. Without them, the spiritual impact of this emphasis will be minimal.

The Word of God

In any revival and reformation, the Word of God must be central both to the church and to each of us personally. We have observed individuals who, with great enthusiasm and zeal, tell others what the message of the Bible means to them—and indeed that constitutes the essence of true witnessing. Many of the psalms exhibit how personal God’s message should be for us. Martin Luther, among others, found hope in the psalms because, in them, he met a loving God who had a message for him. That is still so today.

Second, the communication from God must be central in our preaching. At times, we have all been guilty of using the Scriptures as a way of getting our message across, and in doing so, we failed to communicate the message of the Word itself. On more than a few occasions, I have heard sermons that contained many biblical references. The message sounded biblical; but, in reality, biblical passages were used to buttress the message the speaker wanted to communicate. Sadly, the speaker was convinced that the message was from the Bible. May the Lord keep us from using the Bible to communicate our personal views, no matter how important we think they are. Instead of using the Word for personal purposes, we must—under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, fervent prayer, and much study—effectively preach the Word.

It is personal

As pastors, we sometimes find it tempting to focus on the “church” whenever we think of revival and reformation. And certainly, the church is involved, but in the process we can easily leave ourselves out of the equation. This temptation centers on reviving and reforming others while we continue our own less than stellar spiritual journey. We may also find it tempting to assume that the spiritual road we have traveled resembles the same road that others must travel. This perspective focuses on us, not on God—it focuses on who we think we were and who we are now. These approaches can lead to the dangerous experience of self-praise. The real question, however, remains, How does God see me?

William Miller, the great Second Advent preacher, provides a good example of the personal nature of revival and reformation. Although he grew up in a Christian home, he eventually became a critic of the Bible. Through a series of events, he started studying the Bible and experienced personal transformation. This transformation led him to become a powerful preacher of the Word of God. In his sermons, he did not focus on his previous disbelief or on his current spiritual exploits. Rather, in his sermons we sense his spiritual transformation. His change came because he allowed God to change him—not because he proclaimed his transformation.

Revival and reformation: we need them. Once we personally experience them, we can then—and only then—proclaim God’s transforming power while blessing others in the process.

* The Annual Council is the full meeting of the General Conference Executive Committee. Usually this large body (approximately 300 from around the world) meets once a year.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or write to 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.
Two ministries, one mission

Editor’s note: This article is adapted from the author’s keynote address at the Atlantic Union Conference Pastor/Teacher Convention held in Providence, Rhode Island, in August 2009. The oral style has been retained.

One of the most remarkable things about Adventism is that the only two professional groups, pastors and teachers, who are employed in the local church full time in most congregations, often have little understanding, sympathy, or even contact with each other’s ministries, trials, challenges, and contributions. That fact is more than remarkable; it is tragic.

What can be done to help bring these two crucial professions closer? And why is it important for the mission that we do?

One mission

For starters, in Paul’s discussion of spiritual gifts—when he noted that “some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers” (Eph. 4:11, RSV)—he used a Greek construction that indicates the office of pastor and teacher was held by the same person. Commenting on this passage, F. F. Bruce notes that “the two terms ‘pastors (shepherds) and teachers’ denote one and the same class of men.”1 On the other hand, the other gifts are listed separately.

The significance of this point is that, in order to remain functional, these two gifts should not be divided. Pastors must not only care for the souls of their flock, but must also be teachers. Teachers, likewise, are not merely expounders of truth but, like pastors, have an abiding care for the individuals under their tutelage. Christian teachers function in a pastoral role to their students, and Christian pastors function in a teaching role to their parishioners.

The major difference between the roles of pastors and teachers today has to do with the current division of labor. In twenty-first-century society, the Christian teacher is usually seen as someone who pastors in a “school” context, while the pastor is defined as someone who teaches in the “larger religious community.” Their function is, however, essentially the same, even though by today’s definitions they are in charge of different divisions of the Lord’s vineyard. There might seem to be two different ministries here, but there is really only one mission.

And what is that mission? Ellen G. White sets it forth nicely in the book Education. “Our ideas of education take too narrow and too low a range. There is need of a broader scope, a higher aim. True education means more than the pursuit of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come.”2

Ellen White gets more specific. In a passage that undergirds her entire philosophy of education, she points out that in order to comprehend the meaning and goal of education, we must understand four things about people: (1) their original nature, (2) the purpose of God in creating them, (3) the change that took place in the human condition at the Fall, and (4) God’s plan for yet fulfilling His purpose in the education of the human race.3

She then explains those four items. First, humanity was created in the image of God. Second, people were to reveal ever more fully God’s image by continual development on the earth and throughout eternity. Third, disobedience badly damaged, but did not destroy, the image in its mental, physical, and spiritual aspects. And disobedience also brought death.

But the fourth item is the focal point of the mission issue. In spite of the Fall, we read, “the race was not left without hope. By infinite love and mercy the plan of salvation had been devised, and a life of probation was granted. To restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind, and soul, that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized—this was to be the work of redemption. This is the object of education, the great object of life.”

The salvation of souls

Scripture presents the same picture. Central to a proper understanding of the Bible is the Fall, described in Genesis 3. Neither Scripture nor daily experience makes sense if we explain away, as legend, the first three chapters of Genesis, which says that God created humanity in His image and likeness—an exalted state (Gen. 1:26, 27). Adam and Eve, however, rejected God and
chose their own way. As a result, they became alienated and separated from God (chap. 3:8–10), their fellow beings (vv. 11, 12), their own selves (v. 13), and the natural world (vv. 17–19). Separating themselves from the Source of life, they became subject to death (Gen. 2:17; 3:19). Humanity had become hopeless and lost in the fullest sense of the word.

A unique message
At the same time, however, if Adventist teachers and pastors limit themselves only to the evangelical function of leading souls to Christ, they have failed in their responsibilities.

Why? Because Adventism is not merely another denomination with a few different doctrines and some countercultural dietary practices. From its inception, the church has viewed itself as a movement of prophecy, a church with a special message to proclaim to all the world, a call centered in the Apocalypse of John, in what we call the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14. For one reason or another, the command to preach those Christ-given messages has been neglected by other religious bodies. In that context, Seventh-day Adventists have viewed themselves as a called-out people with a unique message that must be preached to all the earth before Jesus returns again.

This is the understanding that has literally driven Adventists to the ends of the earth and the islands of the sea until Seventh-day Adventism has become the most widespread, unified Protestant body in history. Adventists have been willing to sacrifice their lives and money to achieve that end. And, in the process, they developed a church organization to spearhead that thrust, and an educational system and publishing ministry to enlighten and convict its membership and prepare them for either going to all the world themselves or sponsoring others to fulfill the denomination’s unique mission.

We dare not become bashful about that mission. It is the

PASTORS MUST NOT ONLY CARE FOR THE SOULS OF THEIR FLOCK, BUT MUST ALSO BE TEACHERS. TEACHERS, LIKewise, ARE NOT MERELY EXPOUNDERS OF TRUTH BUT, LIKE PASTORS, HAVE AN ABIDING CARE FOR THE INDIVIDUALS UNDER THEIR TUTELAGE.
The bottom line? A school that no longer understands its reason for being, that has forgotten its message and mission, will eventually lose its support. And it should. A Seventh-day Adventist school that is not both Christian and Adventist is unneeded. Schools in the evangelical, and even the public sector, can achieve all of its functions. Pastor Shane Anderson is right when he wrote that “Adventist parents increasingly aren’t willing to pay the price to send their kids” to institutions that have lost their purpose. “After all,” he writes, “why pay thousands of dollars to send your child to a school that is now no longer substantially different from the average Christian school—or the local public school—down the street?”

A needed harmony

Yet before pastors get too smug, a word of caution: the same disease infects a lot of them as well. Too many pastors have become adept at preaching good evangelical sermons; but they have all too often neglected and avoided the truths and mission that have made us Adventists. In the end, that will lead to self-neutering. After all, why go to the Adventist church, when the preaching is just as good (if not better) down the street?

If Adventism has an important message and mission, let’s hear it in both our schools and churches, for both have the same mission.

The problem is, however, that this important connection between the ministry and teaching isn’t always seen. For example, a church member wrote that “the pastor of my church has decided that Christian education is irrelevant and not soul winning and therefore our local Seventh-day Adventist school should be closed so as not to waste any more of the money that he could be putting into his evangelism to win souls. He has previously sent out emails stating that it is his intention to see the school closed. Last school year the school presented a church service at each of the constituent churches, except ours, because the pastor felt it was irrelevant to the members and a waste of time, and told them they were not welcome.” This pastor even preached against supporting church schools because this had no immediate results.8

While that frame of mind has probably always been around, demographic shifts in the pastoral workforce have increased its popularity. In 1965, about four-fifths of the 45 individuals graduating as theology majors in my class at Pacific Union College had been educated in Adventist schools up through academy (13 of them were preachers’ kids). But for the past three decades, fewer and fewer preachers’ kids are entering ministry, as their own parents have downplayed the unique aspects of the message. Also, an increasing number of adult converts entering the pastoral workforce have never spent a day in an Adventist
church school or academy. If public school was good enough for them, so the logic runs, it’s good enough for their church members’ children. That mentality undoubtedly contributes to the ongoing proportional shrinkage of the denomination’s educational system. In 1945, the ratio of students in Adventist schools to church membership was 25 per 100. That figure remained somewhat constant until 1965. But since that time, the ratio has dropped off precipitously, to 15 per 100 in 1985 and 9 per 100 in 2000. At the same time, more non-Adventist students are enrolling in our schools, which makes the actual ratio of Adventist students to members closer to 5 per 100.

Some pastors, who see the educational system as antievangelistic, seem to have logical arguments: *because* *the school subsidy is often* the largest item in the church’s budget, *couldn’t* *the money from the subsidy and from tuition be redirected to “better” purposes?* In addition, the *results* *of* *education are* *often* *not immediately apparent.*

Are these assumptions valid, though? One pastor, who has never worked for a school, violently disagrees with these assumptions. “In my experience,” he writes, “Adventist education is one of the most effective ways to prepare young people for the second coming of Christ. Furthermore, I believe that our schools—rightly run—are more successful at doing this than any other single evangelistic method, including Revelation seminars, church planting, felt-needs evangelism, or contemporary worship services. Also I believe that Adventist education has been the key to propagating our unique Adventist mission in the world.” He also argues “that our schools are the legs that ultimately keep the Advent movement running.”

**The power of influence**

Which one of the two positions is right? For the short answer, we need only to turn to world history. There’s a reason that both nations and churches have sought to control education. Whoever shapes educational policy shapes the future. Thus, it is not difficult to see the logic in early Adventism’s establishing an educational system that would prepare both future members and future leaders.

Moving beyond the social function of the system, we need to grasp the power of teacher influence. Most pastors do well to see their people one or two hours a week, and communicate mostly in large impersonal gatherings to adults who have already formed their characters and have made most of life’s important decisions. In contrast, the average elementary school teacher has face-to-face contact with impressionable students 30 hours per week.

Which leads to a simple question, what kind of person do you want to have such a strong influence on your child? Who do you want to define their attitudes and values? A non-Christian, a Christian with a different understanding of the Bible, or a like-minded, dedicated, believing Adventist? Never forget that teachers are powerful links between your children and God, and between your children and a Christian Adventist way of thinking and lifestyle. Teachers will, in one way or another, influence your children’s understanding of truth and values.

When pastoring years ago in Texas, I had a very dedicated family who desired with all their hearts to educate their only child in the best way possible. They agreed that the public system was not the answer. But there was no Adventist school. They finally decided that a Catholic school was better than secularism. They were somewhat shocked when their daughter chose to become a nun! They had discovered the power of education as a life-shaping event.

There is no doubt as to the evangelistic potential of Adventist education. But what about the finances involved? Do church schools eat away at the financial life of a church? The only longitudinal study on the topic that I am aware of is a five-year study which revealed that churches not related to a school experienced on average a loss of both membership and tithe each year of the study, while those supporting a church school experienced increases in both tithe and membership each year.10

**Two ministries, one mission**

It should be obvious by now that Adventists in the pastoral ministry and Adventists in the educational ministry have one message and one mission. They both work to reach a lost world for whom salvation in Christ and belief in His glorious appearing are the only real hope.

Both ministries are educational, both are pastoral, and the health of each is linked to that of the other. Both are frontline operations in the war against sin and evil. And both prosper most when supported by the other. It is therefore crucial for educational clergy to privately and publicly support their pastoral brothers and sisters, and it is crucial for pastoral clergy to energetically support their educational counterparts. Healthy schools have a good relationship with their sponsoring churches; and one of a school’s best allies, in terms of both students and finances, is a supportive pastor.

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**3.** Ibid., 14, 15.

**4.** Ibid., 15, 16; emphasis added.

**5.** Ibid., 30.


**7.** Shane Anderson, *How to Kill Adventist Education (and How to Give It a Fighting Chance!)* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2008), 22, 56; emphasis added.


**9.** Anderson, *How to Kill Adventist Education*, no. 12, 144.

God’s promised gift: An urgent appeal for revival, reformation, discipleship, and evangelism

The 2010 Annual Council of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists took an action addressing various church leaders around the world. The editors are sharing the full text of this appeal because it comes from church representatives throughout the world. We urge our readers to look upon this document not as a program that will dictate what you need to do; rather, as an invitation to examine our own spiritual lives and ask ourselves what kind of leadership are we giving to the people we serve.

In another section of this article, we are providing a sidebar that lists some specific events that promote this appeal. We suggest that you visit the various Web sites listed. From time to time, there will be other resources given and suggestions shared.

We share with our readers the full text of the document as voted on October 11, 2010. This information will also be shared with the readers of Adventist World in an upcoming issue.

God has uniquely called the Seventh-day Adventist Church both to live and to proclaim His last-day message of love and truth to the world (Revelation 14:6–12). The challenge of reaching the more than six billion people on planet Earth with His end-time message seems impossible. The task is overwhelming. From a human perspective, the rapid fulfillment of Christ’s great commission anytime soon appears unlikely (Matthew 28:19, 20).

The church’s growth rate is simply not keeping pace with the world’s burgeoning population. An honest evaluation of our current evangelistic impact on the world leads to the conclusion that unless there is a dramatic change, we will not complete Heaven’s assignment in this generation. In spite of our best efforts, all our plans, strategies, and resources are incapable of finishing God’s mission for His glory on earth.

Christ’s promise to His New Testament church


The grace of God overflowed from their hearts to their families, friends, and working associates. Just a few decades after the Crucifixion, the apostle Paul could report...
that the gospel is “preached to every creature under heaven” (Colossians 1:23).* How was it possible for an obscure group of relatively insignificant believers to impact the world in such a short amount of time? How could so few Christians be used of God to change the world forever?

Christ’s great commission was accompanied by His great promise. The Savior commanded His disciples “not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4). The Savior promised, “‘But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth’” (Acts 1:8).

The love of Christ controlled every aspect of the lives of the disciples and moved them to a passionate commitment to His service. They sought God for the promised power of the Holy Spirit and knelt before Him in heartfelt confession and earnest repentance. They placed priority on seeking Heaven’s blessing. They set aside times for prayer and searching the Scriptures. Their petty differences were swallowed up in their all-consuming desire to share Christ’s love with everyone they met. They were absorbed in reaching the world with the gospel. Nothing was more important. They recognized that they were powerless to accomplish the mission without the mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Describing the experience of the disciples, Ellen White wrote, “Putting away all differences, all desire for the supremacy, they came close together in Christian fellowship. . . . Sadness filled their hearts as they thought of how many times they had grieved Him by their slowness of comprehension, their failure to understand the lessons that, for their good, He was trying to teach them. . . .”

“... The disciples felt their spiritual need and cried to the Lord for the holy unction that was to fit them for the work of soul saving. They did not ask for a blessing for themselves merely. They were weighted with the burden of the salvation of souls. They realized that the gospel was to be carried to the world, and they claimed the power that Christ had promised” (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 37).

Christ fulfilled His Word. The Holy Spirit was poured out in Pentecostal power. Thousands were converted in a day. The message of Christ’s love impacted the world. In a short time, the name of Jesus Christ was on the lips of men and women everywhere. “By the co-operation of the divine Spirit, the apostles did a work that shook the world. To every nation was the gospel carried in a single generation” (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 593).

Christ’s promise to His end-time church

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in the early rain was only a prelude of what is to come. God has promised to pour out His Holy Spirit in abundance in the last days (Joel 2:23; Zechariah 10:1). The earth will be “illuminated with his glory” (Revelation 18:1). The work of God on earth will be finished rapidly (Matthew 24:14; Romans 9:28). The church will experience a spiritual revival and the fullness of the Holy Spirit’s power like never before in its history. Speaking of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Peter gives us this assurance: “For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:39). Ellen White adds, “Before the final visitation of God’s judgments upon the earth there will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. The Spirit and power of God will be poured out upon His children. At that time many will separate themselves from those churches in which the love of this world has supplanted love for God and His word. Many, both of ministers and people, will gladly accept those great truths which God has caused to be proclaimed at this time to prepare a people for the Lord’s second coming” (The Great Controversy, p. 464).

Hundreds of thousands of people will accept God’s last-day message through the teaching and preaching of His Word. Prayer, Bible study, and witness are the elements of all true revival. The manifestation of the Holy Spirit will intensify as the end approaches, “Near the close of earth’s harvest, a special bestowal of spiritual grace is promised to prepare the church for the coming of the Son of man” (The Faith I Live By, p. 333). And “By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers” (The Great Controversy, p. 612).

There is nothing more important than knowing Jesus, studying His Word, understanding His truth, and seeking His promise for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power for the fulfilling of the gospel commission. God’s last-day prophet to the remnant wrote in words too plain to be misunderstood, “A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work” (Selected Messages, book 1, p. 121).

If a genuine spiritual revival is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs, should we not, as leaders, place priority on seeking Heaven’s promised blessing with all our hearts?

Our great need: Revival and reformation

When we seek Jesus, He fills us with His presence and power through the gift of the Holy Spirit. We long to know Him better. The Holy Spirit reawakens the dormant spiritual faculties of the soul. There is nothing we desire more than to have a deep and life-changing relationship with Jesus. The revived heart experiences a vital connection to Jesus through prayer and the Word. Reformation is the corresponding change that comes in our lives as the result of revival.
“A revival and a reformation must take place, under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from spiritual death. Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend” (Selected Messages, book 1, p. 128). Reformation does not manifest itself in a self-righteous attitude that condemns others. It is the transformation of character that reveals the fruits of the Spirit in the life (Galatians 5:22–24). Obedience to God’s will is the evidence of all true revival. Our Lord longs for a revived people whose lives reflect the loveliness of His character. There is nothing that Jesus desires more than a people who are passionate about personally knowing His love and sharing that love with others.

Commitment and appeal
As leaders and representatives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church assembled at the world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States, for the 2010 Annual Council, we give thanks to our great and awesome God for His faithfulness and abundant blessings to His church since its inception. The rapid worldwide expansion of His church in both its membership and institutions is nothing short of a miracle of God. Although we praise Him for marvelously working to fulfill His purposes through His church, and thank Him for the godly leaders who have guided His people in the past, we humbly acknowledge that because of our human frailties, even our best efforts are tainted by sin and in need of cleansing through the grace of Christ. We recognize that we have not always placed priority on seeking God through prayer and His Word for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power. We humbly confess that in our personal lives, our administrative practices, and committee meetings, we too often have labored in our own strength. Too often God’s mission of saving a lost world has not taken first place in our hearts. At times in our

Initiatives as voted by the Annual Council of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists on October 11, 2010

In addition to the document “God’s Promised Gift: An Urgent Appeal for Revival, Reformation, Discipleship, and Evangelism,” the Annual Council approved a number of specific initiatives of general interest to our readers. We share these with you.

- “777” Worldwide Holy Spirit Prayer Fellowship—Seventh-day Adventists praying seven days a week at 7:00 a.m. or p.m. for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit’s power and presence. Praying any hour on the hour a person will join with thousands of others in other time zones around the world bringing unity. “A chain of earnest praying believers should encircle the world . . . to pray for the Holy Spirit.” Review and Herald, January 3, 1907.
- New Year’s Eve/Day Worldwide Day of Prayer culminates a weeklong series of television programs on Hope Channel that allows every church member around the world to participate in seeking God for a revival experience in 2011.
- Worldwide Days for Prayer and Fasting—First Sabbath of each quarter designated as days of prayer and fasting for the world church. Encourage families and individuals to establish the first day of each month and one day a week as normal or partial fast days.
- Operation Global Rain, a ten-day worldwide prayer/spiritual emphasis January 5–15, 2011, as a follow-up to January 1 Day of Prayer.
- Plans are being developed to increase study of the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy writings.
- Encourage all members to read and study The Great Controversy for revival in 2011 in preparation for major distribution of The Great Controversy around the world in 2012.
- True Revival, the Church’s Greatest Need book reprinted by the White Estate. For availability, visit www.rhpa.org.

A resource Web site for these initiatives, www.revivalandreformation.com, will be available starting December 1, 2010.

Worldwide broadcasts available
Starting December 25, 2010, the Hope Channel will broadcast various revival and reformation events. One of the broadcasts will be a special message on January 1, 2011, from Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. To get the broadcast schedule for your area, visit www.hopetv.org.
busyness of doing good things we have neglected the most important thing—knowing Him. Too often petty jealousies, ambitions, and fractured personal relationships have crowded out our longing for revival and reformation and caused us to labor in our human strength rather than in His divine power.

We accept the clear instruction of our Lord that “The lapse of time has wrought no change in Christ’s parting promise to send the Holy Spirit as His representative. It is not because of any restriction on the part of God that the riches of His grace do not flow earthward to men. If the fulfillment of the promise is not seen as it might be, it is because the promise is not appreciated as it should be. If all were willing, all would be filled with the Spirit” (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 50).

We are confident that all heaven is waiting to pour out the Holy Spirit in infinite power for the finishing of God’s work on earth. We acknowledge that the coming of Jesus has been delayed and that our Lord longed to come decades ago. We repent of our lukewarmness, our worldliness, and our limited passion for Christ and His mission. We sense Christ calling us to a deeper relationship with Him in prayer and Bible study and a more passionate commitment to share His last-day message with the world. We rejoice that “It is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten the coming of the Saviour” (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 600).

Therefore, as representatives of the world church and on behalf of our entire membership, we commit ourselves:

1. To personally place priority on seeking God for spiritual revival and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power in our own lives, our families, and our ministries.
2. To individually set aside significant amounts of time daily to fellowship with Christ through prayer and the study of God’s Word.
3. To examine our own hearts and ask the Holy Spirit to convict us of anything that may keep us from revealing the character of Jesus. We desire willing hearts so that nothing in our lives hinders the fullness of the Holy Spirit’s power.
4. To encourage the ministries of the church to spend time praying, studying God’s Word, and seeking God’s heart to understand His plans for His church.
5. To encourage each of our church organizations to set aside time for administrators, pastors, healthcare workers, publishing house workers, educators, students, and all employees to seek Jesus and the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit together through a study of God’s Word and prayer.
6. To use every available media outlet, conference, and workshop to appeal to church members to seek a deeper relationship with Jesus for the promised revival and reformation.
7. To urgently appeal to and invite our entire church membership to join us in opening our hearts to the life-changing power of the Holy Spirit, which will transform our lives, our families, our organizations, and our communities.

We especially recognize that God is going to use children and youth in this last mighty revival and encourage all of our young people to participate in seeking God for spiritual revival in their own lives and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to share their faith with others.

We appeal to each church member to unite with church leaders and millions of other Seventh-day Adventists seeking a deeper relationship with Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at 7:00 each morning or evening, seven days a week. This is an urgent call to circle the globe with earnest intercession. This is a call to total commitment to Jesus and to experience the life-changing power of the Holy Spirit that our Lord is longing to give now.

We believe that the purpose of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power is to finish Christ’s mission on earth so He can come quickly. Recognizing that our Lord will only pour out His Spirit in its fullness on a church that has a passion for lost people, we determine to place and maintain revival, reformation, discipleship, and evangelism at the top of all our church business agendas. More than anything else, we long for Jesus to come.

We urge every church administrator, departmental leader, institutional worker, health worker, literature evangelist, chaplain, educator, pastor, and church member to join us in making revival, reformation, discipleship, and evangelism the most important and urgent priorities of our personal lives and our areas of ministry. We are confident that as we seek Him together, God will pour out His Holy Spirit in abundant measure, the work of God on earth will be finished, and Jesus will come. With the aged apostle John on the Isle of Patmos we cry out, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20). }

* All Bible texts are taken from the New King James Version.
Dealing with criticism from parishioners

Generally speaking, parishioners appreciate the roles pastors perform in their churches and communities. This includes preaching/teaching Christian doctrine; performing rites of passage, such as baby dedications, baptisms, weddings, and funerals; pastoral care, such as visitation, counseling, comforting, and praying for people; and administration, such as chairing meetings, developing in-reach and outreach programs for the church and community, and representing the church to the community.

But despite the roles pastors perform, they are not spared criticism from a number of their parishioners. Some of the criticism may be constructive and some destructive.

Pastoral ministry has its ups and downs. One of the up moments is when church programs work well in the church and parishioners support and affirm the pastor’s ministry. During this time, the ministry becomes pleasant and rewarding. A down moment occurs when there is a lack of support from parishioners and the program fails. The pastor faces criticism and bitter opposition from parishioners that can lead to feelings of frustration and discouragement.

Let us face it, a leader cannot avoid criticism. It does not matter what leadership position you hold, whether in politics, as the president or prime minister of a country, the head of a corporate organization, a pastor, or church administrator, there will be criticism.

Some years ago an experienced minister advised me how to deal with criticism from parishioners. What caught my attention was a remark he made that has encouraged me in my ministry. He said, “Jesus faced criticisms, too, and if you are a pastor and parishioners don’t criticize all the work you do, you wouldn’t know how you are performing in ministry.”¹ Since then, I have learned to take criticism differently.

Jesus faced criticism too

Jesus faced criticism in His ministry. Matthew writes, “Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw” (Matt. 12:22).² While the multitudes were amazed, the Pharisees criticized Jesus for casting out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons (v. 24).

Some criticized even His eating habits. They said Jesus was “‘a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!” (Matt. 11:19).³ On another occasion, the Pharisees and scribes were critical of Him, saying, “‘This Man receives sinners and eats with them’” (Luke 15:2). Yet, reaching out to save sinners was an integral part of Jesus’ mission to this world. No wonder, in a similar incident in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus replied to the Pharisees, “‘For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance’” (Matt. 9:13).

In spite of criticism, Jesus was a successful leader. He did not allow criticism of His good deeds to divert attention from His goal to reveal His Father’s love for humanity, and preach the good news of salvation. He stayed focused and accomplished His mission. Pastors need to understand that we will face criticism as Jesus did.

Besides, unlike Jesus who did not sin (Heb. 4:15), we will make mistakes and face criticism as well.

Reasons for criticism

Here are a few reasons, both positive and negative, why pastors may face criticism.

1. Failure to fulfill the responsibilities of pastoral leadership. Pastoral leadership can be very demanding and parishioners often know when pastors perform their jobs or not. Hence, pastors should not be satisfied with a level of mediocrity in their job performances. When we fail to fulfill our responsibilities, criticism will most likely come.

2. When a pastor wants to introduce change. Usually, when a pastor is transferred to a new district and attempts to change established tradition, some parishioners criticize the pastor and resist such change. To most parishioners “change is uncomfortable and often threatening.”³ There will always be resolute defenders of tradition in every congregation who will criticize your intentions for change.

3. A breach of pastoral ethics. Pastors are expected to uphold and commit themselves to practice a pastoral code of ethics. For example, parishioners want a pastor they can trust and confide in with their personal issues. Failure to “practice strictest professional confidentiality”⁴
will result in criticism from parishioners and a loss of credibility.

4. *Pastor a district for years without transfer.* Though parishioners may feel uncomfortable when a change occurs in the status quo, this is not always so when it comes to a change in pastoral leadership. With time, parishioners get used to the pastor’s method of preaching and leadership skills.

5. *Parishioners’ unresolved issues.* Sometimes parishioners go through church-related issues for which they have not sought help from a counselor or their local pastor. Quite often, they are stressed out, impatient, and angry because of these unresolved issues. The church board meeting, or the church business meeting, becomes the forum for them to blame and criticize the pastor for what goes wrong in the congregation.

6. *Expectation to live above reproach.* Generally, people hold pastors in high esteem and expect much from them. Since pastors are seen as preachers of probity and accountability, parishioners expect them to live above reproach. When a pastor breaks one of the commandments or doctrines of the church, criticism or even rejection often follow.

**Approaches for dealing with criticism**

Not all criticism from parishioners is destructive. Some may be constructive; therefore pastors should take criticism seriously and not ignore it. What may be considered trivial and not given much attention may become a serious issue too difficult and too late to solve. Here are some suggestions pastors may include in their approaches to criticism from parishioners.

1. **Count criticism as a blessing, not a trial.** Let’s be realistic about this. We do not find it easy to face criticism and accept it as a blessing from God. When I started ministry, I used to think that parishioners who criticized my job performance did not like me. But I have also come to understand that criticism from parishioners may be God’s way of pointing out something I need to change or correct in dealing with an issue as a pastor. While I do not allow destructive criticism to detract me from doing my job, I do not ignore constructive criticism either. It reminds me that I am human and make mistakes. Constructive criticism also helps me learn and avoid other similar and terrible mistakes later on.

2. **Pray for guidance and for those who criticize you.** In one district, I made an appointment to see one of our conference officials for advice concerning the criticism I was facing from some parishioners. I can recall sitting in his office and pouring out my heart to him. After I finished, he looked at me and said, “You must pray for them.” I must confess that was not the answer I expected at that moment. But I continued to pray for them and before long they stopped the criticism, though a couple of them occasionally criticized me about church programs. Praying for those who criticize you will make a difference in your ministry.

3. **Avoid arguing with those who criticize you.** This is one of the difficulties a pastor may encounter with parishioners, especially when the pastor knows they are right about an issue they are being criticized for in the church. However, try not to argue with those who criticize you in public, whether at a church board or church business meeting. Assume a good disposition when confronted with criticism. Calm down, and if it requires a response, choose your words carefully and answer gently.

4. **Always do what is right.** In every decision that involves the congregation, if you have the church board’s and the majority of the members’ approval, go ahead and implement it. People will criticize and persecute you for doing the right thing, but God will admire and vindicate you for not doing the wrong thing. Ellen G. White offers encouraging words here, “To accuse and criticize those whom God is using is to accuse and criticize the Lord who has sent them.”

5. **Uphold ethics and beliefs of the church.** Whatever the pastor does should be in accordance with the church beliefs and policies. Parishioners respect pastors who are honest and have a strong affirmation for, and practice, ministerial ethics.

6. **Address the needs of your parishioners in a timely manner.** The nature of our work requires us to be sensitive to the questions and felt-needs of our parishioners, and we should make every effort to address those needs in a timely manner.
church, they want to feel that they are a part of the decision-making process of the church. The board of elders and the church board members should know the pastor’s ideas and programs. They will then be able to support and help sell them.

8. Do not sideline those who criticize you. Remember the saying Keep your friends close and your enemies closer. You will be surprised that, in most cases, parishioners who criticize you are not necessarily your enemies, but they may be going through personal issues that require a referral or your expertise in pastoral counseling.

9. Involve those who criticize you in church ministries. Sometimes you will find it necessary to harness the energy and talents of parishioners who criticize you for soul winning instead of using their time in sowing seeds of divisiveness in the church. You can request some of them to volunteer in the prayer team or a special needs ministry in the church. Meet with them periodically to affirm and evaluate what they are doing. As you engage them in church ministries, it will help them use their talents in the right areas.

10. Know if, when, and how to confront those who criticize you. Pastors approach and deal with criticism differently. Some pastors adopt an attitude of a culture of silence and ignore them. Others choose a confrontational approach. “The attitude needed to deal with criticisms is not a withdrawal from the issue or an arrogant approach to the issue. It is gentleness and firmness—an attitude of smart love.” Pastoral attitudes and approaches to criticism should follow the biblical instruction in Matthew 18:15–17. Try not to harbor any animosity toward parishioners who criticize you. Continue to love and pray for them. This will make a difference in your ministry.

Conclusion
The pastor cannot avoid criticism. Every congregation has parishioners who will affirm your ministry and those who will criticize what you do. At times, the criticism may be constructive, and other times it may be destructive. The pastor should be open to criticism and willing to accept mistakes and correct them. Never allow criticism to detract from your calling as a pastor to perform your role. You can count on Jesus as He guides you to shepherd His flock and prepare them for His kingdom.

1. During this time I was a pastor in Chicago, Illinois, with the Lake Region Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
2. All scriptures are from the New King James Version.
4. Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Handbook (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2009), 41.
Theological diversity: A threat, an asset, or what?

Recently I discovered an Adventist section on a Web site that facilitates different faith groups. An anonymous contributor offered a short analysis of the theological diversity in contemporary Seventh-day Adventism. The author suggested that Adventist theologians fall into eight categories. One end of the spectrum has “liberal” and “progressive” Adventists. On the other end are “conservative,” “extreme conservative,” and “ultra-extreme conservative” Adventists. In between are those who defend the “moral influence theory” of atonement, the “evangelical,” and the “moderate” perspectives.

Frankly, when I look at the short descriptions that are given of each category, I simply would not know where I belong. In some respects I would rather be called an “evangelical” Adventist, and in many ways I would also fit the “moderate” mold. Although the author appeared to have a thorough knowledge of the Adventist theological scene, I would argue about the classification of some of the “key figures” that were mentioned. I would definitely want to move some of them somewhat to “the left” while pushing a few to “the right.” My conclusion: categorizations such as these are, at best, of very little value.

Do we have a problem?

Nonetheless, this Web item illustrates the undeniable fact that contemporary Adventist theology has quite a few different faces. Many wonder how this has come about. How can we think so differently about divine revelation? Why do our thought leaders take us into so many, often opposite, directions? Is it because many no longer build on the Word of God? Is it because some have lost sight of the old “landmarks”? Might one of the reasons be that many Adventist theologians have received much of their intellectual formation in institutions where the presuppositions and ideas from other traditions are the standard academic fare?

But one might also ask, Is it really such an enormous problem, as many seem to think, that Adventist thinking has become much more diverse than it used to be? Is it really such a threat as many believe it is? I realize that, in asking the question, I probably betray my background. I grew up in the Netherlands, a traditionally predominantly Protestant country of rather Calvinistic vintage. Before the onslaught of rampant secularism and the dramatic decline of ecclesiastical influence on society, there was a saying that held at least some truth: Take one Dutchman and you have a theologian. Take two Dutchmen, and you have a denomination. Take three Dutchmen, and you have schism.

I grew up in an environment where theological diversity within the Calvinistic tradition was a way of life. And it did not always seem to be all that bad. It certainly fostered lively theological debate among church leaders as well as the members. But it also made me wonder whether it must, perhaps, be expected as a simple fact of life, that Christians who take the Bible as their basis will disagree on many issues since human interpretations will always be limited and imperfect.

In this brief article I would like to offer some perspectives on the theological diversity within Adventism. I realize there are also other points of view. There are probably factors that I overlook or that on which I fail to do full justice. Yet, I hope that my small contribution to the discussion can be helpful. I invite you to consider the following eight points.

1. A history of diversity. Surprisingly, many church members (and even church leaders) have a rather restricted view of the historical developments in their church, in particular with regard to the development of Adventist doctrine. Adventist truth did not miraculously drop down from heaven, as a neat package, in the late 1840s and early 1850s, but it took the better part of the nineteenth century before the Adventist teachings received their more or less definitive form. George Knight has sketched this development in a very accessible form in his book A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs. No one can come away from reading about this development without recognizing that early Adventism was able to flourish in spite of a lot of theological diversity. At the same time, we can, with gratitude, state that the Adventist doctrinal structure...
that resulted, and the Adventist sense of identity and common mission that still gives vitality to our movement, continues to be strong enough, in spite of all diversity, to guarantee an underlying unity that compares very favorably with that of many other confessional families.3

2. Theology as an organic process. Theologians do not work in a cultural or philosophical vacuum. They usually operate within a particular faith community or, at the very least, feel an affinity with a particular faith tradition and with specific methodologies. That is why we have various kinds of “western” and “non-western” theologies and tend to apply numerous other labels to the men and women who are involved in the study of theology. Fritz Guy has succinctly stressed what is involved in “thinking theologically” from an Adventist perspective. He points out how “tripolar thinking” is essential for Adventist theology. Tripolar thinking must be related to three “poles,” three fundamental concerns, “that mutually support and limit each other in a creative spiritual and theological interaction.” These three are the Christian gospel, the cultural context, and the Adventist heritage. This interaction will lead to an underlying unity in our approach to theological issues, but it will also allow for a significant degree of diversity. “It is,” Guy maintains, “as mistaken to imagine that Adventist experience, practice, and belief can be exactly the same in every place, as it is to suppose that it can be exactly the same in every generation.”4

3. Fairness to one another. Adventists are not always fully exempt from the tendency of making a caricature of those with whom they disagree—by misstating facts, quoting rather selectively, and placing undue emphases. Unfortunately, the open and constructive discussion between Adventist theologians can, at times, also be clouded by unfair representations of other “schools” of thought. Those at the more conservative side of the church may talk and write about their “liberal” brothers and sisters as if, by definition, they no longer take the Scriptures seriously, have lost their faith, and are no longer to be considered “genuine” Adventists. The liberals often have a tendency to look with some kind of pity or even disdain at their conservative attackers, as hopelessly out of touch with contemporary scholarship and stuck in an outdated fundamentalism and indefensible biblicism.

Labeling others is a dangerous business that usually does no justice to all aspects of the ideas of the other. It creates distance and distrust instead of a willingness to carefully listen and constructively dialogue in our common search for a deeper understanding of the Christian faith, within the context of our own specific heritage. A more fruitful approach is found in a recent book by Alden Thompson, who convincingly argues that liberals and conservatives in the church need each other. If the liberals dominate the discourse, we run the risk that the boundaries of what we believe become too vague or may disappear, but, if the conservatives fully have their way, the boundaries may be so rigid that all further searching for a better understanding of what we believe, and how we would communicate it, is halted.6

4. Responsibility to the community. All theological activity—whether it be thinking, teaching, or writing—must be characterized by integrity. It should be devoid of all political positioning. Those who devote themselves to the study and proclamation of divine revelation should be true in how they present themselves and share their opinions. That excludes any attempts to be perceived as conservative in view of one’s denominational role or career perspectives just as much as it is incongruent with a desire to project an image of progressiveness.

Theologians must realize their influence—either direct or indirect—on the faith community to which they belong and/or in which they engage in their work. The discussion about the values of academic freedom and loyalty to one’s faith community will probably never cease. Questions will remain as to how far this loyalty should go. Does it imply an unqualified support for all denominational doctrinal statements, and an unquestioning obedience to the church’s administrators? Does it mean that one must expect the denominational publishers to refrain from publishing any viewpoints that are in some tension with established Adventist tradition?

At the very least, I believe, there ought to be frequent opportunities where theologians can talk about what unites them and what divides them in a nonjudgmental and nonthreatening setting. Too often the left and the right talk mostly among themselves, in their own academic fraternities, and decry how far the others have strayed from pure doctrine or how irrelevant they have become, rather than to probe together where they can find common ground or how one’s position could be enriched or nuanced by the standpoint of the other.

But theology is not just for professionals—teachers, authors, editors. The church members ought to be informed, in accessible lay language, about the theological issues on the table. The various options must be honestly described. An atmosphere must be created in which the sense can prevail that truth is always greater than we ever can fathom and that all our interpretations are human and will, by definition, remain incomplete.

5. The responsibility of leadership. We often distinguish between “church leaders” and “theologians.” This is a very imprecise way of classifying people. Many church administrators are trained theologians and have a background in college or university teaching. At the same time, although the majority of the church’s theologians do not hold administrative positions, they must certainly be viewed as leaders. They teach future pastors and other church employees, advise on many
issues, and tend to be appointed to study commissions. They have access to the pulpit, give lectures, and hold seminars. And they write. All of this means they are important thought leaders. It brings a heavy responsibility.

Leaders must lead. They must recognize the direction the church is heading, advise on the path, and signal the dangers and clearly communicate the destination. They fail in their leadership role if they just follow the crowd or push the travelers from behind, only focused on where they have come from rather than pointing to where they must go. Like any metaphor, this one has its limitations. But at least one more point is valid: leaders must never be so far ahead of those who follow that they can no longer be seen. Theologians owe this to their faith community, to be at the forefront, to scout the land of ideas; but to always stay close to the people they attempt to lead.

6. Do not major in minors. Often, bitter battles are fought over relatively minor issues. Yet, amazingly enough, major deviations with regard to core doctrines may cause only limited commotion. The reason may well be an inadequate distinction between what is crucial and what is less crucial.

It would seem, however, that most believers sense that some issues are more vital to our faith and our commitment to God than others. There are things people must believe if they want to be entitled to the name “Christian,” and you cannot claim to be an Adventist if you do not subscribe to a number of core beliefs. Admittedly, differentiating between “more crucial” and “less essential” doctrines can easily become a very subjective exercise. It must, therefore, be embedded in the experience of the larger faith community but to make some distinctions seems justified. Ministry magazine has published some articles that have made valuable suggestions in that direction and other Adventist publications have done likewise. The intensity of our reaction to ideas that differ from our own opinions—and which we would consider as unscriptural and un-Adventist—should be guided by whether or not a truly crucial issue is at stake.

7. Look for unity. I have finally come to the point at which I am looking more avidly for signs of unity than for signs of diversity. Not for a moment do I want to deny the very real challenges of the theological diversity among us. But I do not want that to make me blind to the wonderful degree of unity that continues to prevail in the Adventist community. Whatever label we may give to others or others may give to us, it is marvelous to see that, in most cases, there is far more that binds us than what divides us.

When one looks at what proponents from different currents within Adventism tell us they believe, we notice that they are held together by important convictions. I know there are different perspectives on the inspiration of the Bible, but I know of no Adventist theologian who does not, in some way, take the Bible very seriously. I realize we have differences in Christology, but I know of no Adventist colleague for whom Christ means nothing but a human person and who does not believe that He is our present Mediator and that in the near future He will return to this earth. I know of no serious theologian who still calls himself or herself a Seventh-day Adventist. I hear everywhere within Adventism about the same wholistic view of human nature and “conditional immortality.” In spite of many different theories about the end-time events, I do not think there are many (if any) Adventists who have rejected the biblical teaching that human history, as we know it, will end and that Adventists have a special mission in preparation for that. And for all it is clear that faith affects lifestyle and that stewardship and discipleship are close twins. And so on.

Let us rejoice in this unity, while we think and talk in a Christian way about our theological concerns and the problems we see in some propositions put forward by others.

8. God can take care of Himself. When everything is said and done, we must recognize that truth is not our truth, but God’s Truth. And the church is not my church, or your church, but God’s church. We have our responsibilities. We must guard our integrity. We must, in spite of all our imperfections, each with our own backgrounds and experiences, “do” theology as faithful servants of our Lord. We must honor our responsibilities with regard to the faith community that we have chosen as our spiritual home. But in the end, it is not our work. We do not own the eternal gospel. As human beings we can only have a limited understanding of God and His plan of salvation. The biblical message, however, leaves no doubt: His truth will ultimately conquer—in spite of our weaknesses and misunderstandings.

And God can take care of Himself.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or write to 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.
Reflections on the future of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America: Trends and challenges (part 1 of 2)

Editor’s note: This article focuses on the church in North America. We suggest that other parts of the world may want to do a similar analysis and determine how the church is doing in that area.

How is the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church doing in terms of growth, finances, and Christian education? We will examine important long-term trends in these areas in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America (NAD). The research presented here covers the period between 1913 and 2005. The conclusions, however, have far-reaching consequences. These trends affect the fulfillment of the mission and vision of the church, its growth, structure, polity, and the finances worldwide. We find a significant departure in most trends beginning in the mid to late 1970s in both absolute and relative terms. The causes of these trend changes and their implications for the future of the Seventh-day Adventist Church will be explored in detail.

Methodology
The methodology followed in this research is threefold. First, we collected our data about the Seventh-day Adventist Church from the NAD Archives and Statistics office. Second, in order to understand and interpret the results of the research fairly and accurately, we interviewed 51 thought leaders, opinion-makers, researchers, church administrators and leaders, pastors, educators, and laypersons from across the NAD. Third, we researched the literature to find out the experience of other denominations and what they are doing about it.

Though we tried to provide solutions for the future based on the interviews we conducted, the literature we reviewed, and sound biblical answers, we are aware that we are raising more questions than providing answers. We pray that the publication of these findings will lead to a better understanding of the trends and changes of our time, create vigorous debate, and lead us to prayer, renewal, and meaningful changes so that we might be more effective in fulfilling the mission of Jesus Christ.

We are convinced that no one single factor has caused this radical change in the church. Rather, we are certain that a series of events, factors, and changes taking place in the church and in society, as well as generational and demographic shifts, has contributed to the situation in which we find ourselves.

Church growth: The big picture
In 2007 the Adventist Church in North America baptized 37,359 people. Yet, as we examine the numbers in context, we find this reality: even as we added members, we shrank.

1. Membership growth rate
The membership growth rate (membership growth = [previous year’s membership – apostasy and death + converts] / previous year’s membership) in the NAD since the mid-1980s has been hovering around 2 percent or less (see figure 1). In order to exceed the population growth rate and thus experience meaningful growth relative to the population, the church must grow beyond the 2 percent level. In the last hundred years we have exceeded the 5 percent growth level only twice. The first time was during the First World War in 1917, the second time was during the Depression of 1935.

How do we know what is a healthy and meaningful growth rate for the church? It is possible to have a positive rate of growth (any percentage over zero) but still not grow at least as fast as the population is
growing. In such a case we will find ourselves adding more members and yet still shrinking relative to the population. Consequently, a more focused measure of church growth includes the number of NAD converts as a percent of the population. Figure 2 reports both the absolute number of NAD converts and the number of NAD converts relative to the NAD population. This figure reveals that from 1913 till about 1982, the growth of NAD converts did fairly well in keeping up with the population growth rate. Since that time, though, the membership growth rate on average has been less than the population growth rate.

The population grew by 1.31 percent from 1913 till 1975, but the church grew by 3.61 percent. However, from 1975 to 2005 the population grew by 1.09 percent, but the church grew by 0.06 percent. This indicates that the Seventh-day Adventist presence is shrinking in the NAD. If the number of the converts continues to grow below the rate of population growth, the church will become a shrinking part of the population, making it increasingly more difficult to fulfill its mission.

David T. Olson, in *The American Church In Crisis*, shows that most denominations are experiencing a decline that is similar to the phenomenon experienced by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. Olson demonstrates that the number of people attending all churches has essentially stayed the same from 1990 to 2006. The church attendance numbers thus stagnated while the population, during the same time, grew by 51 million. Thus Olson’s research shows that church attendance, as a percentage of the general population, dropped among evangelicals, mainline Protestants, and Catholics.

2. Ethnic composition of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Not only is the church not keeping up with the general population growth in the NAD, but the membership growth does not match the ethnic makeup of the population. New membership in the NAD comes mainly from the African descent demographic. This group makes up approximately 30 percent of the NAD membership compared to its 12.8 percent share of the population. Though we rejoice in the diversity of the church, this figure shows that NAD is not effectively reaching the Caucasian descent group. They make up 55 percent of the NAD church relative to a 67 percent population in 2005. Similarly, the Hispanics make up 9 percent of the NAD church; they constitute 13 percent of the population. Those of Asian descent and other races are represented in the church at rates closer to that of the population.

3. The graying of Adventism

Another important trend is reflected in what is being called the “graying of Adventism.” In 2008 the median age of Adventists in the NAD was 51 years while the median age in the population was 36. These numbers mean the church is not doing well in keeping or attracting young believers. The church seems to be surviving by the energy and resources of previous generations. But if this graying trend continues, what is going to happen to the church when these supportive generations fade into the sunset?
4. The ratio of Seventh-day Adventist churches to the population of the North American Division

The NAD had 3,000 more Adventist churches in 2005 than in 1913. The ratio of the general population to the number of Adventist churches has also risen. In 1913, there were approximately 52,000 people in the population per church, but in 2005 there were 65,000 people for each Adventist church. This indicates that there is an urgent need to plant churches if the NAD churches are to maintain their current presence in North American communities. Increasing the Adventist presence and visibility in local communities would require even more aggressive church planting efforts. If we maintain the ratio of population to a church in 2005, as it was in 1913, we should have 6,285 churches today (about 1,100 more than we currently have).

Another phenomenon emerging in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America is that the average church is getting bigger. In 1913, the size of the average church was 36 members, while in 2005, it was approaching 200 members.

5. Church and membership productivity

The landscape of church productivity is changing, mostly for the worse. (In this context, productivity is a snapshot of resources put into baptisms.) Member productivity has declined since 1980. It now takes about 27 members to produce one baptism, whereas from 1913 to 1980 it took only about 15 members. The figure indicates this number is on the rise, heading quickly toward 30. While this change may be the result of member inefficiency, apathy, or lack of involvement, some of this change also probably reflects an increasingly secularized public less interested in organized religion. The bottom line is that, as the years pass, we are becoming less effective in evangelism and it takes more members to produce one convert. Other established evangelical denominations are in the same situation as we are or even worse. Today it takes the Southern Baptist Convention about 40 people to gain one convert, whereas it took only 17 members to win one convert in 1913.

6. Pastoral productivity

If pastoral productivity is defined as the number of converts per pastor, then pastoral productivity is on the rise. Pastoral productivity, however, has risen and fallen through the years. The best years were associated with the First World War, the depression era, and the Second World War. In 2001, it stood at about nine baptisms per pastor per year. This number would likely be higher if we considered only frontline pastors (those who minister in a local church) and excluded those who are in conferences, unions, and divisions and administration, teaching, and other areas. Other factors may also be related to pastoral productivity: the ratio of members to pastors and the number of Bible workers and literature evangelists.

The ratio of members to pastors has risen from less than 86 in 1913 to about 250 in 2005. This trend became particularly pronounced in the mid to late 1960s. The number of ordained and licensed ministers in the church rose to about 3,500 in the early 1980s and has essentially stayed the same since that time. However, the number of Bible workers and literature evangelists in the NAD is dropping. This trend reveals a potential loss of frontline, congregational workers.

7. Economic productivity: Total dollars spent per convert

In terms of economic productivity, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the NAD was spending about $41,000 in 2005 per convert while in 1913 it took about $5,500 (2005 U.S.) to do the same. This indicates inefficiency in resource management, with much of the donated money to the denomination being spent to support the structural system of the church in its various levels and organizations, nurture members, and sustain our educational system. Should we not be investing more of our resources directly in the evangelistic mission of the church and less in the administration of the church?

Conclusion

Our research shows major disturbing trends in Adventism in the North American Division in the area of church growth. While the church experiences a decline in the rate of church growth as compared to membership and the rate of growth in the population, the church also takes more and more financial resources to produce one convert.

Busting these disturbing trends in the North American Adventist Church will take much more than a few small changes of technique; it will require a reconsideration of our values and methods. In the February 2011 issue we will deal with plausible explanations of the current trends and some suggestions to reverse the trend.

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Matthew 16:13–20: Jesus’ warning to His disciples

Matthew 16:13–20 has become one of the most controversial and debated texts in the New Testament. Generally, individuals discuss this text in regard to identification of the *petra* “rock,” upon which Jesus promised to build His church. However, this article does not intend to discuss the known textual complication (who is the rock in Matthew 16:13–16), but will attempt to focus on another issue identified in verse 20. Matthew 16:13–20 reads,

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”

And they said, “Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.”

He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

And Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

“I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”

Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ (NASB). Verse 20 reads, “Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ.”

Verse 20 reads, “Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ.” One might ask why Jesus would charge his disciples not to tell any man that He was the Christ. Furthermore, this also seems to contradict Matthew 3:17 where God openly declared to the people that Christ is His Son. Could it be that Jesus was fearful of revealing His identity to the people, and if this is the case, then how can people locate audacity in someone who Himself needs audacity to conquer His fears. Finally, would not this be in opposition to the exclusive purpose of the Incarnation whereby the Son is born to make known His Father’s love to sinful humanity?

**Christos of verse 20**

A close reading of verse 20, in its original Greek text, seems to imply that the term *Christos* may unlock the meaning of this verse. The word *Christos* is a noun meaning the “anointed one.” The Hebrew equivalent of *Christos* is *Messiah* (Lev. 4:5; 6:22). In the Old Testament, the term *Messiah* is substantively used for patriarchs and kings of Israel (Pss. 2:2, 17; 18:51; 104:15; 105:15; 1 Sam. 2:10, 35; 24:11; 26:9, 11, 23; 2 Sam. 1:14; Hab. 3:13; 2 Chron. 22:7). The term *Christos* in its Hebrew form, *Messiah*, is employed for the coming king whom the Jews expected to be the Savior of their nation (1 Sam. 2:10; Isa. 45:1; Dan. 9:25).

Consequently, addressing Jesus as *Christos* implied that He is the *Messiah*, the anointed one, who would redeem Jews from the bondage of the Romans. Perhaps, because of the false concepts of the people who looked for an exclusively national and political *Messiah* (savior), Jesus told His disciples not to publicize that He is *Christos*. “Here the reason for the secrecy is about to become particularly clear. Jesus is not the kind of Messiah that the masses have in mind.” This is also evident from the limited usage of *Christos* throughout the synoptic Gospels. The word *Christos* is used only 54 times throughout the synoptic Gospels in comparison to the Greek term *Iesous* that is utilized 566 times for addressing Jesus.

**The context of verse 20**

Jesus is the center of discussion in Matthew 16:13–20. Upon arrival into the district of Caesarea Philippi, located about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus starts the dialogue by asking the question that has been in the minds of the disciples from the beginning of His ministry. Who do people say that the Son of Man is? How do they classify Him, having seen His healing wonders and incredible teaching?

After hearing the response of the disciples, Jesus moved the dialogue to a more private intensity. “Jesus repeats the question now directing it to the disciples. The question is asked not so much for information
but to elicit from the disciples an explicit confession of his messianic identity. Jesus asked His disciples, “But who do you say that I am?”

In response to Peter’s confession, Jesus declared Him as blessed one, because flesh and blood did not reveal Jesus’ identity to him, but the Father who is in heaven. What follows after Peter’s answer comes among the most debated issues. Several interpretations have been forwarded, but they all can be summed up into four groups. The rock on which the church is to be built is (1) Christ, (2) Peter’s confession of faith in Jesus as the Messiah (v. 16), (3) Christ’s teachings—one of the great emphases of Matthew’s Gospel, and (4) Peter, himself, understood in terms of his role and leadership among the apostles.

The context of verse 20 clearly portrays Jesus as the center of discussion (Matt. 16:13–20). Consequently, when Jesus answered Peter that he will build His church on “this rock” He did not refer to Peter as the rock upon which He will build the church. His expression “this rock” (v. 18), applied to Jesus Himself as the keystone of the Christian church. No wonder, Jesus advises His disciples not to publicize that His ministry will result in an establishment of Christian community. For people may have understood the phrase “I will build my church” (v. 18) as “I will start a freedom movement from the Roman yoke.” For the Creator of the time knew that it was not yet the right time to reveal His Christos character. Not that He was afraid to reveal His identity; nevertheless His ministry had not yet reached the point whereby people could unmistakably perceive the purpose of His incarnation. Moreover, premature revelation that Jesus is the Christ would have caused a threat to the Roman Empire, and they might have killed Jesus simply as a freedom movement leader rather than the Savior who is worthy of redeeming His people from the yoke of sin. Because others already knew and acknowledged Jesus’ personal name, it would have been useless to deny or affirm that he was Jesus; the point under discussion was whether he was Christos, the Messiah. Similar explanation can also be given for Matthew 8:4 where Jesus charged the leper not to tell any man but to go and show himself to the priest and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

Similar passages are mentioned in the Gospel of Mark (8:27–30) and Luke (9:18–21). Mark and Luke agree with Matthew on certain details of the passage but also have some textual differences. Mathew and Mark contain the location (Caesarea Philippi) where the event takes place, but Luke misses it. All three writers agree that Jesus initiated the dialogue with His disciples. Mark and Luke do not have Jeremiah in the list as Matthew has. Furthermore, both Mark and Luke do not contain Jesus’ response to Peter’s confession that Jesus is the Christ. This seems to highlight that the discussion in Matthew 16:20 centers in the character of Christos.

Conclusion

One can reach the conclusion that the reason, in Matthew 16:13–20, for Jesus warning His disciples not to tell that He is Christos was not because He was afraid of revealing His identity to the people or to fail the exclusive purpose of the Incarnation whereby the Son is born to make known His Father’s love to sinful humanity. But it was to avoid people’s misconception of His real identity. People had thought of Christos “Messiah” as the promised Davidic savior who would be a political, nationalistic figure destined to free the Jews from Roman domination (Mark 11:9, 10). The disciples were with Jesus and perhaps during this time, Peter already sensed that Christ is the Son of the Living God.

Conclusion


2. Unless otherwise stated, the New American Standard Bible version is used.

3. See also Matthew 6:25 where demons openly proclaimed that Christ is the Son of God. The disciples were with Jesus and perhaps during this time, Peter already sensed that Christ is the Son of the Living God.

4. For years, believers have found courage and hope in Christ that has filled their lives with deep sense of peace, contentment, and happiness. However, in recent years many have started doubting whether Christ is really the one who can give hope, courage, and blessings. For illustrative purposes I quote, “I do not believe in Christ. I personally think that Jesus’ story is shrouded in myth, fiction, and human intervention.” See http://www.rememberthechildren.com/2010/10/01/donognito.html, accessed March 11, 2010.

5. Perhaps the misunderstanding of verse 20, “then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ” has also contributed to that doubt. Hence, the question raised is valid and deserves a biblical answer.


7. Ibid.

8. See also, Matt. 21:42; Isa. 28:16; 1 Pet. 2:4–8; Acts 4:11, 12; Ps. 118:22; 1 Cor. 10:4.

9. The Bible Knowledge Commentary suggests that Jesus told the disciples not to tell anyone that He is the Christ because He knew it was too late for the nation to respond to His offer, and His rejection was drawing near. There was no reason for His disciples to be trying to convince a nation that had already turned from Him. J. F. Walvoord, R. B. Zuck, and Dallas Theological Seminary, “Matthew,” The Bible Knowledge Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1989-1995), on CD-ROM, 2.1d.

10. Also see, other texts where Jesus charged people not to tell others about Him or to make Him known (Matt. 9:30; 12:16, Mark 1:43; 3:12; 8:30, Luke 9:21).

11. Ellen White supports this conclusion and states in The Desire of Ages, “Jesus charged the disciples to tell no man that He was the Christ. This charge was given because of the determined opposition of the scribes and Pharisees. More than this, the people, and even the disciples, had no false conception of the Messiah that a public announcement of Him would give them no true idea of His character or His work. But by day by day He was revealing Himself to them as the Saviour, and thus He desired to give them a true conception of Him as the Messiah.” (414).

While teaching Adventist heritage classes at Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee, United States, Jud Lake was confronted with many anti-Adventist and anti-Ellen White Web sites. He began a detailed investigation of these criticisms and the church’s response. Ellen White Under Fire is the product of this investigation.

The book is divided into three parts. Part one shows the need for the book by illustrating the intensity of the attacks on Ellen White on the Internet and also covers the history of the criticisms of Ellen White, focusing specifically on the story of D. M. Canright.

Part two, the core of the book, deals with the larger issues underlying the criticism of Ellen White: her inspiration, authority, and the interpretation of her writings. Part three affirms the evangelical, biblical framework of Ellen White’s prophetic ministry, and deals with practical issues relating to the defense and advocacy of her prophetic gift. The concluding chapter contains the author’s personal testimony as to why he believes in the prophetic ministry of Ellen White.

Four appendices supplement the body of the book. Appendix one contains seven contemporary views of Ellen White, five of them are Adventist and two are non-Adventist. Appendices two and three are historic statements in defense of Ellen White by Uriah Smith and John N. Andrews. The last appendix provides a list of resources online and in book form that give specific answers to the charges against Ellen White.

In the chapters dealing with Ellen White’s inspiration, the author clearly defines the terms revelation, inspiration, and illumination and explains that “Scripture knows no degrees in the inspiration of its text or of its writers” (103). And Ellen White “had the same kind of revelation-inspiration experience as did the biblical writers” (104). When it comes to the issue of what kind of inspiration Ellen White experienced (dictation, verbal, thought, etc.) the author opts for the “whole-person model” of inspiration (128, 129). This means inspiration affects not only the thoughts...
The difference between the latter two is somewhat hazy. Against the charge that Adventists have dual authorities—the Bible and Ellen White—the author points out that Scripture predicts the presence of the prophetic gift in the time of the end (Rev. 12:17; 19:10; 22:8, 9). Furthermore, he explains that, like the noncanonical prophets, her inspiration was the same as the canonical prophets, but her authority was not the same as the authority of the canonical writers (173), i.e., her authority, like the authority of the noncanonical prophets, was a circumscribed authority, limited in its scope and function. “Her scope was limited to the specific audience to which she ministered—Seventh-day Adventists, and to the period of her ministry—the end of time” (175). Hence her writings do not violate the sola scriptura principle of “the Bible and the Bible alone” (176).

The interpretation of the writings of Ellen G. White is an important topic addressed quite well in this book. The principles used for the interpretation of her writings are similar to those used to interpret Scripture. The two vital principles that are most often violated by those who seek to discredit Ellen White are the literary and historical context of her statements. Time, place, and circumstances are the keys to unlock many of her seemingly difficult statements. The author cites several examples to show that those “who ignore the literary context of Ellen White’s writings inevitably end up ignoring the historical context” (189).


Reformation is a survey of Protestantism in Europe in the sixteenth century and largely deals with what happened in Scotland, England, Germany, France, and Italy. Beginning with the Scripture predicts the influence of the Bible, the role of Loyola in the Counter-Reformation, and the pivotal help Elizabeth gave to the Reformation in Scotland may also be considered highlights.

Reid has a delightful sense of events and occasions, noting Pope John Paul II’s visit to Scotland in 1982. This was a historic occasion, if ever there was one, as he was welcomed by the Moderator of the Church under John Hutchinson’s statue of John Knox. A helpful biographical essay and book list is appended. This book should delight, inform, inspire, and challenge each reader.


Leona Glidden Running is a language expert and has shared, in years past, her talents and knowledge with many seminary students preparing for ministry. She taught a variety of topics and formats that can be useful in understanding and appreciating the Scriptures.

Her teaching career lasted several decades as she influenced and inspired countless numbers of ministers and scholars. Even though she knows several modern languages, her greatest contribution was the teaching of biblical languages and assisting her students

—Reviewed by Gerhard Pfandl, PhD, associate director, Biblical Research Institute, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

**Ellen White Under Fire** is easy to read. It provides a careful analysis of the major issues in the writings of Ellen White—inspiration, authority, and interpretation. And it deals honestly with the difficulties in her writings, as well as with the critics. The chapter summaries are useful for students and teachers in reviewing the material, and the extensive endnotes provide an excellent resource for further studies. The book would have been further enhanced by topical and author indices. Nevertheless, the book will be a real help for those confronted by a multitude of Web sites and books attacking Ellen White. Every pastor needs to have a copy as well as every church member.

—Reviewed by Gerhard Pfandl, PhD, associate director, Biblical Research Institute, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.
Planning evangelistic strategies

I remember a time very early in my ministry when I asked what were considered to be silly questions. This happened at the first board meeting at a new church. The conference leaders had encouraged pastors to lead their churches in goal setting and strategic planning, so I asked the obvious questions. “What evangelistic plans do you have as a church? What baptismal goals do you think our church should set?”

I was certainly not expecting their reaction. They told me, in no uncertain terms, that they considered such things as goal setting and strategic planning to be the pastor’s responsibility. Responses such as “That’s what you are paid to do,” convinced me that it would take more than that first meeting to convince these folk of the need for them to take some responsibility in this most vital area of church life.

Over the next few years, as I moved to new pastorates, I noticed what appeared to be a widespread mind-set among church members. Most of the churches had not organized anything at all in regard to outreach and evangelism for the ensuing year. When asked to explain why nothing had been planned, the usual answer was something like this: “Well we didn’t know what you would want to do, so we left it until you arrived.”

Several years ago, I was challenged to consider this situation from a conference personal ministries director’s perspective. Part of my responsibility, as director of personal ministries, was to allocate evangelism funds to churches that sent in evangelism strategies and budget requests. A church that was waiting for their pastor to arrive sent in a letter requesting that some money be reserved for them. There was no accompanying proposed evangelism strategy because, as they wrote, “Our pastor has not arrived yet, and we don’t know what he will want to do.”

**Encouraging your church to act**

In light of the above mentioned issues, there are a number of points on which we, as pastors, would do well to refocus. While the following points are by no means an exhaustive list and we are all aware that one size does not fit all, they are suggested as possible ways to encourage local churches to understand their responsibility in the areas of evangelistic planning and goal setting.

1. **Be certain of your role.** Although, as pastors, we have a significant part to play in the plans and programs of the church, do not let the church members convince you that this work belongs totally to you. It’s easy, especially for those new to ministry, to have their ministry molded by the attitudes and expectations of the congregation. The church and pastor somehow enter into a circular journey. The church expects the pastor to do the work, which is what happens because things will not get going if the pastor does not do it. The cycle continues as the church comes to believe that the pastor wants to do everything, and the pastor laments the fact that the church members will not take the initiative in planning and goal setting.

This arrangement then becomes part of the way the church does things. Over time, as the cycle continues through a number of pastors, the church becomes what is called “pastor dependent” and is unwilling to make even relatively simple decisions if the pastor is not present.

Help members understand that they are the best ones to organize the church’s evangelistic endeavors. Explain that they are the ones who know what has been done previously and with what results. They know the town or district better than the new pastor. Those who have lived in the district for most or all of their lives will know it even better than the pastor who has been there for a few years. Locals know the people, their prejudices, concerns, and, most important, many of their needs.

2. **Listen and learn.** There is much to learn after seminary, and there are a few ways of learning. Continual upgrading through events, such as ministers’ meetings and seminars, are good. Keeping abreast of issues through serious reading is also good. However, learning through interaction with church members is a most vital learning experience, the benefits of which are often not realized.

While most members would not presume to tell the pastor how he or she should do ministry, they will most often share their concerns, ideas, and interests when asked. The key includes asking the right questions with the right attitude. Rather than telling the church members what you think should be done, and how, ask for their thoughts and suggestions. Learn from their experiences.
Building commitment through involvement is an important principle in anyone’s ministry. We often hear people speak of how the church needs to work with the pastor, but the pastor also needs to work with the church and not just do things for the church. People experience a sense of ownership, with its ensuing responsibility and accountability, when they are involved in making the decisions.

3. Be willing to fit in. We cannot expect a church’s involvement in setting goals and formulating strategies to continue very long if the pastor, especially the newly arrived, immediately sets about overriding the plans the church has formulated. The members must be allowed to learn from their experiences. Even though the pastor may make changes with the best of intentions, the message received may be that the church has not done the right thing or performed it well enough. One extreme result may be that the church will consider that the pastors think they know everything, so let them do everything.

In all evangelistic planning and implementation, the pastor should recognize the importance of creating a team approach where the pastor and members function as a unit and all feel to be a valued part of the team. Together the team will plan, implement, evaluate, adjust, learn, communicate, and problem solve. The pastor will be committed to helping each team member succeed, giving assistance where needed but not taking over. Trust the team members with the tasks you have given them.

4. Make all evangelistic planning a part of church board deliberations. In most churches, much of the evangelistic planning will be done by the members of the personal ministries committee. Even if this is the case, proposals should be presented to the church board. This ensures that and the goals are not reached. The pastor should know the importance of understanding that setting goals does not mean that your church is locked into them, regardless, or that only one way exists to achieve them.

As a pastor learns from both the congregation and the community, it may become evident that what at first seemed a good plan needs to be modified or adjusted somewhat. In turn, the need for change may reveal some

HELP MEMBERS UNDERSTAND THAT THEY ARE THE BEST ONES TO ORGANIZE THE CHURCH’S EVANGELISTIC ENDEAVORS. EXPLAIN THAT THEY ARE THE ONES WHO KNOW WHAT HAS BEEN DONE PREVIOUSLY AND WITH WHAT RESULTS. THEY KNOW THE TOWN OR DISTRICT BETTER THAN THE NEW PASTOR.

The size of a congregation does not matter when it comes to evangelistic planning. Some smaller congregations shy away from goal setting and strategic planning because they wonder what they can accomplish with so few people. Reality says that goal setting and strategic planning is vital to any size church if they are to effectively reach out to their community.

A church’s evangelistic plans must be both realistic and achievable. Make sure your dreams are not bigger than your abilities. They must be affordable. Can you build it into your budget? They must be sustainable. Can we support this strategy with money, people, time, expertise, and other resources? Can we share this program with other sister churches? They must be flexible. Be on the lookout for needed adjustments and consider emergent strategies. They must be able to be evaluated: What did we achieve?
Go to this article online at www.ministrymagazine.org/2766.

Do we increase funding, effort, time allocation, or not? They must have a time frame—not just a starting date but ongoing times for specific tasks (set times for evaluation, for example). They must be owned by the church. Work through the church board or leadership group. Show benefits, show affordability, show how spiritual needs will be met.

6. Use evangelistic gifts wisely.
Most pastors would have read at some time the percentages of members with particular spiritual gifts. Usually the gift of evangelism is considered the realm of only a few people, a small percentage of the members. How can the church be expected to do great things in the area of evangelism when most members see that their giftedness rests in other ministry areas?

Two points need to be made here. The first point is that a church needs to identify those people with evangelistic gifts, interests, and enthusiasm. As pastor, you should intentionally seek out these people and perhaps even tailor your evangelism around their giftedness and expertise. It is far better to undertake a program that your church is equipped to handle rather than planning programs and strategies that necessitate the pressuring of people into areas in which they have no giftedness or great interest to perform.

The second point has to do with rightly using those with an evangelistic gift. How many times have we seen people who have a definite interest and flair for evangelism get bogged down in some other major leadership task or in multiple support roles? Perhaps churches should consider their evangelistic strategies before they commence their nominating committee deliberations. As important as it is to put the best leaders in the right positions of church leadership, we must also give those with evangelistic enthusiasm and giftedness the room to be involved in the outreach mission of the church.

If we don’t, we may find that all evangelistic talents are tied up in church maintenance—and we are just treading water.

Once again, small churches may consider that they do not have a choice in this area; that if the best leaders are the ones who would do evangelism we must give them leadership positions first. I suggest that we would be pleasantly surprised if we focused upon evangelism first, and allowed the Lord to impress others to do leadership tasks.

7. Identify evangelism support groups. Be careful not to separate the evangelistic thrust of the church from all other church functions. When we see all aspects of church life as part of the whole, we begin to see where each can support the other for the common good.

Each sub-group in the church can have an evangelistic focus. Show the treasury team that they are not just allocating money to projects, but that they are a part of the team that supports the evangelism programs. As mentioned already the church board is a vital support group. Always keep the support groups informed of progress, and involve them in the decision processes.

Conclusion
Above all, remember that the Lord is with us in our efforts to win souls for His kingdom. We can sometimes fall into the trap of thinking that our training, or reading, gives us all the necessary skills to perform the task. While training and educational reading is vital in the process of equipping people for professional or lay ministry, the blessing and power of God makes all the difference. That is the difference between just preaching and preaching with power. That is the difference between reaching out to the community through our concern and reaching out with God’s love.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or write to 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

RESOURCES

Continued from page 27

Her book, My Journey, is an autobiographical reflection of her life and contributions in the field of education. Not only will this book be of particular interest to those who studied languages under Dr. Running, but it also shows what a person with determination and God’s blessing can accomplish in the field of education.

The book chronicles Leona Running’s life, and she shares her recollections of a variety of individuals, including well-known scholar William F. Albright.

—Reviewed by Nikolaus Satelmajer, editor, Ministry
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