2011 - Year of the Youth Evangelism

Does Your Church Make Sense?
Editorial

Justly Rebuked

The rebuke was well-deserved. I didn’t think so at the time because my pride as a parent took a severe blow as my high school-age daughter drew me up short for my attitude. My embarrassment was made more acute by the fact that she was correct in her rebuke.

I had just made a statement that described someone by his ethnicity. As far as I was concerned, I did not mean any harm and was not intentionally offensive, but my daughter saw it differently. She was horrified and rebuked me accordingly. How dare I describe someone by his ethnicity, race, body shape or size?

My position was indefensible, and had I attempted to justify myself, I would have lost her respect. It was bad enough that I was in her bad books for my un-Christian attitude.

I have come to recognise that today’s youths seem to reflect the attitude of Jesus far more often than their parents or grandparents. They are far more accepting of others than their parents. They are not easily distracted by ethnicity, race, gender or body shape. When we see their friends, we are faced with all the diversity of the Canadian experience. Their friendships are not constrained by ethnicity or race. They tend to reflect attitudes unfettered by racism and tribalism and resist their parents’ attempt to transmit their own racist heritage to them. It’s as if today’s youths have embraced the teaching of Jesus that we are all God’s people and that it is His ideal that we may be one even as He is one with the Father.

As I considered this, I felt ashamed that as adults, parents and grandparents, we have not always lived life styles consistent with what Jesus taught. We have preached to our children and pontificated from our pulpits, but our children have not been impressed. At home, they have seen our inconsistencies. At church and at home, they have been the objects of our caustic criticism when they have not lived up to our standards. We have even created unnecessary battlefields where they are forced into fights over some behavioural practices that often reflect tradition and culture rather than biblical injunctions. Yet, we do not consistently reflect the attitude of Jesus and show them that the grace of Jesus is not only to be received from Him, but it is also to be shown to others (Matthew 18:23-35).

Perhaps we need to step back and take some lessons from our children and youths. Their acceptance is based not so much on external features but on a person’s character and behaviour. They want to know if he or she is a ‘good person’. They are inclusive in their friendships and associations. Their inclusiveness even reaches beyond denominational lines. We tend to segregate into groups and churches along ethnicity and racial lines. Our choice of leaders too often reflects the same narrow view.

One of the most telling trait of today’s youths is their tolerance. They are tolerant of others, having recognised that some people just cannot help being the way they are. We are so proud of our achievements and Christian growth that we are less tolerant of others and hesitant to forgive them. We expect others to be as we are. We even forget that any good that we have is the direct result of the Holy Spirit working in us and through us.

I’m especially impressed by the tolerance that our youths weekly demonstrate towards our traditional worship—a style that neither inspires them nor us. In most cases, our way of worship has remained unchanged for at least 50 years. Youths seek worship that is more relevant to them, and it is no longer strange to hear of some attending worship services of other denominations.

The youths of the church tolerate our worship preference, but we are reluctant to show them the same courtesy. On the very rare occasion, when we allow them to lead a service, we often attempt to censor their choice of musical instruments by some dodgy explanations that we heard from a self-proclaimed expert or we throw tantrums, and with good old fashioned righteous indignation, boycott the worship.

Our intolerance alarmingly suggests that we are viewing the church as our personal possession. It seems hard for some to accept that everyone who is a member of God’s church has an equal share and an equal voice in His church. Each person has the same privilege of belonging to, worshipping in, contributing diversity to and supporting God’s church.

I’ve also learned that today’s youth and young adults want to be engaged in fulfilling the mission of God’s church. They are looking for teaching and equipping from their parents’ and grandparents’ generations but too often find very little. They search for mentors who are filled with the Spirit but find only those concerned with maintaining the status quo.

The prophet Joel prophesied that a time will come when God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh and “your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions” (Joel 2:28). This first happened at Pentecost two thousand years ago. It can happen again in 2011, the Year of Youth Evangelism.

Halsey Peat
By God’s Grace
An End of Year Message from Pastor Mansfield Edwards

It was the English poet, John Milton, who said, “Hours have wings, and fly up to the author of time, and carry news of our usage.”

With the Christmas season upon us, many people are looking forward to spending time with family and enjoying all the fun and festivities associated with Christmas and the end of the year. Shortly after, it’s the new year’s resolutions. However, the end of a year is a great time to look back and reflect on how God has led us through the challenges and how He has blessed us with numerous achievements. Reflection allows us to thank God and to praise Him for His marvellous work.

In as large a territory as Ontario with 152 congregations and 29,000 members, God’s work through His church is not easily seen in its entirety so I will share some of the things that we were able to accomplish by God’s grace.

Achievements

In 2010 we:

- Appointed a Stewardship director, Pastor David Schwinghammer, with rounded emphases on faith, family, finance and fitness, under the theme, “Empowered Living.”
- Appointed a field representative for Planned Giving & Trust Services, Vernon Langdon, to facilitate greater effectiveness.
- We continue to sort through résumés and conduct interviews in an effort to appropriately staff our churches. A number of vacancies have been filled, and a few others are still outstanding. We welcomed to Ontario pastors for the Bramalea Filipino-Canadian, Brampton Portuguese and Luso-Brazilian, College Park, Kingston and Addington-Highlands, St. Thomas and Woodstock, and Willowdale congregations.
- In addition to our conference camp meeting, we successfully held regional camp meetings under the theme, “Empowered Living”, in north eastern Ontario, southern Ontario and Thunder Bay, each with record attendance.
- Initiated a new ministry with a focus on worship. This is one area of church that really needs strengthening. We plan to help facilitate a common understanding and appreciation of biblical worship. Our worship leader, Pastor David Schwinghammer, is already holding a number of worship seminars in our local churches.
- Initiated a ministry with a focus on seniors and hosted our first seniors’ wellness retreat at Camp Frenda.
- In 2005, the constituency approved an initiative, asking the Board of Directors to work towards procuring property suitable for camp meetings and possibly other needs. This year, we secured 37 acres of property for this purpose. The Board of Directors has appointed a special committee to look at fundraising for the development of the property.
- Implemented Online Giving. Members and donors can now
Ontario Highlights | Winter 2010

**Feature**

- Make their financial contributions online. This is accessible through the Ontario Conference website.
- Placed major emphasis on engaging the use of the many spiritual gifts of our members in the year of lay evangelism. The faith goal was to host 100 evangelistic meetings held by lay evangelists throughout our conference, between September 18 and Dec. 31, 2010. To date, 202 lay preachers (including 5 women and a young 7-year-old), coming from 65 churches, have led over 400 souls to baptism.
- Transitioned from our annual Maranatha event to hosting our first Festival of the Laity. This proved to be a resounding success, attracting not just a great attendance but eliciting a great response from the delegates committing to the mission of the church.
- Ontario became the first field, outside of the United States, to have hosted the National Bible Bowl Coordinators Association (NBBCA) Bible Bowl event in its 28-year history. We hosted this event at Downview Church, October 22-23. Our four teams made us proud by securing one gold, two silver and one bronze medals.
- Successfully held our Pathfinders’ camporee with 1,292 in attendance, including staff.
- Invested 49 Master Guides—including 10 pastors.
- A most successful summer camping season at Camp Frenda has generated multiple positive feedback from our youth and parents alike. The camp staff was fantastic.
- The Health Ministries Department is positioning itself to more appropriately function as the right arm of our message. We have recently forged a partnership with the Ministry of Health Promotions for our province, coordinating Breathe Free programs and working jointly on many others.
- Continued to emphasize the value of Christian education. A spiritual retreat for teachers set the tone for the school year, and we initiated French Immersion/Extended, Leadership and Nutritional Practices as part of our ongoing curriculum development program.
- Opened two new beautiful church buildings. We commend the pastors and members of the Nepean Church in Ottawa and the Toronto Korean Church for their milestone achievement.
- Are constructing two new church buildings. Both Scarborough Church and Ruth Church buildings are well on their way to be completed in 2011.
- New property acquisitions - Brantford, Parry Sound, and Perth Avenue.

**Appreciation**

I am personally grateful to our executive secretary, Daniel Linrud, treasurer, Ulysses Guarin, and all our faithful directors and support staff for their hard work and dedication as we work as a team, encouraging and inspiring each other.

Our teachers and support staff at our 10 schools in Ontario deserve our deepest appreciation. Daily, they minister to our 956 pupils and provide a Christian environment in which they learn. It is my plan that in 2011, we will host a teachers’ appreciation day for them. Only eternity will show the full fruit of their labour.

Thanks to our pastors, Bible instructors and teachers for their untiring service even...
as we acknowledge the fact that all our achievements depend on distributed leadership.

What can I say about our members across our great province? It seems as if ‘thanks’ is insufficient to say to you. Yet, I offer you my heartfelt thanks. I also thank God for you as officers and members who remain steadfast in praying for us daily, for sharing your ideas and suggestions, and giving sacrificially of your means. We truly thank you. God will reward your faithfulness.

At the church headquarters in Ontario, we renew our pledge to pray for you every morning in our worship and to work with you in preparation to meet Jesus.

In 2010, God has again blessed His church, and as the year draws to a close, we are reminded that: “The days in which we live are solemn and important. The Spirit of God is gradually being withdrawn from the earth…The calamities by land and sea, the unsettled state of society; the alarms of war are portentous. They state of society; the alarms of war are portentous. They forecast approaching events of the greatest magnitude.”

Evangelism, p. 31, 32.

However, let us remember that we are in the hands of the powerful and loving Saviour who is “able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy— to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forever! Amen” (Jude 24,25 NIV).

**Does Your Church Make Sense?**

Is your church really making sense? Consider this well-known story of a man who was not making sense to anyone until he met Jesus. In the story in Mark, chapter 5, Jesus met a demon-possessed man and healed him. He restored the man to his right mind. Mark says that the people found the former demoniac sitting at the feet of Jesus, “clothed, and in his right mind” (Mark 5:15). Eugene Petersen in The Message suggests that the man was “making sense.”

In order for the Gadara Church to make sense on that occasion, at least three departments in the Gadara Church were involved in this man’s life to make his newfound faith meaningful.

First, there was definitely a Bible class. The man is found, sitting at the feet of Jesus, learning from the Master Teacher Himself. Second, there was the involvement of the community services department, because this once naked, bleeding, blaspheming man was clothed. The people did not simply tell him that if he accepted Jesus, he would be covered by the robe of Christ’s righteousness and one day he would receive a long white robe. They clothed him. Third, the education department also had a role to play in his restoration, because the story says that he was in his right mind.

Does your church make sense?

If your church is to make sense, it has to be relevant. It must meet the felt needs of people in the church and in the community. While the church preaches and teaches the same message that “God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son” (John 3:16), and has the same mandate to take the gospel to all the world (Matt. 24:14, Matt. 28:18-20), the method through which the church proclaims the message must change to meet the needs of the social and spiritual milieu.

One of the first questions some people like to ask is, “How can we change our method without diluting our message?” Here is how.

Churches must market their “product” effectively.

In the business world, marketing is seen as a systematic process that uses “well-crafted programs as opposed to random actions to achieve results.” It involves advertising, strategic planning, community research, raising funds, product-pricing as well as good customer service and a vision statement.

Companies invest their best talents and other resources into marketing products that, after a period of time, people consign to the growing mountain of waste. The church’s product is of eternal value and inestimable worth, yet it does not seem to pay much attention to its marketing. Hence, the decrease in church attendance, especially among certain sectors of society, suggests that religious organizations need to rethink and re-focus in order to attract new converts and retain the present and future members.

It is important to understand that marketing is not to be conceived as simply communications strategies designed to change customers to fit the organization’s offering but, rather, responding to the customer’s needs and wants. So, the true church-marketer must be of the mind-set that the organization must adapt to the needs of the customers and not the customers adapting to the organization’s needs. Adapting what the church has to offer does not mean watering down the products (the doctrines). One of the reasons some religious leaders are reluctant to try marketing principles is the fear that they will dilute the content of their doctrines. However, even a cursory analysis reveals that there is no need to change the doctrines of the church or to water them down to suit the people the church tries to evangelize. What it does mean is that, in order for the church to give the right answers to people, the right questions must be asked.

For many years evangelists have been putting up banners and posters which proclaim “Jesus Is the Answer.” But people are asking, “What is the question?” Unless the church knows the questions the people are asking it is not ‘scratching where people are itching’. Those questions can only be found by asking the people themselves and not by guessing or presupposing. Many churches are still putting up banners or handing out leaflets inviting people to attend meetings without even finding out if the people are interested in the subjects being presented. The church is able to reach unchurched people with the gospel when it seeks to meet their needs. Therefore, good marketing strategies demand meeting the felt needs of people. It was the method of Jesus Himself.

The New Testament shows that Jesus, the Master...
Evangelist, used marketing principles, even though they were not identified as such, to gain followers. For example, when he interacted with the Samaritan woman (John 4); Jesus first addressed basic felt needs (His thirst and her thirst). Jesus needed a drink of water and the woman was there at the well to draw water. When Jesus fed the multitudes He met felt needs and the crowds followed Him (Matthew 14:15-21; Mark 6:34-44; Luke 6:12, 17).

What Is a Felt Need?

A felt need is anything in a person's life that is perceived as a need. It could be physical—such as healing or a place to live—emotional, or simply something in which a person is deeply interested that would fill a void in his or her life.

According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, humans are motivated by their unsatisfied needs, and before higher needs can be met, the basic needs (food, shelter, clothing, etc.) must be satisfied. Satisfaction of basic needs must precede higher needs such as spirituality. For example, in the 1860s, Charles Spurgeon often offered advice about felt needs in his sermons as well as in his writings. He spent a lot of money in establishing and enlarging orphanages or almshouses in order to meet felt needs. As a result of his foresight, the Baptist Church grew.

In this century, there are other felt needs programs that people have bought into that have proven successful and very effective. In the United Kingdom, there is a debt-counselling ministry that reaches out from the church and interacts with the community. Through this service, a number of those who were helped became Christians. When the basic needs of individuals are met, those same individuals often develop an affinity with the group that helped them. These ministries meet both tangible and spiritual needs.

This was the method of Jesus' evangelism over 2,000 years ago: He first met peoples' felt needs, then He won their confidence, and they followed Him. “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people,” says Ellen White. He ministered to their needs and won their confidence. Then He bade them ‘Follow Me.’” Ministry of Healing, p. 143.

The church seems to have started with the command, “Follow Me.” That appears to be the wrong way to begin evangelism. Jesus started off by mingling and successfully used what is considered today as marketing strategies. It seems wise, therefore, that followers of Jesus should adopt similar strategies for evangelistic success in the twenty-first century. A church that does not market its ministries is like a man winking in the dark. He alone knows what he is doing.

Speaking the Right Language

As much as a church desires to meet the felt needs of people, all its efforts and energy will amount to nothing unless it is able to speak the language of the people, to communicate in a way that people will understand. Some advertisers have had a rude awakening when they realized that the messages they were sending in their advertisements were not the same when translated into the language of the people. When Coca-Cola launched its product in China the name Coca-Cola was first rendered as Ke-kou-ke-la. Unfortunately, the Coke company did not discover until after thousands of signs had been printed that the phrase means “bite the wax tadpole” or “female horse stuffed with wax” depending on the dialect. It finally found a close phonetic equivalent, “ko-kou-ko-le,” which can be loosely translated as “happiness in the mouth.”

If the church is to reach the Millennial generation, those young people who were born somewhere between 1979 and 1990, then the church must speak their language. It cannot speak in the language of 1960 or even 1999. In the same way, the church cannot use the same old methods of evangelism that it used in the past and expect better results. It is sheer madness to keep doing the same things over and over getting the same results and feel satisfied. The church must scratch where people are itching. The evangelistic strategies of the 1960s, 70s, 80s and 90s will not be as effective in the twenty-first century.

Is Your Church Ready for the Millennials?

Why so much emphasis on the Millennials as a target group for evangelism? Simply: Without them, there is no future for the church in North America. The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America is a rapidly aging church. The Millennials are the new generation of parents, church members and leaders.

In order to reach Millennials and other groups, the message of the church does not have to change—only the methods of communication. Like the leaders of the tribes of Issachar (1 Chronicles 12:32),
If it is true that only Christ’s method of evangelism will give true success, then the church should follow it. It was His relevance that made Him a successful evangelist. He was a good marketer of His ministry. Jesus made sense wherever He went.


1. Bringing structure and meaning to the lives of the members
2. Promulgating a sense of community
3. Fostering a sense of mutual obligation for each other’s welfare
4. Being an antidote for loneliness
5. Giving hope and peace for those who seek for them

So, how successful has your church been in fulfilling any or all of these roles in 2010? What are your plans for success in 2011? Will your church make sense in 2011 and beyond?

1. http://web.utk.edu/~gwynne/Maslow.HTM
2. Christian Debt Counselling Services

In previous articles in this series on worship, the emphasis was on our approach to God and what it means to worship. David Schwinghammer’s ‘Released to Worship’ (Highlights, Summer 2010) identified the 4Rs of worship—Respect, Reverence, Response and Ritual—as key in our understanding and attitude.

The following article looks at the role of worship leaders and how they should plan worship in order to make it effective so that worshippers may experience God. It considers the 2Rs of worship planning—Revelation and Response.

Family worships tend to take the following format: a few songs from the hymnal, a Bible passage and then a prayer. Sometimes the Bible is replaced by a reading from the devotional book or the Sabbath School lesson.

Church services tend to follow the pattern of a hymn at the beginning, one in the middle (sometimes replaced by vocal music or ‘special music’ as it is commonly known) and one at the end. Sandwiched in the middle is a children’s story, offertory, scripture, prayer, and the sermon.

In both family and church worship, the pattern is predictable and fairly easy to use because it does not take any real planning. Consequently, both seem routine and formal, having very little meaning to people. A ritual without real purpose other than to say, we have ‘worshipped’.

It is the role of worship leaders to plan worship services in such a way that worshippers experience God and so gain a taste of what it will be like when the redeemed are brought into His presence at the end of this age.

So, any attempt at worship renewal must carefully consider and evaluate the components of worship and their order. Worship leaders must be very clear about the use of Scripture, music, prayer, sermon, testimonies, etc, and their place and purpose in the worship service. It is not simply establishing an order of service and then filling in the blanks with names of participants each week for the next twenty years.
The first consideration of leaders is to design worship as a verb, not as a noun. It is something that we do, not observe. It is participatory.

Secondly, worship must be God-focussed, not programme-focussed. It must be about God, not us, even though we benefit. While the practice of honouring civil dignitaries and members is commendable, it should not be part of a God-centred worship. In some congregations, such honours or celebrations occur prior to worship. Once worship begins, all focus is on God.

The third consideration is to recognise the role of the Holy Spirit and to pray for His presence and leadership. Worship that is not Spirit-filled and Spirit-led will result in a nice, orderly and formal programme, but it is not worship since only the Spirit can take our worship and make it pleasing to God. The leadership of the Spirit must always be uppermost in the minds of worship leaders in both their planning and worship leading.

Cynthia Brown’s Experiencing Worship, page 33, speaks of the principle of revelation and response as foundation of worship, identifying it as the dominant theme of the Bible. “Scripture is the revelation of God to man and the record of man’s response to God,” she says. “True worship is a two-way event: God reveals Himself to us, and we respond to Him.”

Worship leaders need to consider the elements of worship through which God reveals Himself as: His Word, Christ-centred sermons, the drama of salvation, communion, testimony, music, silence and meditation, among others, and ask, “How is God revealed through these? How can we best use these elements so that worshippers may see the glory, mercy, justice and righteousness of God?” Nothing is left to chance or to tradition.

In their planning, worship leaders are to be motivated by the words of Jesus, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself” (John 12:32, NKJV), and use them as a guiding principle.

It is only as God is revealed that worshippers are able to respond. All the elements of revelation are designed to elicit a Spirit-filled response from people. Hence, the careful selection of Scripture for use in worship will elicit such a response. Does this happen in your church? In your family worship?

When music is chosen, is the selection based on the popularity of the song or for what it reveals about God? The revelation of God inspires worshippers and elicits a response. Each worshipper responds differently, but worship leaders provide opportunities for responding to God’s revelation.

The response of a worshipper is also a verb, something that is done. It is participatory.

Common ways of responding are through praise, thanksgiving, acts of mercy and mission. Praise and thanksgiving are often expressed through music, prayer, offerings, baptism, testimonies and communion.

Response of acts of mercy and mission is our response to God’s love for man and to His command to be merciful, give care to the needy, feed the hungry and become evangelists for Him (James 1:27). Worship that does not elicit this form of response demonstrates a lack of revelation of God. True worship will result in our adoration of God, a feeding of our souls and the impulse to minister to the physical and spiritual needs of our neighbours.

The way in which the various components of revelation and response are presented, emphasized, used and sequenced will greatly determine the extent to which the worship service will help worshippers experience God. It all has to do with how the service is structured and its openness for the Holy Spirit to lead. But, that is the subject for the next article in the series on worship renewal.

Reference:
Cynthia J. Brown, Experiencing Worship, Copyright © 2003 Cynthia J. Brown.

FEATURE

What About the Children?

Children of Christians are not born Christians. Like everyone else, they have to be born again. They are the first mission field of every congregation, especially in that they are God’s most valued possessions loaned to the stewardship of parents and adults.

The value we place on our children is a reflection of our appreciation of God who loans them to us.

Some churches sadly recognise their failure when children who were dedicated in church and grew up attending each Sabbath School division and on into teenage years, leave the church and do not return. Yes, parents are responsible for their children, but the congregation also has a significant role to play.

One of the greatest joys of Christian parents is when their child asks, “Is it Sabbath yet? When can we go to church?” Children excitedly ask questions like these when church, especially Sabbath School, is a child-friendly, interesting and welcoming place, led by consecrated and skilled men and women who love them and take time to

training events. All churches should do the same. It is unreasonable to ask someone to work with children without providing good training and resources.

As good as Sabbath School is for children, they will not benefit if they are not present or are brought late by their parents. The children need to be present, and on time. Unfortunately, some of these parents are quick to complain that their church ‘does not do enough for the children.’

It is not unusual for some parents to sometimes attend other congregations because of the quality of the children’s Sabbath School in the other church. A good children’s programme attracts young families to a church—even families that are not Seventh-day Adventists.

Churches with few children often suffer because parents want to attend congregations where there are more children and will leave to join such churches. The quality of the services and the programmes a church provides for its children should not be low simply because there are only a few children. Whether there is one child or fifty children, the quality should always be the best. This will encourage new parents to remain and help to attract other children and their parents.

For most children, Sabbath School is church. The worship service is for their parents because it is adult-centric. The child-friendly church will plan worships so that children are able to participate in more than just the story. When a service is being planned, the children should be uppermost in the minds of the pastor and those doing the planning. Children need to learn, by what takes place, that the worship service is also for them to worship God.

Churches that place high value on their children are growing churches. Even with a few children, they provide activities, such as Adventurers, Bible Bowl, choir, or even a children’s church. They have ongoing spiritual and social activities that act like a magnet, attracting the children back to the place where they have their most fun—at church.

Thanks to dedicated volunteers and leaders, such churches exists. However, there is always a shortage of volunteers. Male volunteers are especially welcomed. Your commitment to the children of your church could very well make the difference to a child’s life and his or her eternal salvation.

What are you doing for the children in your church?
Death Is Costly, but It Does not Have to Be Expensive

As much as we want to avoid it, death is inevitable. Whether our own death or that of a loved one, it will happen. It is only a matter of time before it invades our homes and wreaks havoc on our lives. Until we have experienced the loss through death of someone we love, these words have very little meaning.

To lose a loved one is to be brought to the very depths of despair. It is like a fall into a bottomless pit from which there is no escape, no sleep, no rest, no hunger, no thirst, no comfort and no hope.

For some, the grief seems so unbearable that their own continued existence seems pointless.

It is because of this state of being why Jesus calls death a sleep and the Holy Spirit moved the Apostle Paul to write:

“13 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. 14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, NIV).

Death is so terrifying and leaves humanity so hopeless that the Holy Spirit has to make it clear that it is not all-powerful. It does not have the final say. The good news of the resurrection is that Jesus has conquered death, and while we grieve, it is not a hopeless grief. The grave no longer has the power to hold us captive. We can view death as Jesus described it, as a sleep–awaiting the call of the resurrection to eternal life.

Verse 18 says that we are to “encourage one another with these words”. Encouragement, or ‘comfort’ as the KJV renders it, does not come from a mere repetition of these verses. It comes when there is a real presence and practical support from fellow-believers. It means to remain with the bereaved days and weeks after the burial when others have returned to their busy lives. It means to walk with them in their grief, provide practical help and to be living examples of faith. Only then will these verses provide ‘comfort’. It is the presence of men and women of faith that helps to restore the believer to trust God and find assurance and comfort in His Word.

It is also the truth of God’s Word that enables us to survive the arduous journey of terminal illness. It is the measure of faith, confidence in God and the practical support of others that sustain us as we watch a loved one slowly wither away before our eyes. It is only the power of God that prevents us from cursing God when death finally snatches our loved one away and seeks to overwhelm us with depths of grief we thought we could never reach.

Funerals

It is in the mire of our grief, struggling to hold on to faith, when we have to organise a funeral. We are faced with decisions that demand the immediate expenditure of thousands of dollars at a time when it is hard to even find money to pay school fees for the children or to replace the tyres on the car. Even those who have made financial preparations are subject to the emotional miasma of grief and the process of preparing to bury or to cremate their loved ones.

Funeral preparation is also affected by grief’s ability to resurrect long-suppressed negative emotions and unresolved conflicts among family members. Sometimes the planning process becomes a fight between family members and relationships remain strained or broken for years. Guilt often emerges as a driving force and strongly influences the decisions. It is during this time that the arrangements are made at the funeral home.

While funeral directors are seemingly among the most understanding and helpful people, we must remember that they are not in business as humanitarians. They are sales people and even in an economic downturn, it is very rare to hear of a funeral home going out of business. So, when the bereaved makes the journey to the funeral home, he or she is especially vulnerable and could leave having agreed to purchase a casket in excess of $5,000.

The casket is only one item. The cost of a grave, flowers, programmes, and limousines can easily take the cost of burial to over $20,000.

Dying is costly, but it does not have to be expensive. It is expensive when the salesperson at the funeral home is allowed to convince the bereaved to ‘provide the best for your loved one’. It is expensive when we think it necessary to live up to the expectations of others (who do not usually contribute any money). It is expensive when there has not been any pre-planning and the pressure of grief and time makes it necessary to take what is offered by the funeral home.

Pre-planning does not solve every problem, but it does help in the exercise of good stewardship.

A living Will as well as a last Will and Testament will ensure that your wishes are carried out. Family members do not have to guess as to what you would have liked. Making a Will will not bring death closer. Talking with your family about your death and funeral is not a death
An expensive, showy funeral does not mean that the person was more loved and cared for. Love and care is demonstrated to a person while he or she is alive, not at death. It is for this reason that people should be honoured while they are alive. The glowing comments and tributes, as beautiful and meaningful as they are to family members, are of no value to them at death.

Everyone will, at some time or another, face death and bereavement. Each person must go through the despair, but the journey can be less harrowing when preparation is made. While financial preparation is paramount so that loved ones are not left in debt and provision has been made for the education and well-being of dependents, spiritual preparation must not be overlooked. None of us knows how we will react when faced with impending death—our own or that of loved ones—so it is vital that we seek Jesus in our daily lives, to know and to trust Him, to have confidence in His Words and experience His abiding presence in our lives. We can be confident in His promise that when He returns, He will resurrect the dead because He has already demonstrated His resurrection power. So, comfort one another with these words.

Halsey Peat

Did You Know that Each Twonee Helps Your Church to Be Debt Free?

Nine years have passed since the Ontario Conference launched the initiative to assist churches in their efforts to eliminate existing mortgages.

- One hundred and fifty-two churches / companies, the constituency of the conference, are involved in helping each other.
- Two dollars (one twonee) is the amount each member is encouraged to give each week in support of the initiative.
- Over 1 million dollars have been raised during the last nine years. Of this amount, the Ontario Conference, in its annual budget, has made a significant contribution.
- Thirty percent% of the total funds collected for the year is shared equally with selected churches that are servicing outstanding mortgages.
- Four churches reselected from a compiled list of the churches that have mortgages, starting with the oldest to the most recent mortgages.
- Seventy percent, the remaining portion, is shared equally among the churches/companies that are not entitled to a specific allocation, as an appropriation for their capital needs.
- Thirty-three churches have already benefitted, enabling them to either reduce the amortization period up to twelve months or eliminate their mortgages completely.

This year, members donated $79,908.56. The conference provided a further $50,000 to make a total of $129,908.56. Four churches will shortly receive $22,734.00. Each church will equally share the remaining amount of $38,972.56.

Let us continue to support the Church Building Investment Fund because ‘helping today, brings hope for tomorrow’.

Vernon Langdon
Planned Giving & Trust Services & CBIF Representative

For information regarding burial and cremation, visit:
www.justcremation.com/askdirector.html
From Morse Code to Cyberspace

I watched in amazement one Sabbath morning as I witnessed a very practical example of how technology is changing our world. The Scripture reading was being read, and I was distracted by a silent but very visible exchange between a deacon and a youth. Disgusted by the use of a smartphone in the young man’s hand, the deacon was motioning to him to put it away. It was not too long before the deacon’s face changed from one of repulsion to one of embarrassment, when he realized the young man was actually following along on his smartphone’s Bible app.

In just 175 years, we’ve moved from Morse code to the age of radio, TVs, fax machines, computers, Internet, cell phones and cyberspace. In almost every part of the world, these fast-track developments have had their impact. Newspapers contain yesterday’s news. Using today’s technology, global news and events are available in real time. When President Barack Obama took the oath on Capitol Hill, almost anyone who wanted to see him could; distance has become a thing of the past.

One of the main contributors to this metamorphosis is the Internet. Every day millions of people exchange ideas, pictures, video conversations and information at the click of a mouse or a touch of a screen, as if they were physically present.

As a provider of multimedia solutions, I’m seeing that with the steady increase of broadband Internet service, Internet technology is exploding with highly advanced methods of communicating both audibly and visibly. Vendors are employing all the tools available to them to maintain consumer relevancy and seek cost-effective opportunities to acquire and retain customers. This begs the question, where is the church in all this?

Too many of our churches are still trapped in the dark ages of communication, but with the momentum with which new technology becomes user friendly, any church can empower its members to become powerful ambassadors of the gospel, and the greatest resource available to us is sitting in the pew.

The other day my five year-old and I walked into a Bell World store, and within five minutes, he was tapping at my pants’ leg to listen to a voice recording he made using the iPhone 4 demo. Can you imagine the possibilities if we could marry the life experience of our seniors with the innovative high-tech minds of our youth, working together and using technology to spread our message?!

Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, YouTube, GodTube, Linkedin, and Blogger etc., have all become household names, and it’s not unusual for account holders to have 300 or even 1000 followers, giving an entirely new meaning to each one, reach one. Social media isn’t a fad; it’s a fundamental shift in the way we communicate.

If we’re not deliberately using at least one of these forms of social media, we may be slowly becoming silenced by these new forms of communication, and soon we may be busy saying nothing at all. So where do we begin? The best place to start is with our youths. Our youths are not our future; they are our present, and given the opportunity, they can not only help provide education about the usefulness of these innovative forms of communication, but they can easily spearhead the effort of integrating them into our ministry.

What a difference if that deacon and young man were both sitting at a control booth, streaming the service.

Cyril ‘Ceejay’ Horrell
www.StrateUpProductions.com
www.CeejayHorrell.com

Useful Adventist Apps for iPod Touch, iPhone, iPad and Android Phones

Seventh-day Adventists techies are busy creating apps (applications) to promote ministries, resources and to share the gospel.

Most apps are either free or cost very little. You may find the following free apps useful:

1. Beliefs: This application places the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church right at your fingertips or on your telephone. It’s a great evangelistic tool.
3. Sabbath School Lesson
4. Seventh-day Adventist Church Hymnal: All the songs and responses of the hymnal. Word edition only.

Bible games (developed by Nick Velinov of the Ontario Conference) for iPhones, iPads and Android phones may also be found at the iTunes Store and the Android Market. Look out for the following Bible games:

Communication Department
2010 Lay Evangelism Reaps Harvest of 400 Converts

“It was one of my best experiences as a lay person,” said Rainford Cornish, one of the seven lay evangelists who conducted the three-week series of meetings as a joint effort between the Brampton and the North West Brampton Churches from September 17-October 9, 2010. As I spoke with Rainford a few days after the series of meetings ended, I could sense his excitement: “Soul-winning is truly very exciting,” he said. “I grew spiritually as I prepared and presented the Word of God.” He cannot wait to conduct another series of meetings in the spring of next year. He also hinted that his desire to be trained as a pastor has been rekindled.

Velma Morgan, the sole evangelist for the Ajax congregation and one of more than a dozen female lay preachers, had a similar experience to Rainford Cornish’s. She was quick to say, “While I grew spiritually through the experience, it was very humbling.” She is committed to be more involved in the Personal Ministries Department of her church.

The baptism of over 400 persons from every corner of the conference was especially rewarding and inspirational. The nearly 140 lay evangelists who participated in the 2010 Year of Lay Evangelism, organized by the Personal Ministries Department of the Ontario Conference, are convinced that they can have a significant part in winning souls for God in Ontario.

Initially, plans called for one hundred churches to host lay evangelistic meetings; however, only 62 churches participated, but they approached it with such enthusiasm and seriousness that God blessed their efforts in ways that go beyond the celebration of baptisms.

As I dialogued with many of the evangelists—ranging in age from six year-old, Deyrold Dean, to seniors in their late 60’s—and church members across the province as well as from what I observed, I noticed:

1. An excitement for evangelism

The Year of Lay Evangelism generated a level of enthusiasm and excitement in church member that has rarely been seen in recent years. I identified three reasons for this:

   a. Ontario Conference’s designation of an entire year to emphasize lay-led evangelism struck a responsive chord with many people.

   b. The conference was seen as being willing to ‘put its money where its mouth is’ by providing resources for training and equipping. Some have said to me, “Now we know that the Ontario Conference believes in us and that we too are gifted for ministry.”

   c. Seeing individuals nightly attend the meetings and eventually make decisions for Christ and be baptised gave a great sense of happiness and joy.

Newly baptized at Mount Zion Filipino

Evangelists—ranged in age from seven year-old, Deyrold Dean, to those with years of experience

Pastors were happy to baptize new converts
2. Potentials revealed

The three week series of meetings revealed a vast reservoir of potential among the laity of our conference. For many of the preachers, it was the first time they were holding such meetings, yet, in both their presentations and deportment they demonstrated levels of confidence and preparedness usually associated with the more experienced. Some were so confident that they even augmented the prepared “Share Him” sermons with their own testimonies and boldly made public appeals, inviting people to take their stand for the Lord.

With the exception of just a few, the lay evangelists, by God’s enabling power, led souls to the Lord through baptism. In one church, a team of three young men preached in a series that led 56 souls to Christ. In another, 18 people gave their lives to the Lord. These and other results clearly affirm that our people are gifted by God, and when rightly trained, can use their abilities for His glory.

3. Creativity displayed

Some lay evangelists demonstrated an admirable level of creativity. In at least four cases, church members moved out of the church buildings and rented classrooms or community halls for their meetings. In two of those cases, there is no established Seventh-day Adventist presence, and it is their hope that new church plants will result from their efforts. One evangelist created his own sermon series and customised it for his audience, instead of using the prescribed PowerPoint sermons. One pastor in the North, realizing that neither of his two small churches had enough human resources to host the series, amalgamated both congregations and rented the Lions Club (halfway between both churches) for the series.

4. Appreciation for and partnership with pastors

With the experience of an evangelistic series behind them, many of the members appreciate the work of their church pastor even more. Some even expressed sympathy for the pastor’s workload and are prepared to help out where they can.

With few exceptions, there was a healthy working relationship between pastors and the laity. I was greatly encouraged by the level of support that some pastors provided for their lay teams. They served as greeters, participated in the nightly services, positioned themselves in the front pew where they could give their verbal support to the preacher and went on visitation errands with the visitation team. On some occasions, the lay preacher invited the pastor to make the appeal.

What a sense of unity! It begs the question, “Are we on the road to fulfilling the desire of God as expressed by Ellen White?” She said, “The work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers” (Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 9, p. 117).

5. A spirit of anticipation

Having tasted the joy of being involved in evangelism, many are asking, “Will this be a one-time event?” And, “What is next?” It seems that many of the lay evangelists and their fellow church members are not satisfied with just one drink from the fountain of evangelism. They are ready for more. They will be pleased to hear that the Personal Ministries Department of the Ontario Conference, in collaboration with other ministry areas and departments, is already making plans to propel the engine of lay evangelism. On January 1, 2011, the Year of Youth Evangelism will begin.

Bowmanville Adventist Church is looking for the following members:
If you have information, please contact Joyce Jones at bowmanvilleclerk@adventistontario.org or call phone: 905-433-7897

Eustace Williams, Personal Ministries Director
Conference Still Vigilant Even As Tithe Increases

“We have a lot to be thankful for,” exclaimed Conference treasurer, Ulysses Guarin. “God has really blessed our church.” He was speaking to the directors of the Ontario Conference in a meeting held on November 2 and informed them that tithe income from January to September 2010 had increased by 4.65% over the same period last year.

“Given the background of the recession and how some conferences in North America are struggling,” said Guarin, “we have to praise God and express our gratitude to our members for their faithfulness during such difficult times.”

Gowan was visibly relieved. Eight months earlier, in a similar meeting, he had sombrely announced: “Our tithe income for January is down by 10% over the same period last year. It is clear that the economic downturn is affecting our members more than we thought.”

The economic measures that had been in place for the previous year were again reiterated and new ones, such as a freeze on hiring new workers or replacing pastors, were introduced. Workers’ salaries were frozen, and departmental directors were asked to reduce travel. Some events were cancelled, and more cost-effective ways to provide training and resources for churches were considered.

Stewardship director, Pastor David Schwinghammer, informed the directors that, “nearly 41% of churches experienced a decline in tithe income while 55% had seen modest increases.”

Since then, a number of those churches that had a decline in tithe have seen their tithe income turn around and contribute to the overall 4.65% increase across the conference.

Some events were cancelled, and departmental directors had to lay off some workers. However, Guarin is still leaning towards caution. “We are not out of the woods yet,” he warned. “We have to continue to be prudent. Our economy is not growing as fast as the Bank of Canada forecasted in July.”

He was referring to the Bank of Canada’s decision on October 19, to keep interest rates at 1%. In Yahoo! News, Julian Beltrame of the Canadian Press reported that the Bank of Canada says that it was wrong about the strength of the Canadian economic recovery. The bank’s council said that it expects that the economy will take a full year longer to return to full capacity than it had previously thought.

The bank said that it believes the economy will likely grow about 3% this year instead of the 3.5% it had predicted in July. In 2011, the bank expects the growth to fall to 2.3 %.

“While things are going moderately well for us,” said Guarin, “we need to practice good economy so that when the years of hardship arrive, we will have something in reserve, just as Joseph prepared Egypt for the seven years of famine.”

In addition to an increase in tithe, there was a small rise in Mission offerings, continuing a yearly trend for the past four years after many years of decline, and a very small rise in Ontario Advance offering.

The increase in tithe income over the same period last year must be taken in context of last year’s 1.4% increase (Graph 1). Two thousand and nine was a very challenging year, following modest increases over the previous two years. Therefore, the 4.65% rise over the first three quarters of 2010 is just able to maintain the mission of the conference at its present level, as long as cost-saving measures are still in place.

Ontario’s 4.65% tithe increase paints a much brighter picture for the stability of God’s work in this conference when compared to the average 1% increase across North America where...
“Freddie! Freddie! Freddie!” chanted the audience as Freddie Guthrie, accompanied by his teammates and coaches from Brampton Seventh-day Adventist Church, received their awards on Saturday night, October 23. The team had earlier won first place in the Senior Adult (36 years old and above) category in the Black Adventist Youth Directors Association’s (BAYDA) annual National Bible Bowl Championships.

“It’s the same each year,” explained Ontario Conference Youth director, Pastor Cyril Millett, “Freddie has endeared himself to so many of the other participants from across the United States that they love to cheer him on.”

‘Mr. Bible Bowl’ Freddie Guthrie took it all in his stride, happy that he and his teammates had won first place for Ontario, especially as the championships were held out of the USA for the first time in its twenty-eight year history and that it was hosted by the Ontario Conference.

Ontario’s three other teams also had much to celebrate. After gruelling rounds with teams from eight regional conferences in the USA, they (Brampton Church) came second in the Junior division (ages 10-15), third (Mount Zion Filipino Church) in the Senior Youth division (ages 16-22) and second (Malton Church) in the Young Adults division (ages 23-35). While they were pleased to be among the top three positions, they would have loved to have made it a clean sweep for Ontario.

Other teams also left with trophies. Most notable is Heritage Church in Queens, New York. The Junior division team won first place at its first attempt at Bible Bowl. Like all teams, they had to first secure their position as their conference’s team by triumphing over all other churches in their conference. Reaching the finals would have been an achievement by itself, but they steadily moved through the rounds until they met and overcame the mighty Brampton Church to gain first position.

For many attending from the USA, it was their first visit to Canada and they were clearly impressed with their reception.

“It has all been excellent,” enthused Lywanda Bell from the Southeastern Conference, “the talent, the people here. We're just having a ball!”

Ardis Bell, a coach from Houston, Texas, heartily agreed: “It’s just wonderful. The kids were all excited about coming to Toronto and Canada. It’s been a great experience!”

Pastor Millett, who was joined by Ontario Conference president, Pastor Mansfield Edwards, in presenting the awards, later expressed his gratitude to BAYDA for allowing the championships to be held in Ontario. In a brief ‘passing the torch’ ceremony to the Lake Region Conference, where the 2011 championships will be held,
Millett handed a flash drive memory stick containing all the files he had used to prepare for the 2010 event to Lake Region’s representative, Pastor Lewis. Millett is hopeful that more churches from across Ontario will form at least one team and participate in the 2011 Ontario Conference Bible Bowl Championships that will take place on July 17 and 23.

To find out more information about entering your church for Ontario’s Bible Bowl 2011, contact Pastor Cyril Millett at 905-571-1022, ext. 214 or by email: cmillett@adventistontario.org

The mighty Black Stars of Toronto Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventist Church are the champions of Christian Youth Sports Academy’s (CYSA) first soccer championship.

On Sunday, September 26, 2010, they swept aside all-comers at Keelesdale Park in Toronto to win the first annual soccer tournament.

It was thrilling all-Africa final as the Black Stars beat the Warriors of the Zimbabwean Group in Toronto to take the crown.

Malton Church won the consolation third place.

Soccer is not the only sport to be added to CYSA's portfolio. It recently added netball and made it very clear that it is only for females.

In 2011, both soccer and netball leagues will begin in spring. Teams may field players from age fourteen years and up.

To register your teams and for further information, contact Chris Mitchell at saga_bwoy@rogers.com

Conference president, Pastor Mansfield Edwards, joined Guarin in both his thanksgiving to God and the membership and in his caution for the immediate future but also added: “Back in February, our congregations were encouraged to exercise faithfulness to God, and I give thanks to God for their faithfulness. It is the faithfulness of church members that has helped us to be where we are today. As we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us into a rich experience with Him the entire church will be blessed. I am convinced that every effort we make for Christ will be rewarded by Him.

Communication Staff

Toronto Ghanaian Wins First CYSA Soccer Championship

Toronto Ghanaian Wins First CYSA Soccer Championship

“Still Vigilant As Tithe Increases” Continued from page 15

Communication Staff

“Still Vigilant As Tithe Increases” Continued from page 15

Communication Staff
In 2011, youths and young adults across Ontario will be at the forefront of evangelism across the entire province. In what the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists has designated ‘The Year of Youth Evangelism’ Ontario’s youths and young adults will join millions of young people across the world as they reach out to their friends, communities and countries with the gospel of Jesus.

“We are really excited to have an entire year dedicated to youth evangelism,” said Youth director, Pastor Cyril Millett, “because we have many talented young people who are totally committed to sharing the gospel and are eager to start.”

Conference Personal Ministries director, Pastor Eustace Williams, was equally pleased to learn that 2011 has been designated as ‘The Year of Youth Evangelism’ because some of the preachers in the lay evangelistic meetings held in 2010 are young people, and they now have another opportunity to use their training and experience to reach even more people.

“It’s a good way to maintain the lay-led evangelistic momentum,” said Williams, “because, with minor exceptions, youths and young adults are lay people. It’s just wonderful to see young people become involved in finishing the work.”

According to Millett, The Year of Youth Evangelism will not follow the general format of 2010.

While there will be some traditional evangelistic meetings with one or two persons preaching, he expects that the focus will be on ‘lifestyle evangelism.’

Life-style evangelism does not require preaching skills and can be done by anyone. Ordinarily, it does not even need money. It means to use ideas and techniques to naturally draw people to Christ. Each person is able to engage in evangelism using his or her own personality and abilities.

“For some young people, life-style evangelism means that they will engage others in conversation and lead the discussion in such as way as to effectively share their testimonies and stimulate interest in others wanting to learn more about God,” says Millett.

Millett says that young people will be taught ways of sharing their faith and pointed out that training began in 2010 with the 7x7 Evangelism Training. During the training, Millett informed the participants that Faith for Today is offering funds and expertise to help in evangelism for Young Adults. He also told them how to apply for the funding.

The annual Youth Ministries Leadership training that took place on November 19 and 21 at Filipino Canadian Adventist Church and at Canada Christian College on November 20 served as the last major training event in 2010. Elder James Black and Elder Manny Cruz, North American Division Youth Ministries director and associate Youth director, respectively, were also present, and inspired leaders by their preaching and training.

Millett encourages every young person in 2011 to become actively involved in evangelism. “Join us, and the world Church in prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit,” says Millett. “Let’s saturate Ontario with the power of prayer. Let’s prepare ourselves by setting aside time for prayer and searching the Scriptures daily until Jesus returns for us. As a result, we’ll be able to witness for the Lord and bring others to Jesus Christ. Let’s experience the joy of salvation and the delight of serving God.”
The first Annual Council of the Seventh-day Adventist Church held since the General Conference Session in July in Atlanta will be best remembered for its strong emphasis on ‘revival and reformation’.

The October 8-13 meetings, held at the world church headquarters in Maryland, USA, were a time for casting a vision for the next five years and to fill various positions left vacant at the General Conference session.

During the Monday morning session, after an hour-long worship and prayer session and a devotional led by Pastor Dwight Nelson of Berrien Springs, Michigan, the delegation approved “an urgent call for revival, reformation, discipleship and evangelism.”

Recognising the various interpretations that could be given to the well-used term, revival and reformation, Elder Mark Finley urged the delegates to remember that “revival without mission is simply sentimentalism” and that “reformation without mission is simply self-righteousness.”

The voted document, “God’s Promised Gift”, recognises the inability of the church to keep pace with the increasing rate of world population growth and squarely acknowledges that it is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that the Seventh-day Adventist Church can fulfil the Gospel Commission. It calls the world church to seek revival and reformation.

The document urges seven different commitments from church leaders and members:

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 a significant amount of time daily to fellowship with Christ through prayer and 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, health-care 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.

The document includes this statement: “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.”

Resulting from this is the 777 initiative, one of the first initiatives of the Revival and Reformation Committee established at the Annual Council.

The ‘777’ means Seventh-day (7) Adventists, praying 7 days a week at 7 o’clock (a.m. or p.m.), without ceasing, until Jesus comes.

2011 Membership Statistics
Also coming out of the annual council was the membership statistical report. Below are a few highlights:
About 2,900 people join the Seventh-day Adventist Church every day. The denomination now has 16,641,357 adult baptized members and a growth rate slightly higher than last year. That is about one Adventist for every 414 people on the planet.
Much of that growth came from Latin America and Southern and Eastern Africa. South America’s church membership is growing the fastest. Of the total membership, Africa has 37 percent; Latin America 33 percent; Asia 19 percent; North America 7 percent, and Europe/Oceania has 4 percent.
This is also the seventh consecutive year the church had a net gain of more than 1 million members.
On Sunday, October 24, 2010, the family of the late Pastor Antonio Bueno, Sr. was joined by over 400 church members and pastors at Willowdale Seventh-day Adventist Church to remember his life and ministry ten days after he had peacefully slipped into death after a period of illness.

In a service that was streamed via the Internet, Pastor Bueno’s rich life in the service of God revealed a man who was totally dedicated to God. The necessity of translation from Spanish, Italian and Portuguese into English was an indication of the breadth of his work, having ministered to those language groups in Toronto between 1976 - 1979.

Guests learned that he pioneered the Italian and Hispanic work in Toronto and became speaker for La Voce della Speranza telecast, also in Toronto.

His early ministry began in 1949 in his native country, Spain, where, after two years, he became secretary-treasurer of the Spanish Mission (1951-1955). Ordained to the gospel ministry in 1956, he became an itinerant evangelist for La Voz de la Esperanza until 1961 and established 18 new companies and churches in un-entered areas of Spain. For the next fifteen years, he first served as a pastor, then as ministerial secretary before moving to Italy as president of the Italian Union until 1976.

During his brief time in Ontario, he established the first Italian-Hispanic Church in Toronto in May 1978 with 79 members.

Pastor Bueno returned to Spain in 1979 as president of the Spanish Union until his retirement on January 1, 1987. However, his retirement provided new opportunities for service. In the same year, he traveled to the United States where he spent four years holding evangelistic meetings. Still not content to settle into retirement, he returned to Spain and taught at the Spanish Seminary until 1992 when he assumed his new role as director of Historical Archives of the Spanish Union, a post he held until 2001.

In 2006 he was finally ready to settle into retirement, so he moved to Canada to live with his son’s family in Oshawa, Ontario. On August 5, 2010, a serious fall resulted in head injuries that required hospitalization. He died on October 14, 2010 from complications of pneumonia.

He was laid to rest on Monday, October 25, 2010, at Thornton Cemetery in Oshawa to await the coming of our Lord.

Pastor Antonio Bueno, Sr. was married to Amparo Berlinches on Apr. 17, 1950. She pre-deceased him in August 1997. Their only child, Pastor Antonio Bueno, Jr. is pastor of Bowmanville Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Halsey Peat, from a biographical sketch written by his son, Pastor Antonio Bueno, Jr.
“When’s the Next One?”
First Senior’s Retreat a Success

It was the question on everyone’s lips—“When are we going to have the next one?”

“Next year,” responded Pastor Mansfield Edwards, Ontario Conference president and Seniors Ministries coordinator, “but I cannot give you the exact date just yet. As soon as I return to the conference, I will look at the calendar and let you know.”

Edwards was responding to the pressing questioning of nearly thirty seniors who had made the journey to Camp Frenda for the inaugural weekend retreat for seniors, October 29-31, 2010.

The desire to know the next date was evidence of how much they enjoyed the weekend.

Although many of the participants, coming from diverse regions of the province, had not previously known each other, it did not take them long to make new friends.

“From the moment they arrived on Friday,” said Vernon Langdon, the weekend organiser, “everyone seemed eager to be involved. It was such a wonderful group of people to work with.”

Langdon described how the fortune cookies of the ice-breaker led to prayer partners for the weekend and how men and women quickly formed singing groups to render vocal music for the worships. He explained that while there was an outline for each worship, no one had been assigned any responsibilities. However, the group quickly pooled their talents and helped each person experience happy, meaningful worship experiences.

Pastor Mansfield and his wife, Sharon Edwards, hosted the weekend with Vernon and Pam Langdon as part of the formation of the ministry for seniors in Ontario.

For too long, our seniors have been neglected,” said Edwards. “They have given many years of dedicated service to God’s church and still have much to offer. While we recognise their tremendous contribution, this weekend was more than that. Seniors still have much to offer, but they also have unique needs. We want to develop a ministry that recognises all these elements.”

One of the purposes of the weekend was for the seniors themselves to identify their needs and determine the direction they would like to see the ministry go. On Sabbath morning, everyone broke into groups and closely looked at how they can help the ministry to develop. They were so engaged that the remainder of the morning’s programme had to be shortened to allow additional time for them to formulate their plans.

One of the highlights for many participants was the presence of Dr. Paulette Higgins and three members of her team from all Dunamis Chiropractic Wellness Centre who provided free massage therapy and personalised body scan. Ontario Conference directors, Maria McLean and Alvin Ram, were also present. Health Ministries director, McLean, presented seminars on coping with illness, and how to access governmental health and social agencies. Planned Giving and Trust Services director, Ram, provided useful and timely information on estate planning.

Departure time on Sunday was a sad one. New friendships had been forged, testimonies shared, spiritual food received, bodies massaged, a wealth of knowledge shared, new and helpful information received and happily played games into the early hours of Sunday morning—surely the weekend was just too short. So, the question was: “When is the next one?”

Edwards was true to his word and upon returning to the conference office was able to identify the date for next year’s senior retreat—September 16-18.
Twelve Churches Achieve Faith Goal as ADRA Campaign Closes

Even as the 2010 Adventist Disaster and Relief Agency (ADRA) fund-raising campaign winds down, nine churches and three companies across Ontario have already achieved their faith goals.

“To date, we have 25 churches on our honour roll,” declared an optimistic Pastor Theodore Sargeant, ADRA coordinator for the Ontario Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. “In addition to those who have achieved their faith goals, four are super goal achievers and a further ten are basic goal achievers.”

Sargeant’s optimism was still evident even as he revealed that the total amount of funds raised to date by the combined efforts of every church, company and group in Ontario is only $440,773.30, approximately $30,000 less than the total of 2009.

“I’m confident that our members can still go beyond last year’s total,” he said, “but even if they don’t, those who have at least made the basic goals are to be congratulated.”

In addition to the funds collected by churches and donated by members, private donors have raised the total collected to $748,682.19. While this figure appears to be very significant, it is much less than what Ontario is capable of. The goal set by ADRA for Ontario churches is based on $100 for each member each year. The combined effort of all members should amount to $2,561,000.00 but so far, with just a few days before the close of the year, Ontario has raised just under half a million dollars or 29.23% of its goal.

Ontario’s 29.23% of its goal, when compared with those of other conferences – 78.2% in Alberta, 67.5% in Newfoundland, 66.35% in British Columbia, and 62.6% in Manitoba-Saskatchewan – casts a pall over Ontario’s reputation for its generosity towards those suffering because of disaster.

“While some of our churches have really responded and given it their best,” says Sargeant, some did not even begin. I am hopeful that even at the eleventh hour, they will recognise how important it is for ADRA to have funds readily available for the unexpected disaster.”

Donations from the 2010 campaign will go towards projects in Mongolia/Somalia/Niger/Sudan/Yemen/Thailand/Togo/Laos/Kenya and Cambodia.

ADRA Canada also provides funds towards local community projects run by churches. However, the amount awarded to a local church is proportional to the amount donated to the ADRA campaign by the local church. It is an example of the words “those who sow sparingly will reap sparingly”.

The annual ADRA campaign was formerly known in the Seventh-day Adventist Church as “Ingathering”. It was introduced shortly after the church was founded and members were encouraged to go out to the community and raise funds to help the needy and those in distress.

To find out how you can become involved in raising funds for ADRA, speak with your local church ADRA agent, or visit www.adra.ca
Lily of the Valley Celebrates “Company” Status

Sabbath, October 23, 2010, was an unforgettable day for Lily of the Valley because the group was formally organized into a company.

Pastor Mansfield Edwards, president of the Ontario Conference, and Mr. Ulysses Guarin, conference treasurer, accompanied by their wives, Sharon and Judith, were present to lead in the organizing ceremony and to share in the joy of the congregation.

The ceremony took place immediately after Pastor Edwards had delivered a powerful and Spirit-filled message in the worship service. Edwards’ sermon was foundational to the organization of the company as it encouraged the congregation to embrace the vision and mission of our world-wide Seventh-day Adventist Church.

“You have matured,” Edwards told the group, “but you have not yet arrived. This is just the beginning. The purpose of every Adventist congregation is to fulfill the Gospel Commission to preach the gospel to every man, woman and child and to prepare them for the second coming of Jesus Christ!”

The director of the group, Sister Carline Saint-Fleur, gave a short history of the group and told of how, in September 2003, twelve members from Nepean, Ottawa East and Orleans French Seventh-day Adventist Churches, under the leadership of Pastor Manuel Donoso, planted a group that would reach out to a multi-ethnic community. They have been worshipping in the same location at 444 St. Laurent Blvd. since that time.

Bro. Ulysses Guarin offered the prayer of consecration and concluded the ceremony.

To celebrate the progress of this small but loving congregation, a potluck was served in the social room.

Pastor Eduardo Monteiro

Meadowvale Celebrates 25 Years of Meaningful Ministry

On October 29-30, 2010, Meadowvale Seventh-day Adventist Church celebrated its 25th anniversary. Former pastors, church and civic dignitaries joined a capacity congregation of present and former members, along with many visitors, to share in the celebrations of God’s work in Meadowvale.

Elder Mark Johnson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada, praised the church and spoke of its role in and responsibility to the local community. Mayor Hazel McCallion, in her twelfth consecutive term as mayor of Mississauga, and who has attended every significant milestone in the Meadowvale’s 25-year history, spoke affectionately of her relationship with the church. Other civic representatives, such as Bob Delaney, MPP for Mississauga-Streetsville, pooled their diverse gifts and talents towards a common purpose. Pastor Omar Palmer, their tireless and enthusiastic leader, organizer and encourager, made sure that everyone—seniors, adults, children and youth, trades, crafts, service and business professionals—was included in all aspects of the planning and the programs.

The anniversary celebration was truly a celebration of God’s faithfulness to Meadowvale. The church can boldly declare, “Many, O Lord my God, are the wonders which You have done” (Ps. 40:5). Taking strength from the past, they look forward to the future, secure in the knowledge that the same God who has brought them to this point will continue to be with them to the very end.

Jennifer Myrie,
Tim Hortons Encounter Leads to Baptism

When Mildred Crewill met Patrick Philippeaux at their local Tim Hortons she did not realize that her life was about to change. Patrick, a recent convert who had been baptized a few weeks earlier at Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church, gave her a flyer and invited her to the Empowered for Life evangelistic series planned for mid-October 2010 at Ottawa Adventist Church. On November 6, 2010, “Millie”, as she is affectionately known, was baptized, along with six others, at the conclusion of the evangelistic series.

The Empowered for life evangelistic series was a four-weekend event that featured four different, yet power-packed preachers. The first speaker (October 16-17), Pastor Mathew Feeley, from the Adventist Theological Seminary, spoke with power and candid conviction. The following week, Pastor Gerly Germain, from Tampa, Florida, brought messages with Holy Ghost fire and personal passion. On the third weekend, Ottawa assistant pastor, Lyle Notice, motivated and inspired the congregation interactively. To conclude the series, Cornwall Adventist Church pastor, Joseph Duchesne, using God’s Word, captured and captivated hearts by bringing thought-provoking messages.

After a beautiful concert on November 6, the climax of the series came as Pastor Floyd Spence, senior pastor of Ottawa Adventist Church, gave a powerful charge to the seven baptismal candidates. Spence shared with the church Millie’s journey. She shared her testimony and stated that she is going back to Tim Hortons to tell her friends about Jesus. Soon after this powerful testimony, the church watched as Clive Anderson, Jr., Christian Mugula, Janna Mugula, Nathan Norelus, Carine Norelus, Anne Isaac, and Mildred Crewill were baptized by Pastor Notice.

As the song goes, “If you cannot speak like angels, if you cannot preach like Paul, you can tell the love of Jesus, you can say He died for all.” We will never forget these four weekends of powerful preaching and the evangelistic work done by Patrick Philippeaux and many others. The result was, seven precious souls gave their lives over to their loving Saviour, Jesus Christ, and many more people are currently studying to be baptized at a later date. We were all truly inspired and empowered for life!  

Pastor Lyle Notice

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Job Vacancy

**Family/Women's Ministries Director**

The Ontario Conference is accepting résumés for the elected term position, director of Family Life and Women's Ministries.

**Qualifications:**
- Bachelors degree (preferably in psychology, sociology, or social work) and a Family Life Educators Certificate (CCFE), (a Masters degree in Marriage and Family or Social Work may be beneficial), a minimum of 5 years experience in family ministries, and be an active member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in good standing.

**Job Description:**
- Family Life and Women’s Ministries focus on developing healthy Christ-centered relationships within a family systems perspective and provide a primarily preventive approach. The skills and knowledge needed for healthy functioning are: effective communication, knowledge of human development, good decision-making, positive self-esteem, and healthy interpersonal relationships. The goal of this ministry is to teach and foster this knowledge and these skills to enable individuals and families to function optimally and live empowered lives in Jesus Christ.
- The qualified candidate will support local church ministry leaders by providing up-to-date resource material, information, training seminars, and workshops to help address societal issues like parenting, work-family issues, sexuality, gender, domestic violence, self-esteem, etc. from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective. The candidate will also be responsible for developing life cycle initiatives (ex. pre-marriage, parenting, elder care, grief recovery, etc.), and organizing retreats for singles, couples, families, and women.

The Ontario Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a flexible, innovative employer dedicated to employment equity. Please email your cover letter and résumé to jkapusi@adventistontario.org or by regular mail to: Human Resources, Julianna M. Kapusi, 1110 King Street East, Oshawa, ON L1H 1H8, by December 31, 2010. No phone calls or faxes please.

Thank you in advance for your interest. Suitable candidates only will be contacted for an interview.
Conference to Launch School of Evangelism

After months of planning, the Ontario Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is set to launch a school of evangelism on March 27, 2011.

The Ontario Conference School of Evangelism (OCSE) is a two-year certificate course designed for church members who passionately believe that the kingdom of God must be preached in all the world and who would like to be thoroughly equipped for the task.

“We are really excited by the OCSE,” says Dr. Errol Lawrence, Evangelism coordinator of the Ontario Conference, “because it will greatly augment the training we have given over the years, and it will equip church members with all they need to be effective and productive in evangelism.”

In the first year, the first two of eight courses will be held monthly in the Toronto area at 10:00 a.m. on a Sunday until November 13, 2011. Some classes will also be held monthly on a Tuesday evening. No classes will be held during July and August. The second year will commence on January 22, 2012 and end on June 3, 2012, in time for a graduation service in July.

Registration for onsite attendance will most probably be limited to the first 100 people but an additional 200 may register for the remote class. The remote class will take place by a computer via a webinar of the live presentation and participants will be able to ask the presenter questions.

While the classes are being held in Toronto,” says Pastor Eustace Williams, Personal Ministries director of the Ontario Conference, “we did not want to exclude anyone in this first two-year cycle. The use of webinars will allow anyone from any location to participate and obtain training.”

Williams also explained that a new two-year cycle will begin in 2012 and each successive year.

“We want this to be an ongoing school of evangelism,” he said. “And while our members who don’t live within easy travelling distance of central Toronto are able participate via webinars, we want to run some live course in other regions outside of Toronto.”

It is anticipated Ottawa could be the location of the second live location with other regions being considered over the subsequent years.

As news of the OCSE reached churches, members have already begun registering. Forms were distributed at the December 4 celebration of the lay preachers evangelism held at Apple Creek Church and there is a rapidly growing excitement among many members.

Registration for the course includes a fee of $75 for each of the two years. Forms and further information may be obtained from the Personal Ministries Department of the Ontario Conference or from the conference website, www.adventistontario.org. Registration may also be done online.
On Sabbath, October 2, 2010, Toronto Korean Seventh-day Adventist Church (affectionately known to its members as ‘TKSDA’) proudly declared its new church building at 4150 Chesswood Drive, Downsview, open.

Ontario Conference president, Dr. Mansfield Edwards, accompanied by Mr. Ulysses Guarin, conference treasurer, was present at the 3:00 p.m. service to join in the thanksgiving celebrations.

The 318-member congregation, its ranks swelled with visitors from sister congregations, eagerly awaited Edward’s message. He took time to give tribute to the present and previous pastors of the church and their instrumental role in keeping the project alive. He continued by congratulating the congregation on its achievement and by giving the assurance that it had obeyed God’s Word to “let them make Me a sanctuary...” He elaborated on the significance of the new sanctuary.

“The sanctuary is a constant reminder, a visible representation of an invisible God;” said Edwards, “that’s why when we build a sanctuary, it should be a beautiful one...and while God loves a beautiful house, He wants a more beautiful church [people].”

He spoke of the church’s use of the sanctuary.

“I ask you to take care of each other in the sanctuary,” he implored. “Pray for each other in the sanctuary. Let this be a place where the community comes in to find peace. Let us use this sanctuary to give glory to God.”

Ontario Conference treasurer, Mr. Ulysses Guarin, later presented the church with a cheque.

“This is just a a token of our appreciation for your hard work,” said Guarin.

Other guests and dignitaries were also present, including Pastor Don Kim, president of the Korean Adventist Church Association in North America, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Peter Kent MP, Conference directors, Birthe Chan and Halsey Peat, all former pastors of the church as well as visiting pastors of other congregations, Doris Chung, the architect, and Martin Forskin, the contractor.

Peter Kent MP warmly congratulated the church, as did Don Kim.

Local church pastor, Dae Doo Seo, identified sixteen members of the congregation who had been instrumental in the completion of the project. Pastor Edwards presented awards to each person. Pastor Dae Doo Seo also recognised the roles played by Doris Chung, Martin Forskin and Birthe Chan by giving each one a gift.

The beauty of the occasion was made even more impressive by the beautiful music that was rendered by the church choir, Youngminkim’s solo and the electronic horns played by a quintet of sisters.

The church was opened one week shy of one year since the ground breaking on October 11, 2009 and thirty-three years since the congregation took its first tentative steps to obtain its own building.

The building is situated on three and a half acres of land. It includes a hall, various offices, Sabbath School rooms, a 150-seat chapel (weekly English worship service) and a 15,000 sq ft sanctuary with a balcony.

There are over 15,000 Korean Adventists worshipping in 150 churches across North America.

Pastor Dirk Zinner is looking for a set of ENCOUNTER 1 filmstrips and audio tapes. If anyone has a set, he would appreciate getting in touch with that person.

Please contact Pastor Dirk Zinner at 519-650-3397 or dzinner@adventistontario.org
Transfers and Other Changes in the Work Force

The Ontario Conference is happy to welcome Pastors Daviceto Swaby and Darren Godsoe into its ranks of ministerial workers.

Retiring

Daviceto Swaby was recently appointed as pastor of Kingston Seventh-day Adventist Church, filling the vacancy left by the transfer of Pastor Djjojo Sekulic to Pembroke and Arnprior Churches. His appointment at Kingston, Ontario, follows a number of years of ministry in Kingston, Jamaica.

Daviceto, his wife, Donna, and their young adult son, Oraine, have been living in Montreal for the past two years.

After over thirteen years of committed service to the churches in Ontario, Mr. Evans Morgan, chief internal auditor for the Ontario Conference, will be retiring at the end of the year.

In 1997, after 24 years working for the Government of Ontario, Mr. Morgan gave three months of his time to assist the conference as an auditor. His service proved so helpful that he was asked to serve as chief internal auditor. Since then, he has helped to organise the way in which churches handle their finances, especially in safeguarding funds, protecting treasurers and speeding up the process of submitting remittances to the conference.

He travelled extensively to all the churches in his work, but also took the time to give financial seminars whenever he was invited. He often spoke of his amazement that many people still held on to "old fashioned views" where the husband controlled the family funds, and the wife had little or no access to it.

Evan's extensive background in the world of finance and close association with people in high places have been of great benefit to the church. Churches that have been threatened with deregulation by the Canada Revenue Agency because of lack of compliance with policies have been saved because of his timely phones call to highly placed friends.

It was not unusual for him to respond to individual concerns and willingly gave his time and expertise to families that were experiencing acute financial difficulties. Over the years, he has helped over 59 families save their homes from foreclosure.

Evan's close association with church treasurers has given him a deep appreciation for their commitment and selfless work. "I am amazed by them," he says. "I know that God has a reward for them."

When asked about his retirement plans, Mr. Morgan says that he "plans to take it easy and enjoy a warm climate during the winter months". He made it clear, however, that he will still be available to conduct financial seminars for churches during the rest of the year.

Saying Goodbye

We say goodbye to Pastor Sasa Andelkovic who has served the North Bay, South River and Haileybury congregations since December 1, 2007.

Sasa has accepted a call to minister in California. The Ontario Conference extends the best wishes to Sasa, his wife, Ivana, and their two young daughters.

Transfers

Three transfers have completed the final round of transfers of pastors for 2010. Adriaan Van der Lingen was installed as pastor of the Carleton Place and Perth Churches on Sabbath, November 20. He replaced Andrew Marttinen who was installed at Simcoe Church and Good News Fellowship on November 27. Also installed on November 27 was Djjojo Sekulic. He is now the pastor at Pembroke and Arnprior congregations.

Willowdale’s new senior pastor is Darren Godsoe. He comes to Ontario from the Hill Avenue Spirit of Truth Community Church in Regina.

Darren is not new to Ontario. His father, Pastor Don Godsoe, was a pastor in Ontario for many years, and Darren attended Kingsway College for the last two years of his high school.

An ordained minister, Darren has worked in the Manitoba-Saskatchewan Conference since 1989 and has been very active with youth and youth camps. He and his wife, Sandra, have two children, Dillon and Lavelle.

Darren will assume his new responsibilities on December 25, 2010.
When Sister Sarah spoke these words, she knew that it would not be long before her illness ended her life. Yet, she did not say them with sadness. She refused to allow even terminal illness to dampen her cheerful spirit and her love for God and for His church.

Her commitment to God and His church was exemplary. She dedicated all her talents to serving God and to making life easier for everyone she met. While in her late 40’s in Montreal, when her church did not have a musician, she took piano lessons until she was sufficiently proficient to accompany the congregation in worship. The wall in the entry hall of her home was a prayer wall, filled with the names of people for whom she constantly prayed.

Sarah loved people and devoted her life to, not only helping them, but was also keen that they hear of Jesus and His love. She did not want her death to bring an end to her work so she made provision in her will that the Ontario Conference would continue it for her. Sarah was called to rest on March 2, 2010.

Sarah’s legacy will help someone to experience God’s saving grace.

If you would like any assistance with your estate planning needs, please contact the Planned Giving & Trust Services Department: Tel. 905-571-1022; ext. 206 or email dputt@adventistontario.org