Putting Words in God’s Mouth

The excitement of the London 2012 Olympics is now behind us. The moments of extreme human prowess, sheer jubilation and excruciating heartbreak are now simply memories stored in the archives of the media and on the hard drives of video recorders.

For all the enjoyment of seeing Usain Bolt, Rosie MacLennan, the Canadian women’s soccer team, Allyson Felix and so many others, there were moments when I wanted to mute the sound on the television. I wanted to silence the commentators—especially when an athlete stumbled or fell. Too often, the commentator did not simply describe what the viewer saw for him or herself, but began describing how the athlete was feeling. I fully understand the expression of empathy, but sometimes it seemed as if the commentators were projecting their own feelings unto the unfortunate athlete.

Maybe I’m being too hard on the commentators because they only do what we all tend to do—projecting our feelings, thoughts and opinions on others. We want others to think, feel and even act as we do. We put them in our shoes and assume that their reaction is the same as ours. Isn’t this one of the reasons we gravitate to those who hold similar views to ours? They score top marks on our approval ratings. This is especially evident in religion and in matters of faith, where things can take on a matter of life-or-death importance to some people.

I remember witnessing some life-or-death arguments when I was a child. My father was always happy to entertain people of faiths other than his own in our home. He gladly welcomed all-comers who wanted to debate him on matters of biblical interpretation. I’d sit in a corner, avidly listening to and watching the combatants—that’s what they were because it seemed as if they were in a war. Sometimes the mood would turn ugly and end in recriminations. Rarely did any of these arguments over biblical understanding end amicably.

As I grew into adulthood, I soon realised that similar attitudes are evident within my own faith community. Sometimes we expend so much of our intellectual and moral resources fighting our brethren and sisters of our own denomination over matters of practice, culture and sometimes interpretation of doctrine that we have very little to offer to personal evangelism and to the mission of our local congregations.

One of the principal weapons in our arsenal of arguments is our assumed propriety of ownership of God. While we would vehemently deny it, our attitude contradicts our denial. What I mean is, we are quick to resort to declaring God’s thoughts and desires. We appoint ourselves as God’s prophets, His mouth-piece. We claim the corner on what God’s will is and expound on His approval or disapproval.

What is really happening, however, is that we are placing words in God’s mouth, making Him speak our opinions and express our feelings.

It all goes back to the age old problem of how we view God. One of these is that we often ascribe human motivation to God. We assume God is motivated by the things that motivate us, such as jealousy, anger, etc. We see this in the Old Testament when Bible writers describe Him as ‘jealous’ or ‘angry’, and we assume that it means jealousy or anger as we experience them.

Are we in danger of imposing sinful humanity’s emotions on God by saying that He is offended by particular behaviour? I do make God subject to tantrums and feelings of insecurity if things do not go His way? For example, I have heard well-intentioned Sabbath School superintendents berating members for their lateness saying, “We have a sacred appointment with God to be here when Sabbath School begins. He is dishonoured when we are late because we don’t treat our employers that way!”

While I greatly value the importance of being present for Sabbath School, it seems that this “sacred appointment” is manipulative and uses guilt to obtain a particular behaviour.

A favourite expression when individuals desire conformity is, “God is not pleased” when it’s really I who disapproves. Because I disapprove of something, I ascribe it to God. Best yet, if I can find a Bible text that seems to support my position, I will speak with authority.

It seems that we have made God a being who simply endorses our own egos and prejudices.

Perhaps it is time that we call on God to give us Isaiah’s experience (Isaiah 6:1-8) of having a true vision of His glory so that we may immediately recognise our sinfulness. It’s only as we see our desperate need of God and for His grace will we respond to His power to transform us so that we may transcend our prejudices. Then we will cease being His police and become His fishermen.

Halsey Peat, Editor
Dear Editor,

I just wanted to extend my sincere appreciation to the quality of the articles in Highlights. Some of the articles have raised some important concerns and issues in the church.

I think especially of Dave Schwinghammer’s, “Pastor, I Don’t Want to Offend Anyone; I’ll Just Stay Seated”. This and other articles were very timely in terms of things happening in my own district. I believe God inspired not only their writing, but the timing in which I received it. Bill Knott’s editorial in the May 10/12 Review, “The Arched Eyebrow” speaks to a concern I have often felt.

Thank you for having the faith and courage to bring such concerns into the open. It is obvious that we cannot do the same as we have always done. God, I believe, is seeking to move the church forward. My prayer is that I will be faithful to His leading and moving.

Pastor Doug Pollington

Dear Editor,

I really enjoyed reading the article by Pastor Dave Schwinghammer. He brings out a very important issue in our church—love and acceptance of others! For as long as I have been a member, I have struggled with the judgmental attitudes of fellow members who fail to recognize that God made each of us special with our own talents and experiences to share. No two people are alike and no two people experience God’s love in their lives in the same manner. Each one of us has an individual relationship with God, and Jesus utilized people with varied talents to share His word and teach others. We need to be careful not to criticize others if their ideas or perspectives are different and recognize the impact of our words and actions. We need to have tolerance and compassion and embrace people with love and acceptance knowing that God is working in each of us. Perhaps we may even learn from each other.

Our world is a fast paced and ever changing one and while traditions are important, so is the recognition that the Holy Spirit blesses and works on people’s hearts in different ways. In order for God to finish His work, we need to recognize that people will be drawn to Him through different types of music and activities. This does not mean they are wrong.

In the end, it is God who will change the hearts of men and embrace those who seek Him. It is our responsibility to love and welcome them without criticism and judgment while also allowing them to express themselves in worship to God. His church is for the sinners just as much as for the saints. We need to pray for our young people and encourage them to be a part of our church as they grow and learn of His love. Demonstration of this love through our words and actions is very important in determining whether they will stay in our church or be discouraged and leave. I think God would prefer they stay. Sincerely and with prayer,

ML, Ontario

Dear Editor,

I want to thank you for addressing the situation in the church that has been on my mind for a while.

The editorial, “I Come from Stouffville,” is very interesting. I am glad that you have brought this situation to the attention of the church.

I believe that when a church is planted in any city, town etc., the name should not be attached to any culture or ethnicity. It should be a Seventh-day Adventist Church. We are all part of the body of Christ; the church is God’s church. It does not belong to any ethnicity. It is time that our churches represent every member of the family of God. There will be no separation in heaven. It is time for us to get ready to meet our Lord as one family.

June Felix, Willowdale Church

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**Ontario Conference Membership Reaches Thirty Thousand Mark**

There are now over 30,000 Seventh-day Adventists living in Ontario, Canada. The actual figure of 30,102 members was presented to the Board of Directors of the Ontario Conference of Seventh-day Adventists on April 29, 2012 by Pastor Daniel Linrud, Conference executive secretary, as part of his quarterly statistical report.

“We’re very excited that we’ve finally reached this mile-maker for our conference,” he told the board members. “It keeps us firmly placed as the thirteenth largest conference in the North American Division. However, in the near future, we look forward to overtaking those ranked immediately above us, as God blesses our efforts to win souls for Him in Ontario.”

Linrud told them that the figure was reached during the first quarter of 2012 and that it represented a 2.63% increase over the same period last year.

Pastor Mansfield Edwards, conference president, was quick to commend the efforts of church members and their pastors whose work resulted in the new membership total.

“We’re blessed with some members who are very committed to evangelism,” he said. “They work side by side with their pastors to ensure that God’s kingdom is being proclaimed. I’m personally thankful to God for them and for their unENDING labour. Can you just imagine what could be achieved in Ontario if more of our members were doing this?”

According to Church Growth co-ordinator, Pastor Errol Lawrence, the 30,000 figure had been “eluding the conference for over a year”, but attaining it will serve as a motivation for every church in the conference to feature baptismal services as a regular feature in the life of the church.

The report also stated that there are now 120 organised churches, 19 companies and 13 branch Sabbath Schools (groups) in the Ontario Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
The Struggle to Evangelize a Secular Society - Part 1

One of the most popular courses in the Ontario Conference School of Evangelism is ‘Understanding the Secular Mind,’ taught by Pastor Frank Dell’Erba of Harmony Church and Italian Company. At the end of one class, a number of students agreed, “This is so important. Every member should learn this. It will make the difference in our evangelism.”

Ontario Highlights listened to their suggestion and decided to abbreviate Pastor Dell’Erba’s presentations in a series of articles. Part 1 follows:

Here Are Some Harsh Realities:

1. The church in western society is on the decline.
2. In Europe, churches are historical landmarks, full only with tourists taking pictures. There are few worshippers.
3. In Canada, only about 18% of the population attend church.
4. The western world is entering a new era—one that could be called ‘post-Christian’.
5. In North America, the growth rate of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is about 1.7%. 1
6. In Canada, there are only 64,000 Adventists out of 34.5 million people.

There are many who think that this generation is the worst and that the reason the church is in decline is because the world is so hostile to the gospel. However, it is no more hostile than the world of the New Testament church: Caesar was worshipped as a god; Christians were persecuted, not just with ridicule, but often with fire and sword, Paganism was rife and believing in Jesus often risked death.

It’s just that western society is undergoing a rapid cultural shift. It is a change that is affecting the way many people think and how they view religion and Christianity. This rapid cultural shift that is occurring is the era of secularism, often called the postmodern world. However, even in this postmodern world, people today are hungry for true spirituality and meaningful dialog, but they are not hungry for the “church package”. Kevin Baugh, co-author of Getting Real: An Interactive Guide to Relational Ministry, 2 puts it this way, “Postmoderns don’t have a problem with Jesus; it’s His friends they don’t like.”

Secularism and Postmodernism

Briefly stated, secularism is the philosophy or way of thinking that excludes religion or worship from all civil life. People are free to have religious belief, but it must not be part of public life, neither should those in authority impose religious belief or practice on the citizens. In some respects, Postmodernism is related to secularism, but it is best understood as a mind set or an attitude. Some even refer to it as worldview, a type of lens through which we view the world.

The Postmodern era is really a reaction to the former era, Modernism (late 19th C to early 20th C), which itself was a reaction to the previous era of religious darkness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modernism</th>
<th>Postmodernism</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Values institutions and authority</td>
<td>Distrusts institutions, especially churches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believes in ‘one truth’, external source of truth</td>
<td>There are ‘many truths’—mine, yours, theirs, etc, and truth is internal. (Hence, all religions have truth, and there is no exclusive religion or church).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(The Adventist Church comes from the era of Modernism so it holds to external truth and doctrinal purity. This is clearly not attractive to the Postmodern mind that seeks out truth as it is lived out in people’s lives).</td>
<td>Truth must be experienced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks for proofs.</td>
<td>There are many grey areas, multiple way of looking at things. “What is my preference?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truth is sharp, distinct and clear</td>
<td>No clear definition of ‘normal’ family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional family is normal</td>
<td>Asks, “Was it a good experience?” or “Is this relevant to me?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modernism highly values knowledge. (Hence the Adventist church’s emphasis on learning and knowing. Things must make sense for Modernism. It must be logical).</td>
<td>Places a strong emphasis on tolerance and relationships</td>
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Those examples are just a few of many contrasting values between Modernism and Postmodernism. However, Postmodernism must not be confused with liberalism. It is not liberalism. It is simply a reaction to Modernism. In many ways, it reflects the era of the apostles because they too had to evangelize a population that was bathed in Greek and Roman philosophies.

Reaching Out to Postmoderns

The examples above demonstrate the need to understand the worldview of Postmoderns if the church is to successfully evangelize them. But who are Postmoderns?

In Canada today, most people under 40 may be described as Postmodern. However, it is not uncommon to find some people in their 50s who reflect Postmodern ideas and values.

How can we, a church firmly rooted in Modernism, reach Postmoderns?
While part two will specifically focus on reaching Postmoderns, a fundamental principle to remember is to use whatever methods and language that will make sense to them and will encourage them to continue a conversation. In our zeal to share the good news of the gospel with people, our choice of language sometimes creates obstacles.

Doug Pollock’s helpful book, God Space, speaks of how we can bring God into a conversation without shutting it down. Conversation and friendship are central to evangelizing Postmoderns. Let us consider ten killers of spiritual conversations:

1. **An unbelieving heart.** If we don’t believe that people are interested in spirituality, it will hamper the Holy Spirit’s ability to use you.

2. **Pre-conversation history.** “Most people I meet assume that Christian means very conservative, entrenched in their thinking, anti-gay, anti-choice, angry, violent, illogical, empire builders...they generally cannot live peacefully with anyone who doesn’t believe what they believe.” says David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons in their book, UnChristian. You are placed in a category once you say you are a Christian. The conversation does not even begin.

3. **Awkward transitions.** In a regular conversation, how do we make a transition to a spiritual one? Most people look for a sales pitch. However, Jesus didn’t approach conversations this way, why should we? We need to learn to do as much in our conversations. Condescension or being ‘parental’ will do it every time. Highjacking the conversation, moralizing or judging the person will quickly do it as well.

4. **Our language, not theirs.** We are so accustomed to using church jargon such as ‘the remnant,’ ‘Sabbath School,’ ‘divine service’ and ‘special music’ that we forget that church is for others to hear the gospel. We need to use language others can understand.

5. **Disrespect.** There are lots of ways to unknowingly express disrespect.

6. **Agendas.** The moment you are trying to steer or manipulate a conversation, it becomes a sales pitch. People quickly pick up on this and turn off. However, if you show genuine interest in them as individuals, you are acting as Jesus did.

7. **Control.** How long does it take you to seize a conversation and dominate it with your worldview? If you want a meaningful conversation, you’ll have to give up the idea of controlling it. After all, it’s the Holy Spirit who is in control, not us.

8. **Judgement.** To many in our culture, Christians are considered as the ‘disagreement people’. We are seen as judgmental. Our tone of voice, non-verbal and verbal responses, are dead giveaways that we strongly disapprove of much of what people in our culture are saying or doing. Remember, acceptance does not mean endorsement. Jesus accepted the woman caught in adultery, the woman at the well and Matthew the tax-collector, but He didn’t endorse their life of sin.

9. **Combativeiveness.** Sometimes a spiritual conversation can quickly dissolve into a game of who can score the most points. The people with whom we converse are not the enemy. They are victims of the enemy.

10. **It’s all about me.** Whenever we approach a conversation with the belief and attitude that...
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we have all the answers, convinced that we have the absolute truth, then it’s an ‘all about me’ conversation. If people are not really asking us what we believe, then it might be wiser to keep the spotlight on what they believe and think. The secret to being an interesting person during a conversation is to be interested.

The story of Jesus and the woman at the well, recorded in John 4, illustrates the art of engaging in spiritual conversation:

First, remember that Jesus is God. He has all the answers, but He does not attempt to give her answers to questions she is not asking. He simply asks for a drink of water. Her interest is aroused because a Jew would not usually associate with a Samaritan, much less a Samaritan woman. By asking for water, He demonstrates his acceptance and trust and awakens her curiosity. She asks the questions. She determines the direction of the conversation, and He provides her with answers that satisfy her longing. She becomes a believer and a missionary.

It has been my profound experience that people we easily label as secular are in fact hungry for God’s love and truth. To reach them, we need to walk with them, befriend them, be interested in them, meet their needs and then we can bid them to follow Jesus and enter His church.

Ellen White points to Christ as the way to do evangelism:

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

Jesus loved people, mingled with them, sympathized with them and helped them where they were. This is how we are to work with people. Only then can you bid them to follow Christ. Before we preach sermons to people, we need to be the sermon for people.

Does Your Church Stream Its Services?

Seventh-day Adventist churches are increasingly joining other churches that broadcast or stream their services online to a worldwide audience.

In Ontario, there are at least six Adventist churches whose services may be viewed online. Perhaps your church is among them or is planning to join them in the future.

While streaming church services is often considered to be good use of modern technology, it also forces the church to think about and plan for the presentation of its services. Being aware of an audience beyond the congregation may serve to help local church leaders to be far more relevant to the unchurched. Also, they recognise that everything they do or say is being scrutinised by people from all over the world. Their worship service represents the entire Seventh-day Adventist denomination and may turn out to be a boon or a bane for the world-wide movement.

If your church streams or plans to stream its services, it must be careful to observe the following:
1. Most people leading out soon become oblivious to the cameras and forget that the service is being broadcast around the world. It is easy to fall back into the habit of speaking only to the congregation and to assume that everyone is Adventist. So, all leaders and visiting speakers need to be conscious of speaking to the world and not only to the people in the building.
2. Do not begin broadcast until all in-house matters, such as announcements, have taken place. This means that the service must begin on time.
3. The broadcast portion of the service must begin at the same time for every service and at the same spot in the order of service. Perhaps, at the appointed time, the pastor or some other leader would welcome those on the web as the church enters the worship (after the so-called preliminaries).
4. Participants should be carefully selected—especially those who can warmly and confidently represent the gospel, fully briefed and provisions made for rehearsals, if possible.
5. Plan the worship service carefully so that it will inspire, teach, convict and be joyous. If your church is not prepared to do this, then perhaps it is not ready to stream its services.

Notes
1. In 2011, the growth rate was 2.5%, but was attributed to an influx of Adventists immigrants. In other years, the rate remains constant about 1.7%.
2. Kevin Baugh, Getting Real: An Interactive Guide to Relational Ministry, Navpress, formerly published as Young Adult Ministry: The Next Generation (Co-author, Richard Hurst)
5. Ellen White, Ministry of Healing, page 143.
Our church has experienced significant change over the years. In 1848, our total membership numbered about 100 believers. Today, we are some 17 million strong, yet growth has brought along with it complications and challenges. Things were simple in the early days; not so today. Every year as I attend Risk Management conferences, I am confronted by new challenges facing our church which demand our attention and appropriate response.

Who would think that church, the place we have long associated with safety, refuge, joy, family and friendship, could be the place where our children are at risk by sexual predators? Sadly, our idyllic view has been shattered when we have heard of the evil actions of sexual predators when they have infiltrated congregations and devastated the lives of families.

In Canada, the majority of reported sexual abuse against children and teenagers are perpetrated by friends and acquaintances.1 Churches gladly welcome new people into their congregations and naturally assume that they are genuine seekers after God. However, some new additions are unknown. Very little, if anything at all, is known, even of members transferring from another congregation. It is not hard for a sexual predator to settle into a congregation and become involved in its life.

Experts in the field of prevention from sexual predators often agree that sexual predators target churches as ‘soft opportunities.’ Cory Jensen, co-director of the Center for Behavioral Intervention in Oregon, USA, says, “Sexual predators view the church as an easy target because it’s a place where they feel safe. Some molesters infiltrate and affiliate with specific institutions in order to approach children and hide their crimes.”2

Sexual predators are not easily identified. When one is discovered, there is often a collective disbelief because the person seemed so nice, so trusted, so ‘Christian’. He (mostly he according to the Department of Justice, Canada) or she would be the last person that would ever be suspected of such evil. They are patient and will often take a long time to befriend families with children or to insert themselves into positions of trust in the church. They will even take longer to groom their victims, isolate, manipulate and control them. They often occupy positions of trust where they have access to children in church.

When predators strike, one act of abuse is sufficient to cause harm to their victims, but they often strike repeatedly and cause havoc to the lives of more than one family. Some cause lifetime damage to their victims. It is hard to adequately portray the devastation the abuse can cause.

Unfortunately, national data for Canada indicates that sexual abuse and exploitation of children is disturbingly common.3 Victims do not always disclose that they have been abused. It could be that the child is very young or developmentally immature and unable to articulate what has happened to him or her. Sometimes, there is a deep fear of not being believed, feelings of helplessness or he or she does not want to get the abuser in trouble because of the bond that has been created by the abuser. These are just a few of many reasons.

For the past 10 years, our conference has been urging churches to be more vigilant in protecting our children from sexual abuse. Police record checks and volunteer forms have been a requirement for all church officers, especially those working with children. Many officers dutifully take the time to honour this requirement. Unfortunately, others have not yet acknowledged the need, while some have refused to comply. Some churches have been diligent in ensuring the safety of their children and insisted that the officers will not assume their responsibilities until they have complied with the requirement. Sadly, others have not been as diligent and, consequently, have placed their children at greater risk.

The local congregation must take responsibility for safeguarding its children. This means that every member must be aware and understand that sexual predators pose serious danger to our children because there is no cure for child molesters. The church should assume that even if sexual molesters are discovered and received
some help, their sin may still continue to be a temptation to them. Like all Christians struggling with sin, they will most probably stumble and fall. Boyle A. Glover argues that “there is a substantial likelihood that, for this man, stumbling means that he will commit an act that harms a child.”

The church must be intentional about the safeguards it can put in place. There are some steps of protection that may be taken:

1. **Careful screening of volunteers.** This includes a completed police record check. The rule is simple: No check, no position with children. The Safe Church Organisation says, “Trust in God...Screen all others!” The pastor and elders must know the law that governs their role in reporting abuse: If abuse is discovered or disclosed to them, they are obligated to report it to the authorities.

2. **Children's leaders should work as teams with children, not individually.** In preschool classes, at least one parent should remain with his or her child in order to care for washroom responsibilities. This is not the teacher’s responsibility.

3. **Over-supervise trips.** For all children’s trips, have more than the required supervisors, especially females.

4. **Provide awareness training for all volunteers.** (DVD, seminars, online training, handbooks, etc. Contact the conference Risk Management department for resources).

5. **The church should not sponsor sleepovers at anyone’s home.**

6. **Known sexual predators are not given any church office and must be observed.** This helps him to deal with his temptation.

7. **Be diligent to learn more about prospective new members.** The pastor and elders should make at least one home visit to a prospective member before membership is recommended to the church. Usually, when a predator has been discovered molesting a child, it is unlikely that it is his first offence. His deep contrition and tears are sometimes designed to cover up further examination. He will have most probably committed abuse on numerous occasions prior and is counting on the forgiving spirit of the church to leave him free to continue his destruction of young lives. The church must not be a playground for him or for anyone else. Our most sacred duty is protecting the vulnerable, the young ones of whom Jesus said, “But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.” Matthew 18:6.

   Are you and your congregation protecting your children?

   **Mansfield Edwards, President, Ontario Conference of Seventh-day Adventists**

   **Notes**

   2. Ontario Highlights, April 2007
   3. Department of Justice, Canada
   5. Adapted from Glover

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**Over a Million Dollars So Far and Growing!**

The Church Building Investment Fund (CBIF) is working! The suggested contribution of $2 weekly ($104 per year) by each member is making a difference to churches with mortgages.

Over the last ten years, through the collective effort of members across Ontario, $1,388,021.89 has been raised. Of that amount, $971,615.62 was disbursed to 41 congregations to reduce or fully eliminate their mortgages. The remaining $416,406.27 was distributed equally among all the other churches and companies in Ontario, as an appropriation for their capital needs.

The four beneficiaries of the first cycle of churches slated to receive allocations are the congregations of Guelph, Toronto Korean, Toronto Spanish and Hamilton Mountain. They were able to reduce or even eliminated their mortgages.

As each recipient church is presented with a cheque, the response is always the same—appreciation and great rejoicing. There have been also reports of increased morale, enthusiasm and renewed focus among the membership.

In the new cycle, the next four churches with the ‘oldest’ mortgages will be eligible to benefit from the contributions. The process will continue until each eligible church has been assisted.

The sum collected and disbursed over the past decade could easily have been much more if more members had participated. Many more churches could have been helped.

Ellen White saw it this way, “When you place the Lord first and realize that the Lord’s house is dishonoured by debt, God will bless you”. Counsels on Stewardship, page 262.

He has certainly blessed the faithfulness of His people who have realized that as the Body of Christ, we can make a difference bearing one another’s burden.

It’s simply really—the greater the participation by our members, the greater will be the financial assistance, thus enabling more congregations to be freed from the shackles of debt. The resources of the churches could then be more effectively directed towards the rescuing of souls who are presently held captive by Satan.

Together we can achieve—every church mortgage-free!

And it’s $2 a week per member — only the cost of one drink!

This week, place your contribution in a tithe envelope and record it on the appropriate line marked, ‘Church Building Investment Fund’.

All donations are tax deductible.

Vernon Langdon, CBIF Representative
“The Best Camp Meeting in Years”

“This was the best camp meeting in years!” seemed to have been the opinion of many among the nearly 10,000 attendees as they streamed out of the International Centre, late on Saturday night, June 30, 2012.

“It was superb,” said one man. “I thought last year was good, but this one somehow managed to top it.”

“It was my first year attending a camp meeting event,” tweeted Teka Clarke. “It was a pretty interesting experience.”

Others were more specific in their reflections. “I really found the worship very moving,” said Ann Richardson from Florida visiting her Adventist family in Ontario. “It looked like a lot of planning went into it. I wish we could do this at the local church level.”

“Ron Smith’s sermons were really powerful,” wrote one worshipper in the chat room while watching the service via the Internet.

The parade of nations, first held two years ago, was again a big draw for many. “I just love seeing my brothers and sisters from all over the world come together,” said Elaine from Toronto. “The parade of nations gives me such a good feeling. When I learned that we were having one this year, I just had to come.”

Even the youth and young adults’ speaker, Pastor Seth Yelord, was impressed and tweeted, “Had a GREAT TIME at Toronto camp meeting. Great people, great fellowship!! Until next time!”

Camp meeting has moved beyond being just a convocation,” explained Halsey Peat, Ontario Conference Communications director. “It has become a model worship experience. Our president, Pastor Daniel Linrud; Worship director, Pastor Schwinghammer; Youth director, Pastor Cyril Millett, and others have worked very hard to ensure that everyone attending camp meeting would encounter God.”

For the second consecutive year, the teens had a worship of their own. And what a time they had! In the hall where the worship planners and leaders are always expected to work harder than anywhere else, the teens eagerly responded to Ricky Schwarz’s narrative-style preaching. Twenty-five signed decision cards to accept Jesus as their Saviour for the first time. Six teens requested baptism.

Next door in hall 4, the seats in the young adults’ service quickly filled up and, with standing room only, nearly two thousand youth and young adults were soon engaged in a worship service that was described as “highly spiritual, engaging, and deeply inspirational”.

In both morning and evening services, led respectively by Vernon Smith, Michael Harris and their praise teams, the entire service—music, prayer, offering, sermon—simply coalesced into a symphony of praise to God.

One young adult summarised the expressions of many when he said, “If worship were like this at my local church, I’d never want to go anywhere else”.

The two sermons preached by Pastor Seth Yelord significantly contributed to this sentiment. Yelord simply preached wonderful sermons, to which many positively responded when he appealed for them to commit their lives to Jesus.

It was evident that Ontario Conference Youth director, Pastor Millett, was very happy with how things turned out. “To say that the congregation was blessed is an understatement,” he said. We most certainly witnessed the
presence of the Spirit of God at camp meeting."

Back in hall 5, with chairs for 6,000 and hundreds more standing at the rear of the hall, worshippers were led to catch a vision of God’s glory as each segment of worship progressively led them into God’s presence. They had witnessed representatives of 54 nations proudly carry national flags in the parade of nations, but many will long remember during the morning service the visually stimulating unfurling of two huge red banners to form the shape of the cross during the singing of a medley of songs that started with “Thank You for the Cross, Lord”.

It clearly set the tone for worshippers to joyfully respond to God.

For both morning and evening services, the worship experience was what many would take with them from camp meeting. However, they could not leave without the powerful preaching and personal testimony of Pastor Ron Smith.

“It was just what I needed to hear,” said Albert from Etobicoke. “The messages, especially the one in the evening, were just for me.”

Camp meeting would not be the same without an ordination and commissioning service. In the afternoon, Jewel Scott and Dureine Jean were commissioned to the teaching ministry. Travis Afflick, Joe Duchesne, Patrick Jacques, Marvin Clarke, Todor Levterov, and Fitzroy Radlein were ordained to the gospel ministry. The sermon was delivered by Pastor Mark Johnson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada.

The theme, REACH-- an acronym reflecting the five enduring values of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America and the focus of the Ontario Conference’s strategic vision-- was embraced for this year’s camp meeting. It was prominently displayed on the three huge screens forming the backdrop to the 60 ft stage in hall 5 and on the screens in the two other worship centres for young adults and teens. However, each segment of the day’s worship was modelled on an aspect of the Old Testament sanctuary and its services.

“We felt that the sanctuary model really embodies the concept of REACH, explained Dave Schwinghammer. “So we simply planned worship as a journey through the different aspect of the sanctuary and its services.”

Earlier, camp meeting featured the graduation of the inaugural class of the Ontario Conference School of Evangelism, when over 120 blue-robed students graduated in a moving ceremony. Their families and friends were joined by over 4,000 persons to witness the graduation.

After supper, during his presidential address, Pastor Mansfield Edwards highlighted two areas of great significance—the REACH initiative and a proposal to build a multi-purpose centre in Oshawa that would be the future home of multi-day camp meetings. He also presented long-service awards to 15 teachers who have served in Ontario for over 20 years.

Camp meeting 2012 concluded in each of the three worship halls with a call for renewed commitment to Jesus.
Commissioning and Ordination Service

Teachers Dureine Jean and Jewel Scott, and Pastors Travis Afflick, Joe Duchesne, Patrick Jacques, Marvin Clarke, Todor Levetrov, and Fitzroy Radlein, were respectively commissioned and ordained at Ontario’s camp meeting on Sabbath, June 30, 2012.

The service, at the International Centre, Mississauga, was held shortly after 4:30 p.m. in the presence of nearly 5,000 church members and visitors.

In a break from tradition, the commissioning of teachers and ordination of pastors was held as one service rather than two. The sermon by Pastor Mark Johnson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada (SDACC), addressed both teachers and pastors. The prayer by Daniel Stojanovic, executive secretary of the SDACC, was offered for both teachers and pastors, and hands were laid on both groups at the same time.

“We recognise the calling of both groups to ministry,” says Pastor Mansfield Edwards, president of the Ontario Conference. “Ellen White makes it clear in the book, Counsels for the Church, page 202, ‘In the highest sense, the work of education and the work of redemption are one.’ By having one service, we are helping our constituents recognise and, hopefully, value this important truth.”

The Teachers

Dureine Jean is a bilingual kindergarten teacher at Ottawa Adventist Elementary School. A teacher for over 11 years, she has spent the last six with the Ontario Conference. She believes that God has called her to prepare His children for both this life and for life in the new earth.

Jewel Scott comes from a family with a history of devotion to God and work for the church. She discovered her call to the teaching ministry while working with young people at her home church and has dedicated the past eight years to teaching at Adventist schools. She teaches choral music at Crawford Adventist Academy.

The Pastors

Travis Afflick, formerly assistant pastor at Mississauga Adventist Church since 2007, upon ordination became its associate pastor.

Travis is married to Ann-Marie, and the Lord has blessed their union with two children, Yeshua Micaiah and Bethany Maliya.

He is currently pursuing graduate studies part-time at the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary at Andrews University.

Marvin Clarke began ministry serving as a chaplain at Crawford Adventist Academy, his old high school. He interned at both Toronto East and Toronto West Adventist Churches. He is now an associate pastor at the latter.

Marvin loves the Lord and love people. He is married to Seanna Parris, and they have been blessed with two children, Micaiah Daniel and Madison Arianna.

Joseph Duchesne is the pastor of Cornwall and Hawkesbury Adventist Churches, ministering in both English and French. An avid believer in reaching young adults through technology, he has developed a thriving Internet ministry.

Joseph and his wife, Lucy, have three children: Tommy, Emma and Ella.

Patrick Jacques began serving in the Ontario Conference in 2006. He interned at both Toronto West and Toronto East. He now serves as associate pastor at Toronto East and as chaplain at Crawford Adventist Academy–East Campus.

Patrick seeks to develop a ministry whose foundation is
On Sabbath, June 30, 2012, one hundred and ten persons graduated from the Ontario Conference School of Evangelism’s (OCSE) inaugural class.

The graduation service was held at 3:30 p.m. in the presence of over 4,000 people during the conference’s annual camp meeting at the International Centre, Mississauga, Ontario. It was also broadcasted live over the Internet.

As the graduands, resplendent in their blue robes, marched into the auditorium to Elgar’s Pomp and Circumstance, there was a perceptible change in the congregation’s mood. At first, unsure as to what to expect, they saw the robed OCSE professor, Dr. Fitzroy Maitland, leading the graduands to their reserved seats, and perhaps sensed that the occasion was more significant than what had been anticipated.

The significance was quickly confirmed by the composition of the platform party. It included Pastors Mark Johnson, SDACC president; Daniel Stojanovic, SDACC executive secretary; Dr. Mansfield Edwards, Ontario Conference president; Dr. Daniel Linrud, Ontario Conference executive secretary; Dr. Janice Maitland, education superintendent; Pastor Frank Dell’Erba, OCSE professor and, in their academic regalia, the four administrators of the OCSE, Dr. Errol Lawrence and Pastors Halsey Peat, Theodore Sargeant and Eustace Williams.

The service that followed was both joyous and solemn. The graduands were thrilled to have completed the gruelling 15-month course. Some had managed to squeeze into the graduating class by submitting their final assignments only a week earlier. Now, surrounded by their families and friends, it was clear that their sacrifice, time-commitment and hard work had paid off. So they eagerly walked across the platform to receive their certificates from Dr. Edwards and congratulatory handshakes from the other dignitaries. Their certificates were accompanied by a medallion bearing the school’s logo and inscribed with their names.

Of the 110-member graduating class, 104 were present, six graduated in absentia, unable to be present because they live outside the province in British Columbia or even outside Canada, in Maryland, USA, and Jamaica. They took the course online. The joy of the students was tempered by the reminder that 240 persons had commenced the course in March 2011, but not all were able to complete it. Or in the very sad case of one person, he passed away.

The solemnity of the graduation lay in the charge given to them by conference president, Dr. Mansfield Edwards.

“The New Testament clearly teaches that all Christians are to be ministers,” he said. “When Jesus spoke of self-denial, taking up the cross and follow Him, He was addressing every believer.”

Dr. Edwards was emphatic when he told them that when they received certificates as lay Bible instructors, lay preachers or as both, their certificates, “were not simply to be placed on a wall”. The graduates are now expected...
to dedicate themselves to “building God’s kingdom”.

Speaking later about the value of the OCSE, Edwards said, “In my estimation, the school of evangelism is one of the best initiatives that has ever been undertaken in this conference. I unreservedly affirm the four principals who work day and night travelling all across this conference to make it a success”.

Part of the requirements for graduation is that all students must be engaged in personal evangelism—giving Bible studies with the purpose of leading someone to Jesus. Many students are already very active in sharing their faith.

The idea of having a school of evangelism arose from discussions among Pastors Lawrence, Peat, Sargeant and Williams, all directors at the Ontario Conference. They had observed the favourable response of church members to training for lay preaching that had been offered by Pastor Williams through the Personal Ministries department early in 2010 and suggested a pooling of resources to offer wider training. The idea of a school of evangelism was born, and they quickly moved on to develop a curriculum that would be challenging, yet inclusive. They did not need to look too far for teachers. The pool of pastors in Ontario provided a rich source of highly skilled, well-educated and well-experienced instructors. Some had taught at college or university levels, while others were experienced evangelists and leaders. The ‘four principals’, as the organisers were soon termed, worked on a schedule that would allow students to attend class and fulfil their assignments in their spare time. The proposal was adopted by the conference administration, and the school was launched on March 5, 2011 at Willowdale Adventist Church. Classes began at Kingsview Village Church on March 27, 2011.

Fifty-five students viewed the first class online from across Ontario, Canada and the world.

Presently, students are able to register for one of two streams: Lay Bible Instructor or Credentialed Lay Preacher. However, registration for the credentialed lay preacher stream allows the registrant to complete all the requirements for the lay Bible instructor’s stream.

For 2012, students are able to attend the OCSE in Ottawa, Toronto, Kitchener-Waterloo and London. It is anticipated that a northern Ontario location will be added in the near future.

The class of 2013 is already hard at work and looking forward to its graduation.
Beautiful sunshine and warm temperatures brought out many worshippers to Southern Ontario’s regional camp meeting, June 8-9, held at Norfolk County Fairgrounds, Simcoe.

On Sabbath, while numbers appeared to be slightly down on last year’s event, the experience was equally rich, if not more so. There were no less than four guest speakers, including Pastor Mark Johnson, SDACC president; Pastor Hiskia I. Missah, associate youth director, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists; Dr Mansfield Edwards, president of the Ontario Conference, and Dr Gaspar Colón, professor of religion, Washington Adventist University.

Dr Colón, speaker for the teens and youths, challenged them to focus on following Jesus.

“In order to know what Jesus would do,” he told them, “we need to know what Jesus did!”

In the adults section, Pastors Douville, Golovenko, Moon and Oudri sang as a quartet and delighted the congregation with Wayne Hooper’s arrangement of Jesus Keep Me Near The Cross. Pastor Johnson highlighted the nearness of Jesus’ coming and told the worshippers they must be certain of following Jesus, even as they ask others to follow their example.

There is no shortage of good musicians and singers in Southern Ontario, and worshippers have almost been spoiled with high quality music at each camp meeting. This year, they were again treated to some of the best singers and musicians from across the region and special guest, Proclaim, from Canadian University College.

In addition to the Sabbath School and worship services, two mini concerts in the afternoon featured Naomi Striemer, Kedric Ireland, The Little Messengers (formerly known as ‘The little Angels Trio’), River of Life Band, Proclaim, and a number of others.

Between the two concert segments, Colón and Missah, both gave presentations on the theme of the camp meeting, “Follow Me! – Be like Jesus”.

“Reaping follows best when we have been planting,” said Colón.

“We follow Jesus so that we can be like Him,” declared Missah, giving emphasis to living a victorious spiritual life as Jesus did.

As worshippers entered each worship area, they were met by T-shirted ushers proudly bearing part of the camp meeting theme ‘Follow Me’ in red, with green subtitle ‘Adventist Movement’. On closer observation, all organisers and volunteers wore the T-shirts. Pastor Jiwan Moon, camp meeting chairperson, ensured that each speaker and director from the conference received a T-shirt.

For the third successive year, the ushers proudly gave away camp meeting souvenir pens and everyone left with at least one. The pens represent the willingness of the church members in Southern Ontario to successfully run their camp meeting without financial assistance from the conference.

Southern Ontario regional camp meeting is usually held on the second weekend of June. It is open to everyone. Visitors from other regions will find that they are warmly received and will experience a wonderful fellowship.
Combining our musical outreach program with our camp meeting, featuring an international speaker, created some excitement in the Bay.

One of our outreach programs is a musical concert that we have put on for several years now. It features our own musical group, “Northern Lights,” made up of some of our more talented members including our own pastor, Jim Rieder, who sings and plays guitar. We also invite other local gospel and Christian groups to perform with us at a local community centre. It has really created a great friendship with the band members and the audience. During the intermission of each concert, we provide free booklets, books and DVDs, etc. These have been gladly taken home by some of the audience. We began this year in late winter with two concerts running up to our camp meeting on May 4. The concerts were well attended—usually about 65-75 people. Another feature of our concerts is a brief presentation on health by one of our members.

This year, we again began camp meeting with a live concert. It also featured our guest speaker, Jim Reinking, speaker/director of Life Discovery series, a Voice of Prophecy ministry. By the time camp meeting concluded on Sunday, Pastor Reinking had brought us five powerful sermons focused on how we may have a living relationship with Jesus Christ. His messages were deeply biblical and helped us gain a better understanding of the Scriptures.

Thunder Bay camp meeting also included a health feature presented on DVD with naturopaths Rudy and Jeanne Davis.

Also present at our camp meeting was the Ontario Conference executive secretary, Pastor Daniel Linrud, and his wife, Verlaine. They spent the entire weekend with us. He led out in both the lesson review in the adult Sabbath School segment and in an inspiring presentation on the REACH strategy.

Camp meeting finished on a very high note, and plans are already being made for next year’s event.

Art Mahon, Communications

Ontario Conference Takes REACH to Pastors

On Thursday, June 28, 2012, the officers and directors of the Ontario Conference took the REACH strategy to the pastors at their annual Workers Meeting at Toronto West Adventist Church.

“I know that most of you have, at one time or another, attended one of the REACH regional meetings that were held earlier this year,” said Pastor Mansfield Edwards, Ontario Conference president, “but today we want to take you further along so that you will have a better understanding of how to lead your congregations in the process.” He went on to inform them that the administration and directors had been working as team for nearly eight months in formulating a strategy and were ready to share their experience with them.

He introduced Joan Rogers, Family and Women's Ministries director, and Halsey Peat, Communications and PARL director, who were both part of a team that had worked on a planning guide to assist churches in the process.

Guides were handed to each pastor and Bible instructor, and Rogers and Peat outlined the contents of the guide and walked them through it, highlighting particular sections.

Three directors illustrated the planning process in the form of a drama that asked the type of questions that would be expected to be asked during planning at the local church level.

Armed with the guide, having watched role play, pastors were then separated into their ministerial districts where they spent over an hour playing the role of a REACH planning committee in a local church. Directors assigned to each ministerial group acted as coaches.

“It was important that pastors experience the planning process;” explained Pastor Daniel Linrud, Ontario Conference executive secretary, “it’s not something they can just get from a book. When they experience it, they are able to be far more effective in leading a congregation through the process.”

After the role play, each group reported to the body of workers, and Pastor Linrud led the group in brief discussion regarding what they had experienced and achieved.

Pastor Edwards indicated that the leaders of each region will be invited to the conference office to join in the planning process and so gain more valuable experience in the process. The leaders will in turn become coaches for their regions and help offer support to churches.

All churches are asked to participate in the REACH strategy.
“This Is My Story”

Recently, the Children’s Ministries department of the Ontario Conference invited writers and artists between the ages of 6-14 to participate in a creative writing/art project. They were asked to write what they enjoyed about being a Christian or why they liked a particular Bible character. Here is a sample of what they said:

What I Enjoy About Being a Christian

“I like being a Christian because you get to go to heaven if you’re good and you learn about obedience. You learn about who created you and the earth and who loves you in case you didn’t know. God has the right to love you, and He wants the best for you, and He wants us to know what is right. You realize that for all those years you’ve been saying, He doesn’t exist. God just wants us to be happy and He wants us to praise Him, and He wants us to know that He is there for us. He knows that we aren’t perfect, and He doesn’t expect us to be and He just wants us to be more like Him each and every day. Why does He want us to be obedient, to listen and to care about what we do? He just wants us to do good and wants us to achieve what is possible for us to achieve. So we are safe and comfortable about learning about God. He wants us to listen.”

By Rochauna Dailey
Ebenezer Seventh-day Adventist Church
Age 7

On the Lord’s Day, we make learning about the Bible lots of fun. We learn lots of things and how we can apply it to our lives. As a Christian, life is better; you learn how to be good, humble, peaceful, giving, respectful, obedient, kind, lawful, and lots more.”

Roaine Coy-Pinnock
Mississauga Seventh-day Adventist Church
Age 11

“My Favourite Bible Character

“My favourite Bible character is Moses because of his courage and patience for his people. I mean, Moses went from being a hot-tempered Egyptian prince, to the well-mannered Hebrew leader. He had so much patience for the people that had given him the hardest time. But thank God, He decided to give the people a second chance, even though they didn’t deserve it. You see, that’s the type of love that Jesus wants us to be showing others. A man who came from a killer to God’s most beloved servant is a big jump; don’t you think? But that’s the type of behaviour that someone can learn while in the presence of God. Moses can show everyone on this earth how much God has an influence on your life. Even though Moses killed someone, Jesus used that moment to bring Moses closer to Him. That moment just proved that Jesus forgives EVERYONE! It doesn’t matter what you’ve done because He loves you and is always ready to forgive you and welcome you into His arms. God shaped Moses to be a brave and powerful leader. And that’s what He wants us to be, brave and powerful leaders.”

Shurnyika Jones
Ebenezer Seventh-day Adventist Church
Age 10

“My Favourite Bible Character

“Elisha is my favourite Bible character because he was one of the prophets of God. One day Elisha was sitting in the shade under a tree when 42 children started to tease him by calling him baldhead, so Elisha asked God to help him in prayer. God sent two big hungry grizzly bears and ate some of the kids.

Another of the miracles that Elisha did was healing a man named Naaman. Naaman had leprosy, and he didn’t know how to get rid of it. His servant told him to go to the prophet Elisha. Naaman didn’t want to hear from Elisha, but Naaman still had the leprosy so he decided to go to Elisha. When Naaman got to Elisha, Elisha told him to wash in the River Jordan. He did as Elisha told him and came out of the water clean.”

Jaiden Campbell
Ebenezer Seventh-day Adventist Church

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Jaiden Campbell
Ebenezer Seventh-day Adventist Church
As I stood by the door greeting the congregation as they filed out of Bracebridge Adventist Church, someone placed an envelope in my hand and said, “This is for your ministry. I’ve been impressed”.

Not sure how to respond to this unexpected encounter, I thanked her and continued greeting the rest of the members.

Later during the potluck meal that followed, I made my way to the member who had presented the envelope to see what she specifically wanted done with it. As we spoke, she shared that earlier in the week she had been moved by the Holy Spirit to make a contribution to the work of the Lord, but she was not sure about the direction, so she began praying for some sign that would help her make the right decision.

She reported that as she listened to the sermon, she felt very impressed as if the message was for her (I had preached on stewardship and personal accountability). She even quoted a statement that I made during the sermon, “The Lord does not measure faithfulness by how much we have, but what we do with what we have”. That, for her was the sign she was looking for and she had every confidence that the Holy Spirit will ensure that the money will be used to benefit others.

The gift from that generous member, a faithful senior, was appropriately allocated to the Seniors’ Ministry of the Ontario Conference. All donated funds for seniors are tax-deductible and will be used in support of the work among the seniors within the Ontario Conference and for their outreach to others. The significant contribution made by so many of our seniors will always be remembered with great appreciation.

The conference now holds annual seniors’ wellness retreat.

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**Ask the Conference**

Recently, in my church, there was a big debate about whether or not the business meeting could continue after we lost the quorum. Please tell me whether or not a meeting can continue without a quorum.

**JT, Toronto**

It is helpful to remember that a quorum is the number or proportion of members that must be present in order to transact business. This parliamentary principle seeks to ensure that decisions are made by a fair representation of the organisation and not left to the determination of a few.

In all meetings, once there is a quorum, the chairperson will declare that there is one, and the meeting can begin. From that point on, a quorum is presumed to continue.

If, during the meeting, a member observes that a number of people have left, he or she may raise the matter of the quorum with the chairperson who must determine if one exists. If there is no quorum, the meeting must be adjourned. This is the common practice followed by those using Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised Tenth Edition (2000), p. 337.

If, however, the local church or organisation has rules (voted at a time when a quorum existed) that allow a meeting to continue after a quorum has been lost, then the meeting can continue. It is important to determine what rules your church has established. Ask your church clerk for the rules governing meetings in your church. As with all rules, they should be an action of the church and be clearly dated.

**Halsey Peat, Communication/PARL Director**

At the annual camp meeting in Ontario, I noticed that the teachers’ commissioning and pastors’ ordination were done together. Why was that? I think that ordination should be done separately because it is the highest office in the church.

Every year, one of the grand highlights of the Ontario Conference camp meeting is the afternoon service in which we celebrate the ordination of pastors and the commissioning of teachers to their respective ministries.

A few individuals have wondered why the pastors and teachers are ordained and commissioned in the same service.

First, the Apostle Paul in speaking of the spiritual gifts given by God to His servants indicates that a Christian pastor or teacher are the same, when he writes “…and some are to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up…” Ephesians 4:11, 12 (NIV).

When Jesus reinstates the Apostle Peter in Jesus’ final scene in the Gospel of John (21:15-19), He commissions Peter to first “feed my lambs,” then to “take care of my sheep,” and finally to “feed my sheep.” Some scholars have argued that Jesus is saying take care of the whole spectrum of my people, young lambs and old sheep, and new believers and mature believers. To “feed” them is a reference not only to the evangelistic nature of Peter’s ministry, but also to the teaching and nurturing ministry to which the Lord was calling Peter. Both our pastors and teachers fulfill these important ministry roles.

Second, in Ellen White’s book, Education, she devotes a whole chapter to the prophetic heroes of the Bible whose beginnings were shaped by godly education. These leaders included Joseph, Moses, Elisha, Daniel and Paul. She shows how the training they received in their youth impacted their future service to God. This has always been the purpose of Adventist Education—to prepare people to serve God in this world and throughout eternity. This is the ministry of every pastor and teacher.

Hence, every year the Ontario Conference celebrates this sacred duty of pastors and teachers together in the Ordination and Commissioning Service at camp meeting.

**Daniel Limrud, Executive Secretary**
We’re Sending You a New Pastor
How Pastors Are Transferred

The transfer of pastors is an important, vital and sensitive part of ministry. The length of time which a pastor serves in each church is not fixed, but it is unpredictable. One’s service may be interrupted by a local transfer to serve another congregation, an appointment to serve at the conference level, or a call to serve in another field or institution.

A transfer is an expectation that comes with one’s occupation as a pastor. Folk who work in careers such as pastoral ministry, military service, police force, or politics, to name a few, live with the expectation that changes in location or specific roles will be part of their life experience.

Around the world, Seventh-day Adventist pastors serve a congregation for an average of 3-6 years. Some may serve as short as one year or as long as ten or more years.

The transfer of a beloved and faithful pastor can create unease at the local church, yet it opens the way for new ideas and fresh thinking that can bring renewed vision to the congregation. An exposure of a pastor to a new congregation is likewise an additional opportunity for further growth and development.

How Pastors Are Transferred

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a wonderful church that functions by a representative system of government. Every four years at our Constituency Meeting (conference session), where leaders are elected, a Board of Directors is also appointed. This Board of Directors is given the great task of overseeing the business of the conference operations on behalf of the membership.

The 23-member Board of Directors is comprised of 13 lay members, 5 pastors, 2 directors and the 3 administrators (president, executive secretary, treasurer). The pastors and lay members represent various regions throughout the Province of Ontario, genders and generational groups within our membership.

Among the early tasks of the newly elected Board of Directors is the appointment of 14 standing committees, which attend to specific tasks and make subsequent recommendations to the Board of Directors for their actions.

One such committee is the Pastoral Placement Committee (PPC). It considers and recommends to the Board of Directors the transfer or the hiring of pastors. The Seventh-day Adventist Church manual is very clear that “the pastor is appointed to the position in the local church by the conference; he serves the church as a conference worker and is responsible to the conference committee...”-Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, p. 52.

It further clarifies that “pastors or assistant pastors are not nominated or elected to such positions by the church. Their connection with the church is by appointment by the conference committee, and such appointment may be changed at any time.”-Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, p. 147.

The PPC considers the needs of the entire field, local church and the pastor. It is sensitive to the pastor as a personal family and carefully considers, among other factors, the following:
1. The strength of the pastor and the needs of the church. How can his/her skills best fit the church, as well as the reverse?
2. Is the pastor married and if so, is his/her spouse employed? What is the potential for his/her spouse to secure a job, if transferred?
3. Is there the potential for the pastor to be transferred within a particular locale, without his/her spouse having to resign current employment?
4. Do they have children? If so, transfer is at best not to be effected while school is in session.
5. Do they own their house? What is the real estate market like? Is this a good time for houses to be sold? If not, can we transfer the pastor without him or her having to change residence?

Once it has finalized the moves, the PPC reports to the Board of Directors. The Board will either approve the report or refer it back to the PPC with recommended changes. Only when the Board is satisfied will it approve the report and authorize the administration to implement the changes.

Mansfield Edwards,
President

ADRA CANADA
Over 18 Million in Crisis in the Sahel, Canadian Government Prepared to Match Your Donation

As the crisis in the Sahel escalates your support is needed more than ever and now your generosity can go even further. From August 7 to September 30, 2012, the Canadian Government will match every donation made to ADRA Canada dollar for dollar.

To help those who are suffering from hunger in the Sahel and have your donation matched give to the ADRA Canada Sahel Crisis by calling 1-888-274-2372 or online at www.adra.ca/sahelmatch.
Summit Addresses Declining Sabbath School Attendance in Ontario

During May 4-5, 2012, ninety Sabbath School personnel and two pastors from 34 churches across Ontario met at the Westin Prince Hotel, Toronto, for a summit addressing the issue of declining Sabbath School attendance in Ontario.

The summit was the result of Pastor Theodore Sargeant’s determination to discover the reason for declining Sabbath School attendance. “We wanted to pool our collective knowledge not just to determine the cause,” said Sargeant, “but what we can do to turn things around.”

Before the attendees were able to address those questions, however, Elders Delbert Pearman, director of Planning for Adventist Missions at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists; J Alfred Johnson II, Adult Ministries director, NAD; Monte Sahlin, director of Research and Development Department of the Ohio Conference, and Theodore Sargeant explored key areas of the Sabbath School.

Pearman ignited a keen interest in missions as he testified of God’s miracles around the world. Johnson revealed the evangelistic purpose of Sabbath School and its apparent irrelevance to peoples’ lives. It was also expressed that few teachers are equipped to make the class interaction meaningful.

Earlier, Monte Sahlin stated that classes were geared for grade 6 level—meaning that most did not meet the needs of those who operate at lesser or greater levels of understanding and abilities. Others pointed out that the early start of Sabbath School was not family friendly, so they arrive later.

Participants also shared what was working for their churches. Common to many of the responses was the success achieved through building personal relationships. They discovered that when the Sabbath School was organised into small groups that operated as social and physical support systems, members had a greater sense of belonging.

Some leaders spoke of how they intentionally involve participation in Sabbath School of those who either attend late or not at all. Another church provided breakfast. Others found that when they engaged in regular teacher improvement, it eventually had a positive effect on members’ satisfaction and hence attendance.

As the groups engaged in finding solutions, it soon became clear that the summit had only just begun its work. As the attendees prepared to leave, they were already thinking of what they would do in their churches.

“I’ve learnt a lot that I’m excited about to go back and share with my church in Cornwall,” exclaimed Danielle Drabik.

“I was really inspired to hear what is happening in the mission field,” said Mestine St. Louis from Orleans Church. “I’m really motivated to sacrifice and give to missions.”

Sargeant indicated that the findings will be collated and distributed to all churches.
With one hundred and thirty-seven years of service between them, Pastors Efenito Adap, Rick Bacchus and Clarence Baptiste have retired from pastoral ministry.

After 44 years of service in the Philippines and in Ontario, **Efenito Adap** has retired. In the Philippines, he served as a district pastor and conference departmental director.

He arrived with his wife, Aurora, and young family in Ontario in 1986 and began serving at Filipino Canadian Church in Toronto. He was instrumental in the birth of Mount Zion Filipino Church before being elected as Stewardship and Personal Ministries director for the Ontario Conference in 2002. Many will remember his favourite slogan, “Go God’s 1000”, as he attempted to launch 1,000 small groups across the conference.

Until his retirement on January 1, 2012, he has been pastor of Scarborough Filipino Church for the past seven and a half years.

His retirement sees him busy helping in his local church as Stewardship and Development leader.

**Rick Bacchus** has had a long and distinguished service in the church, including eight years as president of the Ontario Conference.

Entering pastoral work in 1968, Pastor Bacchus worked for two and a half years in Trinidad before moving to Ontario. He first served as an assistant pastor at Toronto West, then as pastor of Perth Avenue Church.

After seven years at Perth Avenue, he moved into elected office, first as Personal Ministries and Sabbath School director in the Ontario Conference, then as Church Ministries director in the SDACC. In 1989, he returned to the Ontario Conference as its president.

Bacchus became president during a recessionary period when the church was seriously affected by the economic downturn. It was a time for brave and careful leadership. Very tough decisions had to be made. He was careful to keep his hands firmly clasped in God’s in order to steer the conference through the crisis back onto a firm financial position and strong evangelistic achievements. After his last term as president, he faithfully served Willowdale Church as an associate pastor for fourteen years.

He was honoured, along with his successor, Derrick Nichols, by the Ontario Conference in January 2011 for his distinguished and faithful service as its president.

He retired at the end of April and joins his wife, Gerzel, who retired from denomination service in 2007, to take a more leisurely pace in life and to pursue other interests.

**Clarence Baptiste** retired on June 30, 2012 after 50 years of service. He first entered denominational work in April 1962 as a literature evangelist before becoming publishing director and a pastor.

Baptiste served in the Manitoba-Saskatchewan and Alberta Conferences before moving to Ontario in 1990, where he pastored two churches in Thunder Bay. Two and a half years later, he moved to the Greater Toronto Area and served at Toronto East. In 1997, when the Philadelphia congregation was formed in Scarborough, he was appointed as its pastor. Since then, he served Smyrna and Newmarket Churches for nine years before moving to Berea where he remained for a further eight years. His final pastoral district was Guelph and Milton.

While he has enjoyed serving in various capacities, he says that his fondest years were spent serving as a literature evangelist. “I loved meeting people and sharing the gospel with them,” he told Highlights.

Pastor Baptiste celebrated his 47th wedding anniversary with his wife Beryl in June. They have three sons and one grandchild. He plans spending time in retirement as a counsellor and supporting his local church.

“We are very grateful for the service of these great champions of the gospel,” said Pastor Mansfield Edwards, Ontario Conference president. “They have given their best to God in service to this conference, and we are all the better because of it. We are simply building on the foundation they have laid. We wish them God’s richest blessings in their retirement.”
Changes and Pastoral Transfers

Ontario Conference is happy to welcome two new workers into its ranks: Durven Bansie and Leo Launio.

Durven Bansie is a chartered accountant with a strong background in auditing. He has a passion to see the Adventist Church increase numerically and grow spiritually healthy. He happily accepted the call to serve in the Auditing department of the conference. He commenced his new responsibilities on July 31, 2012. Bansie is an elder at his local church and dearly loves his family. He is married to Carlene, with whom he has a teenaged son, Giovanni, who attends Crawford Adventist Academy.

Allen Decena began working as assistant pastor at Faith Filipino and Filipino Canadian Churches in June 2010, after completing his Master of Divinity degree at the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary at Andrews University, Michigan, USA. His ability to effectively work with youth and young adults was soon recognised and appreciated by the two congregations. However, it was also observed by Kingsway College, and he accepted its invitation to serve as its chaplain. He assumes his new responsibilities at the end of August.

Lyle Notice will be greatly missed in Ottawa where he has been serving since commencing employment with Ontario Conference in February 2008. Like Decena, he quickly displayed outstanding ability to effectively work with youth and young adults. He was also well-liked and respected by seniors. Notice has a firm belief that the church must take an active role in the life of its community and associated himself with a number of parliamentarians over issues of religious freedom.

He left Ontario at the end of June to begin his new appointment with Alberta Conference as its associate Youth director and Pathfinder specialist. Pastor Mansfield Edwards, Ontario Conference president, was sad to see them go.

“Both of these young pastors are products of Ontario,” he said, “and we are proud of them. We were very reluctant to lose them because they have a lot to offer to the church in Ontario. However, we did not want to stand in their way. We wish God’s richest blessings on them, their families and their ministry.”

New Pastoral Assignments

A number of churches have recently seen changes among their pastoral staff, while others will see changes in the upcoming weeks. To date, the changes are:

- Andre Anderson Willowdale (Assistant)
- James Anderson Richmond Hill
- David Baker Immanuel
- Peter Caran Peterborough/Lindsay
- Dewaine Fraser Apple Creek (Assistant)
- Rodolfo Alvir New Life
- Edvard Miler Haileybury/Timmins
- Fitzroy Radlein Perth Avenue (Assoc)
- Richard Roschman Willowdale (Assoc)
- Floyd Spence Hope
- Darryl Blahovich Heritage Green
- Andrew King Toronto Central
- Frankie Lazarus Malton
- Samuel McKenzie Guelph/Milton
- Elizabeth Pule Ottawa (Assoc)
- Orlando Pule Ottawa
- Wayne Williams T. West (Assoc)

Saying Goodbye

Sadly, we say goodbye to two young, energetic, committed and creative pastors, Allen Decena and Lyle Notice.
On Tuesday evening, June 26, 2012, the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Medal was awarded to Pastor Daniel Saugh by Greg Sorbara, MPP (Vaughan), at the Ontario Legislature. He was one of fourteen recipients from the Vaughan-Thornhill riding to receive the award for services rendered to the community.

Reading the citation, Sorbara spoke of Saugh’s work as a chaplain with the Canadian Forces and the positive ministry he brought the Queen’s Rifles of Canada who had been without a chaplain for several years. “He has encouraged many soldiers to seek faith in God,” said Sorbara. “He is also very active in his community. He has served the Good Samaritan Youth Drive, a youth program that encourages positive choices and drug-free lifestyle in the Jane-Finch Community for over 5 years. He voluntarily teaches health promotion at the TD Engagement Centre, a joint program between the community in Jane-Finch and York University Institute for Health Research. He also served as a volunteer for CIDA’s youth programme for 2 years, promoting youth involvement in humanitarian work. He is a member of the Canadian Public Health Association, where he seeks to enhance and promote the mental, physical and spiritual health of those he serves and seeks to help people live healthy and fulfilling lives.”

The citation continued, listing Saugh’s work with other organizations and finally with his work with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Sorbara concluded by saying that Saugh “credits his church organization for the opportunity to engage with the community in a meaningful and transformative way.”

Saugh told Ontario Highlights, “I feel humbled and greatly honoured to receive this unexpected award… I thank God for this and share this honour and give credit to my church that has given me the opportunity to serve beyond its walls and to make inroads in many areas of the community, city and our country.”

He was accompanied by his parents and an aunt. They were among 70 people attending the ceremony. The Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Medal has been awarded to 46,000 recipients across Canada for their distinguished services to their communities.
Leonard Maracle
(September 1, 1926 – July 18, 2012)

Len Maracle, elder of Six nations, was laid to rest on July 21, 2012, after a long life of total dedication to God, hard work and overcoming difficulties. So influential was Len that it’s difficult to think of Six Nations Adventist Church and not think of him. He was committed to working for native people, improving their lives and sharing the gospel of Jesus with them.

After a difficult beginning, Len lived a full and accomplished life. At the age of 11, he worked as a cook in a lumber camp. Two years later, he rented a team of horses, plowed the field behind his grandmother’s house, planted and harvested a crop of beans to make money for himself. Life was never easy. He experienced the harshness of the Great Depression, was sent to one of the infamous residential schools and went to war at age 16.

In the middle of World War II, he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force and became a pilot, where he rose to the rank of captain and became a training officer.

After the war, he successfully ran a contracting business for 25 years in Buffalo and Rochester and became involved, working in native organisations.

In 1969, he and his wife, Kitty, moved to Vancouver, became active in native organisations and in the life of his church. He even established and ran a church on Skid Row for several years, ministering to street people and residents.

In the late 1970s, he decided he wanted to become a lawyer, even though He did not have any formal education. He enrolled as a mature student at the University of British Columbia, obtained a degree in English and then in law, graduating when he was 60 years old.

Len practised law as a Crown Prosecutor, and later had a private practise in family and criminal law. He concluded his legal career as a judge.

Upon his retirement in 1997, Len returned to Six Nations Reserve in Ontario and served as director Grand River Employment and Training and continued his work with the church.

It was his passion to see more natives accept the gospel and worked tirelessly to reach them. He led his local church to welcome many evangelistic initiatives and actively took part in them. His church became his life until almost the day of his death.

He was buried on July 21 and awaits the coming of the Saviour.

“ Their Deeds Will Follow After Them”

“Careful consideration should be given also during the planning of how our estate (assets) should be distributed to include the Lord’s work. Too many neglect this aspect of planning, thus limiting the impact and influence after they are gone to hasten the finishing of the Lord’s work” E.G. White Testimonies to the Church Vol 5, p.55.

No one will ever know how many souls will be blessed or garnered for the kingdom because of the blessings from such legacies. It is certain, however, ‘Blessed are they who die in the Lord from now on: Yea, says the Spirit, they will rest from their labours, for their deeds will follow after them” Revelation 14:13.

Vernon Langdon

In his last sermon, ‘The Drum Major Instinct,’ Martin Luther King Jr. said that when he died, he did not want the eulogy to speak of his accomplishments. Instead, he wanted to leave a legacy where he would be remembered for a life of love and service to others.

Last April was the 44th anniversary of his death, yet his legacy lives on.

Louise Schwebler, Mary Ellen Strangway and William Skullech were not civil rights leaders, neither were they national nor even provincial figures, yet they also left legacies. In their wills, they intentionally prepared and left legacies that would benefit others. In accordance with their expressed wishes, Pastor Mansfield Edwards, assisted by Alvin Ram, Planned Giving and Trust Services director of the Ontario Conference, made presentations to three churches.

From the estate of Louise Schwebler, an open-ended gift of $15,000 was given to Kitchener-Waterloo Church.

In her will, Mary Ellen Strangway designated $13,376.08 for the Community Services department of the Sarnia Church. She also directed $26,752.16 to ADRA, and a similar amount, an open-ended gift, to the Ontario Conference.

Finally, William Skullech willed to the Ontario Conference an open-ended contribution of $5000. The conference in turn presented the money to Immanuel Church for services its members rendered to William Skullech during his lengthy illness.

The name of God is certainly glorified when individuals remember the Lord’s work in their estate planning.

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Three to Five Minutes: Speed Dating at Bronte Church

Do you think you could go on a date in 3-5 minutes with someone? You did if you attended Bronte Church’s first singles speed dating event which was held on February 11, 2012 at the church in Oakville.

On the night, over 50 nervous young adults between the ages of 22-35 arrived at the church, not too sure what to expect. However, in no time they were engrossed in the activities. After a few ice-breaker games, such as ‘Battle of the Sexes’, instructions were given and the dating began!

Males were seated, and the females had to move around them in a type of musical chairs. Each female talked to the male in front of her for about five minutes before moving on to speak to the next male at the sound of a whistle. Both males and females would write down the names of the people with whom they had a connection and submit them to the organizers. Later, the organizers gave them emails by which to contact the people in whom they were interested.

“I thought it was fun,” exclaimed Hermione from Oshawa. “It was really a good way to meet new people. Those of us from Durham were thinking that we should hold one in our area.”

Bronte Church planned the event in just over a month, including advertising and preparation, and they were thrilled that it was such an overwhelming success. The event was the first of its kind to not only introduce young adults, but provide an environment which was carefree and fun for young singles to mix and mingle.

With the guidance of Pastor Gerardo Oudri, two young adults from Bronte Church came up with the idea, planned it from start to finish and trusted the Lord would do the rest. The Lord did not fail them, and the feedback was overwhelming.

Bronte Church hopes to hold more similar events to foster connecting young adults not only in dating, but in the work of spreading the gospel. Please look for more upcoming events this summer. Thank you to all who attended. We pray that God will bless you!

Lisa Milovanov

Paralympic Gold-Medalist, Inspires Barrie Church

On May 18 and 19, Ljiljana (Lilo) Ljubisic, a five-time Canadian Paralympic champion, visited Barrie and was hosted by Barrie Adventist Church. Recognized as one of Canada’s most powerful women and named to Canada’s Top 20 Most Influential Women in Sports 2003-2007, Lilo shared her story of passion and unrelenting commitment to excellence.

Lilo, a committed Seventh-day Adventist from British Columbia, strives to “be the best that she can be,” and encourages those around her to do the same. As someone who had to deal with gradual loss of sight, she uses her story to inspire and motivate her hearers.

This was the experience of those who heard her story at Barrie Church. She challenged them to “accept no limits, and to see beyond the disability to the ability”.

Sean Young

Immanuel Church Homecoming October 13, 2012

Special invitation is extended to all former Immanuel members to worship and fellowship with us on Sabbath, October 13, for our homecoming celebration.

Sabbath services will start at 9:15 a.m. and will close with a musical concert in the afternoon. www.Immanuelsda.org
Elliot Lake Members Reach Out to Mall Collapse Victims

On Wednesday, June 23, 2012, part of the roof parking lot of Algo Centre Mall in Elliot Lake collapsed killing two people and injuring more than twenty others.

As residents of the town learned of the shocking news, members of the small Seventh-day Adventist Church were quick to respond. Every evening of that first week, they helped out with the memorial wall, lighting candles and speaking to people.

On the evening of the collapse, Pastors Jagos Ivanovic and Seth Dixon from Sudbury and Sault Ste Marie Churches, respectively, drove to Elliot Lake to give assistance. “We truly appreciated their help,” said Pastor Saugh, minister of Elliot Lake Adventist Church. “It’s great to have such support”.

The largest need arose when approximately 300 people who depended on the mall for employment lost their jobs. The church held two yard sale fundraisers and helped raise funds for the local food bank and subsequently with a relief funds for people who lost jobs.

Shortly after, with assistance from Sudbury Adventist Church, Elliot Lake’s members presented a cheque of $1000 to the food bank and also delivered over 68 kg of food. They also donated about 45 kg of baby food and diapers to Maplegate House for Women.

Moose FM 94.1, the local radio station, having featured earlier an interview with Pastor Saugh about the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, was present to cover the presentation.

The food bank was very grateful for the funds and for the food.

“The needs are just pouring in,” said one representative. “We’re really happy for this donation.” Saugh responded by saying that the church is happy that they were able to make a meaningful contribution.

“It was a real sense of joy to give back something to our community,” said one member.

The church is also preparing to present another cash donation, with the help of the Ontario Conference and ADRA, to the relief fund for those who specifically lost their jobs. The church building remains open on Tuesdays for people to visit its clothes depot, small food bank and maybe even join the youth guitar class.

Elliot Lake Church is happy to receive funds from sister churches or members in order to continue supporting the relief effort. Funds may be sent directly or via the conference office.

Daniel Saugh,

Thunder Bay Church Helps Flood Victims

On May 28, 2012, the City of Thunder Bay declared a state of emergency after extensive flooding occurred following heavy rain. Thunder Bay Seventh-day Adventist Church, with assistance from ADRA and the Ontario Conference, quickly moved to offer help to families seriously affected by the flooding.

While the church building and the homes of members were not affected, many people were affected in one way or another. Some houses in the area were condemned and some did not have any insurance. Pastor Jim Rieder of Thunder Bay Adventist Church explains, “The problem was worsened because the water treatment plant pumps failed during the flood, and the basements filled with not only water but polluted sewage water”.

The church used money sent by ADRA and the Ontario Conference through its Community Services department to provide immediate cash assistance to some families who were in greatest need. They were very welcoming and appreciative of the help. Others were given food vouchers for the local supermarket.

The local church did not depend solely on the money it received. It gave from its resources, and members, including children, raised a significant amount of money to help with the relief.

The members of Thunder Bay Church are happy that they were able to help take relief to those who needed it.

Pastor Jim Rieder presents a cheque to a flood victim
College Park Church Dedicates Eighty-Six Newcomers

On April 14, 2012, College Park Church had a special service of dedication of the 86 newcomers that joined the church in recent years.

Robert Zama, assistant pastor, led in the dedication service of an impressive number of 31 youngsters and 55 adults who joined the church through baptism, profession of faith and transfer. They made a public pledge to use their spiritual gifts, influence and resources to support the mission of this church and to foster the proclamation of the gospel in this area and around the world. The congregation made a similar pledge to support the newcomers with words of encouragement and with intercessory prayers.

The dedication service was part of the church’s conviction of the importance of connecting newcomers to established members and to promote their integration and active service to the Master.

Since 2006, the ministry of Connections was created to intentionally connect newcomers and encourage them to become active in one of the many ministries of the church.

Connections ministry is run by 65 volunteers who happily greet visitors, provide information and offer them hospitality during and after church services. Hospitality includes accompanying visitors to bi-weekly fellowship meals.

The ministry passes on information of visitors to the pastors and elders and even offer support and Bible studies when requested.

It is a growing ministry which is involved in various activities designed to help quickly connect visitors and newcomers to the church. One of these is the “Love Feast”, a regular celebration to help new members feel valued, appreciated and loved by the church.

Connections also hold a Sabbath School class for visitors. The core group of this class is committed to befriend visitors, and nurture them until they are ready to join other classes that best fit their preferences. The class also promotes social activities on a regular basis.

As the dedication service drew near to its close, Pastor Gary Hodder offered the prayer of dedication followed by music presented by Sharon Foreman.

The group left the church, escorted by an honour guard of elders to share in a specially prepared “Love Feast” fellowship meal at College Park Elementary School gymnasium. Nearly 300 people enjoyed healthy food and meaningful Christian fellowship.

Tannia Amorim
Connections Ministry

Madoc Baptism

June 23, 2012, by Pastor Robert Putt. It was an inspiration to all the members who witnessed his baptism, to see his happy face as he praised God for saving him.

Several hands were raised as Pastor Putt invited others to follow his example. Two months earlier Kevin and Metha Mullins were baptized in the same lake just prior to their marriage at Madoc.

Warmth and smiles accompanied the baptism of Adam Van Dusen, as he was baptized in the Moira Lake in Madoc, Ontario, Sabbath, by Pastor Robert Putt. It was an inspiration to all the members who witnessed his baptism, to see his happy face as he praised God for saving him.

Several hands were raised as Pastor Putt invited others to follow his example. Two months earlier Kevin and Metha Mullins were baptized in the same lake just prior to their marriage at Madoc.

Phyllis Vallieres

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A collection of poetry by Dr. Errol Lawrence

ERROL ANTHONY LAWRENCE
Nepean’s Fun Day Leaves Impressions of a People Who Care

On June 24, 2012, Nepean Church held its second community fun day. After the success of the previous year’s fun day, the church hoped that many would remember the exciting activities and return. They did and brought others with them. For some, it was the first time they had stepped onto the grounds of a Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The following three hours were filled with fun and enjoyment for everyone. There were the usual fun things, such as the bouncy castle and outdoor games, but an instant hit was the reptile zoo. Children just loved seeing the creepy, crawly and slithering creatures and eagerly touched them.

There were refreshments in abundance, and in no time nearly every child was holding an ice cone or eating popcorn. Some visitors took time to sample healthy and tasty vegetarian dishes that had been prepared by the church’s Health department.

A unique feature of the afternoon was the guided tours of the church premises led by volunteers who also answered questions regarding Adventist beliefs and core values.

The day was also an opportunity to advertise the upcoming Vacation Bible School. To date, over 25 children from the community enrolled.

The day concluded with a spectacular concert in the church with Naomi Striemer, international singer and radio host. Her melodious cadences and powerful testimony opened hearts to the Holy Spirit. Afterwards, people stayed in the foyer asking questions for more than two hours.

Every visitor was offered a free copy of Ellen G. White’s Steps to Christ, and an invitation to return for worship and fellowship. One woman, requested Bible studies. Another visitor, upon learning that Pastor Donoso spoke Spanish, gladly told him that she had been praying that God would place a Spanish-speaking pastor in her path because her mother, who only speaks Spanish, was in hospital and desired a pastoral visit. Pastor Donoso did so the next day and took communion to her.

As the last visitor left, there was a sense that visitors had been clearly impressed by their experience at Nepean Church. They saw that Seventh-day Adventists are people who care, who are interested in the whole person, with no distinction of ethnicity, religion, or background.

Marcos Paseggi,
Communications

New Master Guide Ministry for Metro Central

On April 29, 2012, a Master Guide Club was launched during a consecration and induction service held at Mount Zion Filipino Adventist Church, for the Metro Central region in Toronto.

The service for the Metro Central Master Guide (MCMG) Club was led by Pastor Edwin Martin, Ontario Conference Pathfinder specialist; Donovan Dodd, Ontario Conference Master Guide Council executive coordinator and Mavis Griffin, MCMG director. Master Guides, family, friends and visitors from across the entire city filled the pews. The service was marked by music, candle-lighting and a homily entitled, ‘ipress’, by Master Guide, Pastor Garth Dottin.

As part of the Ontario Conference Master Guide Council, the club’s ministry has a number of short-term and long-term goals, including community outreach activities, ongoing training and development, and spiritual emphasis events.

Club director, Mavis Griffin, has been very instrumental in the launch of the new ministry and continues to be source of its inspiration.

The club is committed to fulfill its mission statement, concluding with “our ultimate goal is to bring souls to Jesus Christ”.

Christine Agaete-Urquilla
Recently relocated Toronto East Seventh-day Adventist Church is making waves in its new community in Scarborough. As soon as spring arrived, the church, now worshipping at 25 Channel Nine Court, across the road from Scarborough Town Centre, set out to meet its new neighbours by involving itself in community events.

The church’s youth (Toronto East Youth Nation—TEYN) led the way in late May when they did the unusual thing of giving free hugs to bemused pedestrians at Scarborough Town Centre. The hugs were accompanied by the offer of prayer. A few days later, on June 2, they delivered 200 teddy bears to the children at Scarborough Grace Hospital Children's Ward. The hospital chaplain was effusive with his praise for their work in bringing cheer to the sick children.

Two weeks later, on Sabbath, June 16, Pastor Patrick Jacques and a number of church members participated in a community barbeque in the Glendower area in Scarborough.

“They asked us for help in getting the hamburgers and the hotdogs,” said Felix-Dodson, Personal Ministries leader. “They wanted a grill, and we got it for them. They wanted a blood pressure clinic, and we organized it for them.”

Many people took advantage of the blood pressure checks and gladly accepted the accompanying free gift. Several asked questions about the church. “Just being there and being able to do outreach in a different way was rewarding,” Dodson concluded.

Shortly after arriving at the new location, the church, led by its Community Services department, has partnered with Malvern Healthy Food Cupboard, a parachute food bank, to provide service for approximately 140 needy families. Seven volunteers from the church helped to pack food boxes for the families. On July 1, the Community Services department took responsibility for the food bank and is currently soliciting gently-used summer clothing for adult men, woman and children.

The Community Services department also provides a luncheon for the homeless at Agincourt Community Centre on the 4th Sunday of every month. It currently serves nutritious hot meals to 75 people.

Faye Moffat, Community Services leader, firmly believes that this is one way that the church can serve Jesus.

Toronto East Church is intentional about maintaining its partnership with the community, and to do so simply because it is what it is called to do. Its mission is to be a lighthouse to the community and a repository of the Holy Spirit.

Two baptisms, held two months apart, March 17 and May 5, have increased Toronto Perth's membership by thirteen. On March 17, 2012, at the close of the Youth Week of Prayer with Laurent Grosvenor, ministerial student from Oakwood College, six new converts were baptized. Two months later, on May 5, 2012, with a rejoicing congregation, seven new converts were baptized. Our pastors, Dr. Nerval Myrie and Dewaine Frazer, along with Bible instructor, Norma Haughton, and members continue to work earnestly in fulfilling the mission of the Toronto Perth Church -- the proclamation of the good news of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ.

Melissa Answer
Woodstock Church Reaches Its Community with Cooking Classes

On the nights of May 14, 15 and 17, 2012 in the community room of Hurley’s Independent Grocers in Ingersoll, a group from Woodstock Church conducted vegetarian cooking classes.

They were surprised and gratified by the number of people from the community who turned out. Thirty-six people attended, and more were turned away, after being assured that other classes will be held in the future.

The first evening consisted of an informative health and nutrition lecture given by Kathy Rayner of CHIP from London. The other two nights consisted of cooking demonstrations of popular recipes, ably led by Bonnie Onjukka and Elisa Davis and a lively question and answer segment and opportunities to taste the food demonstrated.

On the last night after the class was over, Bonnie led the attendees through the store to show them the grocery items available for a vegetarian diet.

The goal for this event was to show people just how easy it is to prepare vegetarian dishes from food available in their local grocery store. This proved to be very popular, with participants commenting that they didn’t know how easy it was to cook vegetarian food. Each attendee was given a booklet of the organisers’ favourite recipes.

The church felt that God had blessed its efforts, and they are eager to make this a regular part of its outreach to its community.

Judy Nickol

“I Had Difficulty Believing that God Loves Me”

July 7, 2012 marked a change in life for seven precious souls at North-West Brampton Church as Pastor Fitzroy Radlein baptized mother and son, Andrea Plummer and Dillon Selvin; the three Griffiths siblings, Ruth-Anne, Callista and James, as well as Linton Williams and Tara Bailey.

The service was held at Brampton Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The congregation was excited to see these members give their hearts to Christ and listened attentively to their testimonies. Here is Tara Bailey’s story:

“A few months ago, I realized that I was not spiritually fulfilled; in fact, I felt I was going through spiritual illness. My heart was just so overwhelmed with sadness, and I felt like something was seriously missing in my life. Then one day, I had an epiphany. God wanted me to surrender all to Him. He wanted me to acknowledge the fact that He is the only one who has the ability to heal me from pain and make me new. I also had to accept the fact that baptism was the only way I could become a new creature for Christ.

Pastor Radlein gave me Bible studies to help me prepare for baptism and church membership. If I were unsure about a particular topic, he would find specific scriptures that would help me understand it better. However, I had difficulty believing that God loves me. He immediately assured me that God loves me and referred me to some relevant Bible passages which thoroughly explained God’s love for me and for mankind.

Two months later, on July 14, I was baptized. I will never forget that day. I was quite nervous before entering the pool of water; however, once the pastor held my hands and immersed me, I felt an immediate and unusual peace. I now look forward to having a rich relationship with my Saviour, and I am elated that I am now a part of His royal family. I also feel a lot more confident in my approach towards life. I’m definitely aware that I may face trials along the way, but I am happy to fight my battles with the Lord on my side.”

The church family is committed to supporting the seven new converts as they journey together with God.

Judy Williams, Communication Secretary, with Tara G. Bailey, newly-baptized member

Elisa Davis and Bonnie Onjukka
Spanish Churches Hold Third Annual March in Toronto

On June 2, 2012, members from the five different Spanish-speaking churches in Toronto, Mississauga and Brampton, supported by Pastors Efrain Sanchez, Daniel Sanchez and Wayne Williams, took to the streets of downtown Toronto for their third Annual Testament March.

Although the meteorological forecast predicted continuous rain throughout the weekend of the event, in a repeat of what happened at last year’s event, the rain ceased. The marchers strongly believed that God who governs natural laws intervened, and the march proceeded with approximately 300 participants.

Led by uniformed Adventurers and Pathfinders, the march began at the intersection of Yonge and Bloor and continued along some of the major streets in Toronto. A number of marchers, including young adults, adults and seniors, held up numerous banners with messages that exalted the name, the love and the power of the only true God as Creator, Redeemer and Saviour, as well as messages of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Other marchers gave out 2,200 pieces of religious and health literature and magazines to pedestrians as they passed by.

Rodrigo Alvarez

New Korean Group in Central Toronto


The ranks of the 51-member group was swelled to over 200 as members from the other Korean congregations in the conference joined them in the celebrations.

It was certainly a service of celebration as the formation of the group represented reconciliation, the group having once being part of the Ontario Korean Adventist community.

Led by its part-time pastor, kyung Sik Kim, the group gladly welcomed Pastor Edwards, Pastor Dom Kim, president of the Korean Adventist Church Association in North America and Mr. Ulysses Guarin, Ontario Conference treasurer, Mrs. Edwards and Mrs. Guarin and other visitors.

After preaching a message that called the church to commitment to serving God, Pastor Edwards invited the members of the group to the front where they participated in the brief induction ceremony.

The service was followed by a sumptuous lunch of fine Korean cuisine.

The congregation is already busy making friends in the community. On Tuesdays, it hosts a community exercise programme that is attended by over 85 persons.

Central Korean Group worships at the Salvation Army’s Yorkminster Citadel, 1 Lord Seaton Road (Yonge and 401), Toronto, ON, M2P 2C1.

There are over 150,000 people of Korean ancestry residing in the Greater Toronto Area.

Brampton Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church has changed its name to Heart Lake Seventh-day Adventist Church. Its name change signifies its determination to be a church for all people in its community. The address is 10747 Heart Lake Road, Brampton, ON, L6Z 0B7.

After many years of renting, Newmarket Seventh-day Adventist Church has purchased its own building in the nearby community of Holland Landing. The congregation now meets at 16 School Street, Holland Landing, ON, L9N 1K9.

Kanisa has a new address:
From August 18, 2012, they will be worshipping at Onnuri Korean United Church, 63 Dunblaine Avenue, North York, ON M5M 2S2 (401 & Avenue Road – 2 lights south of the 401).
Toronto West Wins Co-ed Volleyball Championship

Toronto West Adventist Church volleyball team members are the new champions of the Seventh-day Christian Co-ed Volleyball League’s (SDC-CVL) 2011-2012 season (Division A).

Their win, along with Division B’s winner, Downsview Adventist Church, celebrated the league’s 25th year.

The league was organised in 1987 as a social outlet for young people on Saturday nights and has won many supporters and friends since that time. There were occasions when it was faced with many challenges, but it has not only survived but has thrived.

With its mission to “promote strength and unity, brotherly love, friendship, endurance and peace in Christ Jesus through church interaction; building the mind, body and character while seeking goodness rather than greatness”, the league is open to co-ed teams from all faith groups. There is no age limit.

The season runs from September to May, and matches are played on Saturday nights after sunset.

If your church would like to join the league for the 2012/13 season or you would like further information, you may write to sdccvl@yahoo.ca.

Petra McGann
Philadelphia Runs Through Rain to Maintain CYSA Championship

Kanisa, Division B Champions

The rain-soaked athletes from Philadelphia Church in Scarborough braved torrential rain on Sunday, July 19th, to maintain its grip on the Christian Youth Sports Academy (CYSA) athletics championship held at York University.

The light blue-shirted athletes and their passionate supporters were again jubilant as they decisively beat the drenched Apple Creek team into second place.

Philadelphia amassed 649 points in Division A (churches with memberships greater than 500) while Apple Creek scored 589 points. A much-improved Toronto East put in a spirited performance to take a well-deserved third place ahead of a determined Toronto West.

Philadelphia also won the coveted relay championship.

As Philadelphia’s team and supporters bathed in the afterglow of their well-deserved victory, Apple Creek’s coach, Vernon Langdon, commented, “We extend our congratulations to Philadelphia. It has maintained its high standard of excellence over the past few years, but we will be back next year!”

Perhaps his eyes were on the Apple Creek’s younger athletes who gave a strong showing in their age categories.

Kanisa Division B Champions

Kanisa, with just 195 members on its books, surprised everyone by scoring the fourth highest amount of points on the day to win Division B (churches with less than 500 members) for the second time. With 319 points, they outscored 1308-member Toronto West by 11 points.

Kanisa’s athletes were determined to win so they did as Philadelphia did so many years ago when they were in Division B—enter as many events as possible! Sure enough, even when they did not win, they still scored points for second or third place. When they won events, they maximised their points.

Kanisa’s pastor, John Scott, was thrilled and was quick to explain, “The coaches, the members of the team, especially our energetic group of children and youth should be commended for their hard work and diligence in practice and performance. We are especially proud of one of our children, Gabby Ennis, who made her debut on the track for the first time.”

In the popular pastors’ race, Meadowvale’s Omar Palmer took gold. Philadelphia’s Joseph Amankwah won silver and Apple Creek’s Anthony Reid captured the bronze, just ahead of Toronto West’s Frankie Lazarus.

The day started off well, and the morning’s events ran smoothly. While general attendance and the number of churches participating were down, the quality of the athletes remained high, if not stronger than ever. And under an overcast sky, spectators happily cheered on the children in their events. The more perceptive would have realised that among the children, they were looking at future champions, who like 20-year-old Crystal Emmanuel, a former representative for Apple Creek, was on her way to the London Olympics to represent Canada in the 200m. Emmanuel was present but did not take part.

The day remained overcast until 1:04 p.m. when a sudden shower had everyone running for cover. After fifteen or so minutes, the rain ceased and the events resumed. After a further 30 minutes, it began raining again. And the pattern for the rest of the day was set, and some races were even run in the rain. Just as the last events concluded, a torrential bout of rain quickly cleared the stadium.

A visiting team-member from Ohio, USA, said he did not mind the rain at all because it had been so hot in Ohio.

Over the years, CYSA has made good attempts to complete all the events within the scheduled time, and even with the rain, they can be proud of their achievements. While they still have the challenge of starting the races

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