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Editorial

Fellow Patients

She knew that she shouldn’t let it bother her, but it did. Her close friend at church told her that it wasn’t worth wasting her emotions over—and on face value she was right, but it didn’t ease her pain. To be called a ‘harlot’ by one of the long-standing women in the church was very disconcerting for Sharon.

Sharon had only been baptised for a few months after attending an evangelistic series. There was so much for her to learn about being a Seventh-day Adventist. It was a total contrast to her former life. She’d even begun changing her wardrobe to fit into the more conservative atmosphere of her local church. Apparently, one or two of her outfits hadn’t met the approval of a particular sister who showed no reticence in letting her know.

Some people would have taken the sister to task, but not Sharon. Her personality wouldn’t allow her. She did what she had always done since childhood, accepted the criticism as a true statement of herself and disliked herself because of it.

I’m happy to say that Sharon received help from her pastor who also had training in counselling, but there are countless others in our churches who, for one reason or another, find themselves in similar situations. Maybe, like Sharon, from childhood they were told by parents or teachers that they were useless, stupid, or some other disparaging terms. Perhaps they were socialised into thinking that they should not be dependent on significant others for decision-making. Entering into a church with clear rules for expected behaviour can pose a real challenge for them, especially when there are well-intended individuals whose seemingly sole purpose in church is to let these souls know when they have missed the mark.

The question is, “Haven’t we all missed the mark?” Isn’t that what Romans 3:23 says? We’ve “all come short of the glory of God”. Hence, we all need God’s grace. So, the church is not a place for perfect people. On the contrary! One of the best descriptions I’ve heard of the church is that it is a hospital for sinners. This means everyone in the hospital is a patient. There are no humans on the medical staff! The pastors and other church leaders are simply patients who have been given additional responsibilities to help other patients. There’s only one doctor and that is the Godhead. Therefore, our healing is dependent solely on the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This means that our worth is determined by God.

The very fact that ‘God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them’ (NIV) speaks volumes of God’s ownership and how He values us. Male and female are both created in God’s image, none is of greater or lesser value to God. Therefore, our worth is not found in our looks, regardless of what society says! It is not dependent on whether we have a wife or a husband. Neither is our worth determined by the opinion of others who are simply fellow patients in God’s hospital, nor by the image they create of us. Our worth is not dependent on our social position, our wealth (or lack of it), nor by the job title we bear in or outside of the church, regardless of what it is. Our worth is found only in God.

God has the highest estimation of us. His love for us is the theme of the Bible. “For God so loved the world...” (John 3:16), “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us...” (1 John 3:1), and “But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8), are just a few of the many passages that speak of God’s love for us.

No one can change this fact by their words or by their deeds. The words of our fellow patients are powerless unless we choose to allow them to have power over us. Their words or descriptions of us do not determine who we are or our well-being. Remember, those who attempt to determine our worth are also in the hospital for the same reason we are—for healing!

Continuing with the analogy of a hospital, it is a sobering reminder that when some people enter a hospital, they get worse. They sometimes contract an infectious disease right there in the hospital. As patients, we need to ensure that we are not the source of a virus that could cause another patient to suffer or even lose his or her life.

It was Jesus Himself who said that we are to treat others in the way in which we too would like to be treated. He also warned that what we do to others, especially those who are vulnerable, we do to Him (Matthew 25:40).

Maybe it’s best to remember that we are all patients, dependent on the Doctor.

Halsey Peat
Dear Editor:

I very much appreciated your editorial, “Facing the Issue”, in the recent Ontario Highlights. You not only summarized several issues accurately and concisely, but you also provided an answer which I believe captures biblical truth and is not at all “simplistic”. Thank you for opening a discussion that needs to continue.

Betty Bayer
Associate Director, Office of Education
SDACC

Dear Editor:

I want to thank you again for writing about the issues facing God’s church as we live in the end of time (e.g. divorce and re-marriage, racial and ethnic barriers, etc.)

As we live in the end of time, the church will be faced with issues that at times will seem difficult to deal with, but not impossible, because God has promised to be with us to the end, but we have to seek Him first, not looking to the world for answers; God is bigger than all the problems the world has to offer.

The leaders of the church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, have a great responsibility to work in harmony to uphold the standard God has set for His church. We cannot take God’s word lightly because Christ paid an awful price for our sins. We cannot afford to see our church family drifting from the truth, and with God’s love in our hearts encourage them (not condemn them), to turn back to the Lord. It’s better to be hurt by the truth, than to be happy and be lost.

Thank you for listening, Pastor Peat. Your articles are always so uplifting, and one cannot help but respond.

God bless you.

June Felix

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The Ontario Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is pleased to announce the launch of the AdventistOntario mobile app for Android, Windows phone, and iPhone. The app allows easy access to news and events. A directory of schools, churches, and listings of pastors and teachers are also at your fingertips.

**Notable features include:**
- Conference news/events
- Church information (address, phone, directions)
- School information (address, phone, directions)
- Pastors directory
- Teachers directory
- Search feature
- Maps
- View local church events

**Ontario Conference Launches App!**

“We are really pleased to launch this new app,” said Raveen Pal, Information Technology director. “It has been quite a while coming, but delaying its launch has made it possible for church events to be viewed on the app.”

Churches are able to have their events viewed on the conference app when their communication secretaries log in to the Ontario Conference website (www.adventistontario.org) and submit information describing their church events. Users can then view a listing of all church events across Ontario. This feature is available immediately.

This app is free of charge and is available through each platform’s respective app store.

The Ontario Conference app is brought to you by the Information Technology department.
One hundred and fifty years! I must admit that, like many, I was caught off guard by the 150th anniversary of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But when I realized that our church has reached 150 years, I took some time to reflect on where we are, especially here in Ontario.

At the fifty-ninth General Conference session, held in Atlanta in 2010, there were 2,410 delegates, representing every region in the world. On Thursday, May 21, one hundred and fifty years ago, there were only 20 delegates, mostly from Michigan, who voted the birth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

That first ‘GC session’ was an amazing feat in itself. Only 19 years earlier, some of the leaders, many of them under age 35, had been totally dejected. Along with hundreds of thousands of other believers, they had looked forward to the second coming of Jesus on October 22, 1844, only to be bitterly disappointed when the day passed and Jesus had not returned. The disappointment was severe and a bitter pill to swallow, especially when suffering ridicule from their neighbours.

Yet, by 1863, a small and resilient remnant from that group met and brought into being what has become a strong and dynamic international church. They suffered scorn, ridicule, financial deprivation and personal disappointment in their quest to be faithful to God. They eventually founded a church that would take the gospel to the whole world.

What continues to amaze me is the fact that the founders of our church were mostly young adults. Most of us lose sight of this because the photographs we have of them are those that show them in later life, after they had aged.

They were audacious! They were men and women of courageous faith. They did not allow anything to prevent them from fulfilling their mission. Today, our membership is just over 17 million members, ministering in 209 countries and communicating in approximately
1,000 languages and dialects. God has led His church from disappointment to a courageous and blessed hope. It is fascinating how young people have factored in the history of our church and how they are still audacious and courageous. Right here in Ontario, young adults are making their contribution. Just seven years ago, a few young women started an initiative, which brought young women in their local church together to discuss relevant issues and experience the benefits of positive peer support. It struck a chord with young women because it soon spread to other congregations. This ministry, now termed ‘Young Women’s Ministry” is an official ministry within the Women’s Ministries department of the Ontario Conference and has influenced its replication by the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Thanks to Naudia Larrow, Marlise Rowley and others for spear-heading this initiative.

Not to be outdone, a number of young men launched their version of this innovative ministry. I clearly remember sitting with these young men as they shared in a safe, trusting environment and prayed with and for each other. They were soon attracting young men from outside the church. Thanks to Shevone Griffiths and others, who led this very relevant ministry.

In many of our churches in Ontario, there are young adults who still have the flame of the gospel that burned within the hearts of our founders. They are working without recognition and do not seek reward. Many have joined hands with older members and seniors to reach out to their communities. They are eager to prepare others for the soon coming of Jesus.

Even as we look forward to the soon coming of Jesus Christ and recognise that the signs of his coming are rapidly fulfilling, we must be aware that the devil knows his time is short. We have a lot to accomplish. On my heart are some concerns, but I will share just three:

1. At the birth of our church on May 21, 1863, the 20 delegates were all men--18 pastors and 2 laymen. Today men are becoming a scarce breed in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In North America, 80% of the membership is female, with the balance divided between children and men. In Europe, men make up a miserly 5%. This is such a real concern. While we preach about the soon coming of Jesus, we must develop initiatives to reach men for Christ. We solicit your prayers as we shape the strategy.

Passionate worship of the Creator God must be the hallmark of a happy and grateful church. Yet, we cannot simply copy the worship styles of others. We must purposely influence our worship by our theology. Our doctrines must drive our faith. Our belief in the heavenly ministry of Christ must be foremost in our minds as we preach, as we sing and as we pray.

3. On the 150th anniversary of our church, we run the risk of having an identity in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, being socialized into the church without having the corresponding commitment. It can be easy to comfortably sit in the pews each Sabbath and sing that Jesus is coming soon without it impacting how we live. Let us, therefore, reflect on that fact that God called this church into being with a unique mission. It is a mission that is not yet complete, but He is calling every Seventh-day Adventist in Ontario to fully participate in reaching the people of this great province with the gospel.

Praise God for our REACH strategy, beginning with revival and transformation. Only then can we recapture the Spirit, focus, and durable faith of the pioneers. With this faith, we will “have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history“. E. G. White, Life Sketches, p 196.

Musicians Needed for 2015 GC Session

The North American Division Music Committee for the 2015 General Conference Session (July 2-11 in San Antonio, Tex.) is now accepting applications from musicians/groups desiring to perform at the 2015 General Conference Session. Applications can be downloaded at the 2015 General Conference website at www.gcsession.org, Click the “Music Application Packet” tab and follow all directions. Applications will be processed through December 31, 2013.
On May 21, 2013, the Seventh-day Adventist Church reached the mature age of 150 years old. However, the world church leadership did not plan any celebrations. Instead, leaders from around the world commemorated the founding of the church with various activities on April 12 during the spring biannual business session of the church’s executive committee. It was followed, on May 21, with a brief afternoon service at the church’s headquarters in Maryland.

“This is a very sad anniversary,” Pastor Ted Wilson, General Conference president, told delegates at the April 12 meetings. “We should have been home by now! The Lord has wanted to come long before this. Why celebrate any more anniversaries when we could be in heaven?”

Among the activities was a historical presentation given by Adventist historian, Jim Nix, who took them through the events surrounding the organisation of the church.

He reminded them that as the Advent Movement began to take form after the debacle of the Great Disappointment of 1844, there was no intention to begin a new denomination. They were struggling just to understand what had gone wrong when Jesus had not returned in 1844.

The founders of what would later become the Seventh-day Adventist Church comprised the smallest of the groups that fragmented from the Millerites. Led by Joseph Bates, Hiram Edson, O. R. Crosier and others, they concluded that the sanctuary of Daniel 8:14, that was to be ‘cleansed’, was not the earth, as the Millerites had erroneously believed, but it was the heavenly sanctuary. They had been wrong in their belief that Jesus was to have returned to earth on October 22, 1844. They understood that Jesus had moved into the second phase of His heavenly ministry.

Coming from many different Christian backgrounds, the people in this group of believers often held divergent doctrinal views. However, they studied the Bible together, arguing, praying, studying again until they began to formulate a set of beliefs, including the Sabbath. There was even hostility from some regarding the evidence of the prophetic gift being manifested in Ellen White.

The small group of believers had no plan to start a new church. They dedicated all their time and effort to preaching about the nearness of Jesus’ return. However, as people began to accept the message they preached and numbers grew, organisation became necessary. Up until that time, they had been distrustful of organisation, but it was forced upon them through the success of their evangelism. They organised on May 21, 1863 and identified themselves by two prominent beliefs—the Sabbath and the Second Coming of Jesus—calling themselves ‘Seventh-day Adventists’.

The following decades saw rapid growth, foreign missions, building of health and educational institutions, continued doctrinal struggles and becoming an international church. Each decade brought new challenges and opportunities, but belief in the imminent return of Jesus remained a common thread. It is this thread that has taken the church into the most recent century and allowed the present leaders to commemorate its 150th anniversary.

Pastor Mark Johnson, president of the SDACC, was present at the April 12 commemoration service and was deeply moved by the experience.

“I was impressed with the deep spirituality that characterized our early leaders,” he said. “That was coupled with a commitment of time and money necessary to share faith, to provide training and to build structures that we still use today.”

Johnson was also cognizant of some of the issues that faced the founders of the church.

“We need to recognize that those early leaders had to wrestle with some pretty big issues in organization and theology,” he said. “Then, as now, personalities sometimes got in the way, but I believe that God led them to pray...”
through the difficulty and on to the solution.”

He also highlighted the fact that the early leaders were not extraordinary at all and that most were young people.

“I’m encouraged as I reflect on how God uses ordinary people with extraordinary commitment for His purpose. Many people in God’s church today have that same level of commitment. Our youth and young adults are a tremendous treasure. It was the energy and clarity of youth that founded this church. I believe that God will use that same youthful energy and commitment in this present generation of young Adventists for His purpose and that someday soon we will see Jesus.”

In a May 23, 2013 letter to the Ontario Conference, world church president, Ted Wilson, considered where the history has now placed the church and what lies before it, especially in light of the challenges facing it. He said,

“By God’s grace, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists will continue to stand firm for God’s truth as is found in His word. God will never leave us and will guide His people regardless of the difficulties that we might face ahead. That is the kind of God we serve. His promise in Matthew 28:20, ‘surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age,’ is sure and we can depend on Him.”

Speaking of the inheritance that Adventists have received, he said,

“What a privilege to serve the Lord at this time in earth’s history as part of the mighty Advent Movement. Certainly the unfolding of the Great Controversy theme is coming to a climax. Jesus’ return is imminent…Let us proclaim the themes of Advent with purpose.  Many people in God’s church today have that same level of commitment.  Our youth and young adults are a tremendous treasure.  It was the energy and clarity of youth that founded this church.  I believe that God will use that same youthful energy and commitment in this present generation of young Adventists for His purpose and that someday soon we will see Jesus.”

Both sets of parents were dedicated to Christian service. They were not perfect, but they tried their best to help others, especially young people in the areas that they served, to maintain a connection with God and with the Adventist Church.

“It is for this reason that the Sanz Family Endowment Fund has been set up, especially for young people growing up in small, isolated Adventist churches,” said the Sanzs. “By attending Camp Frenda, these young people will have the opportunity to establish positive friendships and realize that they belong to a worldwide church family. Hopefully, they will consider Christian education and will make the decision to maintain their relationship with God and with the church.”

Pastor Glenn DeSilva, camp director, happily received the news.

“ I am humbled and ecstatic to receive the gift on behalf of Camp Frenda. Four years ago we had a vision to generate two hundred thousand dollars toward an endowment fund for worthy campers. God honours vision, not only did we meet this final goal, but this wonderful gift will help us supersede it. Countless boys and girls will have the opportunity to enjoy the summer camp program at Camp for years to come because of the generosity of this gift.”

If you would like to include the Ontario Conference in your estate planning, please contact the Planned Giving and Trust Services department at 905-571-1022, ext. 206.
Questions usually cause us to think. Questions are good. I have some questions. Sometimes people who ask too many questions get into trouble; not because the questions are not good but because some other people do not like the questions. Often, however, the one who asks hard questions, even embarrassing questions, comes to know the truth.

I am a Christian and a Seventh-day Adventist by personal choice, but my family learned about Adventism because of a tough question asked at a time and place.

Years ago my father was the Sunday School teacher in the Viceroy Baptist Church in Saskatchewan. The prescribed lesson study for a particular Sunday was on The Ten Commandments. As he was leading the discussion from the pulpit, he was prompted (likely by the Holy Spirit) to express a question. He asked, “With what we are studying here, shouldn’t we be keeping the Sabbath?”

The question ignited an anxious response from the pastor who was sitting on the rostrum behind my father. Quickly rising from his chair, he tapped my father on the shoulder and shook his pointer-finger at him and said, “You cannot ask that question!” However, the warning could not stop my father from thinking.

In those days farmers rode on ploughs and cultivators behind draft horses, and they had plenty of time to think and pray. A few weeks later, my father came in from the field, walked into the house and said to my mother, “We need to start keeping the Sabbath”.

The primary components that make up the genius of asking questions are all in the story: (1) Someone is thinking; (2) He asks a question; (3) Someone is afraid of the question and objects to it; (4) The objection actually supports the validity of the question; (5) Truth is uncovered.

I have a good friend whom I baptised several years ago and who still has some questions. It is an important thing that people who are baptised and join the church should still ask questions. A baptised person who has no more questions is sure to become a cultural Adventist; I mean an Adventist who primarily follows the routine because it is the thing to do, rather than to primarily and experientially walk with Jesus. Whenever I visited him there were always questions. Sometimes he asked me questions; other times I asked him questions.

At one time he told me about a conversation he had with a group of Adventist young people on the campus of the Adventist university from which his son graduated. At an impromptu gathering, the youths seemed to let their guard down and they expressed some tough questions about their relationship with the church. They all claimed to be Adventist Christians. They all affirmed their belief that the church has its doctrines correct, but that some aspects of church communication need changing. And, they dared to reveal the questions with which they are wrestling.

I asked my friend to tell me the issues that preoccupied their discussion. What I heard was poignant, and now I urge us in the church to seriously consider the questions and to do a better job of answering them. Let us consider this group as a “focus group” from which the questions and concerns may be applied more generally in the church. Or, are we not able to handle the questions, and like the Baptist pastor, are we prone to say, “You cannot ask that question!”?

It is not safe to simply dispose of the prevailing questions of the youth of the church. We cannot dismiss the questions.
their church, but the consensus of the
difficult questions. They want to trust
a better view of the answers we give to
do better at helping our youth to have
us select one to show how we might
grape juice?
that the “good wine” was unfermented
turned water into wine, why is it taught
substances such as alcohol. Since Jesus
there was the question about the use of
the Bible teaches that believers in
God did drink fermented wine is based
on authentic and historical fact. To deny
it is to be disingenuous, and youth are
particularly sensitive when we “don’t
shoot straight.” Nevertheless, we can still
speak of how it “was not part of God’s
original plan” and that is why we as a
church take a firm stand on abstinence
from the use of alcohol, drugs and other
substances.

Does this answer the question?

D. Douglas Devnich, Ed.D.

Douglas Devnich is a former president of the
Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada
who, along with other assignments, served
the church for a total of 40 years.

A reasonable answer to the alcohol
question is given in the book, Seventh-
day Adventists Believe, page 315:
“Scriptural stories involving the use of
alcoholic beverages may give the
impression that God approved of their
use. However, Scripture also indicates
that God’s people participated in such
social practices as divorce, polygamy,
and slavery—practices that God certainly
did not condone. In interpreting such
Scriptural passages, it is helpful to keep
in mind that God does not necessarily
endorse all that He permits.” (This
approach can be applied also to the
military practises of Israel. Underlined
words are mine to provoke more
questions.)
Churches are excited about the REACH strategy! Yet some have been asking, “How will we know when we are being successful? How will we evaluate what we have been doing?”

It is clear that REACH needs an evaluation tool. While there are numerous assessment tools that may be used, the Ontario Conference has invested in one that aligns almost seamlessly with REACH. It is NCD or Natural Church Development.

As explained by Alex Golovenko in Ontario Highlights, Spring 2011, NCD is an assessment tool that evaluates the health of a church. Christian researcher, Christian Schwarz, upon observing that churches grow when they are healthy, discovered that the characteristics that make churches healthy, regardless of size, ethnicity or geography, are common biblical principles. Schwarz’s research came to be called Natural Church Development.

NCD, in the form of a survey, evaluates eight key church health indicators, such as: leadership, ministry, spirituality, structures, worship, small groups, evangelism, and relationships. However, it is not just the nouns that are important, but the adjectives that describe their quality. In healthy churches, leadership is empowering; ministry is aligned with spiritual gifts; structures are effective; spirituality is passionate; worship is God-centered and inspiring; church members are engaged in smaller holistic groups; evangelism relates to the needs of those beyond the church; and relationships within the church have a loving quality.

These are the biblical qualitative purposes for the church that mark how healthy it is. When God’s church is marked by these healthy characteristics, then it will be a church where there is Revival and transformation, Education for discipleship, Alignment within the organization, Community outreach and evangelism, and Healthy leadership and management—the primary areas of the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ontario. A church achieving these principles will always be vibrant and growing. This glorifies God, which is the first and highest purpose of the church.

So, where to start? And what is the process?
1. It begins with the local church board voting to engage in the REACH strategic planning process as outlined in the REACH planning guide (www.adventistontario.org)
2. The next step is for the board to also vote to establish a REACH (strategic planning) committee consisting of 3-7 persons (depending on church size).
3. The REACH committee will serve the church board in doing the hard work of assessment and planning.
4. The first step of health assessment is to engage the church in the NCD church survey through www.ncdcanada.com, for which the Ontario Conference will reimburse 50% of the cost. The process for the assessment is:
   a. The pastor requests a conference-designated and trained NCD coach to assist with NCD.
   b. The church board selects 30 members, who are active in the church and represent a cross-section of the membership, to take the NCD survey.
   c. The REACH committee administers the NCD survey to the 30 selected members.
   d. The survey data is entered on the NCD Canada website.
   e. The results of the NCD survey are shared with the REACH committee. It seeks to understand the data’s impact on the church’s health.
5. The data from the survey become a baseline from which the REACH committee will work to set audacious goals (AGs) for the church. For each goal, it will identify possible strategies or plans to be shared with the church board that will strengthen the lowest quality characteristics and enhance the strongest qualities detected in the survey.
6. The REACH committee establishes a timeline for implementation and continues evaluation and reports to church board for discussion and eventual approval.

An example may be that the church's NCD score is low in the area of loving relationships, which is frequently one of the low scores among Seventh-day Adventist churches. The REACH committee, praying for the Lord's guidance, would discuss what some of the reasons may be for this in their local church context. For example, there might be people from many different ethnic or cultural, as well as multi-generational, backgrounds. And while the diversity is viewed as a great blessing, some members have difficulty understanding one another which results in low levels of trust among members. Further, there may be leanings toward a legalistic paradigm, where members have high expectations that few seem to meet, resulting in a judgemental and critical environment. This again diminishes trust and undermines loving relationships.

An example (do not allow this example and subsequent strategies to restrict your creativity) of an audacious REACH goal may be “to increase loving relationships among members in the church by fifty percent over the next year.”

Three possible strategic plans that the REACH committee may initiate:

a. To highlight the church's different ethnicities and cultures monthly or bi-monthly, including ethnic themed dress; Sabbath School programs, worship services, potlucks, socials, etc.

b. To focus on teaching justification and righteousness by faith through a sermon series, a special Sabbath School study, weekend of emphasis with guest speakers, etc.

c. To engage as many members as possible in weekly '40 Days of Prayer' home groups. People that pray together stay together!

7. Major directional strategic plans are recommended by the church board to the whole membership in a church business meeting for adoption.

8. The strategic plan is implemented.

9. The NCD survey is taken annually to measure the church's health and the information—application—transformation cycle continues as the church strives for optimum health to reach its God-given potential and glorify Him.

Strategic planning takes time, and some churches tend to get stuck. They gather the NCD data and, instead of taking time to reflect on what it means, they jump to action. They do what they always do—put on an event or program without thinking of how it relates to the need of the church or its community. Sometimes churches make plans but fail to put them into action. There is also the problem of a church having taken the survey once failing to take another survey to evaluate whether their plans produced the desired results. Strategic planning is a cycle.

Many churches have developed the habit of doing the same programs for ten, twenty or fifty years wondering or even failing to consider why they are not getting better results. While it may appear that a church is doing a lot of good things, the kind of transformational change God desires may not be happening. In fact, the church may even be dying. It is so busy that it does not even realise that it is dying.

When I was a young pastor, more than twenty years ago, the most tragic experience of my ministry to date was when a seemingly healthy thirty-nine year old male church member, who ran every day, suddenly collapsed dead of a massive cardiac arrest. It was a devastating shock to his wife and three young children and to the church. But, what nobody suspected, due to his external activity and appearance, was that internally his heart was a ticking time bomb.

The strategic planning cycle helps to constantly evaluate and adjust the church’s planning and programming, to ensure that the myriad activities don’t cause us to miss a heart problem. It encourages the doers to slow down and think. It encourages the thinkers to speed up and do. It provides a quantified evaluation at the end to launch the next strategic planning cycle. When a church has undergone the entire planning cycle several times, and responsible plans have been prayerfully made and carried out, there is the possibility for deep transformational change. It underscores that we can plan for what we understand; we can gauge whether our efforts have borne fruit, and continue the journey of God’s transformation of the church.

If a church has already begun implementing the REACH strategy and it has not done an NCD survey, it should not stop its work but should seek to take the survey when possible. Churches that have done the NCD survey but are not using REACH should seize the opportunity and begin strategic planning using REACH.
Lonely Single, Lonely Married?

A nita is sitting in a church filled with other members, yet she feels quite alone. This has been her church home since birth, but after the death of her only parent and her return from college, she feels very lonely. She, who has been the reliable bridesmaid of friends who have moved away with love-struck husbands to coo over their young broods, feels the loneliness.

Cassia is married. She never left for college but has worked since graduating from high school and marrying her childhood sweetheart, Ryan. They are having difficulty communicating ever since an awful misunderstanding involving his mother, and now she feels isolated.

Loneliness is and can be very real, but many experts say it can also be the perception of being alone and not necessarily the reality. This feeling of being apart from others, isolated, is real to the individual, such as in the case of Anita, who has feelings of loneliness in spite of being surrounded by a church filled with over one hundred persons, or in Cassia’s case, lonely even with having a husband. Loneliness can therefore be considered as the actual state of one’s mind, instead of what it is commonly defined as: “a state of solitude or being alone”.

Authors Les Carter, Ph.D., and Frank Minirth, MD, in the book, The Anger Workbook, state, “To be lonely, you don’t have to sit in a dark room staring into empty space. Solitude and loneliness are entirely different subjects. When a lack of cohesion occurs in a relationship, or when serious misunderstandings hamper communication, loneliness begins”.¹

Loneliness is experienced by both single and married individuals alike. Loneliness causes both to feel empty, alone and unwanted. There are many contributing factors and situations that can lead to isolation and loneliness. Here are some:

1. Death – the death of someone significant in a person’s life (a mother, father, child, or spouse) can also lead to feelings of loneliness.
2. Divorce – the severing of emotional ties and dependency from a lover, supporter and friend.
3. Physical isolation - moving to a new location because of a job or school or life opportunity.
4. Physical disorder symptom - as depression and/or hormonal related issues.
5. Low self-esteem – feeling of inadequacy attributed to past experiences and/or internal mental factors.

If you have experienced one of the five factors listed, then you may presently be experiencing loneliness. If you have not, you may be struggling with feelings of seeming discouragement. To determine if you are presently struggling with loneliness, circle the numbers that apply to you in the list below.

a. At times, I feel I do not really fit in with the group I am in.
b. I sometimes complain that the people in my most important relationships don’t really understand me.
c. I find myself yearning to be with someone other than the person I am with.

1. Loneliness is experienced by both single and married individuals alike. Loneliness causes both to feel empty, alone and unwanted. There are many contributing factors and situations that can lead to isolation and loneliness. Here are some:

a. Death – the death of someone significant in a person’s life (a mother, father, child, or spouse) can also lead to feelings of loneliness.
b. Divorce – the severing of emotional ties and dependency from a lover, supporter and friend.
3. Physical isolation - moving to a new location because of a job or school or life opportunity.
4. Physical disorder symptom - as depression and/or hormonal related issues.
5. Low self-esteem – feeling of inadequacy attributed to past experiences and/or internal mental factors.

If you have experienced one of the five factors listed, then you may presently be experiencing loneliness. If you have not, you may be struggling with feelings of seeming discouragement. To determine if you are presently struggling with loneliness, circle the numbers that apply to you in the list below.

a. At times, I feel I do not really fit in with the group I am in.
b. I sometimes complain that the people in my most important relationships don’t really understand me.
c. I find myself yearning to be with someone other than the person I am with.
Acceptance from others does not come as frequently as I would like. Something seems to be missing in my relationships. Many of my conversations lack subjective elements, such as discussion of emotions. I become frustrated because I seem to work harder at keeping relationships going than my friends or relatives do. People who know me in public don't really see how I struggle privately with my hurts. The persons I want to be closest to do not share my relational goals. Sometimes I withdraw from people because then I don't feel as much pain.

If you have circled five or more statements, you probably have significant problems with loneliness and at times will find yourself disgusted, resentful, or disillusioned but may be telling yourself that you are only discouraged. However, it is more accurate to say that you are feeling lonely. This is the first major step identifying loneliness accurately and acknowledging it exists.

Once you have identified that you are lonely, you must seek to connect with others. Here are some ways that you can dispel loneliness by forming connections intentionally:

Spend time with God – Studying the word of God and spending time with Him in prayer brings comfort to a lonely heart. Talking to Him and staying in constant communion with Him will help tremendously.

Spend time with someone you know (church person, colleague, friend) – If it is companionship you crave, simply ask some friends and/or family to spend time with you. In the course of our busy lives, everybody assumes that everybody else is too busy to congregate and hang out. Sometimes you just have to bravely take the initiative by simply asking; it is the easiest thing that you can do to facilitate a mutually beneficial social exchange.

Join a group or a club (Bible study group, assist with Pathfinders) – Visit and get out more (plan visits to family, friend, a person in hospital or a widow) Whether you and your friends from work form a weekly book or a movie club, or you seek out people with similar interests, joining groups is still one of the best ways to meet new people and get over loneliness.

Find people that have the same interests as yours in your church, communities, workplace or schools. We all have a natural fear of loneliness. It is important to socialize and mingle with other people because we are communal by nature.

Going for a walk or talking with a new neighbour over a cup of tea can alleviate loneliness when you are feeling bad or a little sad.

Take a hobby course – meeting with others and learning and sharing will give new friendship possibilities.

Remember, in order to overcome loneliness, it is important to remain vigilant and make the necessary effort to maintain, sustain, and grow essential human connection. So try not to constantly subject yourself to a lonely environment. Even if there is no one to go with, visit a museum, shopping mall, or a big bookstore like Chapters: sometimes being around people is enough to combat your loneliness. Most of all, remember that God is always with you.

Reference:

Joan Rogers,
Family Ministries Director
Summer is almost here with its long, hot days that could make you very thirsty. When this happens, instead of grabbing a sweetened, fizzy drink to get rid of your thirst, reach for a glass or bottle of water. This will help you stay healthy.

Here are some of the ways water can help you:

- It helps break down the food you eat and take it to all parts of the body to keep you healthy.
- It helps your kidneys get rid of the liquid and other wastes that your body does not need.
- It helps keep your body cool.
- It is in the blood that travels throughout your body to carry oxygen and food.
- It keeps the air in your lungs slightly wet so that you lungs can do their work well.
- It helps keep the joints in your body moving.

Of course there are other things that you can drink, other than water, like milk and juice, but there is nothing like drinking cool, clear water when you are hot and thirsty.

You can live without sodas and power drinks but you cannot live without water for very long. Nothing in your body works very well when you do not drink enough water. When you do not drink enough water, you may have a headache, your tummy might hurt, or you may not go to the bathroom often enough. Your mouth and your skin may feel very dry and you may even get a temperature. You may also feel hungry or tired and grumpy.

Remember this: Have a glass or two of water first thing in the morning, between 10:00 a.m. and lunch time, later in the afternoon and about one hour before supper.

If you are doing a lot of running and playing, you may need more water. Drinking water helps every part of your body to work well, and God wants you to stay well.

"Dear friend, I pray that you are doing well in every way. I pray that your body is strong and well even as your soul is" (3 John:2, NLV).

Maria McLean, Health Director

The City of Brampton’s Adventist Churches recently united for an initiative that has left its youth longing for more.

For the week of March 9-16, youth from Brampton, Northwest Brampton, Ruth, Heart Lake, and Bramalea Filipino Churches came together for worship, prayer, Bible study and fellowship. It was also a time of outreach to the many youths in the city.

It was an unprecedented event in its collaboration among the five churches. Led by Pastors Travis Afflick, John Scott and Ardison Bernardo, along with youth leaders, its purpose was to help youth experience deeper spiritual connection with God.

The theme, “GET CONNECTED…STAY CONNECTED,” embodied the preceding thought and was highlighted in the sermons and church presentations throughout the week.

Nightly, there was a unique worship experience evidenced through musical, spoken and dramatic talents. Sermons by Pastors Travis Afflick, Jay Becbec, Steven Couto, John Scott and Paul Smith comforted, informed, encouraged, inspired, motivated and challenged those listening.

As the week drew to a close, there was a sense that it had been a remarkably uplifting and inspiring week of prayer. It also revealed that there is a real need for similar projects.

Organisers concluded that the event created the blueprint for future successful events and validated the youth as leaders of today. The collaborative ‘Youth Week of Prayer 2013’ broke ground for many more inspiring youth-led events in Brampton and the larger communities. With an emboldened sense of spiritual clarity, coupled with a willingness to serve, the youths of Brampton Adventist Churches are now positioned to evangelize their communities. Future plans are already being discussed, and pastors, youth leaders, youth, and their supporters are all ready to collaborate in living out God’s grace in the community.

Lurline A. West
“We’re Actually Doing Something!”
Disaster Preparedness Training

“I’m just a member of the church who was interested in coming to this training,” exclaimed Monique of Simcoe Adventist Church, “and I’m excited to pass on to my congregation that as a conference, we are actually doing something!”

Monique’s sentiment about the Disaster Preparedness Certification training held at Quality Hotel over the weekend of April 5-7, 2013 was shared by many of the 163 (including 47 pastors) attendees.

“It has been wonderful! I’ve learned how prepared we need to be, and we aren’t,” said Kathleen, community services leader at Ottawa Church.

“I’ve gained so much,” said Felicia from College Park Church. “Even outside of disaster preparedness, it’s given me really helpful knowledge to help me function better as a leader.”

Pastor Theodore Sargeant, Community Services director for the Ontario Conference, was clearly pleased with the responses.

“We are happy that this has been so beneficial to our leaders,” he said. “With so many disasters taking place in our world, it’s not a matter of if a disaster hits Ontario, but when! We want to have in all our churches a group of trained people who will know what to do in case of a disaster.

These people will become consultants to organisations and have a part in advising the conference Community Services in its response to a disaster.”

The event featured a number of notable speakers who led a two-track training in the first phase of the three-phase certification course. Joe Watts, Adventist Community Services director for the North American Division, and his wife, Sherry, who also serves as assistant director, led the four main sessions for the Disaster Preparedness training. Steve Willsey, Crisis Care coordinator for the East Adventist Community Services, led the training for the Disaster Response Chaplaincy Training track, attended primarily by pastors and chaplains.

ADRA’s James Astleford and the City of Brampton’s manager of emergency measures, Alain Normand, led in two informative plenary sessions. Normand, a member at Immanuel Adventist Church in North York, and Ontario ACS Disaster Response coordinator, shared his experience working for the City of Brampton and outlined the role that the Ontario Conference will play in disaster response.

“I do not want to do what others are trained to do and are already doing,” he said. “We want to be ready to supplement other emergency responders in Ontario and carve out a niche to manage in-kind donations.”

He explained that the Salvation Army deals with food, and the Red Cross raises funds.

“We want to build relationships with other agencies,” he said, “and position ourselves to manage and distribute donated goods (in-kind donations).”

During a disaster, people often donate goods and items of clothes that are sent to the disaster areas but cannot immediately be used in the initial stages of a disaster. These are often stored away from the area to keep them out of the way of emergency response. After the emergency is over, the teams have to dispose of these items in various ways. The ACS plans to manage this situation early on so that it does not become a second disaster. The process includes collection, triage, identification, packaging, temporary storage, transportation and distribution of all in-kind donations sent in the context of emergencies and disasters.

ACS also plans to provide Crisis Response Care for...
emotional support to people during an emergency. It is for this reason that forty seven pastors and chaplains undertook the first phase of their training. They will not be there to preach or teach doctrine but simply to offer emotional support and crisis response counselling.

ACS will also manage people who simply turn up to volunteer but who could be a liability to the emergency services or to themselves.

He outlined the sequence planned by the ACS:

1. Train at least one hundred volunteers in an internationally recognised certification programme.
2. Acquire a disaster response trailer.

Sargeant later confirmed that all steps are in process, commencing with the training held over the weekend. He took delivery of the trailer on April 26, 2013, and the draft proposal to the province has been completed. The 20’ by 8.5’, 7,258 kg trailer will be on standby and filled with emergency supplies in preparation for a disaster. In the event of a disaster, the trailer will be taken to the location and a small team of ACS emergency responders will assist other agencies responding to immediate needs while assessing the situation in preparation for ACS’s main role.

As ACS responders move into their main role as managers of in-kind donations, the trailer will be used to transport necessary materials.

“The trailer is a vital part of our ability to effectively fulfil our role,” said Sargeant. “It will always be stocked with current food and other supplies. It even has its own generator so we will not be hampered by a power outage. As soon as our application is approved, we will be ready to effectively respond to a disaster.”

The application, in the form of a proposal prepared by Alain Normand, introduces the ACS Disaster Response programme to Emergency Management Ontario (EMO). Its purpose is to enter a process that will lead to a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ontario ACS and the EMO.

When the weekend drew to a close, Sargeant expressed his gratitude to the presenters and acknowledged the important role each played in making the training successful. He also mentioned his appreciation to the president of the conference, Dr. Mansfield Edwards.

“Pastor Edwards not only played a crucial role in making this event possible,” he said, “but he and his wife, Sharon, came as participants, taking the training along with everyone else! With his support and encouragement, along with the full participation of everyone here, I see ACS fulfilling a vital role in Ontario whenever we are faced with a disaster.”

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**Invitation to Former Members of the CUC Olympix, CUC 14 and CUC Acronaires 40th Anniversary**

Former members of CUC Olympix, CUC14 and CUC Acronaires are invited to join the celebrations of the 40th anniversary during November 28-December 1, 2013.

We are planning several major events to commemorate the anniversary. The weekend will feature a Saturday night program entitled “The History and Legacy of the Acronaires”. It will feature the 2013-2014 Acroinaire team, performers from other teams with an Acroinaire connection, several world champion performers in acrobatics, trampoline, tumbling, cheering and also many glimpses into the history of the acrobatic (gymnastics teams of the past). The weekend will feature a vespers, Sabbath School, church program and a Sunday morning brunch, as well as lots of time for reminiscing and meeting old friends.

We would love to have as many former team members return as possible. Please help us get the word out to former Olympix/Acronaires. If you are planning to come to the anniversary, please email us your contact information.

For more information, visit the CUC website or Facebook: CUC Acronaires, or contact Ron Schafer or Lindsy Gulfan:

Ron Schafer: 403 391 6909
rschafer@cauc.ca

Lindsy Gulfan: 403 782 3381
lindsygulfan@cauc.ca

The CUC website and Facebook page are updated regularly.
The 325 women had already had an evening of praise, worship, learning and fellowshipping by the time I arrived at the Niagara Sheraton the next morning, Sabbath, April 6, 2013.

It was my first visit to a women’s convention and I did not know what to expect. I arrived after the women had already been for an early morning nature/prayer walk to the awe-inspiring Niagara Falls and breakfasted. Conscious of being a male at the Canada-wide women’s convention, I sneaked into the first breakout room I saw—Communication Skills, led by Janell Hurst, Women’s Ministry director of the Lake Union Conference. Parallel sessions were being held in French and in Spanish.

I was met by friendly, but quizzical, expressions of those near the back of the room who saw me. I held up my camera in explanation, and they relaxed, accepting my presence. Later a few women jokingly asked if I had missed the memo that it was a women’s convention.

The women represented nearly all the provinces in Canada, coming from as far west as British Columbia and from as far in the East as Newfoundland. There were even a few from the United States.

Moving between the various breakout sessions, I observed that the participants had one thing in common—they keenly involved themselves in the subject matter. It was as if they wanted to learn as much as they could. All the presenters were of high calibre, but some were clearly outstanding. Joan Rogers, Ontario Conference Women’s Ministry director and the liaison for Women’s Ministries in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada (SDACC), had certainly collected a pool of highly-skilled presenters.

The English track featured Carla Baker, North American Division’s Women’s Ministry director; Joan Rogers, Janell Hurst, and Naudia Larrow, a pioneer for Young Women’s Ministry in the North American Division.

French participants were led by Marjorice Arice, an educator from Quebec; Marie-Lourdes Franck, from Northeastern Conference in the Atlantic Union.

The Spanish track was led by the dynamic duo: Carmen Griffith, Women’s Ministry director for the Southwestern Union Conference and Josefina Sanchez, former director for Women’s Ministry in the North Central Venezuela Conference.

The workshops, designed to teach the first module of a four-module leadership certification programme, were so interesting that I had difficulty tearing myself away. What I heard was easily applicable to males.

Rogers later explained that while it was a women’s convention, the focus was not so much on being females but being women of God; it was about spirituality.

This being said, however, in the plenary sessions, the women were clearly challenged to be ‘women of worth,’ not as the world defines it, but as God intends.

“We live lives, hiding who we really are because of how we think others feel or think about us,” said keynote speaker, Pastor Rebecca.
By the close on Sunday afternoon, as participants bade farewell to old and new friends, they exchanged experiences:

Shireen from Bronte, Ontario, said, “This has really inspired me to reach within myself to begin with how to accept myself, knowing that Christ has made me unique and that He has a purpose for me”.

“I was recently baptized,” said Katherine from Pickering, Ontario, “and I wanted to learn about Women’s Ministries. I’ve really enjoyed meeting so many people, new sisters.”

Samantha from Toronto described it as a “Fantastic weekend!” and added, “I like how Women’s Ministry has been explained in terms of spirituality, growth of women and actually serving the community”.

Wendy Raquel de la Cruz summed up the general feeling of the women, “I gladly recommend that every woman experience a weekend like this!”

No doubt many of the participants are already planning to attend the North American Division’s Women’s Convention planned for September 25 – 28, 2014 in Orlando, Florida.

I wonder if they will let me attend.

Halsey Peat

You can evaluate Ontario Conference School of Evangelism’s first Bible Conference by attendance, interest or satisfaction. Or you might ponder the choice of topic or the effectiveness of the speaker. By any measure, the conference was a gain for most who attended and, I believe, a loss for most who didn’t. Dr. Mansfield Edwards, Ontario Conference president, was understandably high in his commendation of the four directors who organized the event.

On the evening of Friday, April 26, 2013, some 300 persons turned out at the opening session at Downsview Seventh-day Adventist Church. At the closing session on Sunday afternoon, when attendance would normally dwindle, over 200 were present.

There, from start, to finish was Lloyd Douglas, who came all the way from Nepean Church in Ottawa, and who just “could not stay away”. The writings of guest speaker Ranko Stefanovic had helped to open his appetite for an uplifts is not his own. It’s the connection between God and His people is close and personal. So kudos to the Ontario Conference for choosing Revelation with its challenging but enlightening themes to launch what will be an annual Bible Conference. I also appreciate the choice of Andrews New Testament professor, Dr. Stefanovic, as the speaker.

His commentary on Revelation has received high praise. Yet, when he proudly lifts up what he considers the best commentary on Revelation, the book he uplifts is not his own. It’s the Bible.

At the Bible conference, Vadalia from the Toronto Portuguese Church, said of Dr. Stefanovic’s presentation: “It will stay with me forever so that I can share it with others…. We were so blessed!”

Beverly Williams from Philadelphia Church in Scarborough said: “I have been through the book of Revelation before and I thought that I understood it, but coming here this weekend—oh, my goodness! My eyes have been opened to all that Dr. Stefanovic has to offer”.

Elkie from Lincoln Pioneer says, “It’s been a real eyes-opener for me, especially in regard to the issue of the 144,000”. Not surprisingly, though, what I and many other participants took away from the conference was not any great new understanding of...
what Ranko Stefanovic says about the Revelation. What we left with was an enhanced appreciation of what the book of Revelation says about the book of Revelation.

Gregory Deane from Agape Temple says:
“My eyes were opened to the methods of interpreting Revelation, and I have learned the concepts. Now I can go back and study the book and also help my church to understand these methods”.

Craig from Lincoln Pioneer added, “I have sort of studied Revelation on my own, but more light has been shone on my understanding. It has given me the tools to go back and study”.

For me, also, the abiding value of the conference was the new tools I was given to unlock the riches of the book of Revelation. In case you missed the conference, here are some of those tools.

First, the Bible, including the book of Revelation, is Revelation’s best and most reliable commentary. Much of Revelation is explained by Old Testament writings, which, according to some scholars, are alluded to, although not quoted directly, in 278 of the book’s 404 verses. Much is also explained by other New Testament writings.

Secondly, most of Revelation is based on symbols. A passage is to be understood as symbolic unless the context makes it clear that it is literal.

Thirdly, look out for texts that appear to be saying different things when, in fact, they are saying the same thing. For example, in about half a dozen places, John “hears” one thing then “sees” what appears—but only appears—to be something different. In chapter 5, John hears about the Lion from the tribe of Judah, but sees the Lamb that was slain. Both the Lion and the Lamb, Dr. Stefanovic argues convincingly, refer to Jesus.

Fourthly, a clear, Bible-based understanding of the symbols is crucial to an understanding of the text. For example, Dr. Stefanovic established that whenever a woman is used as a symbol in the Bible, it refers to God’s people. A chaste woman refers to God’s faithful people; a prostitute refers to His apostate people.

Dr. Stefanovic provided a number of other Bible-based tools that space does not allow us to reproduce. One that he emphasizes is the need to remember that the book was written not to feed speculation based on the latest world event, but to remind us that whenever God’s people were confronted by an oppressive power, He was always there to comfort and to liberate. Similarly, in the last days, the patience of the saints will be rewarded with the ability to say that “we have waited for Him, and He will save us”.

Frank A. Campbell, Freelance Journalist, Attends Agape Temple Church
Ontario Conference School of Evangelism (OCSE) students are busy submitting assignments and hoping to join their classmates in one of three graduation services to be held in June and July.

The first of the three graduation services will be held on Sabbath afternoon, June 8, at Southern Ontario’s regional camp meeting in Simcoe. Two weeks later, June 19-20, the GTA school will feature an evangelistic weekend with the graduation in the afternoon of the 20th at Kingsview Village Church. A similar weekend will be held in Ottawa from July 12 to 13, at Ottawa West Church.

“The weekends will be a time to celebrate God’s goodness,” says Pastor Theodore Sargeant, one of the organisers. “We will hear of how God has been using graduates from the school of evangelism to lead people to Him. You can be sure that we will hear some extraordinary accounts that will motivate others to get involved in witnessing for Jesus.”

Even as OCSE organisers prepare to hold the second graduation since the inception of the school, the third batch of students has already started classes. On Sunday, May 21, 2013, over 100 new students nervously filed into seats at Filipino Canadian and Heritage Green Churches. It was the first day of the gruelling 15-month course.

In the new class for the Greater Toronto Area, held this year at Filipino Canadian Church, their instructor, Pastor Damson Oppong, introduced them to Biblical Hermeneutics. It was the first time most of them had even heard the term, yet they were expected to both understand and practice it. Even before Oppong defined the word for them, he explained its importance to their toolbox of skills. “You need Hermeneutics to help you unlock the meaning of the biblical text,” he told them.

They soon learned that Biblical Hermeneutics is the art or science of interpreting the Bible. Before the day was over, they were in small groups practising the principles with an obscure passage in the book of Proverbs.

At the Southern Ontario class at Heritage Green Church, near Hamilton, Pastor Darryl Blahovich was telling his students, “If you plan to lead people to Jesus and see them baptised as Seventh-day Adventists, you need to know the history of your church.”

He then led the class through the history of the Adventist Church, identifying some of the events that gave the church its unique identity. It was a surprise for some to learn how the church struggled in its infancy to arrive at a consensus regarding its doctrines.

Three weeks later, on May 26, nearly 40 students dispersed among seven churches in Northern Ontario—from Timmins to North Shore—also had their first class.

The ‘northern school’, as it has been termed, operates differently from its counterparts in the south. Since school spans such a vast distance, it is almost impossible for students to travel to one location. Instead, they go to their local church and participate via the Internet. The class is held live at the church of the pastor teaching the course. In this way, a live class will eventually be held in each of the participating churches.

Pastors and members alike in the north have thoroughly embraced the school of evangelism as they sense its powerful evangelistic potential for the growth of the church.

Elsewhere, in other regions of the province where churches are isolated, members are hoping that the OCSE will reach them in the near future. School organisers have taken note and are trying to identify the best approach to take.

“We want to make the OCSE accessible to everyone in our conference,” says Pastor Eustace Williams, another organiser, “but it is a challenge because we are such a huge province. However, we are confident in God’s leadership to direct us. My fellow organisers and I are fully committed to the growth of the school.”

Enquiries about registering for the school of evangelism may be sent to rdunn@adventistontario.org.
In less than three weeks (maybe days for some who receive Highlights later), on Sabbath June 29, close to 10,000 people, including children, will be heading to the International Centre in Mississauga for Camp Meeting 2013.

The annual day of fellowship brings together Seventh-day Adventists and their friends from all the corners of Ontario with one purpose—to worship God in one accord.

**Early Camp Meeting for Young Adults**

While thousands of members will set out early on Sabbath morning to secure the best seats, hundreds of young adults will already have experienced an evening of powerful praise and wonderful worship.

For a number of years, young adults have not been content with just one day. They began camp meeting a day earlier for soul-stirring worship and spiritual renewal on the Friday night at Toronto West Seventh-day Adventist Church. 2013 is no exception. It is anticipated that young adults will fill the church sanctuary for an evening when they will experience God in worship. One of the features of the evening will be a communion service to celebrate their union with God.

Dr. James Doggette, speaker for the young adults, will preach the first sermon at the 7:00 p.m. service on Friday.

**Looking Upward, Going Beyond**

As part of the REACH strategy, Camp Meeting 2013 will again direct worshippers’ attention to revival and spiritual renewal. Commencing with the early morning (8:00 a.m.) prayer, praise and anointing service, and up until the end of the midday service, the theme will be ‘looking upward’—Worshippers will be encouraged to look to God for their salvation, as their sustainer and their hope.

Commencing with the afternoon services and until the closing prayer just after sunset, worshippers will be challenged to ‘go beyond’—their comfort levels, the walls of their churches and into their communities to reach people with the gospel. ‘Going beyond’ will also be a time of commitment, an acceptance of the challenge to live as disciples of Jesus and to disciple others.

**Guest Speakers**

Three speakers have been invited to Camp Meeting 2013. Dr. Alvin Kibble will feature in hall 5 in the worship for adults. Dr. James Doggette Sr. will lead worship for the young adults in hall 3 (formerly hall 4) while Pastor Bob Winsor will engage the teens and young in worship in hall 4 (formerly hall 4A).

Kibble, a vice president of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, made many friends when he was the keynote speaker at last year’s Festival of the Laity in Richmond Hill, Ontario. No doubt they will want to secure the best seats at camp meeting.

Doggette recently transferred from a 20-year pastorate of the dynamic Madison Mission in Huntsville, Alabama, to Bellfort Church in Houston, Texas. Doggette is well known, especially among young adults, as a very powerful and skilled preacher. The services in hall 3 will be well attended and fulfilling.

Bob Winsor’s first appearance as a guest speaker in Ontario took place last year at Kingsway College’s...
graduation service. There he accomplished what only a handful of pastors are able to do effectively—fully engage teens.

“Winsor really knows how to connect with teens,” said one observer at the graduation service. “He spoke directly to them. They were on the edge of their seats!”

Since Winsor was invited to be the speaker for the teens in hall 4, he has been called to serve in Ontario. He presently pastors Niagara Falls and St. Catharines Adventist Churches.

**Children’s Programmes**

The children’s programme will again be held in Aviation Ballrooms A, B, and C for kindergarten to juniors. Parents, please be aware that due to the risk of food allergies, no snacks will be provided for the children. Parents are responsible to provide refreshments for their own children.

Space is limited in the Aviation Ballrooms so, to avoid disappointment, parents are strongly advised to arrive early to secure a space for their child.

The children’s programmes will be led by Immanuel, Shiloh, Toronto Central, and Willowdale Adventist Churches.

**Meals**

Members attending camp meeting have found it useful to carry their own meals for lunch and supper.

No meals will be provided at the International Centre.

Please note that no food is allowed in any of the halls at the centre. All members are asked to picnic by their cars or at one of the local public parks (Wildwood Park, 3430 Derry Road East at the corner of Derry Road and Goreway Drive; Humberwood Park at Rexdale Boulevard and Humberwood Boulevard).

**Exiting the Centre by Car to reduce traffic congestion**

When exiting the International Centre by car at lunch time, members are asked to use both exits—the one on Airport Road and the other on Derry Road to the north of the parking lot. It is likely that cars will only be able to turn right on Airport Road. Turning left has greatly contributed to long wait times. Cooperation with the parking attendants and the police will reflect the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those attending camp meeting.

**Live Broadcast**

Camp meeting will again be broadcast live via the Internet at [www.adventistontario.org](http://www.adventistontario.org). Both adults’ and young adults’ services will be available for viewing.

The 2013 cycle will close in November and your church could be among the beneficiaries.

It is with deep gratitude that we wish to recognize the faithful generosity of our membership. Because of their commitment to the “bearing of one another’s burdens,” many churches who are carrying mortgages have benefited immensely. We would like to encourage every member to support this worthy endeavour. Together, we will be able to eventually eliminate the building loans that currently amount to around $12.45 million.

God is greatly honoured when our churches are debt free. In the book, Counsels on Stewardship, p262, Ellen White states, “When you place the Lord first and realize that the Lord’s house is dishonored by debt, God will bless you”.

We would also like to thank Elder Vernon Langdon, CBIF field representative, for his assistance in promoting this initiative. We would be more than glad to meet with church boards or visit congregations to explain the benefits of the CBIF.

**Ulysses Guarin, Treasurer**

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The Church Building Investment Fund (CBIF) continues to be a significant source of blessing to Seventh-day Adventist Churches and members in Ontario—even after twelve years.

This initiative was voted at the 2001 constituency meeting, and it gives everyone an opportunity to assist churches in their efforts to eliminate or reduce outstanding mortgages. Each member is encouraged to donate $2 weekly or $104 per year using the line item on the tithe envelope.

Over the twelve years, a total of $1,516,798.44 has been raised, most of which was a result of the faithfulness of the members across the constituency:
- Contributions from church members: $940,998.44
- Budget allocations from the Ontario Conference: $550,000.00
- Of this amount, 70% was allocated on a rotating basis among the four or five churches with the oldest debts. The balance of 30% was equally divided among the remaining churches, regardless of membership size or tithe income, as appropriation for their capital needs.

As a result of the generosity by the church members in Ontario, a total of 45 churches have benefited thus far from this program; the most recent being: Brantford, Heritage Ghanaian, Newmarket, and Philadelphia congregations. They were the beneficiaries for 2012. Each received $22,536.07.

With these allocations, the beneficiaries were able to accelerate their loan amortizations by as much as twelve months or better yet, eliminate their mortgages.
Grandview Academy Pupils Shine at Regional History Fair

On Wednesday, April 24, 2013, ten pupils from Grandview Academy swept up awards at the Grand Erie Regional History Fair.

According to Principal Lisa Clarke, Grandview’s pupils have always done well among the competitors from various public, Catholic, Christian and home schools, but this year all ten won awards.

The pupils (from grades 4 to 8), Salah Griffith-Jones, Ethan Miller, Kailey Clarke, Busi Dzingrayi, Sofia Oudri, Emma Duncan, Evan Roque, Jared Morado, Angelika Estoesta and Iyani Debollette, were thrilled with their awards.

“This just proves how Adventist education is truly achieving excellence,” she said. “They worked really hard, and we are so happy for them and for our school family. There are great things happening at Grandview Academy. We have a lot to offer parents in the Hamilton area.”

Recently, the school acquired three iPads for their kindergarten classroom to complement the school’s 1:1 laptop program for students in grades 1-8.

“`We are constantly adding to and upgrading our technology,” said Clarke, “so we can provide pupils with the latest educational tools.”

With the recent awards from the fair under her belt Clarke, who takes every opportunity to promote the value of Adventist education, now has another reason to offer parents the opportunity of such an education.

“If you are looking for excellence in Adventist education and are living or moving to the Hamilton area,” she concluded, “do contact us at 905-679-4492, or visit us on the web at www.grandviewschool.ca.”

Hooray to the Budding Flutist!

On Wednesday, March 6, 2013, Alethea Clarke, a grade 6 student at Crawford Adventist Academy, East campus, entered the Pickering Rotary Music Festival and won first place in the category for students under 13. She played “Ave Maria” on the flute. Alethea has been under the tutelage of Miss Ljiljana Markovic, the music teacher at the school. She subsequently received a Certificate of Achievement, along with a gold medallion.

The Pickering Rotary Club was founded in 1942 as a volunteer service club of professionals. The members share a progressive tradition of building social fellowship and helping to create a better community through its service to the community, in the workplace and throughout the world. Their motto is “Service Above Self”. The Music Festival in its 26th year ran from February 21 through March 7, 2013. The mission of the music festival is “to enhance our community through providing a fair and equal environment for music competition, adjudication and awards in order to encourage creative participation and the development of music excellence”. The organization takes “a leadership role in the Arts in Pickering and throughout the Durham Region”. They present roughly $14,000 in awards and scholarships to festival students every year. In order to win first place, the competitor must receive a minimum mark of 80. The competition is only open to amateurs.

Dr. Janice Maitland, Ontario Conference Superintendent of Education was full of praise for Althea, saying, “Heartiest congratulations! You have made your school and your parents proud. To God be the glory!”
Joyful Adventist Youth Choir in Community Clean-Up

On April 28, 2013, about 22 members of Joyful Adventist Youth Choir (JAY-C) from College Park Church in Oshawa enthusiastically participated in Oshawa Community Clean-up 2013.

Dressed in their uniform, JAY-C members spent a few hours collecting garbage in Lakeview Park, one of the popular spots in Oshawa by Lake Ontario. Choir members were very pleased to participate in the community activity and were proud to show off the amount of garbage they collected.

Later, Mayor John Henry sent them a signed certificate of appreciation.

Five days later, on Friday, May 3, 2013, JAY-C embarked on a 3-hour trip to London (Ontario) Seventh-day Adventist Church. On Sabbath, the choir performed a musical drama, “Taking it Through the Day” where young and old alike were encouraged to apply God's Word to their daily activities and to pay close attention to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Choir members had a great time getting to know and build friendships with the youth of London Church.

JAY-C, led by Daniella Kuchurivski and Arlene Flores, is composed of young people ages 10 and up. It aims to develop musical talent in young people and to instill a love for service, whether ministering in music or collecting garbage.

“Dear Lord, Please Send Me a Soul”
Casual Encounter Leads to Baptism

Sometime ago, Twyla saw a small group of people, whom she had never seen before, walking along the street near her home. She felt a spark of interest in them and prayed, “Dear Lord, I'd love to reach these people, somehow”.

Two weeks later, while at the post office in nearby Marmora, Twyla saw a woman who was vaguely familiar.

Then it came to her—she had been among the group of people walking down her street! However, the woman looked troubled, sitting holding her head in hands. Twyla cautiously approached her and asked if she wanted to talk. The woman agreed, and the two walked together to a local park where Twyla learned her name, Christine. The talk was followed by breakfast two days later at Twyla's home.

When Twyla learned that Christine Stoler was having housing challenges, she and her husband invited her to stay in their home.

It was there in an Adventist home that Christine saw Twyla's Christian lifestyle. As soon as she had the opportunity to start learning more about the Bible, she eagerly took it. She found prophecy very interesting and continued to develop a strong desire for all things spiritual.

Christine soon began attending Madoc Adventist Company with Twyla and was warmly embraced by the church family. She was baptized on April 20, 2013 by Pastor Robert Putt.

Twyla is able to testify that by asking God to send her a soul, she was sent Christine. Now, she is asking Him to send her another soul.

Phyllis Vallieres, Personal Ministries Leader

Twyla Dimitropoulos is one of those people who just want to see everyone saved in the kingdom of God. After all, she knows the value of salvation and how God has blessed her with His grace! So, in her small town of Springbrook, near Madoc, Ontario, she is constantly seeking out people to approach. Her prayer is, “Dear Lord, please send me a soul”.

L-R: Twyla Dimitropoulos, Christine Stoler

Phyllis Vallieres, Personal Ministries Leader
Barrie Church Depicts Loving Relationships by Family Trees

In recognition of the Ontario Conference’s Family Day of Prayer and in advance of the provincial Family Day holiday, Barrie Seventh-day Adventist Church held Family Day on Sabbath, February 9, 2013. A special program was planned with emphasis on the family, culminating with Pastor Halsey Peat delivering the sermon. It was a Sabbath set apart to give thanks in prayer, in music and in fellowship for being part of God’s family.

This day grew out of Barrie Church trying to find various ways to address the outcomes found in the Natural Church Development (NCD) Church Health Survey.

One of the areas that Barrie Church has been lacking is in ‘loving relationships’ within our church family. Although all areas listed in the survey needed improvement, building better loving relationships has become a top priority.

Sean George, a firm believer in visuals, was authorised to create a series of family trees. These depicted church members and their biological extended families, the Seventh-day Adventist family tree, and Jesus’ family tree going all the way back to Adam and Eve. The trees were printed out in vinyl and placed on either side of windows that face into the sanctuary, allowing those in the church’s lobby to see pictures of members’ families and those in the sanctuary to see images of church founders, Jesus’ family tree and Barrie Church events.

The final presentation depicts the beauty of God in the diversity of His image through His people. These trees give members and visitors a way to look at and discuss their identities as families, church members, and children of God.

Seven Baptized

On March 23, 2013, Barrie’s family tree grew even more as the church celebrated the baptism of seven people: Shannon Stuart, Shane Stuart, Ginah Msaigwa, Justin Lasquite, Sean George, Lise Hocaluk and Faye Hughes.

Bracebridge Baptism

April 20, 2013 was a happy day for Bracebridge Church when Pastor Carter Stanley baptised Thomas (Tom) Steinberg.

The immersion was followed by Tom being accepted into fellowship as a new member of the church.

Both Tom and his wife, Heather, (who is looking forward to her own baptism) are already active in the church. Last year, they helped out in the church’s autumn fair, and Tom is the chair of the church’s REACH committee.

Please remember Tom and Heather in your prayers as they continue to follow Jesus and witness for Him.

Nichole Valentine

Pastor Jakov Bibulovic (Rt) with newly baptized & Elder C. J. Horrell (L)

The church rejoiced with them and presented each with a gift.
Prisoner Leads Parole Officer to the Sabbath

When my son, Kaleb, was born, 6 ½ years ago, I was scouting churches and religions. I knew there was more to being a Christian than what I learned in the Roman Catholic Church. I wandered from church to church, finding none that filled my need. I eventually ended up at a Catholic Church again.

I had been working as a parole officer for the federal government at the time, but it wasn’t until a particular offender became strong in his faith and spoke to me about keeping the Sabbath, did I ever consider the Sabbath. His message on the Sabbath spoke loudly to me, and I began my quest to know more about it. It first led me to the Church of God, but having spoken with the pastor by telephone, I was turned off. Also, it did not help that their only church was a long way off in Hamilton.

I was still interested in finding a Sabbath-keeping church, so I questioned the offender about his religion—Seventh-day Adventists. We would talk about drinking and drugs, and he would send me scripture pertaining to each. He mentioned that the pastor from the local Adventist Church in Belleville regularly visited the prison to conduct Bible studies with the offenders.

In early July 2012, after taking my son to gymnastics one Saturday morning and receiving confirmation from the instructors that I could leave for the hour and a half duration of class time, I made my way to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Belleville. As I entered, not knowing anyone and unsure of what to expect, I was met by a retired co-worker. I immediately felt comfortable. He introduced me to a single woman who was close to my age, and we sat together and have been friends ever since. She became my “go-to person” for every question with which I bombarded her.

On a glorious Sabbath morning, July 20, Pastor Robert Putt baptised me, along with Lynda Ronco. He also dedicated my son, Kaleb, to God.

I realise now that God sent the offender to me as a messenger. I am very thankful to him and more so for the truth that God has been revealing to me ever since. I am so grateful that I am now keeping all God’s commandments and glorifying the Lord by keeping the Sabbath.

Michelle Aylward

Perth Avenue Church Reaches Community Through Mall Health Fair

Over the last few years, and especially through the new REACH initiative, the Ontario Conference has stressed the need for churches to reach out to their communities.

On Sabbath, April 20, 2013, Perth Seventh-day Adventist Church reached out to its community by hosting a health fair at the Jane and Finch Mall. The church’s Health and Wellness team was joined by representatives from the local Public Health department, the Cancer Society, All Dunamis, Natures Alternative, Leo’s Optical and Dr. Maurice Innis.

Many shoppers took advantage of the various displays to obtain free blood pressure screening, eye examinations, chiropractic assessment, and referrals to free dental programs and literature on cancer related issues. The church’s health team distributed magazines, such as a special issue of Sign of the Times, focussing on health.

The positive response of the shoppers clearly indicated that the event was well received. One mall patron even thanked the team from the church for leaving their church on Saturday to provide a much needed service to the community.

The team is convinced that God blessed its work and all those who participated.

The church has now been asked to repeat the event at least once each quarter.

Steve Anderson
“You Must Have Angels Around You!”

Shortly after Colin Smith came out from under the anaesthetic, the surgeon who had just performed a heart transplant for him told him, “You must have angels around you because nine months ago you should have been dead!”

As Colin shared a Sabbath lunch with friends after his baptism on May 18, 2013, he happily recounted that moment in July 2012 when the doctor informed him that the surgery had been a success. “I really had no doubt,” he said. “From the moment I was told in 2011 that I needed a new heart, I was unconcerned. The doctor couldn’t understand why I was even alive with my heart functioning at only 20% capacity, but I just knew that whoever had brought me to where I was in life would not let me suffer. I was always a believer that my life was guided by a higher power, and He would not leave me when I was going through the biggest test of my life. So, I just knew that everything would turn out alright.”

Colin told of how he was raised by strict Sabbath-keeping parents and because his father had been a 7th Day Church of God preacher, he often had to be in church all day long. He rebelled the first opportunity he had. Yet, the sense of God remained with him and in later years he began attending Apple Creek Church. However, it was not until after he received a new heart that he made his decision to ‘give that new heart’ to Jesus.

“As I looked at the entire process,” he recalls, “I realised that it had been a miracle, and I asked myself, ‘Having had a heart transplant at the age of 70, why am I being kept alive? There has to be a purpose.’ The question was, ‘How do I fulfil this purpose?’ I determined then and there that since God has been so good to me, I must give myself to Him and then He will reveal the reason. So, I gave myself to Him!”

Colin’s wife, Opal, who has constantly been by his side was present to witness his baptism. Colin’s baptism, along with that of six others, concluded God’s Final Call Prophecy Series that was held at Apple Creek Seventh-day Adventist Church from May 3 to 18, 2013.

Each of the other newly baptised, Juvonni Camron Bartholomew, Alicia Benta, Anthony Conroy Lewis, Ashley-Ann Malcolm, Allison Monkhouse and Daniel Reid, also has a story to tell of God’s grace.

The immersions were performed by Pastor Wayne Martin, lead pastor of the church, and Pastor Dewaine Frazer, ministerial intern.

2012 Runners-Up Malton Draw in Season Opener as Champion Ghanaian Withdraws from SSL

Last season’s runners-up, Malton Church, drew 3 - 3 with Philadelphia in the season opener on Sunday, May 26, 2013, in the Sovereign Soccer League (SSL).

With the withdrawal of last season’s champion, Toronto Ghanaian, Malton clearly fancied its chances and had gone into the game hoping to get maximum points. However, Philadelphia’s stalwarts had the same intention, and they both had to settle for a point each.

In two other games, the combined All Nations/ Downsview team decisively took Agape apart in a 3 – 1 win. Yugoslavia held on to their single goal to beat Brampton 1 - 0.

Sovereign Soccer are the new sports kids on the block. Now, in its second season, it was established last year after successfully organising a 2-day soccer tournament, with 8 teams competing for the Sovereign Cup.

Sovereign Soccer is run by volunteers whose aim is to bring quality, organized, low cost, clean and safe soccer to the GTA. The volunteers firmly believe Sovereign Soccer will help raise the profile of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the GTA and beyond.

For more information, email sovereignsoccer@hotmail.com Enter your church soccer team to join the SSL.
Well-Planned Gifts Benefit Churches and School

A wise steward seeks to use his or her time, talents and finances for God’s glory throughout their lifetime and plans to further the Lord’s work when they are laid to rest.

Working with the Ontario Conference Planned Giving and Trust Services Department, two members were able to further God’s work as they did their estate planning. As a result, one school and two churches recently benefitted from their well-planned gifts.

Brother George Sakurai was a member of the Toronto Japanese congregation. His wish upon his passing was to leave his estate to his church. His church was pleasantly surprised when they were presented with a cheque for $6,443.70. His gift will be put towards the expenses the church will incur as they make their building accessible for individuals with disabilities.

Sister Pauline Belle was a beloved member of Hamilton Mountain Church. As she planned her estate, she felt it was important to use a portion of that with which God had blessed her to benefit her local church and Grandview Adventist Academy’s Worthy Student Fund and the Ontario Conference. At workers’ meeting in January 2013, Pastor Mansfield Edwards, president of the Ontario Conference, along with Alvin Ram, Planned Giving and Trust Service director, presented Pastor James Rooney of Hamilton Mountain Church and Lisa Clarke, principal of Grandview Adventist Academy, each with a cheque for $13,583.35 from Pauline’s estate.

Despite her passing, Sister Belle’s gift allowed her church to reduce a huge chunk of debt from building renovations. Her planning for Grandview Adventist Academy will assist with tuition for at least seven children.

Brother Sakurai and Sister Belle are resting in Jesus, but while they were alive, they knew that their well-planned gift would one day benefit what was important to them.

If you would like to learn how you can further God’s work, please contact the Planned Giving and Trust Services Department at 905-571-1022 ext. 205.

SDC-CVL 2012/13 Champions!

The Seventh-day Co-ed Christian Volleyball League (SDC-CVL) congratulates its 2012/13 champions:

- **A Division:**
  - Toronto West Saints

- **B Division**
  - Mt. Zion Archangels

To join the volleyball league for the 2013/14 season, visit sdc-cvl.com or write: curtis.ambrose22@gmail.com and/or sdccvl@yahoo.ca. The league runs from September – April and is open to all ages.