Merry Christmas from our team to yours!

A PRAYER JUST FOR YOU

Back in 1857, a man by the name of Jeremiah Lamphere took up a challenge from his local church to become a missionary to the city of New York, and that summer, he hit the streets with a pocket full of Christian tracts, but to no avail. New Yorkers, it seems, have always been a tough crowd, and the response to Jeremiah’s efforts was discouraging. And that’s when it occurred to him: he didn’t have a clue how to reach the hearts of his big city neighbors, but surely, if God had laid the burden on him to reach the community, He would have a solution. The best approach to ministry, therefore, was prayer.

He printed a different set of tracts – ones that invited people simply join him at his church on Wednesdays at noon for prayer – and he passed out hundreds of them. Would it work? The first Wednesday was keenly disappointing: Jeremiah was the only one who showed up.

It’s the kind of disappointment that pastors understand in a way that few other people can. Our work is often lonely. Support from the congregation is often lacking in a culture that has been shaped by the entertainment industry and consumerism. You’re the paid professional, so members expect you to be the one who ministers to the community. They’ll show up on Sabbath and cheer if you happen to succeed; more often, they spend their time
critiquing your performance as if they were judging an episode of America’s Got Talent.

If you’ve been in the ministry for a while, you know what it’s like to be the only person to show up for something. It doesn’t have to be a meeting where nobody shows up; sometimes it’s a well-attended meeting where you seem to be the only who’s really engaged, the only one whose heart showed up for the meeting.

As we face 2012 together as a ministerial community, I want you to know that your ministerial team at the North American Division gets it. We’ve been there, and our commitment is to building stronger community and dialogue among Adventist pastors, to put meaningful tools in your hands that will complement the gifts God has given you. We want to serve as a constant reminder that you are not really alone.

Jeremiah Lamphere set aside Wednesdays for prayer, and coincidentally, that’s when your ministerial team meets to pray for you. We ask God to help us find meaningful ways to empower you to lead your congregation to discover the ministry that God desires for them. And prayer is the first thing on our agenda each week. We don’t approach the rest of our business until we’ve petitioned God in your behalf. It’s usually the longest item on the agenda – by far – because it works.

This coming year, we’re committed to praying for God’s richest blessings on your ministry. We’re praying that you will be allowed to see the fruit of your labors, and that your passion for your church and your community will spark the kind of electrifying revival that started in an empty prayer room in 1857.

The team meets at 10am EST every Wednesday, and we pray. Check your calendar and see if you couldn’t be on your knees with us at the same time and pray specifically for your fellow pastors across this Division. If there are other Adventist pastors in your city, consider getting together once a week – even if just by telephone. What if 2012 became the year when we knew that none of us was facing this task alone? There are more than 4,000 pastors across the Division. Imagine what might happen if we made a point of praying our ministry to the place that God intends. Have a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year!

MINISTERIAL HIGHLIGHT

by Marcellus Robinson, Ministerial Director for the Allegheny East Conference.

Serving as the Ministerial Director is a very solemn responsibility. As a matter of fact, I have to frequently ask myself the question, “Marcellus, What are you doing in this chair?” Then I realize that early in my ministry someone that God had chosen provided leadership to me that
helped me through my first assignment; when I had no idea what pastoring was really all about. Stumbling through sermons and praying through board meetings and church business meetings were a great challenge. But that was a time when church members were still ready to help train the pastor. I don’t know where I would be if they had not. Years have passed and I have pastored small, medium and large congregations and I look back and say, “Thank God for saints who were willing to look beyond my weaknesses!”

Today, on the other hand, we live in a brand new world. Today’s members, some locked in and hung up with the new technologies, and others still wanting the undivided attention of “the pastor”, are causing young pastors to rethink their ministry. They still recognize their calling, however, they are frustrated by the countless challenges of the place they are encouraged to call, “the flock!” My responsibilities are to, first; serve as a spiritual advisor to the “shepherds of the flock.” That means always trying to keep my relationship with God intentional. Then, I’m expected to serve as a conduit and a consultant to the Allegheny East Conference, which has 149 congregations, made up of nearly a dozen language groups and countless intercultural situations to which it has to provide pastoral leadership. Finally, I’m to be a mentor, as well as, a colleague in the collaborative purposes of ministry. This means winning the respect and trust of the ministerial team of my conference. In order to serve ministerial team, I have a small group composed of six area leaders (covering the six geographical regions of the conference) and four ethic coordinators (African, Asian, Haitians, and Hispanics). All my team members serve on the conference executive committee. In turn, our team meets one a month with our executive officers and church ministry leader to coordinate the mission and minister to the needs of our workers. A product of this partnership, we partnered with Women’s Ministry to have a Minister’s Spouses Retreat on weekend at a resort. We conduct

**Waiting and Longing** by Pastor Randy Roberts

*You can purchase the book at your local ABC or online.*

**Calendar Highlights**

- **Operation Global Rain**
  January 4–14, 2012

- **Adventist Church Ministries Convention**
  Innsbrook, Florida

- **Southwestern Union Ministerial Conference**
  January 9–12, 2012
  Fort Worth, Texas

- **New York City Pastor’s Evangelism Rally**
  January 12, 2012
  New York City, New York

- **NAD Health Summit**
  January 27–February 5, 2012
  Orlando, Florida

- **Bradford, Cleveland, Brooks Leadership Center**
  The Art & Craft of Preaching
  February 26–29, 2012
  Huntsville, AL
annual pastoral reviews which include personal growth plans (which include the areas of family, finance, faith, and fitness).

Pastoring is my first love, and I know that ministry is my calling. However, at the end of each day I can see the hand of God guiding me to a broader sense of ministry. He, through the many saints I encountered taught me; walked me through enough challenges to declare me ready to lead. I accept, and, claim ownership to His direction.

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Message from
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"A man travels the world over in search of what he needs, and returns home to find it." George Moore

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