Mission in Europe

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28 May 2012, St. Albans, United Kingdom

[Miroslav Pujic, tedNEWS]

Forty-three delegates from the eleven Unions and three attached Fields, which constitute the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Trans-European region, (TED), including TED administrators and departmental directors, met at Newbold College, United Kingdom from 10 - 12 May 2012. The purpose of the meetings was to engage decision making leaders and practitioners from the forefront of missionary work in a constructive dialogue and help them in reaching common goals. This Consultation on Mission was inspired by the theme accepted by the TED Executive Committee: ‘Revived by His Word: think differently … think possibilities.’

In his opening speech Dr Bertil Wiklander, President of the Trans-European Division, said that being a Seventh-day Adventist is fundamentally a matter of longing for God, and this longing finds its fulfillment in the vision of Revelation 21:1-5. The little church family established in May 1863, was able to grow and spread itself to all countries in the world because they began to think differently and discover new possibilities.

Dr Wiklander recognised the challenges that we face as a church today in Europe, and he listed 16 major issues which need to be addressed. Here we will list a few of them:

1. The Church misunderstands different cultures – those who don’t look like us and don’t talk and ‘smell’ like us – they are seen as an enemy of the church.
2. The Church is apathetic - skepticism and no success in the past and ‘smell’ like us – they are seen as an enemy of the church.
3. The Church is concerned about the ‘front door’, but leaves the ‘back door’ open wide.
4. The Church is frustrated - why do members keep leaving?
5. The Church is puzzled - why the attrition? Are people just not interested in faith anymore?
6. The Church is a boring place.
7. Churchless spirituality – we do not need to go to church but can say at home or go out in nature to pray.
8. The Church likes to keep one format forever - people are more adventurous and like to move in the way the spirit leads them.

Wiklander pointed to neglected truths in the Word of God that may empower the church for God’s mission. His final appeal was: ‘Be renewed by his Word! Think differently and think possibilities! If we believe that “for God all things are possible” we can be optimists because he is on our side! Then our eyes will be opened and we will see the opportunities for God’s mission in Europe today! This is the task God is giving us now!’

Dr Daniel Duda, TED Education Director, led the participants into the study of the ecclesiastical role of the church and showed how Jesus’ cultural sensitivity was more successful in bringing people to an understanding of the Kingdom.

Wi̇klander, President of the Trans-European Division

Dr Miroslav Pujic, TED Ministry to Postmoderns Director, made a presentation on the socio-cultural changes that took place in Europe 30 years ago which made a major paradigm shift in the way people think and ‘do’ life. ‘The Adventist church failed to grasp that living in a new culture really makes a difference in the way people think and approach life. Church membership and attendance is shrinking and new-comers are fewer. We need to do something. Business as usual is not going to help us,’ said Pujic.

All the participants had an opportunity to share their opinions, suggestions and strategising through the discussions in...
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A number of practitioners from the UK and abroad shared with the group some evangelistic models and case studies that are working very well in a new postmodern environment. The participants also had a chance to identify resources and models that can be replicated in their respective countries.

This was a consultation where thinking out of the box, fair analysis and strategising were involved, together with some professional presentations. Another novel aspect was that leaders and practitioners sat at the same table and spoke the same language of mission. A study of some of the effective outreach models currently being used within the TED gave a new flavour of inspiration to the Consultation on Mission. The whole consultation was embedded in prayer and worship.

‘God has a Mission and He called His People to be His representatives in Europe, which is God's Mission Territory’ commented Kovacs-Biro. He continued, ‘It is time to change from a talking Church into a “representing God” Church, where meeting people’s needs and making God’s message relevant, are the key activities of the Church.’

‘As someone at the grassroots level, I am excited by how seriously the leadership of our church is taking the challenge of mission to the indigenous majority population. Success will not be achieved over night so we need much prayer, patience and support from our leadership,’ commented Rosemary Lethbridge, Church Planner in the UK.

In his concluding remarks, Dr Wiklander said that we are a church in the business of change. If everything could remain the same, there would be no need for mission! But our mission is ‘change’, therefore we as a church must change what needs to be changed in us. Why do we need to change? We need to change so that we multiply people who have faith.

‘As a large organisation, the church sometimes must divide the work into various sectors, but if those sectors don’t interact, we are in trouble. In this gathering, church leaders have interacted with evangelists and church planters. We understand each other better now. Since the world has changed in how it thinks and communicates, we have to understand them better. Change may affect how we give reasons for why faith in him is the best way to approach life, but it may also impact our worship style.

The group has accepted the declaration of commitment for their future work. See below for your information.


COMMITMENTS

Reach Up
1. We commit to being biblically grounded and intentionally prayerful in making God known, felt and heard among competing voices in Europe.

2. We commit to living an authentic Christian life by discovering and using the God-given gifts and personal evangelism styles in being agents of change to family, friends, neighbours and society.

Reach Out
3. We commit to intentionally re-thinking and changing our approach to communities to become more relationally orientated through consciously participating in all dimensions of life and its challenges.

4. We commit to inspiring leaders, pastors and believers to serve the real and felt needs of the whole community, not just of the local churches.

5. We commit to creating alternative worship spaces where everyone is fully respected in love and fellowship.

6. We commit to intentionally building inclusive, just and merciful communities that foster reconciliation, healing and the fullness of life in Christ.

7. We commit to learning and developing fresh ways to communicate the biblical message through experiential means such as stories, metaphors, drama, art, music and life experiences that present the Gospel in a simple, understandable and relevant way.
8. We commit to training our children and young people in discipleship and community engagement, so that they may reach their generation for Christ.

9. We commit to modeling and engaging in the arenas of public life, civic authorities, business and academia as they shape societal values and have a strong influence on public debate that can impact the existence and operation of our Adventist communities and the Christian community at large.

10. We commit to engaging and supporting immigrant Adventist groups in their ministries to reach their ethnic groups, international students as well as the majority ethnic population.

Reach Across

11. We commit to defining, modeling and creating a positive perception of what it means to be an engaged community of believers with a clear and strong Seventh-day Adventist identity.

12. We commit to developing the biblical discipleship process of believers that empowers them in their personal walk with God and in leading others to become fully devoted followers of Jesus.

tedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter's Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
E-mail: tednews@ted-adventist.org
Website: www.ted-adventist.org

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Internet Conference Focuses on Denominational Integration, Best Practices

28 May 2012 Hong Kong, China [Ansel Oliver/ANN & tedNEWS] About 160 participants from around the world gathered for the eighth such forum, held this year in Hong Kong. The forum is held in different world regions each year to better accommodate local church administrators and members. Compared to previous conferences, this year’s forum includes greater delegations from the denomination’s Northern Asia-Pacific and Southern Asia-Pacific divisions, based in Seoul and Manila respectively.

Miroslav Pujic, Communication and Media director at the Trans-European Division, in his presentation about the power of social media and how it can be used in evangelism said that “today millions of people that are on social media want to be heard. We need to be there to share the values found in the Bible and help them to grow spiritually, mentally and in wellness”. Pujic also talked about LIFEconnect, an online community where people can meet, share their life experience and offer spiritual support, as a major initiative in reaching people for Christ which has already made contacts with almost half a million people. (see www.lifeconnect.info)

Sam Neves, pastor in London, challenged global Adventist media leaders to take evangelism as seriously as Steve Jobs took technology products, simply because it really matters. “Steve rejected mediocrity at every level because creating artistic technology products that would be truly human really mattered to him - and he spent time and money to do it perfectly. We should take the salvation of souls just as seriously. This would mean taking time and spending our money to produce the most artistic content and deliver through the most excellent media. If it mattered to Jesus, it should really matter to us.”

Presentations this year underscored the need for simplicity and focus in Web design and interaction. In separate speeches, both King and Adventist Risk Management Marketing and Communication Manager David Fournier outlined advantages of ridding a site of historical baggage.

“The more information you have the more careful you have to be about organizing it,” said Fournier, who was one of several participants urging a greater commitment to effective information architecture on denominational websites.

King said that new initiatives are notorious for making officials think that their organization needs a new website. “I can almost guarantee that the top stakeholders in the organization have not asked themselves, ‘Have market trends and the needs of our customers shifted, and should our current website be adjusted accordingly?’” King said, instead recommending that new initiatives be incorporated into an organization’s existing site.

Others offered tips on facilitating better user experiences on the Web. During a sideline discussion, Jesse Johnson, president of netAserve, which provides technology support to the Adventist Church, said links on a webpage don’t help the organization because it pushes away users. “Instead incorporate another organization’s content on your website, especially if it’s a local church website,” Johnson advised. “Users will enjoy the content and will feel stronger about your site and are more likely to
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Daniel Jiao, Communication director of the church’s Chinese Union Mission, based in Hong Kong, said people are increasingly using mobile devices to access the Internet. Indeed, at the end of 2011 there were an estimated 6 billion mobile subscribers, representing 87 percent of the world’s population, according to a December report by the International Telecommunication Union.

Other leaders advocated for church communication and Web managers to design their websites for mobile usage. “It may end up being a more simple site,” said King, “but if you design for mobile first, you’re reaching all of who your audience might be.”

Several participants offered evening presentations highlighting mass Internet evangelism projects in their own territories.

The Adventist Church in Germany and Austria last year held the Faith.Simple project, an eight-week outreach series to post-moderns, with Internet broadcast discussions centering around the movie My Last Day Without You, created specifically for the project. The film features a young German businessman who travels to New York City on a difficult assignment, which forces him to examine his own life. Klaus Popa, who co-led the series, said hundreds of discussion groups where held in homes and churches throughout German-speaking areas of Europe.

Adventist leaders in South America continue to tweak mass media evangelism events, finding that interactive campaigns with interactive components have proven better online response rates compared to events that are just streamed. For an increasing number of outreach events, respondents sign up on the outreach website or on Facebook to complete a Bible study. The challenge is making sure local pastors or members can follow up with the 4,000 responses from a recent event, a media manager said. “If pastors or church members don’t contact them, they are less likely to join the church,” said Rogerio Ferraz, a project manager for the South American Division, based in Brasilia, Brazil. “People need that personal contact.”

Williams Costa Jr., the Adventist Church’s Communication director and forum organizer, affirmed Adventist technologists, saying, “You are not just dealing with websites and platforms, you’re an important part of the church. Today, making easy content, stories and testimonies, this can be used by the Holy Spirit. [tedNEWS]

TedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter’s Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
E-mail: tednews@ted-adventist.org
Website: www.ted-adventist.org

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BBC TV Focuses on Adventist Music

28 May 2012 London, United Kingdom [BUC NEWS] Two special editions of the BBC 1 programme, Songs of Praise, have had a specific emphasis on Adventist music. The first, broadcast on Sunday, 20 May was on the theme of Spirituals, whose messages have resonance with the Adventist message, as they focus strongly on the themes of leaving earth, and being in heaven. Whilst born out of the American slave trade – spirituals are, in fact, everyone's story, as we all long to 'ride in that chariot', we all want to 'see our Lord', and we can all find comfort in the 'Balm In Gilead' that makes the wounded whole and heals the sin-sick soul.

The second programme, broadcast on Sunday, 27 May was on the theme of Pentecost. This edition was recorded with a congregation which was about sixty per cent Adventist, and is based much more on gospel songs and hymns such as 'Revive Us Again', 'Soon and Very Soon', and 'There's A Sweet, Sweet Spirit'.

In Songs of Praise tradition, dialogue accompanies the music. BUC Communication director, Pastor Victor Hulbert, submitted some potential stories, and one regarding an Adventist singing bus driver, resonated with the programme researcher. Singers in the choir were also interviewed from a singer's point of view.

The congregation was joined by two Christian singers – Kym Mazelle, originally from Gary, Indiana. She grew up around the corner from the world-famous Jackson family. Formerly a singer of high-energy club music, called 'house' music, she had an encounter with the Lord. Having worked with her on a few occasions in the past, I can truly say her love and enthusiasm for the Lord is strong. She called me the day before the recording simply to let me know she was praying for the Lord's blessing on everyone involved, stating that she didn't feel she would be able to sleep that night she was so full of joy.

The programmes were filmed at St John-at-Hackney church, and the Pentecost programme included five musicians, headed by Adventist musician George Acquah on keyboards along with Andy Kydd, from the Newbold Moor Close worship team, playing guitar.

Across the two programmes, four Adventist artists or groups are featured: Tessera, a male quartet comprising of Bobby Carr, Paul Lee, Paul Boldeau and Ken Burton. The quartet was actually set up for Songs of Praise performances and has had a wonderful relationship with the programme; Jeharna South, from Wolverhampton who sings in both programmes; and Resurrection, a female quartet based around current and former members of the London Adventist Chorale.

The main performing group for both programmes is the Adventist Vocal Ensemble (AVE). The ensemble has performed, either solo or in collaboration, nearly two hundred and fifty different songs spanning a decade of Songs of Praise programmes. It is a regular choir on the annual Songs of Praise Big Sing from the Royal Albert Hall and is called the 'resident choir' of BBC Radio 2's Good Morning Sunday, with Aled Jones.

The ensemble for this show is the largest collection of singers it has ever used – just under fifty. The result is truly special, moving from the heartfelt sustained a cappella spirituals to the uninhibited joyful expression of the gospel repertoire. The BBC crew continually comment that they always look forward to working with the singers.

Ken Burton has been intrinsically involved in the two programmes. He states, "My personal role was to burn the candle at both ends, and in the middle! I had the jobs of overall musical director, arranger for the songs, conductor of band, congregation and choir, pianist, singer in Tessera and recording producer." He adds, "My motto is (respecting my family and health, of course): I'll keep busy on earth; I have an eternity to rest."

The two programmes highlight the value of quality Adventist music within the wider society of the British Isles.
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states, “These are not programmes on Adventism or Adventist music per se, but most of the voices, items, and some of the interviews, are from our churches. This is a historical moment for the Church. Never before have so many minutes on the national television airwaves been dedicated exclusively to the sound of Adventist voices.”

Programmes are available on BBC iPlayer: [www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer](http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer),
The songs are available for purchase, in digital format, from [www.adventistvocalensemble.com](http://www.adventistvocalensemble.com) and iTunes.

[tedNEWS]
tedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter’s Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
E-mail: tednews@ted-adventist.org
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Estonian Adventists Celebrate their 115th Anniversary “In the Light of the Beginning”

07 May 2012 Tartu, Estonia [Lauri Beekmann] Estonian Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church celebrated its 115th anniversary in the biggest concert hall of southern Estonia on the 27th and 28th of April bringing together Adventists and friends from different parts of Estonia and also brothers and sisters in faith from other countries.

The whole weekend was organised as an Adventist Spring Festival, which is a growing tradition in Estonia, started by Pastor Anka Karila, the youth director of the Tartu Adventist church. The main theme for the event was “In The Light Of The Beginning” and the sermons and activities were focused on the church growth and mission in the past, and on the hope that we have in Jesus Christ for the future”, pastor Nõmmik explained. “We needed such an event in order to look back and see the progress of our Adventist church in Estonia and maintain focus on church mission and unity. It was great to have guests from Finland, Scotland, England, Latvia and Lithuania among us, and feel their support and encouragement,” Nõmmik said.

During these 115 years Estonia has experienced many hardships. After the First World War Estonia had its first 20 years of freedom, then followed 50 years of Soviet occupation. But as a long-time church member of the Tartu Adventist church Eduard Vari put it, Soviet time couldn't ruin the spiritual health of the church. Churches were still growing and despite harsh limitations to mission work, Adventists were active using all means possible.

“Estonia is not occupied politically anymore, but the spiritual occupation — greed, manipulation, selfishness, pride etc., threatens us all,” said pastor Bertil Wiklander, president of the Trans-European Division, who was the main speaker at this event. But at the same time pastor Wiklander encouraged people to light the candles and share the light, and not focus on cursing the darkness.

Among many guests were also Baltic Union president Valdis Zilgalvis, Viesturs Rejks, president of the Latvian Conference and Bertold Hittner, president of the Lithuanian Mission. “Today is the day of salvation,” said Zilgalvis, “our churches need to concentrate on the present — seek God’s wisdom how to live in present, how to do God’s mission today. Let's trust our youth to lead our church into the future.”

The whole weekend was organised as an Adventist Spring Festival, which is a growing tradition in Estonia, started by pastor Andres Ploompuu, Mission Department Leader at the Conference. “It is interesting that although Adventist Church is a church who is looking into the future, our faith in Jesus Christ is grounded in the events that have taken place in the past,” Ploompuu said. “What has happened helps us to understand what is going to happen in the future. We are moving ahead in the light of the beginning, waiting for the return of Jesus Christ.”

For more information about the church in Estonia, please visit www.advent.ee [tedNEWS]

tedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter’s Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
E-mail: tednews@ted-adventist.org
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Newbold College Seeks to Appoint a Full-time Student Recruiter

Newbold College is a student-centred, inclusive and innovative college of higher education operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is located about 40 miles west of London, United Kingdom. Newbold College seeks to appoint a full-time Student Recruiter from no later than 1 September 2012. The purpose of this post is to assist and participate fully in the recruitment activities of the College on a full range of programmes for which Student Recruitment and Marketing Services is responsible, liaising with other College curriculum areas with recruitment responsibilities. The Student Recruiter is responsible to the Principal for attracting applications and for growing the number of applications that the College receives.

Selection Criteria

Essential
- Detailed understanding of the principles and beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with the ability to promote these principles and beliefs in a Seventh-day Adventist higher education community
- Educated to degree level or relevant experience
- Relevant experience working in a situation requiring the explanation and presentation of information to customers, i.e. in a Student Recruitment, Schools Liaison or Marketing Office/administrative role/s, including administrative experience gained in an office environment
- Knowledge of Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Access, Outlook)
- Fluency in use of online social media
- High level of communication and interpersonal skills
- Excellent organisational skills
- Good presentation skills
- Ability to prioritise work tasks and work to tight deadlines
- Adaptive/flexible in relation to work tasks
- Team player
- Reliable
- Full driving licence
- Flexibility as additional hours will be required during busy periods
- Willingness to travel within the UK and abroad, including travel requiring multiple overnight stays

Desirable
- Knowledge of international education systems and admissions regulations
- Knowledge of developments in higher education

Note: Applicants must be able to demonstrate that they have right to work in the United Kingdom.

Starting date: As soon as possible

Salary as per the denominational salary scale
Candidates are requested to submit a letter of interest addressing the selection criteria and a CV (resume), including the names, addresses, emails, and phone numbers of three referees. These documents should be emailed as soon as possible, but no later than Friday 15 June 2012, to Dr Philip Brown, Principal (pbrown@newbold.ac.uk).

For further information about this position, or Newbold College, please contact Dr Philip Brown on +44 (0) 1344 407400.

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Newbold College Sets out Updated Vision, Mission and Values

24 May 2012 Bracknell, United Kingdom [Newbold College] The Newbold College Board of Governors has authorised updated Vision, Mission and Values Statements presented by the Principal, Dr Philip Brown, at the AGM and Board of Governors meeting at Newbold College on Sunday 13th May. The updated statements were developed using a collaboration of ideas from both staff and students and was recommended as an important step in the life of the College by the Senior Management Team.

Dr Philip Brown, Principal of Newbold College explained: “Newbold College aspires to be the institution of choice for those wishing to study in Europe at a Seventh-Day institution – this is now set out in our Vision Statement. Inseparably, the mission of the College is to foster a Christ-centred and diverse learning community that prepares our students for service in an ever-changing world.”

In response, Bertil Wiklander, Chair of the Newbold College Board of Governors and President of the Trans-European Division of the Seventh-day Adventists (TED) said: “I am delighted about the three navigational instruments authorised by the Board. Newbold College is opening its heart and confesses what drives the College forward and what kind of people it wishes to prepare for service. I like the warm, personal tone used to identify the College as a place where young people are induced into the secrets and blessings of Seventh-day Adventist faith, life and service. The Board fully supports this exciting direction for Newbold College.”

The full statements are as follows:

OUR VISION...
To be the Seventh-day Adventist Christian higher education institution of choice in Europe.

OUR MISSION...
To foster a Christ-centred and diverse learning community that prepares students for service in an ever-changing world.

OUR VALUES...

Spirituality
We invite all members of our learning community to develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ; to demonstrate personal integrity at all times; and to apply understanding of and respect for cultural differences in diverse environments.

Service
We encourage all members of our learning community to engage in generous service to meet human needs and to participate in activities consistent with the worldwide mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Quality learning and teaching
We challenge all members of our learning community to seek to discover, to inquire, to think, to communicate clearly and to understand life, learning, teaching and civic responsibility from a Christian point of view.

Nurture
We encourage all members of our learning community to realise their full potential; to live full and joyful lives; and to embrace a balanced lifestyle, including time for intellectual development, physical activity, social and cultural enrichment and spiritual growth.

For more information please contact: Maria Rosenquist, Marketing Communications Officer: 01344 407493 / 07795 364260 / mrosenquist@newbold.ac.uk [tedNEWS]

tedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
Mission to Cities Initiative Highlights Spring Meeting Opening

02 May 2012 Silver Spring, United States [Ansel Oliver/ANN and Miroslav Pujic/edNEWS] Top regional Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders identified 24 cities that will receive targeted outreach efforts, the next step of a plan voted by church officials last year to focus on urban area ministry worldwide.

During the opening of Spring Meeting – one of two annual meetings of the global Executive Committee – leaders stated plans for renewed outreach in a mega city in each of the denomination's 13 world divisions. Some divisions identified several cities.

Dr Bertil Wiklander, president of the Trans-European Division (TED) expressed the commitment of the division to focus on the urban ministry: "In the TED we are committed to be engaged in a long term outreach process in order to reach the cities within our division. London was chosen in cooperation with the British Union Conference as the city to start this initiative. By the God's grace, we believe that we will be able to make thousands of disciples of Jesus Christ using all our resources and human potentials."

Pastor Janos Kovac-Biro, evangelism director at the TED who is in charge of this initiative shared the plans and the first steps which will be taken in implementing this programme: “From September 2012 all the TED departmental leaders will join forces together with the British Union leaders and pastors serving in London to mobilise the existing church membership to effectively reach out in the most relevant way for their neighbours. In the autumn of 2013 all the representatives of the TED Unions and Fields will be coming to London for a field school of outreach and be part of the diverse evangelistic process planned for London. After the training they will share the experiences and methods of work with their fellow workers in their home country. The spiritual work in Europe is complex and needs continuous connection with God and careful preparation”, concluded Kovacs-Biro.

E G White saw the importance of working in the capital of United Kingdom: "London has been presented to me again and again as a place in which a great work is to be done... God wants His people to work. To every man - and that means every woman, also - He has given His work, and this work each one is to perform according to his several ability." (GC Bulletin, April 22, 1901, p. 396).

The worldwide urban ministry focus will start next year in New York City, with a representative from each division attending part of the four-week initial outreach.

"It's not just an event, it's God's comprehensive plan for reaching big cities," said Adventist Church president pastor Ted N. C. Wilson. "New York will be a symbolic launch."

Meeting at the church's world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, leaders reminded Spring Meeting delegates of the world's changing demographics, which led to the voted plan last year. "For the first time in history, more than 50 percent of the world's population live in cities," said pastor Mark Finley, an assistant to the president. "About 70,000 people every day move from rural areas into cities." [tedNEWS]
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AWR Honours Swedish Radio Workers

Anne-Maj Sandström (left) and Siv Molin (right) received the Adventist World Radio Award of Merit "For more than 33 years of unselfish, faithful and dedicated service to the radio ministry in Sweden" at an AWR training event for radio workers from Sweden and Norway held in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gothenburg.

Commenting on the importance of radio work in secular societies like Sweden, Greg Scott said: "This is a mission field just like any country in the 10/40 window. To reach the people of these societies is just as difficult as reaching a Muslim."

Both Siv Molin and Anne-Maj Sandström have been pioneers in radio work in Sweden. Siv Molin, who turned 80 last year, is still active in the radio work in Stockholm and full of enthusiasm for the possibilities of presenting the gospel through radio.

"I don't know if I am worthy of this," Siv Molin said when she was called to the front to receive the Award of Merit. Later on she said that she was totally surprised by the honour. She admitted that she had been uncertain if she should come to the training event, but after receiving the award she felt full of joy. "Imagine if I had stayed at home and missed this," she said with a big smile.

Anne-Maj Sandström works in the radio station in Gothenburg. She has endured frustrations of dwindling support for radio work, she has seen the ups and downs of it all, but through it all she has served the church and her local community faithfully. "You have been amazingly faithful," Greg Scott said at the presentation of her award.

The citation on both awards read: "For more than 33 years of unselfish, faithful and dedicated service to the radio ministry in Sweden."

The Adventist church operates four radio stations in Sweden. At www.awr.org you will find a large selection of podcasts produced by Adventist radio stations around the world. [tedNEWS]

tedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter's Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
E-mail: tednews@ted-adventist.org
Website: www.ted-adventist.org

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World Religious Freedom Congress Calls to Avoid Secular Society’s Lead

24 April 2012, Punta Cana, Dominican Republic [Mark Kellner/Adventist Review; tedNEWS] Addressing nearly 900 delegates and guests at the Seventh World Congress of the International Religious Liberty Association, Denton Lotz, a noted Baptist minister and IRLA president, summarised the purpose of this three-day event: "We're here today because we believe that freedom of religion is basic to all human rights."

That view, sadly, is not shared in many parts of the world, something Lotz said made holding the sessions even more important.

"It's incumbent upon us to work together that we live together in harmony and concord," Lotz said to an audience of leaders from Christian, Muslim, Jewish and other communities. "We don't need religious wars."

While the main congress theme, "Secularism and Religious Freedom – Conflict or Partnership" may seem far removed from lands where persecution is active, Lotz took a different view.

"Most people worldwide suffer from a lack of religious freedom. Seventy percent of the world lives in places of religious repression," he said.

Speaking to an audience that included Seventh-day Adventists, Mennonites, Roman Catholics, Baptists, Mormons and Scientologists, among others, IRLA secretary-general John Graz noted the world congress is a multifaceted event.

"This congress is about religious freedom, but it is not a religious event," Graz said. "We are all here together. We represent different faiths, different religions and different churches. We are different, but we are respectful of each other."

With the theme of "Secularism and Religious Freedom -- Conflict or Partnership," speakers and delegates tried to negotiate the challenges of a world which is increasingly hostile to a variety of religious expression in the public square.

Dr. Miroslav Pujic, director of the ministry to secular and postmoderns at the Trans-European Division was one of the speakers who talked about the historical development of secularism and he shared few ideas how the media, especially social media, could be used in promoting religious freedom.

"Secularism is manifesting itself in a wave of anti-discrimination measures in Europe that are pushing anti-discrimination laws and practices which do not permit any religious exclusions," says Raafat Kamal, Religious Liberty director for Europe, and he added "the rise of secularism has contributed to a diminishing role of religion in the public square, and a marked increase in skepticism towards the free exercise of faith. When societies become neutral towards religion, we see less and less protection of religion and religious activities."

While standing for separation of church and state, IRLA leader Lotz issued a call for religion to avoid following a secular society's lead. "When religion becomes secular, I believe it is the greatest challenge to religious freedom, allowing secularism to define what a religion believes," Lotz told delegates. "When we allow the secularization of our faith to transcend the transcendent, it loses its meaning," he added.

Denton Lotz, IRLA president, gives a keynote address on secularism and religious freedom. [photos by Ansel Oliver]
Seventh-day Adventist world church President Ted N. C. Wilson challenged believers to grasp the opportunities for open discourse that a secular state preserves. Although acknowledging the inevitable conflict between the values of believers and that of secular culture, Wilson said, "We have to accept this tension as part of a free society. We have to accept the challenges and find appropriate responses, through God’s leading."

Wilson drew a distinction between “radical” or “extreme” secularism—which seeks to exclude religion from the public sphere—and “secular governance,” which remains neutral toward religions and protects the religious freedom rights of minorities.

In a statement read to delegates, the country’s president, Leonel Fernandez Reyna, offered "a most cordial welcome to the Dominican Republic, a land of freedom. The Dominican Republic is a place of freedom for Christians, Muslims, Jews and people of other faiths." [tedNEWS]
Pastors in England Discuss Postmodernism & Outreach

24 April 2012 Bracknell, United Kingdom [Kirsten Øster-Lundqvist] South England Conference ministers in the provinces gathered at Newbold church on Wednesday 18 April 2012 to discuss postmodernism and outreach to the majority population. A presentation on postmodernism by Dr Miroslav Pujic, Trans-European Division Ministry to Postmoderns director, shared some identifying aspects of how a postmodern mindset operates, and highlighted several challenges for the Church when using more traditional evangelistic methods for outreach. He noted that a postmodern mindset responds better to a relational outreach rather than programmes. Dr Pujic concluded by urging the pastors to "always start the conversation with Jesus."

"The presentation brought out some wider principles as we try to reach a secular society," stated Southampton pastor, Douglas McCormac. Pastor Sam Davies cares for Bedford and Milton Keynes church and appreciated the presentation: "It brought alive what we are doing, and helped me rethink my approach to the wider community."

The afternoon debate on reaching the majority population of the UK displayed a passion among the pastors to find methods to reach this people group. In small groups the pastors discussed threats and opportunities, what has worked where, class differences and cultural diversity within the majority population, and how our Church can become better in reaching this specific group.

Pastor Theo Rios cares for the English and Portuguese speaking churches in Peterborough. He called for a programme to be developed by Church leadership. Other pastors expressed that work had to be done in a local context. Youth worker Steven Hulbert shared how it is by developing authentic friendships in the local community that churches grow. Pastor Kwesi Moore expressed that the day had given him an "awareness of how little we understand of the enormity of the task, and how important it is that we can share a deep love for people, regardless of cultural context, colour or philosophical perspective."

Pastor Ian Sleeman, who organised the meeting, commented: "I wanted to share my hopes and dreams for evangelizing the majority population. We have had the discussion many times before," and he added, "but it was good to hear the other pastors’ frustration and perceived opportunities, and together I hope we can find a way forward."

To learn more about the discipleship strategy in reaching postmoderns please go to www.lifedevelopment.info and for the resources please look at this web site, www.tedmedia.org [tedNEWS]

tedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter's Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
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Conference on Adventist-Muslim Relations in Sarajevo

24 April 2012 Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina [Lidija Djordjevit-Runić; tedNEWS] Over one hundred participants gathered on 23-25 March 2012 in Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) for a Mission Conference. The conference was organised by the conference of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Adventist Mission department of the South-East European Union Conference (SEEUC). It was attended by leaders and members of the church from all districts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as delegates from other conferences of the Union.

The main speaker of the weekend conference was Petras Bahadur, the Adventist-Muslim Relation associate director in General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (GC). Instead of pointing out differences Bahadur’s approach is to find common grounds. He believes that the key to the ministry to Muslims is found in our identity, which should be utilized for building bridges. Most Muslims are unaware that the Seventh-day Adventists are the end-time movement group of Christians who actually have much in common with Islam. Bahadur used the Koran to illustrate that this book actually points to the Bible and encourages every Muslim to read it. The Koran also highly appreciates Jesus and points to him as the only sinless prophet.

The participants were eager to learn more about the means of fulfilling the mandate of Jesus by reaching out to over six million Muslims in the South-East European Union. Union president, Djordje Trajkovisi, reminded us: “God does not have other hands but ours to do His work!” Laszlo Gallusz, Adventist Mission (AM) director at the SEEUC, reminded us that the basic missiological principle is that God reaches people where they are – and this principle applies strongly to the “how to” of the AM relations.

This conference was an eye-opening experience. A member of the Adventist church in Sarajevo, who is married to a Muslim, spoke of this conference as an answer to her many prayers! Her husband attended almost all of the sessions of his own initiative. He commented in a private conversation: “This is a positive development in the Adventist church. We need more of these meetings in order to get to known each other.”

Bosnian conference president, Stevan Mirčeta, was very enthusiastic about bringing Bahadur back to Bosnia. He commented: “This conference was an important first step, but not the only one, and definitively not the last.” At the end of the conference Mirčeta made an appeal and many came forward for a special prayer of dedication for ministering to our Muslim neighbours. May God help us to put into practice what we learned!

For more information about the work in Bosnia and Herzegovina, please click here. [tedNEWS]

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Organizational Leadership Development Process

The church needs people who continually experience learning and growth as they go about their ministry. Such persons develop as leaders who in turn create positive transformation. They integrate learning and change with their experience. They in turn disciple others who grow as leaders, experience meaning in their service, and contribute significant organizational change.

Such leadership development is an on-going process in which the following eight conditions are established and nurtured. The eight conditions form a cyclical system; each condition promotes the others. Effective integration of this model means that leadership development becomes hard to distinguish from usual ministry. Leadership development is experienced while actually doing ministry, accomplishing and adapting, rather than a distinctive program.

Church organizations and their leaders can intentionally foster this process. But they need to understand that these conditions must be integrated into the on-going life of the local church or the ministry entity rather than seen as a particular program delivered in seminars or workshops. It is not that leadership workshops are not needed. They can draw attention to the process I describe below. And they can provide skill training that enhances specific ministry skills. In hierarchal organizations this model for leadership development requires promotion of a leadership development process within the local church, not one imposed from the top down to the local church.

Condition One: Rethinking Mission

Organizations (including the local church) seeking renewal typically attempt to clarify their mission. The organization has to get its mission straight.

Rethinking mission means an organization identifies and embraces -- within its idea of mission that it is a creative relational network in which personal transformation of its members is realized. No longer is mission seen in terms of output alone; mission becomes developing people who learn and change while doing ministry.

In hierarchal organizations positional leaders at some level must experience this resolve. Attitudes about evaluation held by these positional leaders then extend to how a member is changing in their important relationships while they go about ministry. Evaluation of mission becomes weighted toward how people are learning and changing while experiencing ministry.

Condition Two: Interrelatedness

Experience, learning, and changing are seen as parts of a whole process in this leadership development model. They are cyclical and internal, not linear or imposed from outside the community. That is what is meant by interrelatedness.

It is essential that persons who serve religious organizations both understand and nurture this reality. Learning, changing, and doing happen where people are in relationship with one another and working together in their primary community; that is where leadership development takes place.

Every system is in relationship with a broader system. So, though leadership development occurs in the setting of the local church, provision of counsel, assistance, and mentoring from an entity in the broader community such as a conference organization is helpful. That interrelatedness requires positive relationships between the church and the organization.

Experience, learning, and changing are interrelated dimensions that require intentionality from within the primary organization and constant renewal.
**Condition Three: Theological Reflection**

Significant theological reflection on the nature of leadership is mutually experienced in the on-going life of a healthy church or church organization. Relational processes of seeking meaning-making in the context of doing ministry provide the best ground for that theological reflection.

The vehicle for such activity is highly relational group interaction. I am suggesting these relationships be intentionally fostered. Highly relational groups should be created, and time for mutual reflection around scripture and ministry experience should be scheduled in the ministry context.

**Condition Four: Theoretical Learning**

Leadership is everyone’s opportunity, so all members of the church or organization should be equipped to critically think about their assumptions regarding the nature of leadership. Theoretical foundations for leadership understanding should form the foundation for this dimension of the leadership development process. Pastors or other positional leaders too often approach learning on this level as their domain without realizing the value to members throughout the organization.

Theoretical learning in the church or church organization can be accomplished by reading groups, annual workshops, and continuing education standards. These activities should be intentionally implemented and designed to foster theoretical learning regarding the nature of leadership.

**Condition Five: Reflection on Leadership Practices**

People experience leadership through specific behaviours they observe in their community including building shared vision, practicing solid integrity, challenging the status quo, empowering people, demonstrating abundance mentality, and relating to diversity. Attitudes are interpreted and formed as these practices are observed.

Think again about the cyclical nature of leadership development. It is certainly true that the heart of a person changes through theological and theoretical learning in the community. But an additional step is needed. That step is the skill of reflection. The opportunity for leadership behaviours to generate change within the heart of members of an organization is proportional to the skill and time devoted to reflection.

Reflection on leadership practice means identifying behaviours, analysing, and critically thinking. Relationships in religious organizations between peer leaders, managers, and positional leaders should foster conversation that is reflective, aside from evaluation regarding productivity. Additionally, continuing education should provide emphases on leadership practices involving skills in reflection.

**Condition Six: Experiential Learning**

The ministry itself provides a transforming opportunity within an organization. This condition is distinct from reflection on leadership practices in that it grasps the value of what might otherwise be seen as ordinary work having nothing to do with leadership or its development. People have the capacity to find meaning and experience change as they go about mundane activity.

Experiential learning requires recognition of the value of the ministry. Such a culture will produce self-directed reflection on just how ministry is done, and what it means to contribute through ministry. A culture of experiential learning is produced by affirming experimentation, valuing the learning failure provides, providing peer feedback, offering coaching, and performance reviews that emphasize the learning that is taking place while doing the ministry itself.

**Condition Seven: Training**

Skill training for a wide range of ministry skills such as strategic planning, conflict management, managing meetings, managing change, communication, financial administration, human resource management, or other specific ministry challenges should be provided in the context of the church in an intentional and professional manner with affirmation given by endorsement or certification of the specific skills pursued.

**Condition Eight: Feedback**

A 360 degree assessment tool that provides feedback from peers, those served, and those that a person reports to should be applied no less than every fourth year to provide feedback to the leader. The growth of the organization around important values can be measured and interpreted as the transforming impact of leadership. We need to listen to the voice of others who can affirm our strengths and help identify our areas of challenge!

**Conclusion**

These eight conditions are integrated dimensions of an on-going transformational leadership development process creating positive change for organizations. The process must be experienced within the ministry of the local church or other organization and is on-going. In hierarchal organizations, the role of supporting leadership development from one organizational level to another is to provide consultation and guidance in establishing the process.

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Skip Bell, DMin

Professor of Christian Leadership,
Emotional Intelligence: The Most Important Leadership Quality?

Arriving in a new district or taking up a new position in an organisation is always fraught with anticipation, uncertainty and worry. This was particularly true when my husband took a pastoral position in an area with which he was not familiar. Shortly upon arrival, one well-meaning church member offered him very insightful advice. He said: ‘You cannot tell the people from our region what to do; you can only invite them to follow you’. What are the leaders’ characteristics that will inspire others to follow?

There is no shortage of literature identifying the most pertinent qualities that every good leader ought to have. We are told that amongst other traits leaders should possess cognitive strength, analytical reasoning, technical skills, inspirational motivation, vision, integrity, fairness, confidence and emotional intelligence. It is to be expected that a highly intelligent pastor or head of a department who oozes with confidence will generate respect from his congregation or his team. However, there are some indicators to suggest that it is in fact emotional intelligence, or as some termed it emotional literacy, that separates ordinary leaders from those capable of great things. What is more, it has been suggested that an ‘emotionally illiterate’ leader is often accompanied with emotional numbness and inability to respond to the emotional needs of others, is a significant shortcoming of those called to lead others.

Emotional intelligence, a concept that emerged in the 80s, has gradually entered into the vocabulary of psychologists, counsellors, life coaches and other professionals and it seems to be here to stay. However, what is emotional intelligence or emotional literacy? One of many available definitions suggests emotional intelligence to be ‘effective awareness, control and management of our own emotions and awareness and understanding of other people’. This human quality has captured the imagination of researchers resulting in what appears to be a convincing argument for the benefits of emotional sensitivity whilst pointing to the shortcomings in the case of its absence.

The far-reaching consequence of limited, or even non-existent emotional awareness is documented by an evaluation of the leadership qualities of past American presidents. Following the analysis of public communication, organisational capacity, political skill, vision, cognitive style and emotional intelligence of eleven presidents the authors acknowledge that ‘in the world of imagination it is possible to envisage a cognitively and emotionally intelligent chief executive, who happens also to be an inspiring public communicator, a capable White House organiser, and the possessor of exceptional political skill and vision. In the real world, human imperfection is inevitable, but some imperfections are more disabling than others.’ Having identified several presidents who despite some noteworthy historical achievements are responsible for ‘the most unhappy episodes of the twentieth century’ the authors reach a bold conclusion: ‘Beware of the most unhappy episodes of the twentieth century’ the authors reach a bold conclusion: ‘Beware the presidential contender who lacks emotional intelligence. In its absence all else may turn to ashes’.

This strong statement is not surprising given that an absence of emotional insight appears to have a profound effect not only on the leaders’ ability to understand his or her co-workers, but it is also responsible for the inaccurate appraisal of self. Daniel Goleman identified self-awareness as the first quality possessed by emotionally literate leaders. This includes ‘having a deep understanding of one’s emotions, strengths, weaknesses, needs and drives.’ What is it that is making me happy, fulfilled and content? What, when and who brings the worst out in me? These are just some of the questions that need answering in an attempt to become an emotionally aware individual. Those people, the author continues ‘are neither overly critical nor unrealistically hopeful. Rather, they are honest with themselves and others.’

A good starting point in becoming in tune with self and others is a systematic appraisal of one’s own strengths and weaknesses. This soul-searching exercise is not about naming what I should or ought to be good at; instead, it seeks to identify the areas in which I do particularly well, the skills I accomplish with ease, and the tasks that capture my imagination. It is about the input that generates positive feedbacks from those I know are honest with me. Having identified all of my strengths, my limitations need careful and sincere consideration. Which aspects of my job make me very anxious or do not result in a positive response from others? What would those closest to me identify as my weakest point as a leader? Do I need help with any aspect of my life? Conducting an accurate evaluation of one’s weaknesses has the potential to contribute to a realistic approach to the challenges that any job brings. This is expected to include utilising strengths appropriately whilst being careful when engaging in the areas recognised as weaknesses. Furthermore, identifying appropriate strategies that will address the weaker aspects of my own performance is also an important aspect of this self-discovery.
An additional benefit of being aware of one's own strengths and weaknesses might result in increased confidence as well as in the readiness to acknowledge one's own limitations. I have recently been asked to teach and work closely with a young, sharp and very intelligent scholar who is leading some 'cutting edge' work in his area of expertise. It would be dishonest of me to omit the fact that I was concerned about being intimidated by him, but quite the opposite happened. In addition to his enthusiasm and his superior handling of knowledge, his readiness to freely identify areas which he apparently ['knew little about', and his modesty about his expertise made him not only approachable but also stimulated learning. This is not surprising because genuine humbleness, not unlike empathy, to be discussed next, is a quality that has enabling properties.

Empathy has been acknowledged as an important dimension of emotional intelligence that, whilst most easily recognisable, is frequently absent from the repertoire of essential leadership skills. And yet, an empathetic leader might be able to prevent the team and individuals from becoming overwhelmed, disillusioned, and even depressed in the course of duty. He or she will not remain silent about the professional challenges or personal hardships his co-workers are going through. Showing genuine interest in his or her workforce will be an integral aspect of the leadership style employed by an emotionally literate leader. Empathy discussed here however is not an 'un-businesslike' sentimental style of leadership, but a leadership capable of taking notice of employees circumstances, feelings and ability 'in the process of making intelligent decisions'. These leaders are in tune with 'the messages beneath the words being spoken'. This will also include unequivocal respect for others as well as commitment to understanding the way culture impacts upon human interactions.

As a social work academic I am frequently involved in attempting to teach students to be both aware of their own feelings as well as being sensitive to the needs of those they will be working with. Positive regard for every individual alongside a related set of traditional values that, amongst others, includes acceptance, a non-judgmental attitude and a respect for people are deeply embedded in the knowledge base and skills passed on to social work students. Despite the noble intentions and genuine motivation of most students, this approach to training often feels as though one is trying to teach budding social workers to create a beautiful master-piece by 'painting by numbers'. As a Christian who teaches at a State University I often question whether it is indeed possible to develop those qualities through education and training alone? Could it be that identified leadership techniques, including the emotional intelligence, might remain just a mechanical exercise without drawing on the power available to those who have a meaningful spiritual life?

There is no doubt that many Adventist leaders are known for their excellent leadership that includes the vast repertoire of skills expected of an effective Christian leader. Equally, as most leaders know, in the ‘hustle and bustle’ of pursuing the common goal, it is very easy to overlook one’s own emotional needs alongside the needs of co-workers. I have attempted to argue that a leadership that is committed to developing the emotional intelligence that includes keen knowledge of self and dedication to the understanding of others has the potential to overcome this omission. I would like to conclude by acknowledging that emotional intelligence that draws from Christ’s example and uses his power in achieving this goal will give real meaning to this important leadership skill. After all, He was the ultimate leader who only needed to say: ‘Follow me’, and the rest is history. [tedNEWS]


Dr Lidija Godina, Senior Lecturer, Applied Social Sciences at University of Bedfordshire

Leadership Development Journal - March 2012
Building Beneath the Surface - The Leader's Inner Life

Brooklyn Bridge is a famous landmark spanning the East River in New York City. At the time it opened (1883), it was the longest suspension bridge in the world — 50% longer than any previously built. For several years the towers were the tallest structures in the Western Hemisphere.

When the bridge opened there were many skeptics who claimed that such a large structure could not long remain suspended by cables. It could not bear the strain of traffic or wind and weather. Before long it would collapse into the river. Yet for well over a century it has served as a major transportation artery connecting the boroughs of Brooklyn and Manhattan.

During the early stages of constructing the New York tower progress was not apparent. Local citizens complained about the passage of time and the absence of any visible development. In response, the Chief Engineer wrote: “To such of the general public as might imagine that no work had been done on the New York tower, because they see no evidence of it above the water, I should simply remark that the amount of the masonry and concrete laid on that foundation during the past winter, under water, is equal in quantity to the entire masonry of the Brooklyn tower visible today above the water line.”

The Chief Engineer’s statement illustrates a vital truth about leadership: It is the work that is done inside the heart and mind, where people cannot see, that determines whether a leader will stand the tests of time and circumstance. It is the inner life, where only God sees, that informs, stabilizes, sustains or weakens and corrodes the visible aspects of leadership. This inner work is accomplished by worship, devotion, prayer and reflection about ethics, morals, and values.

Today one hears a lot about leadership strategy, leadership vision, the marketing and communication of leadership ideas. The risk is that a person may spend all his/her time on these leadership concepts and forget that character-building is the first priority for leadership.

Jesus spoke in graphic terms about the contrasts between the outer and the inner life. (See Matthew 23:13-28) The outside of cup and platter may be so clean as to glister in the sun but the inside is full of corruption and excess. Religious leaders might be as attractive as newly-painted tombstones in a well-manicured cemetery but the inviting exterior only hides inner decay. This is the tragedy of leaders failing to recognize the importance of the inner life.

On another occasion Jesus spoke about the influence of one’s life. “On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” —John 7:37,38 NKJV

What Jesus is saying is that if you want your life to be influential the first thing is to make sure it is connected to the right source. Perhaps the leadership principle that is most important for spiritual leaders is that “when you guard your secret life with God, your public life will take care of itself.” Jesus assures us that if we are connected to Him, the visible effect of our lives, however small, will be a blessing to the world.

Far too often news headlines these days describe the moral downfall of persons who have hitherto carried enormous responsibility and enjoyed public trust. And then to everyone’s amazement the corroded inner life of such a leader is exposed — perhaps an act of financial fraud, failure to tell the truth in a moment of crisis, unfaithfulness to a spouse, or the cancerous effects of a private habit such as pornography. Leaders of religious organisations are not immune to public failure. The environment of power and the accolades of colleagues can easily blind a person to the risks that accompany position and prestige. It requires the inner life to anchor the public life.

How then do we attend to the inner life, the character-building work that is so essential to survival in public leadership? It happens primarily in what we do with our quiet time — those moments of the day that are reserved for feeding and focusing the mind. Those periods in private when we wrestle with huge questions: what kind of person do I want to be? for what purpose am I living? to whom do I turn for mentoring? what are the values by which I live?

It is a myth that a crisis develops character. It does not. Crisis only reveals character. The urgent lesson for leaders is that in changing times, in moments of crisis, strength comes from one’s spiritual disciplines. These habits are not
developed on the spur of the moment. They yield their fruit only when carefully cultivated with consistency and honesty.

And there is a marvelous assurance that the inner life of dependence upon God will have its beneficial effect in one's public life. Jesus affirmed that in His statement about a person, who believes in Him, becoming a river of living water.

Ellen G White cautioned and encouraged leaders that, “It is not the capabilities you now possess or ever will have that will give you success. It is that which the Lord can do for you. He longs to give you understanding in temporal as well as in spiritual matters. He can sharpen the intellect. He can give tact and skill. Put your talents into the work, ask God for wisdom, and it will be given you.”

Building beneath the surface is the most important work that any leader can do.

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1 Ellen G White, Christ's Object Lessons, p. 146

By Lowell C Cooper, General Vice President, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Leadership Development Journal - January 2012
A World of Possibilities

It is canny how ideas converge to capture our attention. Among Heathrow's advertising graffiti last week was the strap:
HSBC - the Bank that sees
a world of possibilities.

During a training event this month, school governors were introduced to the idea of 'possibility thinking' - what happens when a student believes that they are an A-grade student? What happens when teachers perceive their students worthy of the A-grade? It would appear that the students cease to operate from a basis of fear, or in a spirit of competition, they become adventurous and creative, they begin to live into their possibilities. They live into the person they want to be. Teachers find new respect and passion for those they teach and find common purpose with their students.

Coincidently one of the themes in our Trans-European Division meetings was 'thinking possibilities'. We were challenged to think of 82,000 members all inspired to speak of God's grace, people in twenty nations speaking to needs and conflicts of their communities, we spoke at length of the coming Christ who will overcome in the face of the saga of controversy during the last six thousand years of human history. We spoke with passion about recognising possibilities, gifts for service and leadership, in every person both male and female.

Ben and Roz Zander, in their inspiring 'The Art of Possibility' write as follows:
"The action in the universe of possibility may be described as generative, or giving, in all senses of the word - producing new life, creating new ideas, consciously endowing with meaning, contributing, yielding to the power of contexts. The relationship between people and environments is highlighted, not the people and things themselves. Emotions that are relegated to the special category of spirituality are abundant here: joy, grace, awe, wholeness, passion and compassion."

"You are more likely to be successful overall, if you participate joyfully with projects and goals and do not think your life depends upon them...resources are likely to come to you in greater abundance when you are generous and inclusive and engage people in your passion for life... In the universe of possibility, you set the context and let life unfold."

"The leader of possibility invigorates lines of affiliation and compassion from person to person in the face of a tyranny of fear",... we can exercise this kind of leadership whoever or wherever we are.

Clearly, when we think possibility with respect to our neighbours, we see them not as enemies to be conquered, or heathens to be converted, incorrigible secularists, but people created in the image of God who could grow into disciples of Christ. People like James and John, common fishermen, to whom Jesus simply said: follow me. The same people who years later described the vision of their experience: for we beheld his glory, full of grace and truth.

Thank you for seeing possibility in the people you serve by offering them hope in these times of despair. Improbable, but with possibility!

By Victor Pilmoor - Treasurer, British Union of Conferences of the Seventh-day Adventists
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