A Fresh Perspective to Making God Known in Europe

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Navigating the Grey Area

28 November 2012 Berrien Springs, United States [Ann Gibson, LDJ] As I write, the opinion/editorial pages of American newspapers are debating the ethics of General David Petraeus, given his extra-marital affair and his subsequent resignation as Director of the CIA. Some editors/national columnists argue that since other public figures have engaged in similar activities and didn’t resign... Read more
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A Fresh Perspective to Making God Known in Europe

29 November 2011 St Albans, England [Miroslav Pujic, tedNEWS] Seventy-eight delegates from the eleven Unions and three attached Fields, which constitute the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Trans-European region (TED), met from 21 - 26 November in Becici, Montenegro. The theme of the annual council was “Making God Known, a fresh perspective.”

Dr Bertil Wiklander, President of the Trans-European Division (TED), says, “The focus of the Annual Council 2012 was to approve our new strategic mission plan for Europe, present numerous reports and plans for events, services and resources that will help the church in the TED to make God known; approve the budget for 2013, receive guidelines and policies for our work, conduct leadership development workshop, drive the development of Newbold College forward, and inspire, envision, strengthen and nurture the spiritual faith of our leaders and members.”

Representatives from the Adventist World Church Headquarters, Dr G. T. Ng, Executive Secretary, Elder Robert E. Lemon, Treasurer and Pastor Orville Parchment assistant to the President, attended the meetings and provided counsel.

During four intensive days, the Committee listened to reports and the plans from administration and departmental directors, discussed numerous policy changes, processed various items of business, and discussed current and future major initiatives.

Reports

In his keynote address Dr Wiklander said: “We now make God known in a spiritually cold and yet materially well-to-do Europe, where God is not known. Ignorance and indifference are our two great challenges. As leaders, our great need is the same as it has always been: To remember our life-changing meeting with God, as we walk with him. The first Christians brought many radical changes as they witnessed the risen Christ. What they said was totally different from what people in those days believed about the resurrection. This can only be explained by a crucial and unexpected event that converted them. God had made himself known to them in a new way! So, let’s make God known! Let’s follow Jesus in being faithful to God like him.”

Audrey Andersson, TED Executive Secretary, presented the Division’s statistical report showing the membership of the Trans-European Division was 82,768 at June 2012. “This is a net increase of 911 over the past year. Eight of the 11 unions and three attached fields saw a decline in membership over the past year a trend which could be reversed if we could improve the retention of our existing members. For every 3.3 people baptised one person leaves the church. Preventing this membership drain should be a priority”, concluded Andersson.

Jöhann E. Jóhannsson, TED Treasurer, reported the financial situation and plans for the next year saying that “tithes and offerings in local currencies have been relatively stable during the last year, despite the financial crisis in many countries within our territory, especially in Greece. Some of our unions and fields have experienced moderate increases, while in others tithes and offerings have decreased, and drastically so in some countries. We give praise to the Lord for our members’ faithfulness during these financially challenging times.”

Making God Known is the theme of the newly revised TED Strategic Plan that was presented by Pastor Raafat Kamal, TED Field Secretary, and approved by more than 80 leaders and attendees. The vision is to bring a fresh challenge to bear witness to Jesus Christ and his teachings to over 200 million people residing in the countries of the TED. The plan follows the GC model “Tell the World” with three main goals to Reach Up (worship), Reach Out (witness) and Reach Across (community) - in every community, in every sphere of society, and in the realm of ideas. Based on 30 commitments and multiple exciting actions, the TED leaders entered a pledge with God and with each other to pray, to study, to plan, to prioritise, to work together and to grow together in making God known in Europe.
Dr Philip Brown, Principal of Newbold College, reports a 9.5% increase in student enrolment for 2012-13, including a 45% increase in students living on campus. Recent initiatives taken to enhance the student experience include the refurbishment of the Cafeteria, the full renovation of Keough House (Men's Hall of Residence) and the initial refurbishment of Schuil House (Women's Hall of Residence) with a refurbishment of the College Gymnasium scheduled from mid-2013. The College has joined the Adventist College Abroad (ACA) consortium. This is attracting students who wish to combine a 'British Heritage' suite of modules with studies in business, English literature, history, media, music, psychology and/or religion. Increasingly flexible delivery options are resulting in more students pursuing postgraduate theology studies. The English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programme continues to grow in popularity. During June and July 2013 a number of campus-based intensive study options will be offered across six themes: Media Studies; English Literature; Teacher Education; Business Studies; History and Theology (undergraduate); and Theology (postgraduate). More details of this programme can be accessed at www.newbold.ac.uk.

Reports from individual Unions and Fields indicated the full commitment of the leaders, in mission outreach and evangelism. At the same time all of them recognised the challenges faced in postmodernism, secularism, materialism, traditionalism and a resistance to Christian beliefs. Each report pointed out the special role of the church, namely that the church is more than a social club, more than a group of men and women with common interests. Rather, it represents God’s activity in the world and man’s response to that activity with thanks and willing obedience.

To watch some of the reports presented at the meetings, please click here.

The Executive Committee also voted new assignment: Paul Tompkins, Director for Ministry to Clergy Families.

Evangelism
Pastor Raafat Kamal, TED Adventist Mission Director, explained the purpose of the mission of the church across the Division: “The three-fold purposes for Adventist Mission are to enter new areas, reach new people groups and revitalise existing churches. For the first 9 months of 2012, the fields, TED and GC have supported 82 projects within the TED with over $1.4 million dollars – this includes funding for 2 Centres of Influence in Copenhagen, Denmark, and Stockholm, Sweden. This has led many people to accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour or request Bible studies. Over the past 17 years, the church organisation has supported thousands of Global Mission projects to the value of $30 million dollars. We praise God and thank Him for his blessings and we request from our members to continue praying for the work of our Global Mission pioneers”, concluded Kamal.

LIFEconnect ministry (www.lifeconnect.info) has been proven as an excellent new evangelistic model creating online communities in making digital disciples with the real people. Thirteen languages, out of 21 registered, made the fantastic results in having 11,000 members of the network; 138,000 visits every week; 241 bible studies, and already 15 baptisms. "I am so thrilled with the LC concept and the report that I heard", says Iselin Fjeld, lay representative from Norway, and continued: "LC has shown me the great value and potential of going bigger and much wider than we ever have. I believe in meeting people where they are already, where they are available. And this is definitely where you find Norwegians today, on social media."

Great Hope Project (GHP) is ready to start, reports Dr Miroslav Pujic, TED Publishing Director. “The TED is part of the Great Hope Project worldwide. The vision of this initiative is to engage members and pastors in witnessing to make disciples of Jesus Christ. This will be achieved by sharing 2 million copies of literature for the purpose of bringing spiritual seekers into a better understanding that our only hope can be found in Jesus Christ as a person and that His Second Advent will be a final solution to life’s challenges.”

The plan is to do a massive distribution of the attractive Great Controversy magazines, Escape for adults and Connect for youth, to raise the interest of people who want answers to critical questions about the challenging times we live in. Once the interest is shown, Bible studies will be conducted using the message book, Experiencing the Joy, accompanied with a DVD and curriculum. In addition to this The Great Controversy book will be offered to those who want to learn in depth about the battle between good and evil. Finally, invitations will be offered to follow Jesus and make a commitment by the action of baptism.

Pastor Reidar J. Kvinge, the president of the Adventist Church in Norway sees the GHP material as a fantastic resource: “This is the most appealing and helpful material I ever seen. ‘Is life more than surviving? Why are we here? Why is there so much evil in the world? Are there reasons to hope?’ These and many more questions are reflected upon in such a way that I want to share this with all my friends. People who want a life changing experience will
The Initiatives of the General Conference ‘Mission to the Cities’ with the aim to significantly share the Gospel in 650 major cities around the world before 2015, found positive response at the TED. London is to be the evangelistic focus for the 2013 were more than 100 evangelistic programmes will be done. Janos Kovacs-Biro, TED Evangelism Director and the leader of the programme says that the "the vision is to involve all local church communities in activities which would make God known in a felt and practical way within their communities, mission territories. The aim is to recruit a task force in order to cover practical ministries like community services, health approach, media ministries, youth ministry, Bible studies, etc., to provide training for all who want to be involved.”

"There is a work to be done in the cities, so many of us lose our children in the jungle of the city," emphasises Pastor Sam Davis, President of the South England Conference.

Comments
Renée Hazen, lay representative from the Netherlands, says: “After a few days filled with meetings, Sabbath came as a welcome change of pace! We heard testimonies, instrumental specials and inspiring video clips. To me, there is nothing better than when the church unites in singing. Songs like ‘Ancient Words’ and ‘Great is Thy Faithfulness’ touched my heart. The hotel lobby filled with music and I spotted one of the hotel staff joining us, in her own language the song "Morning by morning, new mercies I see!"

Ossi Turunen, lay representative from Finland, says: “The meeting provided an opportunity for learning from the experiences of other unions, networking, spiritual strengthening, hearing a number of excellent talks, and discussions with high quality people and with leading persons about timely topics for today.”

Kärt Vahtramäe, lay representative from Estonia, says: “I am really glad I have been given the opportunity to take part in such a gathering of the leaders of the church. With all the devotionals, the reports on God's miracles and blessings, as well as the presentations of the evangelistic programmes and resources that have been developed for spreading His love, the meetings provide an experience that reinvigorates and renews my faith in the local church. What is there not to like – the food is fantastic, the venue surprises me each morning with an indescribably beautiful view over the sea and the mountains, the weather has been warm and welcoming, the company simultaneously awe-inspiring and inclusive, and the Sabbath a brief glimpse at what heaven might be like! For a lay member, this kind of leadership meetings and organisational matters may at times seem too distant and even unnecessary or useless. Some issues may appear deceptively clear-cut from the safe surroundings of the local church, and some vaguer and more confusing than they become when addressing them in a company of people from all over Europe who know their business, and – most importantly – know God's business. It is reassuring to see our leaders' dedication to and passion for His mission - no, these people are no different from us (no saints or extra-holy men in the group); and yet, they are blessed with the skills, knowledge, faith and inspiration necessary for leading our church and providing for it.

Pastor Orville Parchment, Assistant to the GC President: “I experienced a tremendous blessing while attending the 2012 TED Annual Council. The spiritual atmosphere was inspiring. The attitude among the attendees was outstanding. The initiatives and programs outlined by the administration of the Division, Unions and Attached Fields will certainly be effective in sharing the good news of the gospel. The location was invigorating and splendid. Let us move forward in faith to continue "Make God Known in Europe".

Conclusion
In his final remarks Dr Wiklander noted that "we succeeded by God's grace, our excellent teamwork, and very good cooperation with the Unions to achieve our objectives. I am very pleased with the atmosphere and participation in the meetings. We have shared a great amount of material, especially as we launched the Great Hope Project, and approved plans for the Mission to the Cities project which will focus on New York and London next year, and for the Pan-Europe Adventist Youth Congress in Novi Sad, Serbia. It was also very impressive to see how many evangelistic projects around TED are now working extremely well, and they are creative and innovative and leading to baptisms everywhere. Some unions have had strong growth and church plants have turned into churches. The use of social media through LC ministry has also become prominent and we are making a bigger impact on our societies than before. We had a vigorous and significant discussion about the church's timetable in answering our request to ordain women for the gospel ministry and reported on our study of the theology of ordination including women's ordination. We have started a new work in Cyprus which is looking very exciting. We pray for the situation in Greece and thank God that our church there is doing many things to relieve the suffering of the people. Above all, we have been encouraged to engage in our mission with spiritual tools, our faith and reliance on God, and we have been reminded that we will not give up in the 'race' to make God known. I would like to invite all readers of this newsletter to come on board with us and never give up." [TedNEWS]

If you would like to see more photographs from the TED executive meetings, please click here.

To learn more about the Trans-European Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, please visit our websites:
- www.ted-adventist.org
- www.lifeconnect.info
- www.tedmedia.org
- www.essenceofworship.org
- www.lifedevelopment.info
- www.ministrytopostmoderns.com

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Adventist President Calls for December 1 Day of Prayer, Fasting to Support Falsely Accused Members

20 November 2012 [ANN staff, Adventist News Network] Seventh-day Adventist world church President Ted N. C. Wilson today called for an International Day of Prayer and Fasting on December 1 to rally support for the release of two Adventists currently imprisoned in the West African country of Togo.

Wilson and top church executives who voted the emphasis day at a November 20 morning business meeting said the event will raise awareness of the plight of Antonio dos Anjos Monteiro, Sabbath School and Personal Ministries director for the church’s Sahel Union Mission, headquartered in Lome; and Bruno Amah, an Adventist lay member and businessman in Lome.

Adventist lawyers and human rights activists have called for both men’s release since they were detained in March for conspiracy to commit murder. A Togolese man implicated Monteiro and Amah as conspirators in an alleged blood trafficking network, but a police search of Monteiro’s home and local church headquarters did not produce evidence. Since then, local authorities have recognized both men’s innocence.

Diplomatic efforts to secure both men’s release are expected to continue. Today church leaders established a working group to oversee efforts led by John Graz, director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty for the Adventist world church. Church leaders are enlisting the support of members worldwide to raise further awareness through a social media campaign to promote the December 1 Day of Prayer.

“We are asking the entire world Seventh-day Adventist Church to join in prayer and fasting on December 1,” Wilson said. The world church leader met with both men in prison earlier this month during a tour of West Africa.

“These are falsely accused, innocent church members and we are pleading with the Lord for his intervention so that they can be reunited with their families and continue their work,” he said. [tedNEWS]

Adventist Church President Ted N. C. Wilson, right, calls for a December 1 International Day of Prayer and Fasting for two Adventists imprisoned in the West African country of Togo. Wilson spoke about the situation with church leaders worldwide through a video conference on November 20. At left is Williams Costa Jr., Communication director for the Adventist world church. [photo: Ansel Oliver]
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23 November 2012 Watford, United Kingdom [Victor Hulbert, BUC News] Mac couldn’t be happier. "Most days I'm loading my truck to make rich people richer. Today, I'm transporting happiness," he beamed while carefully swinging a forty-foot container up from the ADRA compound on Stanborough Park, Watford, onto the back of his lorry.

A skilled operative, he was one of the lorry drivers commissioned to transport the two ADRA containers to the Port of Felixstowe. That will start their six week journey by ship to Burkina Faso where 12,000 shoeboxes, WakaWaka solar powered lights, and 250 relief boxes from Aquabox should arrive, ready for distribution, on Boxing Day. What a joyful surprise that will be for thousands of children.

ADRA-UK CEO, Bert Smit, was visibly excited as he watched the containers being loaded on Wednesday, 21 November. "So many people, and especially schoolchildren, have made this happen," he stated, noting that there were 4,000 more shoeboxes than in the 2011 appeal. "People are so generous, even when feeling the pinch themselves."

That generosity has been seen across the country. In Middlesbrough 167 boxes were collected at the Adventist church while a further 202 were donated by children at a local primary school. Judy Hamilton-Johansson states, "This is the sixth year the school has taken part in our annual shoebox appeal. The kids are so keen to help others and get really excited about making the boxes, after watching the ADRA DVD and realizing how little the children of Africa have, many used their own pocket money to buy gifts."

Judy noted that it really helped getting an article published in her local newspaper. She says, "I had people knocking at my door with boxes."

Leamington Spa Mission found members of all ages bringing their creative skills to the fore on Sabbath afternoon, 10 November, sorting, wrapping and packing as well as providing transportation donations. Nigel Clark notes that it was a fun community activity, with the energy levels "maintained with the provision of hot mince pies and mulled juice."

In Central London, Claudia Passer rejoiced, "Praise God, we managed to make 104 complete boxes. However, they got so excited and want to go for 200 next year."

They are representative of hundreds of churches and volunteers who have made this year’s appeal the most successful to date. A young child from Manchester stated, "We saw your video and we wanted to do shoeboxes to make more little kids happy.” Not put off by the frost last Sunday morning, another volunteer stated, "When I saw the number of shoeboxes being delivered it was only then I realised how big the shoebox appeal has become."

"The response from our members and friends has been phenomenal," states appeal coordinator, Godwin Benjamin. His thanks go not just to the donors, "but also the volunteers who packed boxes at the collection points and those who helped to unload the trucks and pack the two containers. All your efforts were greatly appreciated."
Volunteers will also play a part in the distribution next January. Five volunteers have been selected from the applications received in response to an announcement on the ADRA-UK website. The volunteers travel at their own cost but will be hosted while helping with the distribution. Expect to see Mac’s smile multiplied a hundredfold as these volunteers see the joy a simple shoebox can bring.

Visit the BUC Picture gallery for photos and a video of the shoebox send-off. Follow ADRA-UK on Facebook or on the web. [tedNEWS]

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Wilson Urges Reconciliation in Ivory Coast, Meets with Ashanti King in Ghana

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In the Ivory Coast last week, Wilson called for reconciliation following last year’s civil unrest after a disputed election.

Wilson, who served as a regional executive for the Adventist Church in Ivory Coast from 1981 to 1990, said, “During this period of reconciliation here in Ivory Coast, we must have the spirit of the Good Samaritan. The duty of Christians is to represent Christ.”

He delivered his remarks in French during a keynote speech at the Palace of Culture in Abidjan.

Wilson also added, “We must treat our women with respect. We must have a respectful and a warm attitude towards our wives, our husbands and our children. Reconciliation must first start in the home, the neighborhood, the church and then spread to the country.

Ediemou Jacob, president of the Religious National Forum of Ivory Coast, said Wilson was the first world religious leader to visit Ivory Coast with a message of reconciliation.

Wilson also met with Ivory Coast President Alassane Ouattara on November 7.

There are nearly 13,000 Adventist Church members in Ivory Coast, which is the headquarters for the denomination’s West-Central Africa Division.

Wilson is visiting several countries in the division this month. Late last week he traveled to neighboring Ghana to begin a five-day visit in the country.

In the city of Kumasi, Wilson met with Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, who is the Asantehene, a ceremonial leadership role of the Ashanti people. Wilson’s father, Neal Wilson, who served as Adventist Church president from 1979 to 1990, visited the previous king 24 years ago.

Ted Wilson told the king and his officials of the gift his father received – a hand carving of a hand holding an egg. “The explanation of it is that if you are too hard on your people you will crush them, and if you are too relaxed and not interested and you relax your hand, the egg falls,” Wilson told the delegation in the Manhyia Palace.

Tutu commended the Adventist Church in Ghana for its contribution in the areas of education and healthcare. “I have realized that there is a lot of [self] discipline in the Adventist Church, and those in the church believe in its values and principles,” he said through an interpreter.

Wilson also inaugurated a nearby multi-cultural center, which was sponsored by the Adventist Church headquarters and the church’s South Central Ghana Conference. The center will offer skills training for church and community members in information technology, catering and sewing. It will also offer training for evangelism and outreach.

On Saturday, November 10, Wilson joined some 30,000 worshipers at Baba Yara Stadium in Kumasi for a special...
Wilson Urges Reconciliation in Ivory Coast, Meets with Ashanti King in... http://www.ted-adventist.org/news/wilson-urges-reconciliation-in-ivory-coast/

Wilson is presented with a golden stool by a representative of the king of the Ashanti people in Ghana. The gift, which represents pillars and strong foundations, was presented during the Sabbath worship service at Baba Yara Stadium in Kumasi. [photo: Ohemeng Tawiah]

The next day, Wilson spoke at this year’s graduation ceremony at church-run Valley View University. He challenged the more than 500-member graduating class to have the biblical viewpoint of success. “In whatever work God leads you, you should realize that success is dependent on your connection to Christ, which results in humble service to him and others,” he said.

Wilson also met with Alfred Oko Vanderpuije, the first Adventist mayor of Accra, Ghana’s capital. There are some 375,000 members in the church’s Ghana Union Conference.

Wilson was accompanied on the trip by his wife Nancy and officers of the division. Wilson will also visit Liberia and Togo during his trip to the region.

Earlier last week, at the division Year-End Meeting, the Executive Committee voted to grant self-supporting conference status to 14 administrative units in Nigeria and one unit in Liberia. The moves highlight development of the church in those regions in terms of its finances and leadership. [tedNEWS]

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Children’s Ministries Progress in Albania

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Employing a creative, interactive approach, the Sanchez couple instructed the audience on various topics that involve ministering to children and teens. Among others, the keynote speakers stressed the importance of taking into consideration all aspects of the development of early teens -- physical, cognitive, social and psychological. Meanwhile, the TED speakers could not hide their enthusiasm at the strong presence of children and teens in Adventist churches throughout Albania. “It is a unique experience for us to see such a high ratio of children and teens taking part in Sabbath services,” said Sanchez-Schutte. Taking into consideration the fact that the Church in Albania has the youngest demographic in the TED territory, Pr. Marčeta, pointed out that “we at the AUC see an excellent potential in this particular ministry and we take this opportunity to express our continued support for Albania.”

On behalf of all the participants, Clarissa España, Director of Children Ministries for the Albanian Mission (ALM), expressed her most sincere appreciation to the TED and the AUC for supporting children’s ministry during this visit. “It was indeed a blessing for all of us! We all got very encouraged to continue working with our children and youth for the kingdom of heaven, fulfilling the biblical counsel found in Proverbs 22:6 ‘Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.’”

Furthermore, Pr. Leo España, ALM President, thanked the speakers for the professional, enjoyable and creative presentations. “Church administrators as well as local pastors were glad to see the enthusiasm from all the children coordinators and teachers who participated in the training. They returned to their hometowns motivated with new ideas to put into practice in their local congregations.” Pr. España also emphasised that “children and teenagers are the future of our church in Albania; there is a great potential in them, and we have to invest our time, resources and talents guiding them in their spiritual growth with Jesus.”

For more information about the church in Albania, please visit www.adventist.al [tedNEWS].

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Navigating the Grey Area

As I write, the opinion/editorial pages of American newspapers are debating the ethics of General David Petraeus, given his extra-marital affair and his subsequent resignation as Director of the CIA. Some editors/national columnists argue that since other public figures have engaged in similar activities and didn’t resign (e.g., Bill Clinton, Edward Kennedy), why should Petraeus have resigned? (Thomas, 2012). Others argue that while engaging in an extra-marital affair is certainly of grave concern to his wife and family, should it be a matter for national attention, especially given other grave national and international concerns (The Sacramento Bee, 2012)? Some, with tongue-in-cheek, query whether there should be a guidebook which outlines separate guidelines for retention or dismissal, depending on the offender’s military or civilian status (Thomas, 2012).

Generally one does not look to the U.S. press for counsel on ethics or morality, but in this situation, they raise an interesting question. Is it possible that what is considered to be ethical behaviour depends on who is acting unethically? Are those in power exempt from the demands of ethics which rest on the general populace? Is what is unacceptable for the common man permitted by those who occupy positions of power, of leadership, of top management?

I am, of course, discussing the concept of casuistry, which Blaise Pascal argued against in his Provincial Letters (1656-57). For Pascal, the immediate problem centred on the Jesuits’ permitting wealthy Church donors to confess their sins one day, re-commit the sin the next day, and generously donate again the third day, thus avoiding punishment, while the poor penitent received severe punishment for committing the same sin. We see this concept at work when a manager lies about plans to close a plant because to tell the truth might result in bad publicity, with workers leaving immediately rather than waiting for the plant to close and thus continue making profits for the company, blissfully unaware of the impending closure. Yet for most people, telling lies is seen as unethical behaviour. Does being a leader permit one to operate under a different set of standards than one’s followers?

Peter Drucker, a well-known and revered management thinker, would argue no. In his article "What is "Business Ethics?"", Drucker called such reasoning “the ethics of social responsibility” (Drucker, 1981, p. 22), but clearly stated that it is not business ethics. The “ethics of social responsibility” permits the business leader to justify actions which would clearly be unethical for anyone else under the name of “doing the best for the organization.” Rather, for Drucker, “There is only one code of ethics, that of individual behaviour, for prince and pauper, for rich and poor, for the mighty and the meek alike. Ethics, in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, is the affirmation that all men and women are alike creatures—whether the Creator be called God, Nature, or Society.” (Drucker, 1981, p. 20.)

Drucker preferred ethics as outlined in the Confucian concepts of interdependence to the “ethics of social responsibility.” Under these concepts, there are five basic relationships of mutual dependence (superior and subordinate; father and child; husband and wife; oldest brother and sibling; friend and friend). In these relationships, optimization of benefits to both parties is paramount. To break out of this mutual dependence is to move into unethical behaviour. The pressure to disregard interdependence may come from the lust for power or because of exploitation or manipulation (Drucker, 1981, p.30). For the Confucians (and for Drucker), the ethics of interdependence is ethics for individuals; it is a matter of the person. Confucius put it this way: “Do not impose on others what you do not wish for yourself.” (Freedman, 2002). Jesus said: “Do unto others as you would have do unto you.” (Matthew 7:12).

Bowen McCoy was a successful Wall Street investment banker when he took a sabbatical for the purpose of climbing to the summit of one of Nepal’s highest ranges. McCoy’s attempts to climb to the summit in the past had yielded only altitude sickness. As a result, McCoy had had to retreat to the village at base camp while others went on to reach the summit.

This time the climb was going well because McCoy was not experiencing altitude sickness and the weather was cooperating. On the day he expected to reach the summit, he and his companion, along with their Sherpas and parties from other countries, were proceeding well during that small window of opportunity that they had before the sun melted the steps they had carved in the ice located in the narrow passageways to the summit. Anticipation for finally reaching their goal had all of the climbing parties excited.

But before reaching the carved steps, they encountered a religious pilgrim, a sadhu, who was not dressed appropriately, who had collapsed in the snow and was suffering from altitude sickness. To be certain that the pilgrim...
would survive, someone would have to carry him back down to the village below their base camp. To do so would mean that they could not make the climb because of the loss of daylight and proper conditions for the ascent. So, each person and climbing party offered some help. One group offered additional clothing. Another group offered food. Still another waited to be sure that the sadhu was revived enough so that hand-eye coordination was restored. The final group pointed down the mountainside to the base camp and the village below, as if offering directions to the sadhu on how to proceed. Then they all moved on in their climb and all reached their goal of the summit.

Only after the climb did McCoy's companion confront him with the reality of what they had done. Stephen, McCoy's partner, noted that they all perhaps contributed to the death of another human being. Although they can never know whether the sadhu lived or died, McCoy and Stephen were left with a hollow feeling of "our goal accomplished, but at what cost?" That hollow feeling prompted McCoy to write about his experience and publish it in the Harvard Business Review. As a result, it has become the classic question for leaders and followers alike. What makes an action, a decision, an ethical one?

From the above illustrations we may draw the following principles:

First, Christianity gives us a clear definition of what are the most fundamental of relationships, for Jesus taught us that God is the Father of all, and mankind are brothers and sisters. The Bible gives us universal rules of conduct, especially in the Ten Commandments. The Bible also forces us to consider our actions and our behaviours, rather than applauding us for good intentions. But not every action appears in Scripture. What then? What about those grey areas which seem so complicated?

We know we cannot hide behind the “ethics of social responsibility;” we cannot use the reasoning of those who practice casuistry; we cannot change our values (in McCoy’s case, respect for life) because we are in a different setting (i.e., on a grueling mountain climb), even if others are willing to go on despite ethical dilemmas. We cannot let the group decide for us. We must remember that ultimate accountability lies with individuals. We must demand of ourselves the clarity that Jesus illustrated when He spoke the Golden Rule and avoid behaviours we would not respect in others. Peter Drucker gives us some good counsel for these times of uncertainty. After reminding us that relationships should be harmonious, constructive and mutually beneficial, he suggests that we “practice behaviour appropriate to the sort of person they would want to see ‘in the mirror in the morning.’” (Drucker, 1982, p. 36).

Finally, in later discussions of his experience with the sadhu, McCoy cautioned against defining ethical dilemmas in the either/or conundrum (either I let the sadhu go and make the climb, or I help him and again miss my goal). Such definitions often produce choices that disregard ethics and values. McCoy acknowledged that his most memorable experiences were not in achieving the summit but rather those moments he spent in the village at base camp when he had altitude sickness and the rest of his party went on. The immersion in culture, the weddings experienced, and the kindness of the villagers were the true rich experiences of his climbs, not the conquest of the summit. Facing ethical dilemmas with an open view to possibilities, keeping in mind that the God who is the Creator can create solutions for us in our daily lives, will help us be the ethical leaders we all aspire to be.

References


By Ann Gibson, Professor of Accounting and Hasso Endowed Chair of Business Ethics, Andrews University

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Adventist Church in the Netherlands on the Move

13 November 2012 Huis Ter Heide, the Netherlands [Wim Altink, tedNEWS]

More than 200 delegates, representing 56 local Seventh-day Adventist Churches, met together for the Netherlands Union Conference (NUC) Session on three consecutive Sundays, ending 11 November 2012 at Congress Centre "De Breehoek" in Scherpenzeel, Netherlands. The theme of the Session was "An Involved Church." This was the main focus in the presidential report presented by pastor Wim Altink. This theme has been the focus of the Adventist church for the last five years. Several local churches have become heavily involved in community services with great success and many blessings. This serving attitude and connecting with the community has paved the way for the growth of the Adventist Church in the Netherlands over the last few years.

The membership of the Adventist Church in the Netherlands has grown from 4950 to 5500 over the last five years. Outreach has been especially effective in the Rotterdam area, where now 1 in every 700 people is an Adventist. Two new churches have been established in Rotterdam in the last year.

An Adventist community church, "X-preszo", led by Renate Hazel who recently was voted in as a member of the Trans-European Division (TED) Executive Committee, has gained many members from a variety of cultures, whilst the congregation of "Het Kompas" has reached out to Dutch Caribbeans. Outside of Rotterdam two other churches were founded: "Uniek" in Utrecht and "Het Middelpunt" in Purmerend. In total, four new Adventist congregations were welcomed into the fellowship of the Dutch Adventist Church at the session.

A special welcome message was presented by pastor Klaas van der Kamp, Secretary General of the Dutch Council of Churches. As an observer at the Session, he reminded the delegates of the impact the Adventist Church is making, witnessing to the importance of health and the Sabbath. He told the delegates how he decided to become a pastor to stay in touch with fellow Christians.

Considerable time was taken to discuss the operation of the Union and its contribution to the life of the church. Concerns were expressed about its financial strength; the church has been hit hard by the financial crisis of recent years. Several motions were accepted in which the newly appointed Executive Committee was urged to make sure that the Union’s financial viability remains strong.

Looking back at the Session, a single motion stands out as having received the most time and attention. In this motion the delegates requested the Union to instigate the practice of ordaining women for the Gospel ministry of the church. To read the full report about the decision and comments, please click here.
The delegate of The Hague Church, Wim Willems, comments: "We had a hard talk during the three days of meetings but it was worth it". Frieda Souhuwat of Rotterdam-Noord says: "The Lord wanted to show where our human weaknesses are in order that we should trust Him more. I am optimistic about the future of the church."

Pastor Wim Altink (53) was re-elected as the President of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Netherlands. Pastor Tom de Bruin (33), newly elected Executive Secretary, is one of the youngest in the history in this position. Pastor de Bruin brings pastoral and teaching experience to the office. Besides his MA in Theology, he has a BS in Computing Science and is about to finish his PhD dissertation at Leyden University's Religion Department. The new Treasurer is Mr. Istrahel Schorea (40) who hails from the Dutch Caribbean and is an elder from the Rotterdam International Adventist Church. He currently holds a managerial financial position at the leading telecom company of the nation (KPN), and will now dedicate his time to help the church build a strong financial future.

For more information about the Adventist Church in the Netherlands, please visit www.adventist.nl [tedNEWS]
Adventist Church in the Netherlands on Women’s Ordination

13 November 2013, St Albans, United Kingdom [Miroslav Pujic, tedNEWS] Two hundred delegates representing 56 Adventist Churches across the Netherlands spent considerable time discussing a motion on the ordination of women, which eventually passed with a large majority. The action that was taken seeks to involve the Union in the current study process led by the Trans-European Division and the time-table for dealing with the issue of a Seventh-day Adventist Theology of Ordination and, included in that, the issue of women’s ordination in the world-church. The General Conference Session is expected to reach a decision on Ordination in July, 2015.

The action reads: “Considering the biblical principle of the equality of men and women, the delegates in session indicate that they reject the current situation of inequality in the church on principle. For this reason, and considering the context of Dutch society, they charge the Executive Committee to vigorously promote this perspective in the worldwide church. As quickly as possible, and no later than six months after the next session of the General Conference (2015), equality between men and women will be implemented at all organisational levels of the church in the Netherlands. The equal ordination of female pastors also falls into this category.

Pastor Wim Altink, re-elected President of the Netherlands Union Conference, commented on the decision: “This decision reflects both a determination to ending gender discrimination in the church and a strong commitment to taking part in the process laid out for us by the world-church until July, 2015. The action is to hold implementation until we know the outcome of the global study of the Theology of Ordination and the final decision scheduled for the General Conference in 2015.”

Dr Bertil Wiklander, President of the Trans-European Division, was the official representative from the Division at the Session. Asked to make a comment, he responded: “It is good that the church supports women and men as equals in the priesthood of all believers. In 1990 the General Conference decided to withhold the ordination of women to the gospel ministry, not because of theological reasons, but for practical reasons, such as the differences in cultural contexts and the danger of losing our world-wide unity. I understand that some in our Division are now impatient, because 22 years have passed and while more and more women have accepted the call to serve as ministers in the Trans-European Division, little progress has been made on the matter of their ordination as pastors. I also appreciate that there is, in the Netherlands Union, a clear commitment to work with the Church in the study of the Theology of Ordination, including Women’s Ordination. I appreciate that the Netherlands Union does not intend to implement ordination of women until the current process has culminated at the General Conference Session in 2015.

However, what I pointed out to the Session delegates on 11 November, is that I think the decision would have benefitted by two things: Firstly, the action would have been improved by recognising in its language that the Union has already, through the Trans-European Division, asked the General Conference for permission to ordain women and that, as a division family, we are waiting for their answer, which will come in 2015, and that, therefore, it looks somewhat odd to now decide to do in the future what you have already asked for permission to do, before you have received the answer from the General Conference. Secondly, I think it is in principle, inadvisable to word an action now about what you will now decide to do in the future what you have already asked for permission to do, before you have received the answer from the General Conference. In addition, there are members in the church in the Netherlands who are not yet clear on Women’s Ordination, and the study process that is now in progress would in my view help them. With this action being taken now, these people are not given time to understand what may come from the world-church study process, but you tell them in advance what the outcome will be and what they are to think.

Having said that, I want to underline that the Trans-European Division is deeply committed to working for the unity of the Church, while doing all we can to empower men and women in their spiritual and administrative leadership in our church. The Holy Spirit is guiding us through the ministry of Ellen White, who said: ‘Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed ... They should be set apart to this work by prayer and the laying on of hands. In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church.’ (Review
I continue to pray that God will lead His Church to full clarity on the matter of "Ordination" and that we will be given the wisdom to handle the current situation in a true Christian Spirit, in patience, humility, with a concern also for the interests of others, and a commitment to do what is right", concluded Wiklander.

For more information about the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Netherlands, please visit www.adventist.nl
The Great Hope Project Ready to Start

13 November 2013, St Albans, United Kingdom [Miroslav Pujic, tedNEWS] Trans-European Division (TED) is part of the Great Hope Project worldwide. The vision of this initiative is to engage members and pastors in witnessing to make disciples of Jesus Christ. This will be achieved by sharing printed resources for the purpose of bringing spiritual seekers into a better understanding that our only hope can be found in Jesus Christ as a person and that His Second Advent will be a final solution to life's challenges. People around us are desperate to find hope for today and for the future. They are not looking for a manifesto from any political party or for a message from any leader, but for something that is more promising and gives them an assurance for a better life and offers a final resolution to the problems of this world.

The plan is to do a massive distribution of attractive Great Controversy magazines, 'Escape' for adults and 'Connect' for youth, to raise the interest of people who want answers to critical questions about the challenging times we live in. Pastors/members will purchase in bulk of 25, 50, or 100 copies and strategically share them with their immediate non-Adventist neighbours, family, friends, and colleagues at work. Once the interest is shown, Bible studies will be conducted using the message book, Experiencing the Joy, accompanied with a DVD and curriculum. In addition to this The Great Controversy book will be offered to those who want to learn in depth about the battle between good and evil. Finally, invitations will be offered to follow Jesus and make a commitment by the action of baptism.

Dr Bertil Wiklander, TED President, shares his excitement about the initiative: “The story of the Great Controversy presented in the book written by Ellen G White and the book of Revelation gives us in-depth information about the historical background of the battle between good and evil. It also describes the deceptions that we will face at the end of time, but it ends with the great hope that we can find in the person of Jesus Christ and His Second Coming. This information needs to be shared with people in our neighbourhood, in our work place, and with our friends and family. I am very happy to report that the TED is ready to commence this programme in the year 2013 in all 22 countries. Our goal is to share 2 million magazines and books in order to make a connection with our neighbours, and if the interest is shown, we will follow with the Bible studies to help them become disciples of Jesus Christ”, concluded Wiklander.

The benefits of "The Great Hope Project" are numerous: members and pastors are engaged in the community to share hope for today and the future; people and entities are blessed because they are blessing others; the Church is united in working on a global witnessing project that will continue to have a ripple effect; and the truth is spread, resulting in transformed lives.

By the grace of God, we pray and believe that this project will generate great interest for Bible studies and the eventual baptism of those who are seeking a deeper relationship with God. [tedNEWS]

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What Happens When You Light the Fuse?

People are like dynamite, the power is on the inside, nothing happens until the fuse gets lit. So it is with leaders. A leader can give inspiration, motivation and encouragement to move mountains, or leave a trail of destruction and despair producing inertia and stagnation.

Positive and negative, good and bad are words used to classify people and also leaders. What is the essential ingredient that makes the difference? Can it be summed up in the word “character”?

Having worked in senior management in a secular business environment for sixteen years before starting to work for the church it is possible to draw some comparisons between the two working environments and from the perspective of leadership character traits. The resulting ambivalence calls for a careful assessment of character on the part of those who would lead.

Ethical excellence

The secular business world strives for expertise, efficiency and excellence. At times this is combined with an economic application of ethics or moral behaviour, which at best can be described as dysfunctional, at worst criminal. (The banking mismanagement is just the one recent example.)

In contrast church structures sustain a high level of morality, and ethical behaviour. However a cynical comment expressed at a session “People keep getting elected until they reach their level of incompetence”, has uncomfortable overtones.

Performance criteria and an expectation of excellence may generate accusations of secularisation, but is striving for excellence within a functional ethical framework a non-negotiable leadership characteristic? Jesus himself guided and educated his disciples to grow, develop and improve. Should we require less today?

No sentiment in business

There is no room for sentiment: is a business mantra within the secular world of economics. Yet law, unions and personal policies are designed to protect employees from injustice seeking to ensure that they are treated with dignity, fairness and often kindness. These are correctives to unjust leadership behaviour which can be discriminatory and hurtful.

Could there be a perception of the church as an uncaring employer seen in a widening trend of members resorting to litigation in Employment Tribunals to resolve difficulties? Bitter members or ex-employees may pour out bile, which creates situations that are negative and cause extreme difficulty for leaders attempting to resolve issues. This is an area where a gram of leadership prevention is better than tones of cure.

A generous application of the golden rule goes a long way in preventing problems. It respects people at all times and in all situations.

Have you heard the one about …?

A leader was once overheard commenting about one of his pastors “She confirms my worst opinion about her.” and in a few negative statements delivered an effective character demolition.

Few consciously set out to gossip. At all times it is vital to distinguish between the necessary and appropriate sharing of that “special insight” or confidential information and gossip which can be malicious.

Closely allied to gossip is criticism. Cutting words can discourage instead of encourage, destroy instead of develop. James (James 3) points to the dangers of thinking with our tongues instead of our brains. Reflective speech is a non-negotiable priority.

Avoidance of gossip and negative criticisms are essential. They are out; transparency, openness and honesty are in. "Criticism, like rain, should be gentle enough to nourish a man's growth without destroying his roots.” (Frank A Clark)
Running away from issues
Honesty framed by kindness and firmness would avoid many problems. Persons entering a training program for ministry may not be suitable for the profession. Hints are given, but the issue is not faced. Some are never employed and years later fail to understand why. Others enter ministry and struggle, finding life difficult and discouraging in the churches they serve. An honest facing of these matters could save a lot of hurt and anguish. It is a rule: situations which are not confronted openly and fairly will never be resolved. Honesty and openness combined with kindness are character qualities leadership should embrace.

Ambition
Secular ambition is regarded as positive, with little consideration of whom you trample on the way up! The wise would have reflected on possible negative encounters on the way down.

Is ambition within the church taboo? Would it generate envy resulting in subversive attitudes and actions? Is it not possible sanctified ambition can be positive? Could it generate a desire to improve, develop and hone abilities to better serve God? Would a healthy dose of "sanctified" ambition improve performance challenging growth at all levels?

Is it really character?
Our character is not a heavenly passport but it helps. It is a positive or negative power here and now. It is not only when we reach the end of our life that character is important. Our Lord when describing those entering the kingdom did not set an unobtainable character goal for them. He spoke of simple things, which have far reaching influence and consequences. Giving a cup of water. Visiting the lonely. Showing hospitality. Inviting someone home for a meal. Giving away an article of clothing. These activities are well within the capabilities of anyone. They do not require great riches, a high degree of education or special talents. What they do require is character: a character like our Saviours, which treats people with respect, grace, dignity and appreciation in all situations, not least in the daily life and work of the church.

By Audrey Andersson, Executive Secretary, Trans-European Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

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Is Now the Time to Give Up on Being Relevant?

There are some things the Bible says that are difficult to understand. I take it back. There are many things that challenge me. Take for example,

**You want to live? Die.**
You desire to be great. Become little.
You aspire to rulership. Learn to be a servant.
You want the riches of heaven. Become poor in spirit.

Then leave it to Peter to cast in his share of strange insights about the Kingdom of God: “His divine power has given us everything we need . . . for life and godliness . . .” (2 Peter 1:3)3 Everything? Really? It does become rather obvious that the world that I, a Christian, am striving for has a different set of values and goals from the one that has nurtured and guided me through much of my life . . . and yours too. It’s no wonder that one writer has said that the time has come for the world that I, a Christian, am striving for has a different set of values and goals from the one that has nurtured and guided me through much of my life . . . and yours too.4 Of course, what he is suggesting is that there is a relevancy that supersedes the one we find being broadcast today. Such an appeal suggests that there are deeper needs to be met. The conflict is all about a war of opposing worlds, different worldviews and multiple attempts to resolve the conflicts that arise because of them. It’s no wonder the development of Christian character and practice is so difficult. There is, however, a silver lining behind these dark, confusing and threatening storm clouds.

Let’s Begin with the Foundation

“‘In the beginning God . . .’ (Gen. 1:1). That’s how our story starts. It leaves no one out. Our roots are the same regardless of convictions, color or country of origin. We are all in this together. But something happened along the way that has caused the peaceful and promising origin to appear to fall apart. It is called sin. When that entered, so did greed and selfishness, and trailing not too far behind came corruption, deceitfulness and strife. Sin and its rainbow of manifestations have filled the earth that was with sadness and misery. These vices have crept, sometimes imperceptibly, into homes, schools, churches and governments. The result is pain, agony and a sense of hopelessness. The begging question is this: ‘Is there a roadmap showing how to get out of this world of greed and selfishness?’ There is, but how we tell our story will help us find the right map. One writer has suggested that in telling our story we have abbreviated God’s story far too much. It is common, for example, to hear redundantly that the story is all about the fall and redemption. He suggests that the bookends have been left out and that it takes the whole story to resolve our dilemma. He suggests that the full story comes in four parts: creation, fall, redemption and restoration.2 Knowing the beginning and where God wants to take us is important. Sounds reasonable?

An Escape Route Has Been Planned

With God being the Creator of my world and me, a new picture begins to emerge. It automatically makes Him my landlord—the owner of all. Once I get that relationship straight a whole new image of hope begins to emerge. For one thing, the story isn’t all about me! As much as I am concerned about me, my problems and my hopes, the message isn’t about me, but it does include me. It begins with God and because it does, you and I have hope. Our Creator-Owner is not passive in offering a solution and neither should I be in receiving His offer. A radical problem, however, demands a radical solution. It has been said that when the world is off center, it takes a lever with a fulcrum outside the world to move it. That lever to move the world is a wooden cross.3 Such an intervention provides the only hope for the pervasiveness of sin that has become manifested in the greed and selfishness. This is where faith comes into the picture. Faith in the Gift from God becomes the anchor for virtue. To put it bluntly, it is impossible to change my ways and to do good without God. True, we might get started down the pathway but a faithless virtue is short-lived. The problem with starting out by being well intentioned is that successful Christian living is not about doing a series of good things. Rather it begins by first “drinking” from the Well Source of all life. The creation and redemption parts of the story remind us that solutions come from outside ourselves. It is not something that evolves naturally from human hearts. The relationship with the Owner and the Redeemer points out clearly that my struggle with greed and selfishness is not a change that comes by doing more good things but rather by yielding to the Presence of God and His will for me.
How the Idea of Stewardship Gets Blurred

Choosing to live within that Presence is key. It opens some doors and closes others but it is here that we must be careful lest we assume that the ethic of avoidance is the hallmark of being Christian. It is not. Henry David Thoreau once wrote that "Men don't ride on trains but trains ride on men." Before we write him off as being delusionary, we need to think through what he was really saying. The men who laid the rails on which the trains ride worked hard, spent time and energy to do so. Those rails are visible representations of their lives and how they were spent. Jesus rebuked the teachers of the law and Pharisees as being hypocritical, not because they tithed but because they divorced tithing from living a life of "justice, mercy and faithfulness" (Matt. 23:23). A life of avoidance is hardly representative of the kind of life He lived.

A Calling to a New Level of Relevancy

Whether it be the Wall Street Protestors and their global kin, the secularists next door, or the Christian friend caught in the vices of sin, there is only one way out of the dilemma that confronts all of us. The answer to greed and selfishness simply put is this: "Jesus loves me this I know." Mocked as they are by some, these words reach out with healing for those whose inner wounds are crying out . . . sometimes in protest, sometimes in violence and sometimes in abject despair. In the midst of such agony two important beacons of truth shine forth today. They are not passive invitations. They are reminders that we have not been abandoned. They are life changing . . . but only if connected with their Source:

The first is the Sabbath. It is a reminder that God is our Creator and our Redeemer—the Owner of all. Not only have we not been abandoned but we do not have to, nor can we, dig our own way out of the mess we created. He is present with us. He is at work in and through us.

The second beacon of truth also strikes at the heart of greed and selfishness. It calls for active participation and represents a radical change in our cherished values. In times of financial crisis it seemingly goes contrary to conventional wisdom. It calls for surrender to God for what the world is clamoring to get and control—a portion of our prized treasures. This soul-searching truth is the returning of tithe and the giving of offerings. More than symbols of wealth, however, these treasures are visible representations of a new life—a life given and now chosen, a life being lived with a new kind of relevancy in the midst of a world filled with chaos and uncertainty. This "hope does not disappoint us." (Rom. 5:5)

1 Henri J.M. Nouwen, In the Name of Jesus, pp.15-22.
3 R. Paul Stevens, in The Other Six Days, p.232.

By Larry R Evans, D. Min. Associate Stewardship Director, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church

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Preparing for the Plans Committee

Many of our constituency meetings are a form of Grand Theatre with stage performances, political intrigue and a show boat chorus from the floor delegates. Cloistered from this, the PLANS committee is a scratch cast with some players versed in corporate process while others just come with a simple passion for the cause. Most are uncertain about their role, though they want to make a difference. Given the limits of time, the process is more like speed chess than the reflective master game. Chess players at least know the rules.

With regret, the script produced by the plans committee, is often eclectic, rushed, un-budgeted and not addressed to any particular office or theatre. It is filed never to be rehearsed again.

To confuse matters, the outgoing Thespians also present a scheme of intent which is more manifesto than an operational reference. Inevitably, the Nominating Committee conspires to appoint fresh actors who feel a personal mandate to be different, ignoring the insight of both colleagues and members.

To be frank, congregational members feel that we abuse their time, expertise and commitment. Such dishonour is cynically corrosive to their sense of ownership.

How does one plan for the Plans Committee? How do we restore honour to this process?

There must be many ways, but what follows is a summary of a recent attempt following less satisfying outcomes in prior years.

Understand the playing field weeks before the session:
Read the session report and strategic frameworks. Identify success, failures and new proposals, observe their structure, scope and limitations. If possible talk to those who compose these documents to clarify where the Conference is, what they have and where they want to go.

Look for an organising theme, pattern or motif:
In this case the Conference had chosen Reach Up, Reach Out, Reach Across based on the General Conference approach. Ask yourself how you can depict this model to focus the thinking of contributors. Inevitably these models use alliteration to make their elements memorable. Plans are about actions described with verbs rather nouns. Translate the dimension to practices: Worship, Witness and sharing in Wisdom. Inevitably one can identify 6 or 7 disciplines for each activity field and that which lies at the axis of these skills. This gives at least twenty nuclear points. It gives the possibility of thinking about the Worship-Witness plane with an array of fifty fields of thought. In like fashion consider the interface of Witness and Wisdom, Worship and Wisdom leading to a three dimensional matrix with over three hundred cells of thought. As it turned out, we were able to allocate just ninety minutes to each dimension. People's response is rarely so disciplined, but at least the chair has sufficient pigeon holes to categorise incoming ideas.

Actions always require actors. The best actors have learned their lines, they know their script and contemporise when necessary. The worst actors believe that 'it will be alright on the night' and rely on the wit of the moment.

In general the church has a departmental role for each of the spiritual disciplines. It is important that the role contributes to the mission, rather than existing to find its own mission.

Expand the framework to accommodate contributions:
For each of the dimensions create a framework to explore and receive contributions. In the example, the question we might ask is: How do we encourage our young people to have a meaningful prayer life? Who will take responsibility? Is this critical or urgent? Each cell is an invitation for the whole church to respond to a matter of basic intention without which the prayerfulness of our young people is left to chance. Respondents include leadership at every level, friends, parents, and siblings.

In addition to the script, the acts and actors a performance needs props, events, backdrops, stage furniture and literature to enhance the impact of the play. The director choreographs the participation of many stage hands to ensure that the audience / congregation gets the best view, sees the picture and hears with clarity. Plans must include the meaningful contribution of every member.

Every play house manager knows about ambience. The audience ‘was electric’, the response was ‘flat’ this evening, the show was disrupted by people shouting bravo, etc. Understanding and managing ‘that which is between’ is one of the unseen roles of leadership. To facilitate this planners identify the lines of fracture, bring forward recommendations to bridge the gap and appoint mediators to resolve differences. As ever – timing is critical. Some schisms will wither if left, others need proactive attention.

So much for the frameworks:
The next challenging part is to ask how the information will be elicited from the committee. People want to tell their story. They need the confidence and assurance that their voice matters. Much time is taken listening to garbled narratives, to explain their rationale for a course of action. For the most part, they will not have the ‘buzz words’ to describe their solution. Attentive chairmanship listens for the action cues, that result in a proposal, captures them in essence and places them where they can be acted upon and retrieved.

To achieve this prior attention needs to be given to space and resources. The room assigned needs to be spacious and congenial, served with refreshment. Paper, flip charts, pens, projectors should not be presumed but planned for. Timing, breaks, attendance to other votes on the floor all need to be planned for.

Whilst the business is reverently sincere, with time for prayer and contemplation, the general rap of business needs to be alive. To draw the best out of people, they need to relax, hold their views tentatively, resolve differences with humour and be generally entertained. This ethos comes by design. We need to get to know names and personality quickly.

Once the committee work is concluded, the write up begins. It is unlikely that a full report will be available for discussion by the plenary group. Present just the highlights of the committee findings with a promise to publish the outcome when complete. Each member of the committee will have the framework created as a worksheet. Most members will fill in a hand full of cells, but once the papers are collated most areas will have a contribution. The chairman will take great care that in creating the context, he/she has not fabricated the content.

The purpose of the outcome is to create an ongoing conversation based on seed thoughts to be replicated in each church and in the Conference providing support for the expressed needs.

Members of the committee need to be affirmed in their work. Ensure an e-mail address to register thanks people for their participation and have them confirm the final draft before it is sent to the Executive Committee.

You might be surprised to find out how many people actually enjoyed a committee for once in their life.

The expanded outcome of this process is beyond the purpose of this assignment but can be obtained from vphilmoor@adventist.org.uk

By Victor Pilmoor, Treasurer at the British Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Used with permission from Leadership Development Journal - October 2012
Ministry to New Members

New members in our congregations are a sign that the church is healthy. Welcoming new members into the church is our reason for being and so therefore there needs to be a definite and concerted effort in making church a place where new members feel at home.

What is a new member? It is one who has joined the church through baptism, profession of faith, or by transfer. New members can experience 'newness' in different ways. The 'newly baptised' may have begun a brand new experiencing with the church and Christianity and will need a lot of care and attention. There will be need for much clarification as to the nature of the church and his or her walk with Christ. The new member, by 'profession of faith', may be new to the congregation but not necessarily new to the Christian walk. Nevertheless, they would have arrived at this juncture in their lives as a result of a spiritual pilgrimage and so they will need spiritual reassurance and social fellowship. The new member, by 'transfer', is more likely one who is familiar with the Adventist community but is being transitioned for social or political reasons. Whilst not wanting to diminish the need for spiritual nurture, one would suggest that this new member's greater need would be social integration into the new fellowship.

One would suggest that there are two categories of new members. There is the 'evangelistic' new member and there is also the 'biological' new member. The evangelistic new member is very often highly celebrated because it is fruit of the evangelistic fervour and exploits of the church. These are people who have been brought in from outside of the so called 'fold'. They are brands plucked from the burning. They are trophies of the victory of the church over the kingdom of Satan. We love to see and receive evangelistic new member. The biological new member, on the other hand, is from within. They have been born and brought up in the church from early years and have been educated, nurtured, and exposed to the elements within the church family that has inspired them to make a decision to accept Christ and become a member of the church. Biological new members already feel at home in their congregation. They know the members; they have made many friends; the members know them; and they are already involved very much in the life of the local congregation. Both evangelistic and biological new members need the attention of the church. By nature, their immediate needs may vary, but each need must be understood and addressed as fully as possible.

A survey of forty-one new members was recently conducted in two of the larger congregations in the UK. These were new members who had joined the church within the past five years. The purpose for the survey, in preparation for this article, was to ascertain their level of involvement in the church and their degree of satisfaction as new members.

The majority of respondents were between the ages of 30 to 50 years and had been members for between 1 to 2 years. Sixty-three per cent stated that prior to church membership they attended church for more than eighteen months and the majority, 53%, were not involved at all in the activities of the church, whereas 29% stated that they were occasionally involved. After becoming members, however, 39% of new members stated that they expected to be involved at all in the activities of the church but it turns out that 53% of new members either held a church office or was involved in some aspect of ministry in the church after acceptance into membership. The majority suggested that on-going Bible study after baptism was essential.

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All new members cannot necessarily hold a church office, but all new members can and should be involved in some aspect of church ministry. Helping new members to see how they can become involved is an essential part of their preparation for ministry and must be encouraged and reinforced even after acceptance into church membership. All want to be involved in ways that will build their confidence. The survey revealed that 24% of respondents consider their greatest need, as new members, to be that of being taught how to become more involved in church activities.

Believe it or not, new members want to be confident in Bible knowledge and they value good and wholesome fellowship with other believers in the church. According to the survey results, 56% stated that their greatest need was to receive more instruction on how to become a growing disciple of Christ. Coupled with this, when asked, “Based on your experience as a new member, what advice would you give a church leader who is preparing someone for church membership?” the majority suggested that on-going Bible study after baptism was essential.

Closely related to on-going Bible study is the need to build closer and better relationships with other members of the church; 32% of respondents identified this as their greatest need. This highlights the need for leaders to be proactive in...
facilitating greater meaningful fellowship opportunities along the discipleship pathway of the members in the church because new members need to experience a deep sense of belonging and have greater confidence that their ‘new family’ is a community in which they are naturally exploring and developing their potentials as servants of Christ.

Leaders need to remember that to effectively minister to newcomers the local church needs to be prepared to receive new members. The church needs to be trained to receive and to celebrate the arrival of the ‘newly born babes’. There is need for the training of ‘spiritual guardians’ who will act as mentors and support for them in identifying their spiritual giftedness and give them on-going personal attention as they try to walk the Christian pathway. Leaders need to remember that newcomers have not yet seen the ‘big picture’. Help new members to understand how and where they fit into the wider Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Through Bible study, meaningful fellowship, and a grasp of the mission of the church, newcomers will be equipped to share their new found faith with their friends in the world around them and experience the joy of not only their own salvation, but also that of countless others who will be influenced by their faith.

By Dr Michael Hamilton, Trans-European Division Personal Ministry Director

Used with permission from Leadership Development Newsletter - March 2010
Statement on Women’s Ordination to the Pastoral Ministry

Presented at the TED European Pastors’ Conference
25 August 2012 Rogaska Slatina, Slovenia [Bertil Wiklander, tedNEWS]

The Trans-European Division is a division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. It means that TED follows General Conference policy, except in cases where we request and are given permission to apply a variance to the common world-church policy. The 11 unions within the TED are all members of the General Conference (and the TED) and in their constitutions and bylaws they state that their faith, church order, and working policies shall be in harmony with the GC/TED.

These regulations in our church law explain the position taken by the TED Executive Committee on women’s ordination to the pastoral ministry.

The matter of women’s ordination for ministry has been under discussion in the TED at least since 1968. In the 1970s and 1980s, the issues were usually about concerned women being ordained as elders and deaconesses. The General Conference Executive Committee had approved both ordinations, but with some restrictions, in the spring of 1975, and this was reaffirmed by the General Conference Annual Council in 1984. The former ordination, with right to perform weddings and baptisms, was endorsed by the General Conference Session in 1990 and the latter in 1975.

In May, 1989, a survey of our unions’ positions on the ordination of women was undertaken and a clear majority was then not in favour of actually ordaining women as pastors although they may not have considered it biblically wrong to do so.

The policies of the General Conference from 1990 and onwards allowed for ordination of women as church elders, employment of women as associates in pastoral care (if they were ordained as local elders), and also commissioning of female pastoral workers. We have seriously looked at recommendations from this group. Thus, salaries, employment conditions, titles, and job descriptions for male and female pastoral workers have been made more and more equal in many unions. On 18 November, 2009, the TED Executive Committee voted unanimously to provide ‘Revised Guidelines for Commissioning’ where all that was possible to do within policy to create equality between the genders in pastoral kinds of ministry was established for the TED.

In January–March, 2010, the General Conference President, Jan Paulsen, initiated a survey among the 13 world divisions regarding their position on women’s ordination. The TED invited all its unions to take part. The outcome was that all our unions unanimously accept that there are no biblical reasons for not ordaining women and that it would not be a problem if the General Conference granted the TED authority to let unions, who so request, the right to ordain women as pastors. Of all the 11 unions today in the TED, only one union president stated that his union would not at present ordain women as pastors, even if it was permitted, but he had no objection to this being done in other unions. However, a majority of world divisions did not share our view and the GC leadership decided therefore not bring the matter forward to the GC Session a few months later.

The issue was however raised on the floor at the GC Session in Atlanta in June/July, 2010, in connection with the discussion and acceptance of the ordination of deaconesses. It was voted that the church would study the theology of ordination and seek a better biblical understanding of what ordination really means: If the church can ordain women as church elders and deaconesses, then why not also as pastors? We now have a detailed time table for this study, and it is clear that it is going to be a very comprehensive work that includes women’s ordination and all aspects of ordination in the church. Each division has been asked to provide a research report through their biblical research committee, getting input from the unions, voting it in their executive committee, and sending it to the GC Biblical Research Institute.
The TED is now fully engaged in this work and our executive committee will be asked to authorise our research report in November, 2013. A co-ordinating body at the GC will then study the research from all 13 divisions and provide a report which will go to the GC leadership in the summer of 2014. If recommended by the GC Annual Council in October, 2014, a motion will go to the floor of the GC Session in San Antonio in 2015. We take the view in the TED that we actively participate in the study of ordination and then we wait and see what will be the outcome, believing that the Spirit of God will lead this matter to a good solution for his church.

In November 2010, the TED Executive Committee voted a document called ‘The Leadership and Ordination of Women’. Its purpose was to address the tension between the extraordinary mission challenges facing the church within our territories and the need to mobilize all our members, male and female, on the one hand, and church policy on the ordination of women, on the other. Four requests were made to the General Conference. Those requests and the responses were as follows:

1. To request that the study of the theology of ordination as voted at the General Conference Session in Atlanta is prioritized. The General Conference has granted this.

2. To request the General Conference to review and amend General Conference policies, so that the wording is gender neutral and that all leadership pathways are open to male and female. No formal response has been received and we will continue to work with the GC Secretariat on this point.

3. To request the General Conference to grant a variance to the model constitutions and bylaws to accommodate the unique needs of the Trans-European Division with the insertion of “conference and union presidents should be ordained/commissioned ministers” in its policy language. We feel that this is a matter of some urgency and respectfully request that this be dealt with as soon as possible but no later than General Conference Annual Council 2011. This was brought to the floor in October 2011, but it was not voted on formally, since a similar variance only relating to conference presidents was requested by the NAD. Their request was voted down and by common consent the TED motion therefore also failed.

4. To request the General Conference for permission to ordain women to the gospel ministry within the Trans-European Division thereby creating party between female and male ministers and follow the same process and procedure as currently applies to ordained men and credentialed ministers. This point is in abeyance awaiting the outcome of the study on the theology of ordination.

In November, 2011, following the vote at Annual Council, the TED prayerfully considered how to respond to it. We consulted widely and received input from the unions. We recognise and understand that we are part of a global church and need to listen to and be in harmony with the decision of the church at large. The Committee voted:

1. To affirm again the role of its women leaders, pastors and lay members.

2. To pro-actively work to support the development of women in leadership within the TED and to present a road map to the TED Spring Meetings 2012 as to how this could be done. This work is on-going.

The big question is of course what the Bible says about women’s ordination. We will provide an answer from our perspective in November, 2013, based on a very comprehensive research. In the meantime, I would ask you all to pray for this study. Without the Spirit of God and of Jesus Christ we can do nothing. But I would add that you can do more than praying. You can also study the matter for yourself, so that you understand what the word of God teaches on this point.

One way for you to get acquainted with the matter is by reading pastor John Lorencin’s booklet on women’s ordination—it is available in English with the title Priestly Ministry in the Old and New Testament: Should Women Be Ordained? (2012) Pastor Lorencin was the Yugoslavian Union President until 1994 and used to be very much opposed to women’s ordination. He admits that he took a traditional view and under the influence of his cultural context where there were three main religions: Orthodox Christian, Roman Catholic Christian, and Islam. He had not formed his opinion on the basis of the Bible, so when he retired he decided to study ordination in the Bible. In his book, as a pastoral Bible reader, in simple language, he goes through the whole Bible. He finds that in the New Testament, Christ has taken over the sacrificial priestly office from the Old Testament, so it is no more. Instead, Christ has fulfilled the sacrificial system and become our high priest in heaven where he now offers his benefits for us to God. As our high priest, he is also the head of the body of Christ, the church, which consists of the priesthood of all believers, which makes no distinction between male and female. He also points out that there is no word for ‘ordination’ in the Bible. It is used in the King James Version from 1611, but it is there based on old Roman Catholic translations from the 14th and 15th centuries. In fact, pastor Lorencin warns against letting the pastoral ordination be influenced by the Roman Catholic, unbiblical practice, which is rooted in the pagan Roman system of being promoted (Latin ordino) to a higher ‘order’ (Latin ordi) in the state offices. Any sense of the rite of ordination conveying a special status or character that is not already there through the gift of the Holy Spirit is unbiblical. Ordination is therefore a work of the Spirit and only recognised and confirmed by the church. Many of the points raised here have also been pointed out in the Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, in the article on ‘ordination’ (1996).

And there is of course other literature on the topic. The teachers at Andrews University collected a number of papers on the topic in a volume called Women in Ministry (edited by Nancy Vyhmeister, Berrien springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998) and this valuable book is still available. I can add mention that Dr Jan Barna, one of our esteemed teachers at Newbold College, has written his doctoral thesis in 2009 on this topic and he is in negotiations to have it printed. His emphasis is the view of the Bible and the hermeneutics being applied in dealing with the matter of women’s ordination.

I want to say to you that I have never made a secret of my own personal conviction. I accept women’s ordination as being biblical and appropriate. But I am also very concerned that we manage this important matter in harmony and cooperation with the world church. I know that the Lord will bless our joint efforts to explore his word and to share it with our brothers and sisters world-wide. And I think the best thing we can do is to pray for the Spirit of God to lead his
church to understand this matter in harmony with his will. As keepers of the heritage of the Protestant reformation, let
us see this matter from a spiritual perspective and ask God to lead us to an understanding of his truth. And let us do it
in a spirit of respect for each other, knowing that we all seek the truth and that Christ has promised that the Holy Spirit
will ‘guide us into all truth’. [tedNEWS]

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The London Olympic Games just ended. The whole world was watching. In British media, a phrase kept coming back, again and again: ‘This is what these Olympic Games are all about!’

And the phrase was used for many different things:

- It was said about the theme of the Games: ‘Inspiring a generation’
- A boy said it about getting to know new sports, such as handball
- About winning: Jamaica’s Bolt
- About counting the gold medals: Bolt got three of them for the second time
- About setting new world records: Kenya’s Rudisha led 800m from start to finish
- About an immigrant boy who made his new nation proud: GB’s Mo Farah
- About team work and friendship
- About Manteo Mitchell who broke his leg in the relay 4x400 but continued to run for the sake of his three colleagues
- Roger Bannister – the legendary British runner who was the first to run an English mile under 4 minutes: ‘The Games have given a sense of national pride and greater tolerance in multi-racial Britain’
- The Chinese took the view that the Games are about improving their performance every four years so that one day they will win all medals, proving that the Chinese social system is the best in the world
- Maybe in the end it was all down to ‘It’s Never too Late to Exercise’ (pic 15)

And so on… But what the world was watching is now over. But our Pastors Conference begins tonight! What is it all about?

I put it to you this evening that it is all about making God known.

This central idea stems from the biblical concept of the Mission of God. Driven by his love for the world, God wants to be known as God among its nations and peoples. This is the essence of the Plan of Salvation and the cosmic Great Controversy between good and evil. God wants relations with his created beings. That’s why he created the world and will heal and restore it to what he intended it (John saw it in a vision in Revelation 21:1-5). And then he will ‘live with men and they will be his people’ and ‘God himself will be with them and be their God’. Therefore, he has called the church to Make Him Known.

This is what the three angels’ messages are all about. To every nation, tribe, language and people the eternal gospel is:

Revelation 14:7: ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgement has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water!’

The second angel applies the eternal gospel that makes God known to God’s great adversary, ‘Babylon’, who rules the nations in rejection of God. The message is that, since God is God, Babylon will fall like Babylon of old, leaving no trace, and all the nations will rise in freedom from bondage and ‘come and worship before God, because his righteous acts will have been revealed’ (Rev. 15:4).

The third angel applies the eternal gospel that makes God known to all individuals who are caught in false worship,
The Meaning of Knowing God | TED Adventist

http://www.ted-adventist.org/feature-and-analysis/the-meaning-of-knowi...
than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep; then he appeared to James, the to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

Then he explains the resurrection of the dead, saying that ‘if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith’ (15:14), repeating that ‘if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile’ (15:17). ‘If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.’ (15:19)

We have here, in the Bible, a revelation from God of first importance. Our faith, our preaching, God’s mission as we understand it in his word—everything—is based on the resurrection of Christ. But when did I hear a sermon on that topic in an Adventist church? We have even managed to lose sight of the resurrection in the three angels’ messages, for it is clearly central in Revelation 14:13 which we seldom refer to. The phrase ‘the deeds [of the dead who die in the Lord] will follow them’ is a set phrase in contemporary Judaism, meaning that the works of the righteous dead are being laid up with God and will be revived at the end of time when the righteous receive their reward, which is what Revelation teaches in chapters 20:4-6 and 19:1-8.

Yes, we are special in God’s sight.

Yes, we are a ‘remnant church’ and a ‘prophetic church at the end of time’.

Yes, we understand so much of Bible truth and we are richly blessed with light from Scripture.

Indeed, praise God for our church! For all the wonderful, loving and caring people God has brought together in our fellowship! For the love of God in us!

But whatever we say and do, even if you take all that is stated on the 700 pages in The Great Controversy, if you take the signs of the times, and if you take our sanctified and healthy lives, if we fall short on the very basis of our faith; on Christ who has made God known, on his death and resurrection, our preaching is useless and our faith is futile.

Who is the God we know?

Who is the God that we make known in our ministry?

It is the God who revealed himself in the love of Jesus Christ – as described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 – and who raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

Death is the great tragedy of human beings, also in Europe. But nobody wants to talk about it. While the world was looking at the Olympic Games, a young girl, Tia Sharp, 12 years old, was murdered and hidden in her grandmother’s attic. And how many more lost their lives at the same time? And here we are, with the only piece of hope and good news from Jesus’ resurrection, but we are silent about it.

N.T. Wright in his book Surprised by Hope shows several radical changes that the first Christians brought – deviating from what people in those days believed about the resurrection. These changes can only be explained by something crucial and unexpected happening. All the New Testament is based on eyewitness evidence for the resurrection. The life and death of these witnesses prove to me that Christ is risen. This gives me a fantastic hope as a human being, it helps me live my life now and face death. Sharing this is to make God known.

As we read the Bible with new eyes, with the eyes of the Bible itself, only then can we share the genuine original Christian faith in Christ as the resurrected Lord who is now connecting us with God and soon to return.

Only then can we understand what the Christian hope really means and what our hope is.

Only then can we experience our own death and resurrection in our baptism to a new life in service to God who raised Christ.

Only then there is hope for change, salvation, transformation and new possibilities in our world. Because it leads us face to face with the God who created the world, who has never given up his care for us despite all evil, whose mission it is to create all things new in order to live in an open fellowship with us, and who therefore taught us to pray: ‘Thy kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.’

He, and none other than he, has given us the assurance that we rest in his arms when our life is ended and that he, and none other than he, has provided an escape from death: the resurrection from death in following Jesus and being faithful to God like Jesus.

God raised Jesus up!

He raised me up!

He raised you up!

He wants to raise the world up!

Therefore: Let’s make this God known!

By Dr Bertil Wiklander, President of the Trans-European Division of Seventh-day Adventists