Message for the New Year

Dear Readers,

Coming to the end of 2012 fills my heart with gratitude to the Lord for His many blessings in the past -- personally and in the life of the Church. I think, for example, of our revised Strategic Mission Plan which has been updated for Europe since our reorganisation on January 1, our many advisories and seminars that... Read more

Holy Spirit Works in Albania

12 December 2012 Tirana, Albania [Julian Kastrati, tedNEWS]

On the Saturday of December 1st, Adventist believers and seekers from all churches and groups throughout Albania convened at the last Festival of Faith for the year, celebrating the wondrous works of the Holy Spirit. Pr. Leo N. España, Albanian Mission (ALM) President, in his year-end report exclaimed... Read more

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30 November 2012 Silver Spring, Maryland, United States [ANN staff]

The auditorium darkened, lightening flashed across a projector screen, thunder roared over the loudspeaker and artificial rain fell on hundreds of school children this morning during a recreation of the biblical flood, eliciting laughter and screams from the students. The simulation was part of Celebration of Creation, a free community event held this... Read more

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- 12,000 ADRA Shoeboxes Head to Burkina Faso
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Church Responds to Media Inquiries over TV Sitcom Star’s Affiliation

28 November 2012 Silver Spring, Maryland, United States [ANN staff] The Seventh-day Adventist Church emphasized its welcoming of converts in a response to media attention surrounding an American TV situation comedy actor’s comments about his religious affiliation and his personal thoughts about the show... Read more
Message for the New Year

Dear Readers,

Coming to the end of 2012 fills my heart with gratitude to the Lord for His many blessings in the past -- personally and in the life of the Church. I think, for example, of our revised Strategic Mission Plan which has been updated for Europe since our reorganisation on January 1, our many advisories and seminars that have equipped and encouraged departmental directors in many countries, the outstanding European Pastors’ Conference that focussed on Making God Known in Europe, the numerous evangelistic meetings across the Division leading many to Christ.

But we are now entering a new phase. God has a future for us in our ministry! We have launched the Great Hope Project with an unusually rich selection of resources that we hope will reach secular and postmodern people next year. At the same time we rally around Mission to the Cities, joining the world church in a global outreach to the big cities, starting work in New York and London. Our Strategic Plan will be implemented emphasising Reach Up (Worship), Reach Across (Nurture) and Reach Out (Evangelism). We are as concerned about church health as we are about church growth. We will continue to use media as a major tool to reach our image-driven society with creative productions of short video clips with a message for today and we will use “social media” through the LIFEconnect ministry where we have already reached hundreds of thousands of people. A major event in 2013 will be the European Youth Congress in Novi Sad. We expect to see the work in Cyprus gain speed under new and stronger leadership than before. The list is longer, so these events simply represent the enormous activity being envisioned in the TED next year. We pray for new believers, for new churches and for a revival among our children and youth, and we believe that Newbold College of Higher Learning will play an important part in these plans.

By God’s grace we see progress and growth in the Church when we seek Him first. May the conclusion of this year and the beginning of the new bring us closer to God and in the fellowship of family and friends. My thoughts go especially to all those who are alone and who suffer pain and hopelessness, and I pray that God will again be the great Comforter and bring healing and hope. A blessed new year from the Lord to all!

Dr Bertil Wiklander, President
Trans-European Division
Holy Spirit Works in Albania

12 December 2012 Tirana, Albania [Julian Kastrati, tedNEWS] On the Saturday of December 1st, Adventist believers and seekers from all churches and groups throughout Albania convened at the last Festival of Faith for the year, celebrating the wondrous works of the Holy Spirit.

Pr. Leo N. España, Albanian Mission (ALM) President, in his year-end report exclaimed: "2012, what a blessed year for the Church in Albania! He was referring to the highest number of baptisms to be recorded (21) in the last 15 years. "We thank God for His many blessings," said España. "It has been wonderful to see how the Holy Spirit has worked in the hearts of the people through the work of pastors and church members who have been dynamic in their participation of the proclamation of the gospel."

The congregation showed solidarity for the illegally imprisoned Adventist pastor and church member in Togo. Pr España concluded: "Amid songs of praise, preaching, reports, meditation, fasting and humble prayers, our church has met today seeking for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. We know there is still much to be done. As our Lord Jesus said in Luke 10:2 "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few" (NKJV).

"We are very excited to report that ADRA Albania and the Church in Albania are working together on a special Christmas project", said Dr. Beatrice C. Kastrati, ADRA Country Director. "For the first time ever, Albanian children are joining German and Austrian children in giving Christmas parcels to poor and vulnerable children throughout the country. The annual distribution of thousands of Christmas parcels, kindly provided through ADRA Germany and ADRA Austria, is regularly highlighted on national and local television. "Here's an excellent opportunity for ADRA and the church to encourage Albanian society to be more engaged in our own communities by giving rather than receiving", said Dr. Kastrati. In response to the appeal, children from local churches and the general public pledged nearly 300 parcels.

The year will also be marked for the significant progress of internet ministries. "Thanks to the LIFEconnect platform, we can now witness, make real connections and even give Bible Studies to the unreached, in ways that we could never imagine before!", said Sandra Veideman-Thornitori, one of the most prolific Digital Missionaries (DMs) from Elbasan. Using the LIFEconnect Albania website and its Facebook presence, the online series 'Exploring Life Together' has already shown promising results. "Over 1 million Albanians are on Facebook, and as we post, we bear in mind that we are the light of the world and salt of the earth" said Blerina Hasani, an active DM from Durres.

"Preparation for outreach efforts throughout 2013 has commenced," said Pr Julian Kastrati, co-ordinator for Publishing Ministries in Albania, who was the main speaker at the festival. "We praise our Lord for the increased number of publications for this year, especially in regard to Spirit of Prophecy literature", explains Kastrati. "By Christmas we will have in print the highly-anticipated "Patriarchs and Prophets" by Ellen G. White for the very first time in Albanian. It is also a blessing for Albania to be part of the Great Hope Project. The translation of the books The Great Controversy and Experiencing the Joy, as well as the 'ESCAPE' and 'CONNECT' magazines has already started.

In his sermon, Kastrati invited everyone for the New Year 2013 and beyond to 'wear the wardrobe of Christ', consisting of His compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and covered by His forgiveness and divine love for God and one-another.”

In a special message to the world church, on behalf of the Albanian Mission, Pr España kindly solicits "please join us in prayer for Albania, so that the seed of the gospel may continue to bear fruit – fruit that lasts for eternity.”

For more information about the work of the church in Albania, click on these links: www.adventist, www.adra.al and www.lifeconnect.al [tedNEWS]
*I Believe* by Wintley Phipps

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Adventist HQ Holiday Outreach Celebrates Belief in Biblical Creation

30 November 2012 Silver Spring, Maryland, United States [ANN staff] The auditorium darkened, lightening flashed across a projector screen, thunder roared over the loudspeaker and artificial rain fell on hundreds of school children this morning during a recreation of the biblical flood, eliciting laughter and screams from the students. The family-friendly event runs November 29 to December 2 and celebrates the biblical account of creation with a series of evening lectures from leading scientists for adults, and daytime workshops and presentations for kids. Celebration of Creation includes a screening of a 20-minute nature film, “The Creation,” shot during filmmaker Henry Strober’s four-year journey around the globe. Scenes of nature accompany music and a narration of the Genesis creation story during the film.

Daytime workshops at the event are geared toward elementary-aged children. Kids enjoy posing with an animatronic Stegosaurus dinosaur before finding their seats in the auditorium at world church headquarters. Singer and dinosaur sculptor Buddy Davis from the Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky, shares stories and songs about God’s creative power. Christian cartoonist Dan Lietha leads children in a dinosaur-drawing workshop, and Guide magazine nature columnist Rich Aguilera brings the biblical flood story to life.

Aguilera also uses changes within breeds of dogs to demonstrate a lack of evidence for so-called “transitional” species. As dozens of dog breeds multiply on screen, he asks, “Does anybody see a hippo up here? Does anybody see a tomato? No. All we see is variety. God created variety. Do you guys all look the same?”

“Let’s see if we can pet him,” Aguilera says of a boxer-bull, one of the newest breeds of dog. As he reaches toward the screen, the dog barks unexpectedly and jumps toward the audience. “Well, I guess we shouldn’t pet the dog — at least not that one,” Aguilera says amid laughter.
 Adventist HQ Holiday Outreach Celebrates Belief in Biblical Creation |... ht tp://www.ted-adventist.org/news/adventist-hq-holiday-outreach-celebra...
Church Responds to Media Inquiries over TV Sitcom Star’s Affiliation

28 November 2012 Silver Spring, Maryland, United States [ANN staff]

The Seventh-day Adventist Church emphasized its welcoming of converts in a response to media attention surrounding an American TV situation comedy actor’s comments about his religious affiliation and his personal thoughts about the show.

In a news release yesterday, a spokesman from the denomination’s North American Division said the Adventist Church welcomed actor Angus T. Jones “with open arms.” Jones is the 19-year-old actor on the sitcom Two and a Half Men, a popular show aired on the CBS network. He joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church through baptism in June.

Jones was the focus of media attention this week when a video of him criticizing the content of the show went viral. The video was recorded by Christopher Hudson, an individual whose ministry is not affiliated with the Adventist Church.

George Johnson, a spokesman for the Adventist Church in North America’s, said questions about Hudson should be directed to him and his organization directly.

Click here to read the full statement. [tedNEWS]

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Church Responds to Media Inquiries over TV Sitcom Star’s Affiliation |... http://www.ted-adventist.org/news/church-responds-to-media-inquiries-o...
A Fresh Perspective to Making God Known in Europe

29 November 2012 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.

Johann E. Johannsson, 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.lifecollect.connect.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
certainly benefit from what they read."

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 ministry, 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

Renate Hazel, 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 large 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 devotions, 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 (re)inspires and (re)motivates me in my work for 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 to "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 time-table 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 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:

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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. [teuNEWS]

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]

Adventist Church President Ted N. C. Wilson, shown here in a file photo, is one of two Adventists currently imprisoned in Togo on what Adventist legal and human rights experts say are unsupported charges. [photo courtesy West-Central Africa Division]
Adventist President Calls for December 1 Day of Prayer, Fasting to Supp... http://www.ted-adventist.org/news/adventist-president-calls-for-decembe...
12,000 ADRA Shoeboxes Head to Burkina Faso

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

13 November 2012 Abidjan, Ivory Coast [Gilbert Weeh, Solace Asafo Asafo Hlordzi, and ANN staff] Seventh-day Adventist Church president Pastor Ted N. C. Wilson is meeting with government, community and church leaders in West Africa during a visit to the region.

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 Ghana

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 | TED Adventist

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](http://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 Judaico-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).

Bowell 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 gruelling 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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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) 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 a ministry that is no longer bent on trying to be relevant.¹ 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. ² 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 and meet Him as the owner and to do good without God. True, we might get started down the pathway but a faithless virtue is short-lived. 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 showboat 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 vpilmoor@adventist.org.uk

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

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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 somewhat involved in the activities of the church immediately after acceptance into membership whereas 34% expected to be given some time to find their feet before becoming involved. Less than 10% stated that they did not expect 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.

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.

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