Redesigned adventist.org set for launch in October

20 May 2013 Dubai, United Arab Emirates [Libna Stevens/IAD/ANN/ tedNEWS] The redesign of the Seventh-day Adventist world church’s website, adventist.org – scheduled for launch in October – will offer major enhancements in style and information architecture, say church Communication leaders. The overhaul of the homepage will also include an improved design framework... Read more

European Health Conference on Healing

15 May 2013 Prague, Czech Republic [Miroslav Pujic, tedNEWS] Six hundred Adventist medical experts, health advocates and church leaders met for the European Health Conference in Prague, Czech Republic last month. This conference focused on the theme of Healing, not just physical healing but also mental, emotional, social, and spiritual healing... Read more

Adventist Church Session in Denmark

15 May 2013 Copenhagen, Denmark [tedNEWS] May 8 – 12, 2013 the Danish Union of Seventh-day Adventist Church held its session at the church owned campsite Himmerlandsgaarden. Quite quickly, the nominating committee put a motion to the floor to re-elect the President, Thomas Müller. Müller was re-elected together with Treasurer Bjorgvin Ibsen, who has been working as a Treasurer in... Read more

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Recently I spoke with the CEO/President of a very large corporation employing nearly 100,000 associates and generating annual revenue in the billions. To be successful, such a leader must be astute in finance, well-versed in emerging trends, and decisive when taking actions—a true leader. Additionally, such individuals are often accused of being ruthless and driven, with an eye on the... Read more
The redesign of the Seventh-day Adventist world church’s website, adventist.org – scheduled for launch in October – will offer major enhancements in style and information architecture, say church Communication leaders.

The overhaul of the homepage will also include an improved design framework, creating an opportunity for better integration of the hundreds of websites throughout the world church. Church leaders say the move will deliver stronger and more consistent branding across the denomination, which has a decentralized structure throughout the world.

“This will allow the church to define its brand, to clarify its voice and move from a place of multiple different sites to becoming a network of sites,” said Garrett Caldwell, assistant...
Caldwell and other Communication department leaders from the Adventist Church headquarters announced the website revamp last week at the Global Adventist Internet Network summit, held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The conference brought together 230 participants – top church administrators and technology and communication professionals – to network on unified efforts in sharing the gospel in a clearer way around the world via the Internet.

The new website will be offered in four languages – English, French, Portuguese and Spanish. The site is a key starting point for journalists, researchers and those seeking a spiritual community, Caldwell said.
“We want to take each online visitor through a journey where they can see who we are as Seventh-day Adventists, what we believe, where they can feel our vitality, spirituality, and what moves us to service,” he said.

The new homepage will have a simple, clear design that will complement its content database and interactive technical features, said Andrew King, the Communication department’s Web manager.

“We're not just creating a new website, but a design framework for mobile, desktop and television,” King said.

Communication directors from across the church’s division offices agreed that unity and diversity are crucial to achieve successful website integration.

Church leaders from regions such as East Asia, Latin America and Africa are eager to integrate their websites with the new platform. Others, many of whom recently revamped their sites, will work toward adapting to the integration.

South Pacific Division’s Communication Director James Standish is open to seeing what the
new website will offer for his territory. “I’m interested in universal excellence while allowing for customized design options,” Standish said.

Williams Costa Jr., the Adventist Church’s Communication director and organizer of the GAIN conference, stressed the importance of a unified digital presence.

“We understand the diversity around the world, the different tastes, colors, cultures and the need to have something that binds us, but people need to see us as a family and with clear content and visibility,” Costa said.

Offering greater unity of content and design was a need that prompted Corrado Cozzi, Communication director for the Inter–European Division, based in Berne, Switzerland, to attempt to integrate diverse and multi–language territory websites for branding more than a year ago. Cozzi and a team led by Klaus Popa of the Adventist Media Center in Germany have coordinated efforts with the Adventist world church’s new website project in the integration of microsites.

Following the launch of the new adventist.org in October, Communication leaders will hold a series of meetings to discuss options for integration.
In addition, the netAdventist platform for church websites will also be integrated into the new look and framework of the new website, said John Beckett, who oversees the platform as director of the church’s Office of Global Software and Internet.

In a Sabbath sermon, Adventist world church President Ted N. C. Wilson addressed meeting participants and local church members at the Ras Al Khaimah Seventh-day Adventist Church, urging them to continue using all means possible to spread the gospel.

“Share God's love, share the Three Angel's Message as to how God is preparing people for His soon coming,” Wilson said.

Wilson challenged technologists to explore ways to use in a comprehensive integrated media approach to reach the hearts of people through various outreach initiatives.

Participants were also shown the new "Creation: The Earth Is a Witness" film project, which will be completed and distributed worldwide later this year. Wilson appealed to conference participants to collaborate in innovative ways to showcase the film in churches and other venues in every community possible.

GAIN's 2014 meeting is scheduled to be held in India. The forum is held in different world
regions each year to give local church administrators and members the opportunity of participating.

Three representatives from Trans-European Division (TED) were at the conference: Miroslav Pujic, Communication & Media Director, who had a presentation on Social Media Discipleship, Mirjana Kicusic Social Media Marketing Director, and Sasa Ciric, Web developer. There were also a number of participants were from the British Union, Norwegian Union and the Netherlands Union.

To see more photos from GAiN 2013, please click here. [tedNEWS]

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15 May 2013 Prague, Czech Republic [Miroslav Pujic, tedNEWS] Six hundred Adventist medical experts, health advocates and church leaders met for the European Health Conference in Prague, Czech Republic last month. This conference focused on the theme of Healing, not just physical healing but also mental, emotional, social, and spiritual healing.

The organisers, Inter-European, Trans-European and Euro-Asia Divisions, brought together a rich ensemble of Adventist experts in the medical and health-related fields – people who know what they are talking about. People drawn from health institutions, universities and research facilities across Europe and the Americas.

In his keynote address, Dr. Viriato Ferreira, Health Ministries Director for the church’s Inter-European Division, explored the emotional and spiritual suffering that often accompany physical illness. “We need healing from life—not just physically, but also spiritually and emotionally,” Ferreira told delegates from some 40 countries across Europe. He urged them to accept complicated realities and recognise that “suffering may be part of healing.”
“This conference confirms Trans-European Division commitment to strengthen a blended health ministry approach, based on how Christ ministered while on earth.” says Steven Cooper, TED Health Ministries Director. “Christ's ministry was to bring healing to all, whether it was physical, mental, emotional, social or spiritual. By God's Grace, TED will work with our unions in encouraging this transformation.” concluded Cooper.

Many of the TED conference participants reiterated the need for training. From this conference, plans are being developed for appropriate programmes which encompass many of the healing issues discussed during the conference. Through a balanced, non-judgmental, evidence-based approach, it is envisaged church members and community alike will be drawn into living life to the fullest and experiencing the joy which comes from God.

Dr Bertil Wiklander, TED President, who was one of the devotional speakers at the conference, says: “My hope is that through this conference there will be a renewed focus on a balanced, evidence-based approach to our health ministry and healing.”
“As I listened to the presentations – especially the plenary sessions and workshops – I had a growing conviction that the ‘health message’ and ‘health ministry’ of the Adventist Church is one of our greatest assets. Not just for us personally, but as a means for us to make a positive impact for Christ in this day and age. We have what our neighbours need!” says Julian Hibbert, the Editor of Messenger and Focus magazines in the United Kingdom.

It was wonderful to see so many with a deep desire to renew the work in our health message with Christ being at the center of this ministry.

The Adventist Church has been emphasizing healthy living for about 150 years. The health ministry of the church includes a global network of hospitals, clinics and medical universities.

The Health Ministries Department at the General Conference will organise Global Health Conference which will be held in Geneva, Switzerland from 7–12 July 2014. You do not want to miss it!

To see more photos from the Conference, please click here. [tedNEWS]

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Among the usual matters of the constitution and bylaws amendments, the Union Executive Committee handed in a document to the Plans Committee concerning the gender equality in the Adventist Church. The Plans Committee brought the motion to the floor and after some discussion, an addition the document was brought to a vote. The document is a statement of intent to clarify the Danish position concerning equality in ordination. Out of respect for the Theological Study Committee working on the ordination theology, the session chose to wait for the outcome in 2015, however the Committee wanted to express the views from Denmark. Therefore, an extra paragraph was added to the statement declaring that all ordinations will be suspended until 2015.

The atmosphere at the session was positive and the leadership of Dr Bertil Wiklander, President of the Trans-European Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, during the nominating committee helped make the session a smooth experience for everyone. The Church in Denmark has 2500 members and has seen a decline of about 25 members yearly for many years. In the last two years, the membership has held a status quo and the Church looks very positive into the future.

After the Session, President Thomas Müller commented: ‘The Church in Denmark has great opportunities. There are a lot of good initiatives happening: the second-hand store “Happy Hand” is reaching out to people in Copenhagen in a variety of different ways; the youth are eager for mission and are seeking opportunities to be involved; and we have just produced a new magazine "The Journey" (Rejsen), a colourful magazine with Biblical texts from Genesis to Revelation, giving people a sneak view of what the Bible is about,’ Müller explained. ‘I look forward to leading out during this next term of office and am confident that God has something good in store for Denmark,’ Müller concluded.
To read the full statement regarding the equality and ordination in Denmark, please click here. [tedNEWS]

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Doing the Right Thing: Leading by Values

Recently I spoke with the CEO/President of a very large corporation employing nearly 100,000 associates and generating annual revenue in the billions. To be successful, such a leader must be astute in finance, well-versed in emerging trends, and decisive when taking actions—a true leader. Additionally, such individuals are often accused of being ruthless and driven, with an eye on the bottom line, and highly competitive.

In light of this general perception I noticed his response to a question I posed: “Yes,” he said, “doing the right thing, is important. We have to start there, and then find a way forward.”

I have concluded that doing the right thing matters a great deal in all successful organizations and must be practiced by their leaders, including church leaders. It means doing the right thing by the people we employ, in the selection process, remuneration decisions, work expectations, and the support we provide. It is generally easier simply to do what we have always done and follow past patterns. But is that the right thing for our associates? It also extends to management of our financial resources? It seems so obvious that we must do the right thing, and yet it is easy to follow a path of convenience, of least resistance, of past practices, rather than identifying the right thing when we spend funds. And what about planning and programming? Certain programs are expected of us from both the top and the bottom of our organization, but are they right for the organization now? Every action, plan, decision contemplated by leadership should ask before implementation: But is it the right thing to do?

How do we know what is the right thing? Is there an organizational policy or a text in scripture that tells us that, or do we just follow our instinct (as the old quip goes, "I know the right thing when I see it").

I believe there are some tests we can give to our leadership activities that help us discover what the right thing is. Here are some I have used.

1. Will our associates become better people, more effective and mature workers, successful in the organization, and prepared to take on larger responsibilities because of our leadership decisions? At a very practical level, are we surrounding ourselves with people equipped and able to succeed us when the time comes?

2. Does the principle of the talents in Jesus' parable describe the way we allocate funds?
Specifically do we expect growth from all our investments of funds, or are we satisfied if we simply do not incur losses? In church organizations, these funds are donated by faithful believers, and surely leaders are not charged simply to protect the principal, but to grow its value through additional services rendered, more people helped, new initiatives in teaching and preaching the gospel? Can that be said about all our financial appropriations?

3. Leaders are constantly confronted with the question of what to keep and what to change! Programs, departments, services, activities are crossing our desks daily. Do we keep them all (because--well there they are), or do we stop doing certain things so we can introduce new things (innovate)? The temptation to keep everything we have done before, and be cautious about innovation is particularly great for Christian leaders whose resources keep coming primarily in the form of tithe and offerings. Is that doing the right thing, or are we to be change agents like the first Christian leaders beginning with Christ himself and his greatest apostle Paul?

There is one more test we may consider, and that I have borrowed from international management/leadership guru, Gary Hamel in his latest book on leadership, What Matters Now. In the short chapter entitled "Reclaiming the Noble," Hamel proposes that leadership which is merely successful, though comforting to stockholders or church members respectively, lacks the excitement of leadership that is also "reclaiming the noble." On Hamel's roster of such leaders are Michelangelo, Galileo, Jefferson, Gandhi, William Wilberforce, Martin Luther King, Jr. Mother Theresa, Sir Edmund Hillary. Others are listed on my church roster, such as E.G. White, J.N. Andrews, Ana and Fernando Stahl, the Murdoch family, Ben Carson, et al. What is unique about them? They inspire by reclaiming in their time something we have nearly forgotten in ours, as key leadership goals, namely "beauty, truth, wisdom, justice, charity, fidelity, joy, courage and honor." They reclaimed the noble.

Doing the right thing in leadership, especially Christian leadership, is not complete until it has captured the noble—those goals far beyond (but not apart from) the bottom line. These are the real values of Christian leadership, and the good news is that these values are not incompatible with organizational success. In fact, they may enhance it.

By Niels–Erik Andreasen, PhD – President, Andrews University

Used with permission from Leadership Development Journal – March 2013
Spring Meeting, in Battle Creek, Marks Church’s 150th Anniversary

13 April 2013 Battle Creek, Michigan, United States [Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN] In a replica of the meeting house where Seventh-day Adventist Church pioneer and prophet Ellen G. White once spoke for 10 hours on the Great Controversy, world church leaders met yesterday to commemorate the church’s 150th anniversary.

The Second Meeting House is located on the campus of the Adventist Historic Village here in Battle Creek, the birthplace of the Adventist Church and the site of this year’s Spring Meeting, a biannual business session of the church’s Executive Committee, its top governing body.

Delegates received a crash course in Adventist History 101, with a side of some of the more obscure events surrounding the church’s early formation, a strong urging to learn lessons from the past and, above all, a call to rekindle the enthusiasm early Adventists felt for the Second Coming of Christ.

“We must never lose the sense that [Jesus’ Second Coming] is soon,” Adventist historian Jim Nix told delegates. “This is what our pioneers fervently believed.”

Nix, director of the Ellen G. White Estate, explored the church’s early roots in Battle Creek during a morning presentation. When church pioneer Joseph Bates first arrived in the rural Michigan town, Nix said, he asked the local postmaster for “the most honest man in town,” in hopes that man would be open to the emerging Adventist message. The man was David “Penny” Hewitt, a peddler so honest that if he unknowingly cheated a customer so much as a penny, he felt compelled to make immediate amends, Nix said.

After a “morning worship” by Bates extended well into the evening, Hewitt and his wife, Olive, were convinced of the seventh-day Sabbath and the sanctuary doctrine. The couple became
Battle Creek’s first Sabbath-keeping Adventists. In 1860, David would suggest naming the growing denomination the “Seventh-day Adventist Church,” three years before it was officially established.

Delegates also learned about some of what Adventist historian Merlin Burt called “spiritual detours in leadership” during the church’s early formation.

“The Bible doesn’t hide the weaknesses of people of faith, and nor should we tell an incomplete story of our pioneers,” he said.

Burt, who directs the Center of Adventist Research at church–owned Andrews University in nearby Berrien Springs, Michigan, took the opportunity to defend the reputation of a man many Adventists have viewed unfavorably as an authoritative legalist.

That man, George Ide Butler, was embroiled in a heated debate with other early Adventist leaders regarding the doctrine of righteousness by faith. Butler rejected the notion, claiming it slackened the reins of God’s law.

By 1888, Butler’s health had collapsed. He had been “thrust” into leadership of the Ohio Conference after two dissenters, Snook and Brinkerhoff, questioned Ellen White’s prophetic authority and unexpectedly left the church, Nix said. Butler would later serve two terms as Adventist Church president.

He retired to a rural citrus farm in Florida, where he cared for orange groves and his wife, Lentha, who had suffered a debilitating stroke. Years later, in a letter, Butler said the setting gave him ample “opportunities for meditation,” and admitted that his mistakes were “manifold.” Mellowed by quiet reflection, Butler fully accepted the doctrine of righteousness by faith and returned to church administration, mentoring A. G. Daniels and other young members.

Calling the story “redemptive,” Burt urged delegates to apply its lessons to their own leadership. “Even when God works and changes our own lives, our limitations still remain,” Burt said. “Hopefully, though, when we’re dependent upon God we can be more humble in our opinions, more charitable to others, less critical, and try to understand and care for others. When we are aware of the mercy of God, it makes us more merciful and able to be more effective leaders.”

During a mid-day break, delegates witnessed the groundbreaking of two new buildings on the campus of the Adventist Historic Village — replicas of the church’s first publishing house and first health reform institute in Battle Creek.
Adventist world church president Ted N. C. Wilson, flanked by presidents of the church’s 13 world divisions, raised bright blue shovels into the air for a photo opp, a stark contrast to the gray drizzle that clouded the village.

“May this be a reminder of the importance of transferring truth through the spoken word, and the written word,” Wilson said, referring to the future publishing house.

During an afternoon presentation, Adventist world church Vice President Delbert Baker explored how the early church’s outreach method put it at the leading edge of advocacy for equality.

Early Adventists, Baker said, grappled with slavery, equality and other “defining issues” of the mid-19th Century. The church was officially established two years before the end of the Civil War, which pitted the northern and southern U.S. states against each other in a bloody battle over slavery, states’ rights and the preservation of the Union.

Ellen White counseled early Adventists to let “timeless biblical principles” guide their approach to race relations. Using Luke 4 as what Baker called an “outreach blueprint,” Adventists were “unequivocal” in their belief that the Bible prompted ministry to all people and compelled Christians to “set the oppressed free.” Indeed, Baker said, early Adventists were a diverse group, well representing gender, age and ethnicity. A former slave named Charles Kinney became the church’s first black minister. Missionary Anna Knight was the first black woman to do outreach in India.
Progress, however, “was not accidental” or, at times, even “easy,” Baker reminded delegates. It often required the “prodding of members” and the “confrontation of Ellen White.”

Early Adventists also struggled over whether to formally organize as a church, a subject Barry Oliver, president of the church’s South Pacific Division, explored. Early pioneers such as James White were fervent in their call to “come out of Babylon,” which they first interpreted as a challenge to leave organized religion and return to gospel simplicity.

But financial collapse and an urgent need to fund outreach led the Adventist Church to embrace formal organization.

“The development of mission was a clear impetus for organization,” Oliver said, adding that early leaders were equally clear in cautioning that “when structure inhibited mission, it should be changed.”

Formal organization led to burgeoning church growth worldwide. When the church was officially established in 1863, there were 3,500 Adventists. By the turn of the century, there were 75,000 church members worldwide in America, Europe, the South Pacific and other so-called “mission fields.” During a question-and-answer period, one delegate asked Oliver whether he feared current tension between world church headquarters and local regions would jeopardize the church’s unity. Some administrative units of the church have lately challenged the world church on the issue of women’s ordination.

“You’re asking me to be a prophet,” Oliver said, eliciting laughter from the delegates. He thought for a moment, then recommended a healthy “balance” between the church’s world headquarters and regional administration.

“We are resilient as a church, but unity must be guarded appropriately,” he said. [tedNEWS]
"Digital Evangelism Works!"


26 March 2013 Rogaska Slatina, Slovenia [Andrew Willis, tedNEWS] Twenty-five web pastors and community developers from around the Trans-European Division (TED) met for three days of training, exchange of experience and further development of the Internet ministry known as LIFEconnect (LC) in Slovenia. They were excited to hear of the impact that LC and LC STREAM programmes are already having on lives in Europe. Pastor Julian Kastrati from Albania shared the experience of the first LC stream event in Albania, telling his colleagues, “Digital Evangelism works!” We had more than 1,200 viewers online and 100 people in the hall. For Albania, where the church is very small, this is a miracle. (To read a full report from Albania, please click here.)

The LC Web Pastors and LC Community Developers participated at the LC STREAM programme in Rogaska Slatina, Slovenia. They were able to experience first hand preparation and delivery of a live stream event alongside receiving cutting edge training in Social Media skills and sharing reports from their countries.

The LIFEconnect concept is one of the online communities where people can explore life. Its aim is to create a place where people connect, share, dialogue, meet and are invited to become disciples of Jesus Christ.
The event began with the news that God has truly blessed LC. The 25 LC Web Pastors and LC Community Developers heard how the LC community has grown. Today we have over 367 Digital Missionaries, 18,549 members of the network and over 1.5 million visits last year. There are number of people who already made a covenant with Jesus to follow him. The new LC website was shared [lifeconnect.info hyperlink] and further LC Stream events are planned for Poland, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro in the month of April.

Outlining some of the recent technological trends and innovations, Miroslav Pujic, TED Media Ministries Director, laid the foundations, showing how LIFEconnect and digital evangelism can work in our Division before opening up the technical training in areas of Social Media. The seminar covered marketing strategies, network development, search engine optimization and technical issues. Talking about the power of social media today Pujic said: “If we are not there someone else will be.”

Alongside the training delegates were able to exchange ideas and resources and came together to support each other in friendship, worship and prayer. Perhaps the most important lesson came from the Macedonian LC community developers. When asked how they had managed to generate their exceptional online statistics they replied, “first ask God to lead, then trust Him to do it.”

Please visit www.lifeconnect.info and join us in sharing the story of Jesus in a holistic way.
[tedNEWS]

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26 March 2013 Rogaska Slatina, Slovenia [Andrew Willis, tedNEWS] The Grand Hotel Sava in Rogaska Slatina was the venue for the latest LIFEconnect – LC STREAM event from Slovenia. For over 10 years the hotel has hosted workers' meetings and training events and is well known to many in the Division. After sharing their friendship and hospitality with the Seventh-day Adventist church over the years, the town was invited to the hotel to explore life together with the online LIFEconnect community.

Over two weekends, Pastor Miroslav Pujic, Trans-European Division Media Ministries Director, explored six topics in a contemporary setting. Using music, stories and presentations he covered the values of trust, integrity, allegiance, forgiveness, love and hope and encouraged the audience to make positive choices in their lives.

Around 70 people were able to experience the LC Event in the Hotel. Seated around small tables they shared food and conversation whilst taking part in quizzes and getting to know each other. Each evening included a short presentation on health principles and some of the finest musicians had recorded videos to be shared during the events. Thought provoking video clips and stories contributed to the relaxed and open discussion that flowed throughout the evening. At the end of the evening the participants were encouraged to reflect on their values and make positive choices in their lives.

Pastor Zmago Godina, President of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Slovenia said, “The LC STREAM programme was a wonderful opportunity to reach out through both digital
media and live events to people that would otherwise hesitate to attend or would consider traditional settings or topics boring and irrelevant. It presented the everlasting gospel in a contemporary way. It was a great blessing for all of us.”

The impact of the LC STREAM was not limited to the small town of Rogaska Slatina. Every night between 700 and 800 people joined in online. Online visitors were able to part in the programme, whilst the audience in the hotel discussed the host’s questions, the online chat room was open and the virtual community shared in the conversation. Many commented on the quality of the programmes, the excellent music, and relevant topics.

Amongst the comments were those who had logged on and found hope in times of trouble. One online guest wrote in, “In my crisis of ‘epic proportions’ I have learned to stay calm and leave everything else up to God”. Another told the programme hosts, “I believe that you tonight have contributed to someone stepping on to the right side…” The conversation started online during the programme continues on the LC website.

The Slovenian livestream programme was the second LC STREAM event following on from its successful launch earlier in the month in Albania. (To read more about LC STREAM in Albania, [click here](http://www.ted-adventist.org/new...).)

LC STREAM events are part of LIFEconnect, an online community where people can explore life together with the ultimate aim of becoming disciples of Christ. The website
[lifeconnect.info hyperlink] provides a place to meet, an opportunity to share and a forum to talk. The LC STREAM event introduces the fourth level of the discipleship process, a place to meet. The final level is an invitation to discipleship. LIFEconnect Web Pastors and Community Developers from around the Division were present at the LC STREAM in Slovenia where they gained valuable experience in preparation for future live stream events in their countries.

After success in Albania and Slovenia the LIFEconnect team is preparing for the next LC STREAM events in Poland, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro in April. To be part of the online community and to take part in this growing ministry, log on to lifeconnect.info.

[tedNEWS]

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21 March 2013, St Albans, UK [Paul Tompkins, tedNEWS] On Saturday, March 16th the first ever Global Youth Day (GYD) was held, under the theme ‘One in Compassion.’ Adventist young people were asked to “be the sermon” and to be involved in acts of kindness in their localities. The idea was to think globally but act locally, and who better to do this, than the youth departments of our church!!

The young people responded well throughout the world and, whilst data is still coming in, it looks like this event (on Twitter and Facebook) has been the largest Global Social Networking event our Church has ever conducted, with over 26,759 people talking about it, and 3,457,327 people having seen the media files published on the Facebook page alone (https://www.facebook.com/AdventistGlobalYouthDay)

Live television links were held through Hope Channel studios in different parts of the globe. GYD was featured live on Hope Channel International for one hour from Australia, for one and a half hours from Darmstadt, Germany, and one hour from the General Conference HQ in Washington DC. Hope Channel Europe from Germany hosted a fast moving and interactive afternoon programme, coordinated by Stimme der Hoffnung, and featured live Skype reports as well as Facebook posts with pictures and videos. The Trans-European Division (TED) was well represented as part of the skype interviews and included a live link
to GC President, Ted Wilson, who was in Serbia at this time.

Within TED a number of excellent projects took place. In Norway young people took to the streets where they were visited by hundreds of visitors as they made free waffles, hot drinks, gave away hugs, balloons and sang. The local organizer commented, ‘The Youth Department would like to thank all the Youth groups in Norway for making today a truly memorable Global Youth Day. Well done!’ In Serbia blood donation was organized, while in Turku Finland, Albania, Deft, Netherlands, Sweden and other parts of our Division, older people were visited in Nursing Homes or simply in their own home if they were sick or unable to get out. In the UK, the South England Conference (SEC) Youth department in association with the London Youth Federation had home missionaries...
throughout London for the day. Though raining all day, they were not deterred from also singing in the streets, visiting the elderly in nursing homes and hospitals and giving blood. One youth department, supported by the majority of the church, even became a place of refuge for abused women. Pastor Steve Thomas, SEC Youth Ministries Director, commented: ‘We thank God that our youth became the sermon for that day’.

In Denmark, Adventist Youth took over the streets in Copenhagen with fruit baskets, tracts and other literature while the young people in Arhus braved the cold as they served waffles and talked to local people. Other reports are still being received as young people were challenged to visit their local communities and to be involved in random acts of kindness.

The day has been an undoubted success and will be repeated every year with the next one being on Saturday, 15th March 2014 which will once again mark the beginning of the International Youth Week of Prayer. To see more photos of the GYD, please [click here].

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you identify tedNEWS whenever you publish these materials.
Jesus is and must always be our great example as a leader. The reasons for this have been beautifully summarized by Laurie Beth Jones.¹ She calls attention to three simple premises:

1. One person trained twelve human beings who went on to so influence the world that time itself is now recorded as being before (BC) or after (AD.) his existence.

2. This person worked with a staff that was totally human and not divine ... a staff that in spite of illiteracy, questionable backgrounds, fractious feelings, and momentary cowardice went on to accomplish the tasks he trained them to do. They did this for one main reason—to be with him again.

3. His leadership style was intended to be put to use by any of us.

Other authors challenge our Christian leadership in broader terms. What key principles actually characterise a Christian leader? Let me draw on Charles Sibthorpe, A Man Under Authority: Qualities of Christian Leadership (1984). Your answers to his nine questions will describe your leadership:

1. Are you a servant?
Sibthorpe’s home was sometimes used as a centre for young people. He says: “I was always interested in who would volunteer to clear up the bar or give the place a coat of paint. It is interesting that those who were the most ready to serve took up positions of leadership later.”

One of the key principles of leadership is the willingness to be a servant. Jesus said: “whoever wants to be- come great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave” (Matthew 20:26–27).

2. Are you humble?
A Christian leader knows he is incapable of doing his work in his own strength. Paul described his mission to Corinth like this:

“When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling.” (1 Cor. 2:1–3)

Moses, when he received God’s call to leadership, said: “O Lord, please send someone else to do it.” (Exodus 4:13)
Gideon’s response to his call was similar: “But Lord,” Gideon asked, “how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.” (Judges 6:15) This attitude of humility is the condition for spiritual power. As a leader, Paul recognised that “When I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Cor. 12:10)

3. **Do you speak the word of God?**

“Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you” (Heb. 13:7). There are a lot of words in the church today. But are they effective? Jesus only spoke the words God gave him: “The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life” (John 6:63).

Human reason and eloquence, good as they may be, have a limited effect and only last until someone produces a better and more convincing argument. But God’s word is spiritual power that transforms human lives.

Paul said: “My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.” (1 Cor. 2:4–5)

A leader must be a man or woman of God’s word.

4. **Do you live your message and values?**

“Remember your leaders...Consider the outcome of their way of life” (Heb. 13:7). Life speaks more powerfully than words. All we say or preach cannot be fulfilled perfectly in our lives, but a man will apply the word of God to himself first, and only then will he be at liberty to share it with others.

Paul said: “For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.” (1 Cor. 4:17)

This is all a result of faith in God’s grace. Paul said: “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them— yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.” (1 Cor. 15:10)

A leader is a man of God’s grace.

5. **Do you operate by faith?**

“Remember your leaders...and imitate their faith” (Heb. 13:7). A Christian leader has a faith that others want to imitate. Faith points to God who controls our lives and invites his power to lead.

6. **Are you followed?**

Jesus said: “Come, follow me ... and I will make you fishers of men”. Then, we are told: “At once they left their nets and followed him” (Mk. 1:17–18).

Leaders in business have followers, because they pay them. Leaders in the church are
different. The people are not always being paid, and are not under any compulsion to submit. If they are paid employees, they will not get more pay if they do what you want them to do. The whole dynamic is based on the relationship between God and man, not on reward.

A leader’s leadership will be tested by the way people respond to it. A leader who leads by the power and authority of God will be followed. If no one is following, the leader is not a leader.

This does not mean that a leader should seek to please the people. If you are a man-pleaser, you will be moved out from under God’s authority. A true leader does the will of God, which may not always please.

At times, a true leader is surrounded by people who have lost their faith in God and who do not wish to do God’s will. God will then call him to lead others.

7. Are you fruitful?

God plants leaders with the anticipation of reaping a rich harvest of fruit in the lives of his people. Paul referred to certain followers as his “dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you” (Gal. 4:19).

Fruitfulness in God’s people is the reflection of Christ in their lives. God does it by His Holy Spirit, in order to glorify him and to be a blessing to others.

8. Are you ahead of the people?

If you are to be followed, you need to be ahead of your people. Paul was bold enough to say: “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1).

Leaders live under the responsibility of continually pressing on with God. It is often a lonely path, because you are breaking new ground for others to walk through later, but you yourself will only be following the path that Jesus has already walked. Through discouragement and fatigue, leaders often find they have not remained out in front and so their people have come to a standstill. When the church stands still, the leaders are standing still. You need to be ahead of the people. That is leadership. Being ahead also means to listen to your people, understanding their needs and ensuring that you bring God’s saving word to them which will fill them with hope, inspiration, and a will to go where God through your leadership wants them to go.

What is the fundamental, real key to all these questions? I have taken great strength from a passage in Henri Nouwen’s precious little book In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership (1989). He says as he comments on Jesus’ last conversation with Simon Peter: Before Jesus appointed Peter as a shepherd, he asked him: “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than the others do?” He asked him again: “Do you love me?” And a third time: “Do you love me?” We must see this question as the crucial question for our entire
Christian leadership, for it is that question which both saves us from opportunism and gives us a true self-esteem. The question is not: How many people take you seriously? How much will you accomplish? Can you demonstrate any results? But the question is: Do you love Jesus? ______________


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

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God has always had His appointed representatives to show His character and love in the community. It was for this purpose that He raised the Seventh-day Adventist church and it is His purpose in calling you and I to be leaders. How can we as leaders CONNECT with our church members and assist them as they interact with the community to uplift Christ in very practical ways?

Perhaps the following acrostic will offer helpful suggestions:

C = COMMITMENT to God and His Service -
Connect with God through His Word, prayer and meditation in finding what He would have you and I do in our respective communities. This relationship, essential for a Christian leader, is the basis of any positive association in the community. Jesus knew this – we see examples in the gospel where Jesus got up early in the morning and went to a solitary place to commune with His Father. Jesus had to have His quiet time with His Father. He recognized the importance of prayer to keep him in touch with His Father’s mission. We will not be able to help others without first being connected to the Life giver. Engaging in anything which we feel is important takes time, effort and commitment.

O = OBSERVE opportunities for service within our communities – social events, business meetings, school programmes, community initiatives. Sometimes we are so busy looking after ourselves that we forget about others and the real reason we are on this earth. Take time to reach out, to see what is happening in your community, listen to the hidden cries of someone in emotional pain, understand where someone is coming from, interact socially with our communities. Allow God to speak to you as you observe and follow His leading. Remember God has given us two eyes, two ears and one mouth. When we use our mouths, it is hard to observe. Let us use our eyes and ears at least twice as much as we use our mouths.

N = NON-JUDGEMENTAL – Connect without judging or condemnation while not giving up our values or principles. God has blessed us and provides us with understanding and insights into His Word. Unfortunately, at times this blessing has caused us to feel we are superior to other groups or individuals. This is not the case – we should not consider ourselves any better than the addict or drunkard. We are both loved by God equally. In actuality, being ‘keepers of the flame’ we have a solemn responsibility to uphold the standards and principles which have been given to us by God. To disregard them is to actually put ourselves in a worse position. It is important for us to leave the judging to God.
but to share with the community the love God showed us. No one likes someone who is always critical or judgemental. As a church supporting the community, let us show much love and less critical judging.

**N** = **NURTURE** church members and community. Principles for this are found in Christ's servant-leadership. "The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'" MH 144 This was no hurried process but that of leading the people along at a pace with which they could identify and respond appropriately. Allow the Holy Spirit to convince and convict others. Our responsibility is to humbly share what God has done for us.

**E** = **EXEMPLIFY** the character of Christ to our church members. Following the principles of Christ's ministry includes not only the way in which one works but also who one is in Christ. The Holy Spirit will develop the needed fruits for us to be like Jesus -- "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." Galatians 5:22,23 NKJV The familiar saying, ‘Actions speak louder than words’ is true and this influence of the leader encourages the church members to exemplify the fruits in their lives and to their community.

**C** = **CARE** for the marginalized and oppressed, the addicts and depressed, the rejected and the broken-hearted, the searching. Also step out of your COMFORT ZONE in associating with those of wealth, power, great learning and influence. We have received riches, blessings and knowledge, which are far above any earthly wisdom. If we will humbly share the goodness of the Lord, we will bring comfort and encouragement, leading to a desire in many to know the wonderful God we serve. We live in a secular society. We are not to copy their lifestyle and methods but seek to address the community needs in a real and lasting way. We are to uplift Jesus so that He will draw all men unto Him. John 12:32 refers to Christ's crucifixion but also has an application to our invitation to have people look to Jesus, accept Him as Lord and Saviour and be saved.

**T** = **TENDER TEAMWORK** on social issues and needs in the community – Connect and support each other in different social ministries. The needs in our communities are many and each of us has a role in community work. It is sometimes difficult for people enthusiastic in their service for others and filled with good ideas to accept different ideas and work as a team but teamwork is crucial in exploring needs, methods and cohesive progress, ownership and loyalty in the church and community. Micah 6:8 counsels us, "He has shown you, O man, what is good and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" Together in Christ our communities will
be transformed.

"Make Christ's work your example. Constantly He went about doing good—feeding the hungry and healing the sick. No one who came to Him for sympathy was disappointed. The commander of the heavenly courts, He was made flesh and dwelt among us, and His lifework is an example of the work we are to do..—Manuscript 55, 1901. {WM 53.1}

By Stephen Cooper, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) TE Director

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In the Guinness Book of Records the fastest talker in the world is Steve Woodmore, at 595 words per minute. Depending on which research you look at people normally talk at 100 to 175 words per minute. By contrast, their listening capacity or ability to comprehend is 600 to 800 words per minute. This, disparity researchers say, means that someone hears and comprehends between 25–50% of what you say.

George Bernard Shaw’s expressed the problem slightly differently: “The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place”. If you read, listen or watch the news the truth of that statement is all too obvious. Conflicts in the Middle East, Iran and in Africa are all examples of apparently successful negotiations or agreements breaking down. The illusion of communication is shattered by the practical application of what the parties thought they had “agreed”. The same situation can arise within the church between: members; pastors and members; administration and employees. The potential for misunderstanding between people is ever present.

There are various aids to communication, presentation methods and structures which can aid communication and assimilation. There is one aspect of communication which is often overlooked and all too seldom practiced – silence.

**Active listening**

Listening can be regarded as passive, said in the right way it is a tool to improve our efficiency, effectiveness and enhance our ability in interpersonal relationships.

There are key components to active listening. These components help us understand what a person is trying to say, while at the same time giving positive feedback to the person who is speaking and facilitating a true exchange of ideas.

**Pay attention**

At the risk of stating the obvious – pay attention to the person who is speaking!

When on the telephone or in a meeting with your computer resist the temptation to play games on your computer, scan incoming e-mails or surf the internet. There is nothing as irritating as hearing the click, click of a mouse at the other end of the telephone. It communicates disrespect for others.

Look at the speaker. Observe their body language. Avoid preparing your response after you
have heard the first sentence. Wait until they have finished speaking or presenting their point before responding.

It is all too easy to be distracted. External noises, mobile phones, bright lights, or decorations all can interpose between us and the speaker. A late night, a heavy workload can easily result in mind drift. Suddenly you realize that you have lost half of the conversation and now you are expected to make a response. A helpful approach is to take notes, a discipline that keeps us focused on the speaker.

Show that you are paying attention
Just as the speaker’s body language enhances their verbal communication, so your body language enhances your listening. Sit in an open positive position. Nod, smile, and reflect the emotions of the speaker. In a small group or on a one to one basis give verbal endorsements where appropriate, such as yes, ok, hmm etc.

Positive response
Our preconceptions, cultural conditioning, emotions or assumptions may distort or enhance our ability to hear and understand what it being said.

Reflect back to the speaker what you have heard using phrases such as: If I understand you correctly... What you are saying is ... and then paraphrase what you have heard.

If it is unclear about what the person is saying – ask clarifying questions. Confucian wisdom ‘say’: “When you know something say what you know. When you don’t know something say that you don’t know. That is knowledge.” At appropriate points in the conversation summarize what you have heard and understood. This way misunderstandings can be cleared up at the meeting and not come as a nasty surprise afterwards.

Suspend judgment
There is nothing more frustrating than someone who constantly interrupts. It disrupts the speaker’s flow of ideas. It inhibits the listeners’ ability to understand what is being said. Always allow the speaker to finish so that you have the complete picture. It may make your counter arguments more effective!

Respond
Active listening is based on mutual respect. This should also be basis of our response. Apply the Golden Rule: respond to others in the manner that you would like them to respond to you.

There may be times when a person makes a personal attack on you. Your natural reaction
may be to react and express anger, frustration or indignation. Well thought out strategies in advance can help defuse the situation and help avoid a conflict situation. By applying “reflect” and responding: I feel that you are XXX, have I understood you correctly? This can help the speaker listen to themselves and constructively confront and diffuse a difficult situation.

**Active listening checklist**

Use the following list will help evaluate your active listening skills and identify where there is room for improvement.

- What proportion of time do you spend talking and listening?
- How often do you finish other’s sentences?
- How aware are you of your personal filters in a given situation? We are products of our environment and have natural biases. How do these effect our ability to listen to others with different opinions?
- Do you experience mind drift or daydream during meetings?
- Do you play games on the computer or surf the internet while talking to someone on the telephone?
- Do you dominate conversations or do you allow others to express their opinions?
- When do you formulate your response? Do you wait until the person has finished what they are saying or are you formulating it as they speak?
- Do you give feedback by reacting or reflecting?

Active listening requires as much if not more energy than speaking, but it will pay rich dividends. Those who think with their mouth have little use for their grey cells.

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

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Leadership and sexual self-control

The general assumption is – you can’t be a good leader, teacher, pastor, or elder and have sexual self-control problems. In reality most people are good at hiding their sexual self-control problems.¹

Looking for something to read while waiting for a colleague, a pastor opened the glove compartment of his colleague’s car to find a collection of pornographic magazines, not the religious literature he was expecting. Confronting his friend, he pointed out that not only was he setting a bad example, he was also putting his ministry in jeopardy.

This article focuses on the underlying dynamic involved in all forms of addiction, including sexual addiction. A simple definition of addiction is: “any thinking, or behaviour that is habitual, repetitious, and very difficult or almost impossible to control regardless of negative consequences”.² The long term negative consequences of an addiction are detrimental to a person’s relationships, health, psychological well-being and spiritual health. Addictions come in many guises. The most common are alcohol, drugs, television, Internet games, shopping, gambling, eating, sports, work, nicotine or even chocolate. Others are addicted to exercise, work, politics, or religion. When the addiction is perceived as negative, most try to hide it; however, when the addiction is something positive, such as care giving or church activities, some project it as being good and wear it like a badge of honour. According to another definition of addiction, providing no harm comes to the individual or others, technically there is no addiction.³

People may accomplish a lot in other areas of their lives while still having a real and potentially dangerous problem with sex. Problems with sexual self-control can be like a monster, constantly needing more and more to keep it quiet. Some risk their security, including job, money, relationships and health to meet the ever-increasing demand of their sex life.

These problems are not new. King David, a “man after God’s heart”, could not resist temptation when he started to focus on Bathsheba’s physical beauty. His lust resulted in him arranging to have her husband killed. In turn David suffered the consequences when confronted by the prophet Nathan.
Sex addiction problems are prevalent among people from all walks of life. Today sexual images are readily available and not everyone is strong enough to resist and refocus the mind on something else.

Today there are many sources of sexual gratification. Pornography is readily available 24x7 via the Internet. More than 200 new pornographic websites are launched daily. More people than ever before are struggling with sexual compulsivity due to the Internet. About 40% of sex addicts are women. Like other addictions, a sex addiction is a pathological relationship with a mood-altering experience, which in the end becomes central to the person’s life. The relationship is with sex not with people. The secretive and double life becomes more real than the public life.

The addictive experience generally follows a four-phase addictive cycle. Phase one moves from a pre-occupation with sexual fantasies to an obsessive search for sexual stimulation. The mood is altered as the person enters an obsessive trance. In the second phase the person progresses from this mental state to preparation activities (rituals) which intensify the obsession. In the third phase the natural outcome is compulsive sexual behaviour which is almost impossible to control. The fourth and final phase is a feeling of hopelessness and of being powerless. Within this cycle there are three levels of addiction. Some people have episodic sexual compulsion problems and engage in activities such as excessive masturbation, watching pornography, Cybersex or illicit sexual behaviour. At a more destructive level behaviours such as victimisation, harassment and exhibitionism call for legal sanctions. The third level consists of behaviours like incest, rape and child molestation, with grave consequences for both victim and perpetrator.

Sexual excitement is centred in the brain, and the impact of sexual addiction on the neural pathways of the brain is one reason why it is so hard to break. Our brain is composed of multiple neurons which are connected by synapses that can be created and grown, or deteriorate based on our thoughts and actions. Therefore, our choices and behaviours change the structure of the brain. Dopamine (a neurotransmitter) floods our brain and rewards us for exciting or risky behaviour. In addition, Oxytocin is released in the female brain and Vasopressin in the male brain stimulating attachment during sexual activity, creating organic changes in the brain. In the end addictive neural pathways based on sexual stimuli are established which are extremely hard to change. These neural pathways function like a map indicating what is arousing in a specific situation and form the physiological basis of our thought processes. The preoccupation and obsession with sexual activity functions as a filter distorting reality so that sexual activity is considered to be the most
important need\textsuperscript{9}, because the brain is now addicted.

Many case studies also seem to indicate that sexual addiction is transferred from one generation to the next. According to specialists, the underlying dynamic in any addiction is a deep ingrained fear of abandonment. Generally there might have been a lack of nurturing. In the search for something or someone to depend on, alternatives are sought, which always promise to be a source of comfort and feeling good. In this situation any addiction becomes a real danger. In the case of sex addiction e.g. pornography, the fusion between sex and nurturing is cemented together.\textsuperscript{10}

Especially during times of stress, conflict or fatigue, individuals are more vulnerable and likely to lose control. PET scans show that at any given time, more blood flows to areas of the brain which are active.\textsuperscript{11}

During times of prolonged stress the part of the brain involved in so-called, instinctual drives (hunger, sleep etc.) and emotional experiences, is more active. At the other end of the spectrum, parts of the brain controlling the ability to inhibit unacceptable behaviours, controlling impulses and exhibiting moral behaviour, become less active. They are bombarded by impulses from the emotional brain and are overwhelmed. As a consequence, a person becomes less rational and more emotional, and extremely vulnerable to any issue with which they may struggle. The thinking process gets distorted and that is why it is important to take time to recuperate and balance work with rest. Triggered by this mental state, sexual self-control problems are intensified by distorted thinking, intense emotions, specific situations and the strength of one’s physical sexual drive. Additional risks include factors such as: being in a place where loss of control happened previously; being in conflict with other people (spouse, family, work); having unwanted feelings such as hostility, depression, anxiety and not knowing what to do with them; acting on unfounded thoughts and sexual arousal.\textsuperscript{12}

When individuals learn how to cope with their negative emotions, thoughts, situations and sexual arousal in more healthy ways, they are less likely to engage in addictive behaviour. How does one give leadership and guidance to those who struggle with sexual self-control issues? Or for that matter how does one cope on a personal level with issues in this area? Here are some strategies to guide others. These guidelines can also be used as a self-help method: 1. Acknowledge and accept that the problem is beyond the person’s control and stop denying or neglecting this fact (ownership). 2. Help the person admit that he /she cannot control the addiction without dependence on God, self-examination, prayer and help from at least one trustworthy individual. Establish a relationship based on unconditional
acceptance and trust with at least one other person. 3. Support the individual to commit to the help they have sought. 4. Challenge old (obsessive) thoughts, and understand and change sexual planning and decision making; refocus sexual fantasies. Thoughts are not true in themselves. Consider them to be nothing more than hypotheses which ought to be challenged. 5. Practise tolerating negative emotions such as anger and depressed feelings without using sex to relieve them. Develop the ability to experience strong negative emotions without bringing sex into the picture. 6. Identify situations and strategies to avoid high-risk situations. A changed environment changes behaviour. 7. Balance life so that sex is not more important than any other part. Find a hobby and plan other activities. There are great joys in life that have nothing to do with sex. 8. Take a break in time. 9. Cope with the problem of wanting immediate gratification. 10. Be aware of the “abstinence violation effect”. Old behaviour pathways never completely disappear. They are overrun by new pathways. When trying to change (stopping old behaviour and practising new skills), relapse into old behaviour is simply part of growth, and there is nothing wrong with that. The risk is to think that all is lost. This is catastrophic thinking. Take a step back; refocus as soon as possible on the new behaviour and start again. 11. Be patient with the person and help him/her to be patient with themselves! It takes at least nine months of practice to establish a new neural pathway that is strong enough for the behaviour to become more or less automatic. In fact this might be a life-long process. 12. Help the individual to focus on Jesus who offers unconditional acceptance. Guide them to tap into His love and power as a spiritual resource, which enables change and gradual growth into Christlikeness! It is very important to have an external model to focus on. 13. Help them to memorise by heart, empowering scriptural texts that strengthen neural pathways (e.g. Philippians 4:13 is helpful: “I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me.” (NKJV) Ephesians 3:20 “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.” (NIV) 14. Seek professional help!

Notes:
(3) Ibid., 682.
Understanding sexual addiction, xi.


(6) Ibid., 37.


(9) Ibid., 102.

(10) Ibid., 97–103.


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Leaders, criticism and self-criticism

I have never particularly liked reading books on the subject of leadership. You know the sort of thing: Ten steps to maximising your leadership potential. They are often very generalised and full of lists pointing the way to success. They may have their place of course. Stephen Covey’s book Seven Habits of Highly Successful People would not have sold in such huge numbers had it not had something important to say.

But these books often make a crucial mistake: they make leadership into a science when actually it is an art. They offer some sort of mechanical performance, techniques, and systems as the keystone of success. I believe that at the heart of good leadership inevitably and always you find strong, respectful, and creative relationships. If this generalisation holds good anywhere surely it must be in the Church.

The best book I have read on Christian leadership is very short and contains no lists, no steps. It was written by a man who, by his own admission, was entirely lacking in the ability to manage any large venture. But leading is not at all the same as managing. And he remains a great leader of minds worldwide. Henri Nouwen has important things to say to us in the Church today in his book In the Name of Jesus: reflections on Christian leadership.

In a few short pages he confronts us with some uncomfortable truths about the ways we exercise leadership. He says: “We have been tempted to replace love with power...Much Christian leadership is exercised by people who do not know how to develop healthy and intimate relationships and have opted for power and control instead” (p60). He adds that “it seems easier to be God than to love God, easier to control people than to love people” (p59). Such tensions mean that we are often engaged in “political battles for power [rather] than spiritual searches for the truth” (p31).

We all, if we are honest, want to make our mark, to draw attention to our own contribution. But no, says Nouwen. We must resist the “temptation to do something spectacular”, after all “Jesus refused to be a stunt man” (p38). Nouwen says we must “overcome the temptation to individual heroism” (p25). And the temptation to heroism is strong among us. The mark of true Christian leaders is that they are “always willing to confess their own brokenness” (p46). That is not easy to do in the midst of the pressure to impress which is as present in the life of the Church as anywhere else.
Well at least we can stand for justice and be the model of a moral human being. But no: “it is not enough for the priests... of the future...to be moral people”. They will have above all “an ardent desire to dwell in God’s presence” (p29). Many things in the institutional life of the Church stifle this desire but

“when we are securely rooted in personal intimacy with the source of life, it will be possible to remain flexible without being relativistic, convinced without being rigid, willing to confront without being offensive, gentle and forgiving without being soft and true witnesses without being manipulative” (p32).

If only...

Nouwen identifies my weaknesses as a leader with disturbing accuracy. It is a rather painful read. He raises the bar higher: “The Christian leader of the future is called to be completely irrelevant and to stand in this world with nothing to offer but his or her own vulnerable self” (p17). But I desperately do not want to be irrelevant! I want all my activism to count for something!

He reassures us: "Through contemplative prayer we can keep ourselves from being pulled from one urgent issue to another and from becoming strangers to our own and God’s heart" (pp28-29). All of this means that we have to be wide open to the opinions of others, open to critique without being destroyed. God’s correction will often come through the critique of others.

‘Critique’ is somehow a gentler word than ‘criticism’. Whichever word you choose it is hard to accept. The reason often is fear. Many of us are insecure in ourselves, in our own judgements and leadership ability. And so we become entrenched in our own views, fearing critique as an attack on us. It takes a depth of spirit to accept criticism from others.

Many of us are servants of the system which promoted us. So we are wary of giving or receiving criticism. He who critiques will himself be critiqued. And so we maintain polite silences. We lack the courage or the skills necessary to offer life-giving criticism. Yet we have not only to accept criticism but to embrace it. This is the mark of a mature leader who turns critique into momentum for future action. Ultimately criticism only really becomes valuable when we transform it into self-criticism.

You might think that is only negative critique which is difficult to take. But no. Many Christian leaders find it impossible to accept affirmations. They deflect them. This has always puzzled me. It masquerades as humility but is often false. It is a serious spiritual problem because it shows that we find it difficult to accept grace when it is extended, and
for a Christian that is serious.

Nouwen calls for “a whole new type of leadership...not modelled on the power games of the world, but on the servant leader, Jesus”. And then he announces the final unpalatable truth – that “the mystery [is] that leadership for a large part means to be led” (p57).

Maybe Nouwen is right. Maybe we have sometimes mistaken managerialism for leadership. Maybe we have thereby invited secular styles into Church structures. If Nouwen is right we have a lot of rethinking to do about our approaches to leadership in our own places of work.

-------------- All references are to Henri Nouwen, In the name of Jesus: reflections on Christian leadership, London: Darton, Longman, Todd, 1989.

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