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"Together in Mission" - XXI Session of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Poland

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In Europe, Adventist Social Media Sparking Interest in Spirituality

The development of a social media strategy for outreach in Europe is paying off for Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders trying to connect with those potentially interested in learning about God.

The online community LIFEconnect, launched in 2010, offers content and discussion groups for various lifestyle topics. This year, the online project began offering live meeting events and streaming presentations. Follow-up statistics from March and April meetings show the project is drawing tens of thousands of viewers and participants, and in some cases motivating them to visit an Adventist Church.

The initiative is operated by the Adventist Church’s Trans-European Division, based in England. The region includes 22 countries and is home to slightly less than 83,000 Adventist Church members.

Currently, 13 countries in the division are participating in the LIFEconnect project, with another half dozen expected to join this year.
“Jesus told us to go where people are, and today more than 2.5 billion people are on the Internet,” said Miroslav Pujic, Communication & Media director for the Trans-European Division. “Digital roads are quickly taking us to millions to share the story of Jesus Christ.”

While other church regions are finding success with major media outreach – such as television production and distribution in countries including Romania and Brazil – LIFEconnect is the denomination’s first major ongoing outreach initiative solely using social media. Though small for now, division leaders are finding some success in highly secular regions, where other methods of evangelism have yielded few results.

“I know of the challenges and sacrifices made to implement this project, and it’s thrilling to see this method of outreach delivering such great results, said Williams Costa Jr., Communication director of the Adventist world church. “Our church has been using other methods of outreach, and that’s fine, but we need to keep being innovative in finding new ways to share our message.”

In Albania, home to only 200 church members, more than 20 visitors came to an Adventist Church following a streamed LIFEconnect event. The nightly program had about 1,100 viewers.

In Serbia, organizers noted 10,500 viewers of a streamed program in one weekend. While some were church members, many community members participated in the program and at an auditorium event.

In Macedonia, a streamed program gained 3,300 viewers over a weekend. A national pop music recording artist came to a live event.

In Montenegro, 80 percent of registered users are not members of the Adventist Church. Some 3,000 people viewed a weekend
program in March, with three people coming to visit and Adventist Church the following Saturday.

“This is becoming the major outreach method in Serbia,” said Dragan Grujicic, LIFEconnect leader for the Southeast-European Union Conference, based in Serbia.

Pujic launched LIFEconnect in June of 2010, following two years of planning and development. Church administrations in participating countries were required to designate a Web pastor for the project, a network developer and volunteers.

The initiative is operated at the division by a small team of developers, a marketing manager and a content manager.

Pujic said roughly 32,000 people followed streamed programs online or participated in corresponding events in auditoriums in March and April.

He said the division plans to add the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and several Nordic and Baltic countries to the LIFEconnect project by the end of this year. [tedNEWS]

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Government Minister Visits ADRA-UK & Praises Grass Roots Work

23 May 2013 Watford, United Kingdom [Bert Smit, ADRA-UK CEO/BUC News] International Development Secretary, Justine Greening and Watford MP, Richard Harrington, visited the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA-UK) offices in Watford on Monday morning, 20 May 2013, for an extended one and a half hour tour and meeting.

The Secretary of State's visit focused on ADRA-UK’s work in Myanmar (Burma) where the charity is implementing a project with funding from DFID that creates jobs and promotes income generation along with raising awareness of gender, HIV/Aids, disaster risk reduction and environmental protection activities.

Ms Greening praised the efforts of ADRA and the work they are doing at a grass roots level. She said, "It was really, really helpful because the global poverty action fund is all about going beyond working with the biggest NGOs in Britain. We are working with medium-sized NGOs such as ADRA and much smaller ones."

The visit put ADRA-UK in the spotlight and gave them an opportunity to highlight the excellent work that ADRA does around the world.

It was a first visit to the ADRA office for Mr Harrington. He expressed delight in having such a positive charity in his constituency.

"It's very different from the old type of top-down aid where wealthy countries gave money to small countries and hoped that enough filtered through", he told reporters. "This is actually funding a project at grass roots and it's helping people to set up their own business, survive themselves and build an infrastructure."

Responding for ADRA-UK, Helia Mateus, chief financial officer said: "It's very encouraging everything the secretary of state said particularly highlighting that we work at grass roots.

"We work with the most vulnerable in the communities and she particularly appreciated what we do.

"We provide them with skills so they can generate some income to support their families, especially the young people who would otherwise have to leave the villages and head to the urban centres possibly to work in factories in the Thai border and sometimes never to be heard of again."

ADRA-UK was established by the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a charity in 1999. It stands however in a long tradition of helping people in need. This year the Church in the UK is celebrating 100 years of collecting from door-to-door by our members to fund medical, educational and development work overseas.

Since its beginnings ADRA-UK has become a professional organisation focusing on long-term development and providing relief in emergencies.

On paper ADRA-UK is relatively small with just eight employees. However they are supported in the UK by over 50,000 people, young and old.
The link to the Seventh-day Adventist Church is important because not only does it give ADRA-UK the ethos for its work but also gives church members an opportunity to be involved in the wider scheme of social responsibility and humanitarian work.

According to the latest statistics ADRA as a network employs over 6,000 staff worldwide and helped 31.5 million people in 2012.

The small team here in the UK makes a significant difference, supported as it is by many thousands more and able to use the global reach of the ADRA network.

A video report of the visit is available here. Also reports in the Watford Observer and on Richard Harrington's constituency news page. [tedNEWS]

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30 May 2013 Aarau, Aargau, Switzerland [Herbert Bodenmann/APD/ANN] Delegates of the Swiss Bible Society elected Seventh-day Adventist theologian Reto Mayer as the organization’s president during their May 24 meeting, making him the first Adventist appointed to the post in the society’s 58-year history.

Mayer, associate treasurer of the Adventist world church’s Inter-European Division, based in Berne, Switzerland, has served as the society’s vice president since 2005. The Adventist Church joined the society in 1982.

“I hope that people see [the Bible] as an invitation from God, inviting them to live a personal relationship with Him,” Mayer told the Swiss Bible Society in a May 24 interview. “The distribution of the Bible is close to my heart, so it's a pleasure for me to participate in this work.”

The Swiss Bible Society was founded in 1955 succeeding the former coalition of Swiss Bible Societies. Today, the society has 45 members, among others, cantonal evangelical-reformed churches, the Old-Catholic Church, independent evangelical churches, cantonal Bible societies, Christian societies and working groups in Switzerland that share the society’s charter of bible distribution.
The society promotes standards for translation, production and distribution of Bibles in Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein.

The Swiss Bible Society works with more than 146 national bible societies united as the global United Bible Societies to bring the Bible in easy and modern language and form closer to the people. [tedNEWS]

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U.S. Study of Adventists Finds vegetarians Live Longer

A study published yesterday in JAMA Internal Medicine, a journal of the American Medical Association, said vegetarians experienced 12 percent fewer deaths over a six-year period of research.

The study, funded by the United States’ National Institutes of Health, was conducted by researchers at Loma Linda University, an Adventist institution in Southern California. Researchers tracked 73,308 Adventist Church members who follow the church’s dietary counsel of a plant-based diet to varying degrees.

Of the study’s participants, researchers said 5,548 were vegans, 21,177 were lacto-ovo vegetarians (also eating dairy products and eggs), 7,194 were vegetarians who also ate fish, and 4,031 ate meat infrequently. The rest of the study participants ate meat.

The findings confirm health benefits of eating a vegetarian diet, the lead study author Dr. Michael Orlich told Bloomberg News.

“People should take these kinds of results into account as they’re considering dietary choices,” Orlich told Bloomberg. “Various types of vegetarian diets may be beneficial in reducing the risk of death compared to non-vegetarian diets.”
Orlich, director of the preventive medicine residency program at Loma Linda University Medical Center, said the study was aided by studying subjects who have low rates of alcohol and tobacco use.

The Wall Street Journal today pointed out that the study said cancer still struck meat-eaters and vegetarians at similar rates. Also, a vegetarian meal doesn’t automatically make it a healthy one. Deep fried foods contain high amounts of fat, and some meats are healthier than others.

Researchers pointed out that the health benefits were even more beneficial for men. It remained unclear why women were less affected by a vegetarian diet. Future research will examine gender-specific reactions to certain foods.

Dr. Kathleen Kuntaraf, associate Health Ministries director for the Adventist world church, said a vegetarian diet is part of living a holistic, healthy life.

“More and more people are recognizing our principles from 150 years ago are truly scientific,” she said.

Seventh-day Adventists have long advocated a vegetarian diet. The founder of Loma Linda’s School of Public Health overcame resistance in the health community in the 1940s to produce a landmark study on the benefits of a vegetarian diet, discovering that such a diet indeed contained sufficient protein, among other benefits.

In recent years, Adventists have been noted as one of the longest living people groups ever studied. In 2008, “Blue Zones” book author Dan Buettner wrote extensively about the health principles of Adventists and their longer, healthier lifespans.

[tedNEWS]
The academic success of twenty-nine students from Newbold College of Higher Education was celebrated on Sunday, 2 June 2013 at the College’s Awards Ceremony.

The Mayor of Bracknell Forest, Councillor Mrs Jan Angell, and other local politicians joined over 300 staff, alumni and friends of the College at the ceremony in the Newbold Church entre.

These students, who represent 17 different countries, have successfully completed the requirements for the College’s programmes in business, arts and humanities, media arts, and theology, which are offered in partnership with a number of international Seventh-day Adventist education providers.

Dr Friedbert Ninow (Rector) and Dr Johannes Hartlapp (Dean of Theology) represented Theologische Hochschule Friedensau – the Seventh-day Adventist state-accredited higher education institution in Germany – and attended the ceremony to celebrate the first graduates from the partnership between Newbold and Friedensau.
The guest speaker was Dr Edward O. Blews Jr, President of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, an association of Christian institutions with 116 member campuses in the USA and 69 affiliate campuses (of which Newbold is one) in 25 countries outside the USA.

Dr Blews addressed the audience on the theme Carpe Diem (loosely translated as Seize the Day), and shared Christ’s own eternal perspective from Matthew 6.33-34: ‘Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you … Do not worry about tomorrow … Each day has enough trouble of its own.’

Dr Blews reminded the graduating students that God is calling them into a waiting world, playing on the College’s name in urging them to ‘go forth with “New Boldness” in serving Christ and in serving humanity – His creation. The world awaits – seize the day to which God calls you,’ he urged.

Dr Philip Brown (Principal); Dr John Baildam (Deputy Principal); Pastor Patrick Johnson (Senior Pastor, Newbold Church); and Dr Daniel Duda (Director of Education, Trans-European Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church) were among those who participated in the ceremony as part of the platform party.

Newbold College of Higher Education is a member of the Seventh-day Adventist higher education network and is located in Binfield, Berkshire, UK. Newbold offers programmes in theology and religion, business studies, liberal arts and English for Speakers of Other Languages.

To see a list of Newbold Graduands for 2013, please click here.

Learn more about Newbold at www.newbold.ac.uk, and view photos from the 2013 Awards Ceremony at www.facebook.com/NewboldCollege [tedNEWS]
Adventist-Muslim Relations in Bosnia

Adventist-Muslim Relation Associate Director at the General Conference, Petras Bahadur, visited Sarajevo between 23-27 May 2013, holding number of workshops and seminars. Sarajevo is the capital city of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a country within South-East European Union of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with the Muslim presence of about 2 million people and Seventh-day Adventist church membership of about 500.

Bahadur’s visit brought manifold blessings. Majority of his time was spent in educating members and church leaders, however, he also took the time to get to know some of the local people and meet with the core team of the church to make future plans.

At the meeting held on Friday night, which was open to everyone, Bahadur expounded on why Jesus had to come, and then on Saturday morning, he shared with us ideas on how we can achieve more effective Adventist-Muslim relations.
Saturday night and Sunday seminar focused on Muslim beliefs and common misconceptions. The objective was to train the participants on how to build better relationships with Muslims. One of the techniques demonstrated during the training involved role playing, but the main focus was on prayer and creating friendships.

Many members of the Sarajevo Seventh-day Adventist church, who have Muslim spouses, as well as Muslim co-workers, supervisors, neighbours and friends, found this seminar very useful. Their Senior Pastor Pavle Runić commented: “We are very excited! New ground is being broken here! We gained valuable knowledge, which we didn't possess before.”

Bahadur is planning to have a series of public presentations in Sarajevo this coming autumn. In addition to that, the local team is planning to organise cooperative parallel presentations with Muslim leaders. Topics of interest will include: Social justice in the Qur’an and the Bible; People of the book; Diet according to the Qur’an and the Bible; and Prayer in the Qur’an and the Bible. [tedNEWS]
"Together in Mission" - XXI Session of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Poland

04 June 2013 Podkowa Leśna, Poland [Daniel Maikowski, tedNEWS] Over 160 delegates from across Poland took part in the XXI Session of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which took place from 30th May to 1st June 2013. It was an opportunity to take stock of the activities of the Polish Church in the last five years. The assembled delegates were also electing a new Board of Directors and the Executive Committee of the Church.

The Session, that lasted three days, resulted in election of a new president, Pastor Jaroslaw Dziegielewski, and the reelection of Marek Rakowski, Executive Secretary, and Maximilian Szklorz, Treasurer.

Among the delegates present were representatives of the Trans-European Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (TED), Pastor Bertil Wiklander, TED President and Pastor Raafat Kamal TED Field Secretary.

‘I want to thank Pastor Pawel Lazar for his leadership during two terms.’ said Pastor Wiklander. ‘He has been a valuable colleague in the international work of the church and he leaves his office with a positive development both in terms of evangelism and finances. At the same time I welcome Pastor Jaroslaw Dziegielewski as the new President of the Polish Union. He has several years of experience in leading two conferences and has also served as conference secretary-treasurer. Pastor Dziegielewski is a humble and spiritual man, but also a gifted leader and pastor. I look forward to co-operating with him. The Session also meant that the church in Poland has taken a big step forward in upgrading its constitution and bringing it in harmony with the international Seventh-day Adventist Church policy. I have felt a positive spirit in the church in Poland which I
pray will deepen and inspire many to take up the mission of God in Poland. May God bless his church in Poland!’ Pastor Wiklander concluded.

To see more photos from the Session, please click here. [tedNEWS]
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, 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 Communication director for public relations at the Adventist world church headquarters.
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]. [ted/NEWS]

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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.

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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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 Bjørgvin Ibsen, who has been working as a Treasurer in Denmark since March 2012. Henrik Jørgensen was elected as Secretary and replaces Line Nielsen who sat in the position since September 2012 but chose to go back to a leadership position in the town council in Odense. Jørgensen recently moved back to Denmark from serving many years at Newbold College, England.

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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The Reluctant Leader

In a church and a world calling for effective leaders, it is appropriate to ask once again, where do good leaders come from? Do we find them through some thorough screening process? Do we forge them through a variety of experiences? Can we train them by carefully designed coursework or degrees? And how long do we wait for their performance to show whether they are the real deal – someone with discernment and wisdom whom others will follow.

As part of my responsibilities at Loma Linda University, I chair many search committees. These are small groups of peers and colleagues who come together to select a new Dean, Vice President, or other significant leader for our institution. I am always fascinated by the discussions that occur. First, the committee spends time talking about the characteristics they would want to see in this person. When the discussion is complete, we have created an ideal candidate that we all realize can never be found. Then we start putting forward names. The list often starts with obvious choices - those second in command, associates, or recognized leaders on campus. There always a few who nominate themselves, though my experience has been they are usually not the best candidates.

And the discussion begins. What is the balance of characteristics that make the best leaders? Do you want charisma over character, energy over tolerance and reflection? How important is knowledge in their particular discipline? And what about wisdom? Where does it come from? Gradually, over a number of meetings, the issues are carefully and prayerfully discussed and a consensus starts to emerge. Opinions change when listening to others. The preferred candidate of one meeting may move down the list after reflection at the next meeting. Finally a “short list” is selected and interviews scheduled. And even then, after hours of discussion of each person’s history and references, opinions change based on how they present themselves, how they respond to key questions, and their general demeanour and attitude.

It is very clear that the intangibles of who we want in a leadership position are more than a set of good credentials or knowledge in their field. It includes their disposition, their attitude to life and those they will work with, and the approach they demonstrate to issues. I have come to call the best candidates the “reluctant leaders.” They are the ones who are not overly confident, but quietly competent. They show a reflective attitude, not easy answers. They are not seeking the job, but are willing if asked.

Jim Collins, in his bestselling book “Good to Great”, talks about this kind of corporate leader.

“We were surprised, shocked really, to discover the type of leadership required for turning a good company into a great one...Self-effacing, quiet, reserved, even shy – these leaders are a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will.”

Those are the Level 5 leaders that Collins found could truly make a difference in his or her organization. Reserved… Shy… Personal humility… - not exactly what one usually thinks of as a leader. Yet they are the ones who were able to gather ideas and people around them to move their organization forward.

So where does that place our church in this process of developing leaders? How do we grow, identify and appoint leaders with those characteristics? Does our current system of selecting leaders really do that?

I was attending a division level meeting recently in which the president was very clear on why he wanted each union and mission to become conferences. “Because then you will be responsible to the people. You will have to defend your actions and decisions to those who elected you”. Yet, does even the democratic process of selecting leaders guarantee results? When is a person’s popularity a barrier to making the tough decisions that are often necessary? Can a church, an institution, an organization, prepare leaders effectively? Or is this a matter of finding the right genetic material and polishing to what we want?

My impression is that the most effective leaders come with the basic ingredients already on board, a result of genetics and their early training as a child. They are then moulded by experience to have the characteristics we want them to have. It is the
difference between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge comes from many sources and is absolutely essential. But wisdom only comes when that knowledge is refined in the context of life’s experiences. It starts making reactions more intuitive, guided by forgotten experiences that left their imprint on that person’s character.

One strategy that we are trying to institute at Loma Linda is for each leader on campus to identify potential successors to their position. Each year they are expected to confidentially submit to their leader the names of 2-3 people they feel could take their place, either now or in the future. This is tough work and sobering for all of us. Yet it forces a mindset that is crucial to recognize that organizations will move on after us, and though things may be done differently, they will continue.

A key part of this strategy is to then seek to grow these potential successors to prepare them for future responsibility. Usually this must be done without their knowledge, as it often destroys a person’s relationships with peers if others think they have an inside track or have already been selected for an advanced position. So quietly and without most being aware of the strategy, these people are placed on committees, given assignments, and appointed to responsibilities that will expose them to the kinds of ideas and thinking that are important to the organization. If the initial supposition was correct, they perform well and can be given other responsibilities. But occasionally, characteristics of that person emerge that raise questions about their skill or even character. Both kinds of information are critical in identifying future leaders. And I often see the list of potential successors change as more exposure is provided.

Finally, I want to comment on the art of mentoring. I have benefited enormously through the years by having someone whom I respect be brave enough to comment on my behaviour or decisions in various situations. This is an incredible gift to another to have that kind of discussion. Too often we shrug our shoulders and hide our thoughts, thinking we don’t want to hurt our relationship or discourage a friend.

But the courage to confront, to have a crucial conversation with another, is one of the most valuable steps in developing leaders. It is the best kind of education, usually creating memories that stick in your mind for years. It doesn’t need to always be a comment about a problem, but can be equally effective as an affirmation of something positive that was observed. This is a responsibility we all can share.

Our church needs and deserves the best leaders we can find. Intentional strategies to develop individuals with the character and insights to truly be authentic leaders are essential. May God give us the courage and commitment to do this patiently, deliberately, and with precision.

By Richard H. Hart, MD, DrPH - President, Loma Linda University
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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 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

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Reflection on Christian Leadership

Jesus is and must always be our great example as a leader. The reasons for this have been beautifully summarized by Laurie Beth Jones. 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 become 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? _______________

1 For example, Laurie Beth Jones, Jesus CEO: Using Ancient Wisdom for Visionary Leadership, Hyperion, New York, 1995.

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

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}

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

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The Silence Dividend

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.

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. ♦

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

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