Message for the New Year

As this year comes to an end and a new year begins, we who work in the Trans-European Division (TED) Office want to wish you all a good new year filled with God’s grace. God, and his loving care for us, is the foundation for all that we hope for and he has made it known to us in Jesus Christ by his Holy Spirit... Read more

Introduction to the TED Theology of Ordination Study

In consultation with the chairman of the General Conference (GC) Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC), the Trans-European Division (TED) herewith publishes its Study Report on Ordination: The Mission of God through the Ministry of the Church: A Biblical Theology of Ordination – with Particular... Read more

Who is listening?

Hidden in the nobility of Leadership talk is the inconvenient reality that Leaders are supposed to influence others to achieve something! This is easy when demands suit our craving. However, when the object becomes onerous, when roles...
diverge, when the pace of progress is unacceptable, when egos clash... Read more

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Dear Readers,

As this year comes to an end and a new year begins, we who work in the Trans-European Division (TED) Office want to wish you all a good new year filled with God’s grace. God, and his loving care for us, is the foundation for all that we hope for and he has made it known to us in Jesus Christ by his Holy Spirit.

In the past year, we saw more baptisms in the TED than we can remember (looking at the European territories only). The Great Hope Project and the Mission to the Cities campaign took off, and a very successful Youth Congress was conducted. In September, we had the first joint ministerial meeting with the Hungarian fellowship of Adventists, who separated from us in 1975, and the signs are now giving us positive hope for coming closer to them. The Field School for the London Mission to the Cities events in October, the Secular and Post-Modern Conference and the TED Annual Council in November were also blessed and successful. Our ordination study has at last been completed and we are actively engaged with the world church in finding a path towards an inclusive ministry in our beloved church. There is a good spirit among us and we have a lot of work to do with our unions, leaders and members. For all this and other things not mentioned here, we thank God.

Next year will bring continued good progress but also some challenges. We want our senior college, Newbold College of Higher Education, to do well financially, so a special group will report to the Board on the 10th of February. Meetings and sessions are planned throughout the year and the Mission to the Cities continues at the level of our unions. It is good to place all our plans and the challenges we must face in God’s safe hands, while committing ourselves to allowing him to use us for his mission.

I want to thank you all for your support and prayers. May God be honoured! May Christ be lifted up among us! And may the power of the Holy Spirit dwell in us and be shared through us! A blessed new year from the Lord to all!

Bertil Wiklander

President of the Trans-European Division of Seventh-day Adventist Church
Introduction to the TED Theology of Ordination Study


The Study Report is part of the following process:

1. The GC Session in 2010 voted to request the GC Administration to prepare a study report regarding the biblical theology of ordination.

2. In 2011, the General Conference asked each of its thirteen divisions to engage its Biblical Research Committee to produce a study report on ordination including its consequences for the practices of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, to present it to the Division Annual Council 2013, and, if so voted, to forward it to the GC-TOSC, which will meet 21-25 January and 2-5 June, 2014. The intention is that the TOSC will produce one consolidated report and forward it to the GC Administration in the later part of the summer of 2014. Based on a decision by the GC Annual Council in October, 2014, the approved Report and associated recommendations will be passed on to the GC Session in the summer of 2015.

3. The TED Study Report was unanimously recommended to GC-TOSC by the TED Executive Committee in a secret ballot on 18 November, 2013. The TED Study Report will be shared with the more than one hundred members of the TOSC.

4. The Division Study Reports will also be made available on the TOSC web-site, where all research papers presented to the committee and all previous research papers since 1973 have already been made available to the church or public (www.adventistarchives.org/study-commissions-and-committees).

In addition to this process, however, the TED Administration feel it is vital that members and pastors in the TED are made aware of the content of the Report. Firstly, while we wait for the process to reach the stage when we present our Report to the TOSC in January, 2014, it is valuable for us to receive comments and reactions from the wider church in the TED. These comments will be included in the verbal report to the TOSC and it will also help us refine and improve its written content. Secondly, our church needs to be educated on the biblical and historical aspects of Ordination. Regardless of the decision of the GC Session in 2015, the Church needs to know what we are discussing and voting on. We have been given a clear mandate by the GC Administration that the divisions are responsible for this education, and we believe this is best cared for by making our Report available more widely. Comments are welcome on this e-mail address.

It is our belief that unity in the Church on any matter is not only achieved on the basis of scholarship, interpretations, and arguments, but it is based on being filled with the wisdom, understanding and vision of the Holy Spirit. This was how the early church went forward when they faced the serious challenge of defining what was required for being a ‘Christian’ according to Acts 15. The decision to have two kinds of Christians – Jewish and Gentile – was based on (a) understanding the Bible (15:15-17); (b) being committed not to ‘trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God’ (15:19), and (c) following the decision of the Holy Spirit, which had been given to Jews as well as Gentiles (15:8-11, 28). We wish to see the same approach being used by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in dealing with Ordination. Therefore, our most earnest appeal to you all is that we pray about this matter and open our hearts to the good work of God’s Holy Spirit.

May God bless you!

Bertil Wiklander President of the Trans-European Division of Seventh-day Adventist Church
Who is listening?

Hidden in the nobility of Leadership talk is the inconvenient reality that Leaders are supposed to influence others to achieve something!

This is easy when demands suit our craving. However, when the object becomes onerous, when roles diverge, when the pace of progress is unacceptable, when egos clash, when competition sets in, when discouragement and failure looms, what then?

Leadership by nature is a relationship spiked with fear-based tensions by both parties. The trick, if there is one, is to channel this fear into confident trust. Given this interpersonal stress, David Runcorn suggests that "the primary but most demanding quality of a leader is to be a non-anxious presence."

The value of listening is a theme that runs through the Samuel narrative. In 2 Samuel 20 there is story about an un-named but 'wise' woman who demonstrates such composure.

The northern tribes of Israel are dissatisfied with southern rule. Absalom has just been impaled and Joab has something to prove. Sheba the son of Bichri leads a break away and is holed up in Abel of Beth-Maachah on the Lesebian border. It is a gory story in which Joab and his ruthless forces decide to batter their way into the town and kill all in their path, when a 'wise woman' comes out of the city and says: “Listen, Listen; ... there is a local legend that says... they shall surely ask counsel at Abel and so they ended the matter .... I am one of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel: you seek to destroy a city and a mother in Israel, wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the Lord?” Joab indicates that he is only after Sheba. “The woman said to Joab, behold, his head shall be thrown to thee over the wall. Then the women went to all the people in her wisdom. And they cut of the head of Sheba and cast it out to Joab”. “And he blew a trumpet and retired from the city....”

Runcorn reflecting on this story shares the following:

“There is, I believe, a direct relationship between our failure to listen and our experience of work as a form of forced labour... without a disciplined listening heart, we will be driven by the tasks we face. If we do not have the reflective space we need to re-imagine the world our only option will be to work harder, ... driven by 'systems of salvation'... each system held in place by higher levels of inhibiting anxiety ... resulting in an inability to be present ... In the grip of anxiety, our capacity to listen, to love or to respond imaginatively will be much reduced...when we are anxious we fear chaos and so strive for control and conformity... we tend to exclude rather than embrace...we blame rather than assume responsibility ... we play victim rather than take critical decisions ... anxious system-driven communities suffer from grid-locked imagination ... we will not get anywhere until we can admit what we are afraid of...."

Consider the following: How many leaders can you name that are famous for their capacity to listen? Are you more flattered by invitations to be listened to, than to listen? How often have you heard the cry that church leaders are too busy to listen? Is the purpose of pastoral visitation to invoke or to evoke? Does our message driven mission deafen us to the voice of the voiceless? It seems that the ability to listen deeply, to hear the unspoken pain articulated in those we serve and those with whom we contend, is a special gift. Leaders regard time assigned to being a non-anxious listening presence as an opportunity to offer grace.

This should not be contentious since we readily recognise that 'faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God' or more simply, trust in God, comes by listening to God's voice, or more generally, trust in each other comes through listening to one another. To stretch it further, might not the discipline of hearing God's voice be the training opportunity for listening to the powerless who yearn to be heard? It then becomes possible that space once constrained by debilitating fear becomes energised with confident trust.

While reflecting with some exasperation on a recent round of executive committee meetings, three issues were repeated:

1. Leaders expressed concern about the impact of people/groups peddling divisive ideas,
2. Lay representatives made claims that Pastors did not visit as they once did.
3. Pastors described their stress due to the demands of conflict.

Clearly there is a lot of preaching and talking going on, but not enough listening.

To be fair to others, if I could change one thing about my office based service, it would be to ‘get out’ and simply spend time with people listening more broadly to peoples deepest concerns, even if I had to take up Golf to achieve it. The nature of our itinerant service hustles us
from one agenda to the next. We meet with one harried group after the other. Yet, loyalty is not won through the power of argument, or the resolution of committee action, but through the grace of having listened to one another.

Paradoxically, one of the core services in ministry is the pastoral visit, though all too often this interface is high-jacked by the business of church activity, or the drive to explain some doctrinal position.

Pastoral and leadership listening is an offering of grace.

Pastoral visits are times of engagement for no other reason than to share something of God’s grace. They are times of un-required giving. They are times when we are more likely to listen than to inform. They are times when we need to prepare a spiritual seed, appropriate for the occasion that serves to elicit the voice of the voiceless.

I dream of a committee where representatives speak spontaneously about their confidence in leadership, of loyalty and enjoyment in fellowship, with every Pastor expressing confidence and courage, each because they have been heard.

Ref: David Runcorn (2011) Fear and Trust: God-centred leadership (SPCK)

By

Victor Pilmoor, Treasurer, British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Used with permission from Leadership Development Journal - September 2013
28 November 2013 | Nicosia, Cyprus [Audrey Andersson, tedNEWS] He was not the typical missionary. A refugee from Antioch, Moses Boursalian, an Armenian comb maker arrived in Cyprus 100 years ago. Moses and his family initially let their lives do the preaching as they became the first Seventh-day Adventists to settle on the island. It was not until 1932 that the first official workers came to the island, a retired Pastor Robert Graves and his wife. The Graves had returned to North America from Africa due to ill health. As they recuperated, they felt the call to do something else and so moved first to Turkey, then Greece and finally settled in Cyprus.
On Sabbath 26 October over 150 members and friends of the church gathered in Nicosia to celebrate the centenary of the arrival of Adventism on the island. Stories of God’s leading and guidance were shared by Moses Elmadjian the oldest member and grandson of the first Moses on the island. He enthralled the children, old and young, by showing one of the combs his grandfather made from camel bone. Some of his earliest memories were going to the Graves’ home as a small boy. He says, “It was like experiencing a bit of heaven. The atmosphere was something special.”
The current President, Branislav Mirolov, was joined by the current pastor, Bible worker, and two past pastors in sharing stories of God working in the more recent past. The future looks exciting with lots to thank God for. A plot of land has been bought in the center of Nicosia. The church is experiencing growth, with 14 baptisms between June and November. A Pathfinder club has recently been established together with ministries for students and different national groups on the islands.

We thank God for his leading in the past and look forward to His continued guidance in the future. [tedNEWS]
450 Anniversary of the First Croatian New Testament

28 November 2013 | Zagreb, Croatia [Dragutin Matak, tedNEWS] On 26 October 2013, just a few days before the Protestant Reformation Day, a transliteration of the first Croatian New Testament was presented at a celebration ceremony at the University of Zagreb. The celebration marked the 450th anniversary of this landmark publication, which was completed in Urach, Germany, not far from Tübingen in 1562/63. There were about 200 visitors present at the celebration, many of whom were Old Slavic language specialists including a group of 28 Russian linguists. During the week that followed, presentations of this work were made in Osijek, Varaždin, Pula, Rijeka, Sisak, Belgrade and Mostar.
Adriatic Union College in Maruševec, Croatia, led the way in the preparation of this publication. The joint publishers were the Old Slavic Language Department from the University of Zagreb and ‘Školska knjiga’, the leading publisher of educational books in Croatia.

Back in the 16th century, the New Testament was translated by Catholic monks, Anton Dalmatin and Stipan Konzul, who became Protestants later on. The work was printed in the Glagolitic and Cyrillic alphabet and was intended for missionary outreach. In the introduction of the translation, the translators stated that it is the Word of God for the Dalmatians, Croatians, Bulgarians, Serbs, Turks and others. Two more people were crucial for the publication: Primož Trubar, a Slovenian, who provided the vision, and Ivan Ungnad, a German military commander who served in Croatia, who donated all his belongings for this purpose and raised money from the German nobility, including the emperor Maximilian II.

Now, in autumn of 2013, for the first time everyone can read this 450 year-old Croatian holy script transliterated into the Latin alphabet. By initiating this project, Adriatic Union College paid homage to this sacred Biblical text and made it available for further theological and
linguistic considerations.

Dragutin Matak, editor of the transliterated New Testament, says, “It was a pleasure to work on this project with the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities who are leading authorities on Croatian language and literature, the University Centre for Croatian Studies, the Old Church Slavonic Institute, and Školska knjiga'.

May this publication continue bringing attention to the everlasting Word of God. [ted/NEWS]

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ADRA Albania Launches Newly-Renovated Health Centre

28 November 2013 | Tirana, Albania [Beatrice C. Kastrati tedNEWS] On Tuesday, November 5th, ADRA Albania launched the regional project ‘Love Your Heart: Adriatic Cardiovascular Diseases Prevention Network’ with the financial support of IPA (Instruments for Pre-Accession to EU) – Adriatic Cross Border Cooperation Programme. The ‘Love Your Heart’ Centre aims to decrease and to prevent the incidence and prevalence of cardiovascular diseases in Albania. To achieve this objective, the project aims to develop cardiovascular prevention programmes which are suitable to the local culture of Albania. The activity was hosted by ADRA Albania at the ADRA Health Centre, which was inaugurated in 1997 by the famous British actor, Sir Norman Wisdom, and was re-opened in 2010.

In the upcoming months, the ADRA Albania Health Centre will offer free trainings, seminars and courses for all citizens in Tirana about healthy lifestyle, stress relief, weight reduction, and the monitoring and fighting of important cardiovascular risk factors. Services offered are rehabilitation and physiotherapy, medical services and support and advice.
More than 40 participants representing public, local and national institutions, civil society organizations, international organizations, and members of the surrounding community of the ADRA Health Centre, as well as members of the Roma community were present in this activity.

The opening speech was given by deputy Minister of Health, Ms Milva Ekonomi who underlined the importance of the prevention and awareness of cardiovascular diseases, which are the main sources of mortality in Albania and in the world.

Ms Etleva Bisha, General Director of Social Services in Albania, congratulated and complimented ADRA Albania for the initiative in launching the project and in opening the ADRA Albania Health Centre. A courtesy speech was also given by the Chairman of the Board of ADRA Albania, Pr. Leo España, who congratulated ADRA Albania for the work done so far and expressed his wish in seeing the project achieve all the stipulated results.

The final message was given by Ms Beatrice C. Kastrati, the Country Director of ADRA Albania, who thanked the guests and hoped for a further cooperation with all the actors as NGOs, international organization and public institutions operating in this field in order to achieve the prevention of cardiovascular disease in Albania through the promotion of healthy lifestyle.
Participants also took the opportunity to visit the newly reconstructed ADRA Health Centre and to learn about the services that ADRA Albania will offer in this centre.

ADRA Albania, the first non-for-profit organization that entered post-communist Albania, enjoys a high profile in Albania, appreciated by government bodies, the civic society, as well as their numerous beneficiaries. Apart from the ‘Love Your Heart’ Project, ADRA Albania is also simultaneously implementing other projects in conjunction with the Austrian Government/ADRA Austria, (‘Reflection! Action! Integration!’), Toms Shoes Inc., USA (massive distribution of donated shoes for unprivileged children), as well as ADRA Germany (‘Reflect Second Chance’), thus enabling tens of thousands of beneficiaries.

For more information about current and recent projects of ADRA Albania, please visit www.adra.al and www.neo.al. [tedNEWS]
Training for the Women’s Ministries Department in Hungary

28 November 2013 | Pécel, Hungary [Maria Tokics, tedNEWS] “If God gives you a vision for your life, then He will definitely help you achieve it; thus, you can realize more in life than you have ever imagined. You are precious!”

These empowering words were spoken by Clair Sanches-Schutte, Women’s Ministries Director at the Trans-European Division (TED), at a Women’s Ministries training event held in Pécel, Hungary from 8-10 November, 2013.

During the seminars, which consisted of 11 modules, Clair Sanches-Schutte talked about the example set by women in the Bible, giving valuable advice on how and why to study the Bible daily, and also invited the participants to see the potential of women’s ministries.

During the training, the participants learnt how to improve communication skills, lead women’s ministries in a way that will enrich the life of congregations, but above all, how to serve and spread the gospel in their communities.

Women’s ministries were initiated at the end of the 19th century by Myranda Henry following Ellen G. White’s counsel to encouraged women to get involved in ministers in order to lift up the name of Jesus as the one who can change women’s lives, so that they can grow in their homes, churches and communities.
At the end of the training the delegates of churches compiled different declarations of mission according to the needs of their local congregations.

Clair Sanches-Schutte and Eva Hella, leader of Women’s Ministries Department of the Hungarian Union, along with the members of the workgroup, prepared small presents for the participants to encourage them to continue to be faithful and to show empathy and love to each other. These actions were also encouraged during the three-day training by the workshops and creative tasks.
Clair Sanches-Schutte presented certificates of ‘Successful Leadership’ to the ladies who came from more than 30 different churches in Hungary. These certificates prove that all 33 women participants achieved Level 1 of the General Conference Women’s Ministries Leadership Certification Programme.

“This training encouraged, inspired and taught me the importance of women’s ministries in all aspects of life,” said Zsóka Bodnár, a minister’s wife.

GC and TED Women’s Ministries Departments are organising a Women’s Conference 24-28 September 2014 in Rogaska, Slovenia. For more information about the conference, please click here. [tedNEWS]
AVS Newsletter Launch

I am excited to see how God is working in the lives of volunteers around the world! I hope our new monthly newsletters will provide you with helpful information about Adventist Volunteer Service—what it is, how it can benefit you, and how it changes lives. --Karen Plaatjes, TED Adventist Volunteer Service

New AVS Website

Adventist Volunteer Service needs your help to recruit new volunteers and create more positions where dedicated people can share their faith in a practical way. For more information visit our new website www.tedadventistvolunteers.com and find out how to become a volunteer or how to call volunteers to help in your organisation.

Resource: Request a Volunteer Info Pack

Not sure how to go about calling a volunteer? This info pack provides all the information you need to get the process started. Download a print ready copy here or contact the AVS office for a hard copy.

Resource: Become a Volunteer Info Pack

Are you ever asked how to become a volunteer through AVS? This new info pack is for people who are interested in serving. Download a print ready copy here or contact the AVS office to receive a hard copy.
The Spiritual Heart of the Leader

Leading from Within

Leaders lead more from who they are than any other leadership qualities or skills they may possess. Who leaders truly are influences others and if leadership is to be authentic, all leaders who function in the Christian context need to lead spiritually. Spirituality is not measured in number of hours spent in meditation or meetings attended. Spirituality is much more complex than just activities – it is indeed a pilgrimage; a walk with God who forms us and gradually transforms us into the image of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 3:18). Spirituality is dynamic, relationship-based, experiential and unique to each individual.

The process of becoming is the heart of leader’s spirituality. Given the importance of this aspect of leadership, it is vital to understand that spirituality interacts with a number of aspects of our growth into what God has in mind for us as His leaders.

Spirituality and Identity

Our identity is in Jesus Christ and out of that secure identity can flow humble yet powerful leadership that makes a difference. We are created into God's image, we are in Christ – saved, redeemed, destined for greatness and assured of eternal life. Only leaders who are secure in Christ can lead others in a way that is God-honouring. Our treatment, our strengths and weaknesses, our gifts, all determine our unique identity which can only be appreciated in a close relationship with the One who made us.

When we have this sense of security in Jesus Christ our Creator and are in the constant process of discovering who He created us to be, we can lead with freedom and assurance; no need for pretending, impressing or hiding. We lead as an expression of our identity in Jesus.

Spirituality and Integrity

The second aspect of our journey as leaders has to do with integrity. We live on a planet infected by sin – and sin is impacting and challenging our sense of identity. The enemy is actively pursuing people to destroy God's image in them. Everyone has inconsistencies between who God wants them to be and who they actually are – thus our integrity is challenged. The moment we start covering up the gap we become less than transparent and our influence becomes tainted with dishonesty. Who we are inside is not what people see on the outside, and the greater the gap the more destructive our influence. Spirituality is therefore an awareness of that gap and an openness to God and others to correct us, encourage us and help us grow to become spiritually whole.

Spirituality and Intimacy

Leadership is inevitably expressed in relationships – and relationships require appropriate levels of intimacy with those we lead. The degree to which we allow people to come close to us is determined by how secure we feel in Jesus Christ. If our identity is strong and our integrity is transparent and authentic, people will feel invited – and when they engage with us they will not feel betrayed or disillusioned. Thus our speciality affects the degree of authentic closeness and ultimately this will determine our ability to influence others positively.

Spirituality and Intensity (Passion)

Leaders who are deeply aware of who they are and who extend that awareness to those whom they have been given the privilege of leading will develop an intensity – a passion – to be instrumental in assisting others to be spiritually mature and to increase their own awareness of God's plan for them. More than that, they will also passionately pursue the bigger picture, the vision of what God has in mind not just for individuals, but for entire groups, congregations and communities. This is the beginning of a vision for the preferred future God is preparing for those who are in close relationship with Him. A leader can sense that future, can articulate it with passion and can invite others to engage in that journey towards the future.
Leading Well

The core of leadership is spiritual. Only leaders with a spiritual heart are qualified to lead God's church. It is the quality of the leader's on-going relationship with God which gives life and direction to all the elements of his/her leadership.

By Branimir Schubert, DMin - Manager, Leadership and Professional Development People Services, South-Pacific Division

Used with permission from Leadership Development Journal - September 2013
Is Failure an essential ingredient of success?

You are a failure! These are words we fear to hear. Failure is a subject we do not like to talk about. It is the elephant in the room that no one mentions, yet it is always there, because failure is a part of life. Consider how many successes do you forget? How many failures do you forget? How many times did things not work out as you planned? To put it bluntly, how many times have you failed? What is the ratio of success to failure? Is it true that behind our success is a series of failures?

Thomas Edison, inventor of the electric light bulb and phonograph, at one time held the world record for the number of patents owned by one person, a staggering 1093, confessed: “I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work.”

Benjamin Franklin, one of the Founding Fathers of America, expressed a similar sentiment: “I didn't fail the test; I just found 100 ways to do it wrong.”

There are countless leadership books and articles on the “How To” of success. There are few dealing with failure. Yet failure is often the essential part of success.

In a spiritual context we learn how failure focuses our minds on the relationship between victory and failure. This is positive and necessary. Listen to the Apostle Paul in Rom 7:19 when he says: “For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing.” His failure became the ground of his success and victory, but if he had never failed he would never have known success.

Hebrews 11 is a catalogue of faith – those who are held up as examples for us to follow. A quick survey shows that even these giants experienced failure.

Abraham is called by God to leave Haran and go to the Promised Land. He goes without questioning. He is overly generous towards Lot. He pleads for the people in Sodom. He is even willing to sacrifice his own son Isaac. Yet he tells a half-truth to Pharaoh that Sarah is his sister rather than his wife. Impatient for God to fulfil his promise of a son, or perhaps, doubting that God could fulfil the promise, due to Sarah’s age, Abraham fathers a child by this wife's maid Hagar. Then he sends Hagar and the child away. Yet he is known as the friend of God, and father of the faithful.

Isaac repeats his father’s mistake and lies to Abimelech’s men, telling them that Rebekah is his sister rather than his wife, yet he is the model of the born again believer.

In Jacob we see another flawed character. He manipulates his brother to sell him his birthright for a meal, then deceives his father Isaac into giving him the blessing by deceit. As a result he has to run away from his home, never to see the mother he loves again. When he is at his lowest God give him the marvellous dream at Bethel, of a ladder reaching from heaven to earth and Jacob promises to follow God. However the intrigue and deceit did not stop. He was cheated by his father-in-law. In turn when Jacob decided to return to his homeland he runs away. In the end his life becomes a story of victory and success. He becomes the father of all the twelve tribes of Israel.

Moses successfully led the children of Israel to the boarders of the Promised Land, yet his failures were spectacular. He was a murderer. As a result of losing his temper, he was not able to go into the Promised Land instead he went to heaven.

These heroes of faith were definitely not saints who never put a foot wrong.

The writer of Hebrews mentions others like Able, Samuel and the prophets.

We know very little about Able except that he was the first victim of violent crime. Even though he did what was right, things didn’t work out well for him.

Samuel from a child was in the temple and did God’s work. He judged Israel, yet under his leadership the Israelites chose to move away from God and have their own king, Samuel felt a failure, but he was the last of the Judges and the first of the Prophets.

Of all the prophets, Daniel, is a classic success story. Yet at times it looked as if he were a failure, not least when he was thrown into the den of lions.

What all these people learned was that there are two perspectives in life: short term human perspective and God’s long term eternal perspective.
We all make mistakes. As leaders our mistakes are often more public than most. We all fail, but failure can be the price of success. Failure is not the problem. The issue is: how we handle failure? Failure is cumulative: the older you get the more failures you become aware of. Failure can either weigh us down or shape us up.

Compare Judas and Peter’s response to failure. Both failed to grasp the true nature of Jesus’ mission. Judas betrayed Jesus. Peter denied Jesus. When Judas understood the enormity of what he had done, he felt there was no way back. The only solution was to give up; he went out and hanged himself.

Despite having been warned in advance, Peter denied Jesus in style, with cursing and swearing. When the cock crowed and Jesus looked at him, the enormity of what he had done engulfed him. He ran out into the night buried in an avalanche of guilt and remorse. Thankfully he didn’t hang himself. He reflected, and repented. He learned the lesson, there is forgiveness and freedom from failure. On the Day of Pentecost it was Peter who unashamedly stood up and preached salvation. Failure is not necessarily a disaster.

At the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, Derek Redmond was strongly tipped to win the 400 meters. He exploded out of the blocks and it looked as if he would win. In a painful, humiliating moment his hamstring snapped and he collapsed on the track. His race was over. Then he did the unexpected. He got up and began to hop down the track. A man pushed his way past the security guards and ran onto the track. It was his father, who told him he did not need to do this. Derek replied “I do”. Supported by his father, sobbing with pain, Derek crossed the finishing line. He received the longest standing ovation of the games as 65,000 people cheered him home. Derek finished the race!

Whether you are struggling in your leadership or everything is going well, sooner or later you are going hit a bump. You are going to make a mistake or fail. It is inevitable, unavoidable. You know it, because you have had the experience of failure, but you are still alive, the world didn’t end. Failure need never be an end except we choose it. It can and should be a learning experience.

Fight on my men said Sir Andrew Barton, I’m hurt but I am not slain I’ll lay me down and bleed a while Then I’ll rise and fight again.

_by Audrey Andersson, Executive Secretary, Trans-European Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church_

_used with permission from Leadership Development Journal - June 2013_
Where Have All the Leaders Gone?

The question used as title above is used in the Introduction to Leadership Next by Eddie Gibbs. He is Professor of Church Growth at the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California.

The reason for his book was an interview on the web-site of Christianity Today regarding the topic of the emerging church – a concept of church which changes and adapts to the ever changing culture around us. He was asked a question that torments (or should torment) Seventh-day Adventist leaders today: ‘What are the reasons that so many young people under thirty-five leave the church?’ His answer was: ‘One factor is that they are reacting against a culture of control’. The editorial director of InterVarsity Press thought that this answer contained the seed for a book and prodded Gibbs to write. Leadership Next is the result.

‘The youth are reacting against a culture of control’. The statement kept me thinking. I had just presented a paper to the General Conference Global Mission Issues Committee on ‘Mission Challenges in a Post-Christian World’. In my research I had found numerous indications to support Gibb’s answer.

It is an uncomfortable truth that Adventist youth are being born, growing up and living in a post-Christian society (and where this is not yet the case in Europe, the signs indicate that it is on its way). People in this society erroneously think that Christianity is something of the past and a looser. Although we know they are mistaken, their beliefs form a powerful context which exposes young people to the mixed values of ever-changing ‘secular’ (‘there is evidence that God does not exist’) or ‘post-modern’ (‘we don’t know and can never know’) kinds of reasoning about the world and our place in it.

The changing culture today has certain constancies: a growing individualism and longing for freedom from authorities, be they parents, teachers, police, government, church, Bible, or God. Our youth are not immune to this. They, too, ‘react against a culture of control’. Church leaders today need to understand this and learn to communicate the invitation to leadership in a different way. Thus, young people will not respond to invitations to assume leadership if the church organisation simply tells them ‘we need more leaders’, or ‘this is what you have to be and do’, or ‘this is what the GC has decided’, or ‘this is what you need to learn at the Theological Seminary’.

What is it, then, that may bring good leaders in the future? Maybe it is their experience of being called by God. Maybe it is their experience of being called by Christ to be his disciples and followers. Maybe it is their experience of being grasped by the power of the Holy Spirit.

If so, how are we as leaders to encourage and empower them to seek these experiences, to acknowledge them, and to act on them? Modern youth respond to authentic people. Thus, a fundamental condition for being heard and trusted is that we – ourselves – have these daily and ongoing spiritual experiences and that we – ourselves – embody and demonstrate – with profound humility – a Christian leadership based on such foundations? Part of the new generation’s mind-set is a ‘reaction against a culture of control’. It means, among other things, that you will not be trusted as a leader because of your position or title (control), but because of your life and genuine personal experiences of God.

I take comfort from thinking that God owns the church and he has the power to make it into what he wants it to be. So, the plan of redemption or the mission of God will not fail. The key issue is a different one. It is personal: Will you and I fail as leaders, because we fail to know the mind-set of our youth and thus talk past them?

Recently, I was privileged to take part in the GC celebration of 150 years of the organised Seventh-day Adventist Church in Battle Creek, Michigan (1863-2013). It was stated repeatedly that this is a ‘sad’ occasion – because we are still here and Christ has not yet come. I tend to leave this with God, however. If my Saviour has not yet come, God will have his reasons for allowing that to happen. Another way to look at our 150th anniversary is to ask ourselves this important question:

What is it in the structures we have built up in our church over the past 150 years that is now an obstruction for the gospel to be received by our youth and the world around us? Many Adventists of all ages are now asking this question. I noticed how strong such sentiments were at the meeting of The One Project in Chicago (11-12 February, 2013), both from the pulpit and in the group discussions. Some answers to this vital question came to me as I read Gibbs’ thoughts on leaders being ‘called by God’ (pp. 131-134). This theme is what pastor Lowell Cooper is sharing with us this month and I believe that the following reflections will connect well with what says to us.

Gibbs brings seven areas of concern:
1. Discipleship: The essential deficit of the church today: its failure to adequately disciple the church members. Thus, he opens the brief section ‘Called by God’ by linking church leadership with the biblical concept of discipleship: ‘The concept of calling is essential to the life of discipleship’.

2. Christ’s Call is On-Going and Life-Changing: Gibbs says that ‘the call of Christ is not a once in a lifetime experience, but rather represents the ongoing response of the disciple’ and it is therefore the key to the ongoing growth as a disciple which generates new enthusiasm for continuing. ‘A life lived listening to the decisive call of God is a life lived before one audience that trumps all others – the Audience of One’. This principle applies to all followers of Christ, but especially to leaders ‘for God’s calling is the key to igniting a passion for the deepest growth and highest heroism in life’.

3. The Individual Calling Is Part of a Communal Calling. Gibbs then looks at how we abuse our calling: ‘Some leaders are so obsessed with their own sense of calling that they marginalize those around them or simply use them to serve their own ends’. This is of course contrary to the Bible, where disciples are called, not in isolation, but as part of ‘a community of the called’. Every leader must address the reverse side of being called by God, namely conceit, envy and greed.

4. The Unfortunate Distinction between Clergy and Laity Must Be Reformed from the Teaching of the Bible. God’s calling applies to the totality of God’s people. It is not restricted to the leaders. The myth of the ‘restricted call’ has crippled the church’s mission in the world. Traditionally, Gibbs says, ordained ministry or the mission field (more broadly labelled ‘full-time service’) has been regarded as ‘the highest calling’. Over time this has led to two distinct classes of Christians (Adventists): the clergy, those ordained to the pastorate, and the laity, the majority from which the few were selected.

‘Clergy’ means ‘called’ (kleros), and the term carries the unspoken implication that the laity is not called by God. As a result, the church is built around the call and gifting of this elite group surrounded by a marginalised laity. Such a separation breeds, on one hand, resentment and struggles for power and influence and, on the other hand, passivity and the avoidance of responsibility over spiritual issues which are regarded as the domain of the clergy. I see this in my beloved Adventist church today, and I hear the many lay people who feel marginalised by the ordained clergy – for example, in a break-out group discussion within the TED Executive Committee in 2006.

Thus, we must change our view of ordination and clergy, coming more into harmony with the Bible, if we want to mobilise the whole church for mission. We must change it for another reason, too: The young people of today, especially those who are leaving us, ‘react against a culture of control’. If they live and work in a church where all are called and sent on the mission of God – being ordained by their faith and baptism – they will see that the ordained pastor is one of them, that he leads them to seriously impact the world out there, not to benefit his own programs.

Gibbs says that ‘as we come to appreciate the comprehensive nature of God’s call, we must recognise that lay people are not amateur contributors within the structures of the institutional church. They must not be regarded as volunteers who support and run clergy-controlled programs. The term laity (laos) has to be restored to its original meaning – the people of God called to a priestly and apostolic ministry (2 Cor. 6:16; Tit. 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:9). We are all members of the laity, including those who are ordained as pastors. We have all been sent by our ascended Lord into the world to represent his present reign, herald his anticipated coming and invite people to join us in following him. In this view of the church, the people of God become culture-creating teams dispersed throughout society as salt, yeast and light.’

In this view of the church, there is no place for struggling with ‘how to activate the church members’. This is an issue created by the clergy-laity distinction! Neither would we see so many young people leave us, because they would be acknowledged as called by Christ already and their engagement in ministry to change the world would be their life!

Leaders in the church are formed among disciples of Christ, among a mobilised community of Christ, where young people, men and women are expected, encouraged and equipped to be ministers, with our without imposition of hands. And therefore, the attitude, life and leadership that you and I display as leaders will have an impact on where the new leaders will come from.

5. Replace Self-Fulfilment with God’s On-Going Call to Service. Gibbs calls attention to a serious consequence of an absence of a personal sense of call from God by church members: their focus on the need for personal fulfilment in order to find some sense of purpose for their lives.

Facts indicate a strong trend among secular and postmodern people towards self, and you have a keen interest in self-growth, self-development, self-realisation, and self-fulfilment. Even young Adventists being asked to serve often ask these days: ‘What’s in it for me?’ This is the fruit of not being part of a community of disciples of Christ where service is the focus of everything. They don’t understand what ‘service’ means because it has not been embodied by their church and it is virtually non-existent in the mass-media.
version of life. The deep and consistent teaching on ‘service’ in the Bible has not reached them.

Gibbs warns against looking within one-self and self-realisation and gives a quotation from J. E. White: ‘When personal fulfilment is allowed to take the place of calling, our lives become little more than exercises in self-indulgence. Ironically, we were created such that our deepest fulfilment is found as we submit to God’s calling on our life. The reason is simple: we are first and foremost to Someone, not to something or to somewhere.’

6. Leaders Must Embody that the Entire Church is Called by God and Show it in their Leadership Style. In order for the entire church to be motivated by a sense of divine call, Gibbs says, ‘it is imperative for its leaders to share this deep conviction, demonstrating their own personal call and God’s call to the whole congregation. In fact, church leaders cannot merely share it; they must embody it to an extraordinary degree. For some, this will require a gigantic shift away from a controlling style of leadership to one of affirmation and empowerment.’

7. Demonstrate the Joy of Service. All leaders know that leadership seldom consists of moving from one exhausting test and exhilarating triumph to the next. Most days consist of dealing with an ‘unending succession of mundane matters’. But the calling of God transforms life so that even the simple, everyday duties become invested with kingdom significance. For Adventist leaders, therefore, an essential ingredient in leadership should therefore be the joy of doing our work, because we are called by God.

In conclusion, as we step out in obedience to Christ’s leading of our leadership, let us bear in mind the positive approach that God’s call inspires in us by the Spirit:

- Look at the kingdom, not just your corner.
- See beyond our circumstances to the presence of Christ with us.
- Focus on successes, not problems.
- Beware of exaggerating problems and empowering failures.
- Keep a list of blessings and successes.
- Look at reality with all its imperfections, not just exceptions.
- Reconfirm your call rather than be swayed by complaints.

3 Ibid., p. 78.
5 Leith Anderson, Leadership that Works, Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1999, pp. 164-174 (as summarised and quoted in Gibbs, Leadership Next, p. 194.)

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Hearing the Call

\[ \text{ted-adventist.org/features-and-analysis/hearing-the-call} \]

“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I! Send me.’”

The ancient prophet is caught up in a dazzling display of light and sound. Riveting in its intensity. Frightening in its majesty. He feels awful and awe-filled at the same time. His call, though couched in generality, is unmistakable, his response unequivocal.

Most people experience the call of God in less dramatic ways. In whatever way it comes a call from God can be a fearful thing. If it strikes us as strange, unusual or difficult the response might be, “Here am I. Send my sister.” On the other hand, a person can rush ahead of God, conjure up a call based on imagination and then perform a self-appointment.

Mark Buchanan identifies several questions for thoughtful reflection about hearing and heeding God’s call. These include: Am I running from something? Is it a genuine call or simply a desire? Does this fit who I am and how God shaped me? Is it for now or later? Do others independently perceive it? Is it rooted in the deeper call of God?

The reality is that all are called. Called first to a life that glorifies God, a life that proceeds out of committed discipleship to Jesus Christ. Within that calling there may come something more specific dealing with a career, a ministry, a temporary role or simply a once-in-a-lifetime act. But all of these are cradled in God’s call to holiness and service. So, whoever you are, wherever you are, you have been called by God.

God’s general call is for everyone. God’s specific calls cover a vast array of roles and persons. Consider for a moment a short list to illustrate the variety of God’s calls:

Abraham—a man with no possessions and no progeny called to be the father of the faithful
Moses—an 80-year old shepherd called to lead a band of slaves to nationhood
Samuel—a little child commissioned to bear the message of God to the one in highest spiritual office of the day
Daniel and his friends—captive in a heathen empire called to bear unflinching witness to the King of the universe
Lydia—a businesswoman provides housing for the evangelistic team in Philippi
Paul and Silas—whose suffering as prisoners in Philippi leads to the jailor’s conversion

And then there is a nameless slave girl, kidnapped from her home, forced into domestic service for the wife of a military commander, caught in circumstances she did not choose and could not change. Then one day she learns that the master of the house is himself caught in circumstances he did not choose and could not change—Naaman has leprosy! And instead of rejoicing at his misfortune this little maid merely voices a wish that her master might find healing at the house of the prophet. Naaman goes, is healed and becomes a worshipper of God.

A witness to God and His kingdom can arise from any occupation. There is no hierarchy of spiritual professions. The preacher or Bible worker is not more important than the taxi driver, housewife, or parking lot attendant when it comes to being light. It is not your place in the wage scale, nor your place in the organization; it is not your brains nor your beauty; it is not your degrees nor your seniority that qualifies you to be light. It is your connection with Jesus Christ.

Remember the challenge of Jesus: “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”

Perhaps what is urgently needed in the Church today is the realization that every kind of work done for the sake of human community and the mission of God is a consecrated calling. We must reject the idea that ministerial work is more holy than teaching math or fixing machinery. We reject this idea because it masks the assumption that if I am unable, unfit or uncalled to ministerial work my role is basically that of a bystander in the mission of God.

Martin Luther strongly opposed the view of vocation prevalent during his time—the idea that only work in and for the church could qualify as God’s calling.

“It is pure invention [fiction] that Pope, bishops, priests and monks are called to the ‘spiritual estate’ while princes, lords, artisans and farmers are called to the ‘temporal estate.’ This is indeed a piece of deceit and hypocrisy. Yet no one need be intimidated by it, and that for the reason: all Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them except that of office….We are all
consecrated priests by baptism, as St. Peter says: ‘You are a royal priesthood and a priestly realm’ (1 Pet. 2:9). The Apocalypse says: ‘Thou hast made us to be kings and priests by thy blood’ (Rev 5:9-10).\(^5\)

We must take care lest we fall victim to the idea that we serve God best when we are in church, when we are praying or reading the Bible, or giving Bible studies or handing out tracts and that our work is merely a necessity to provide resources to serve Him when we have completed our allotted task or shift of duty. Our daily work is ultimately an act of worship to the God who called us and who equipped us to do it.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”\(^6\)

These three ideas form the context for a Christian’s sense of calling: 1) We are called first to be children of God, 2) The means by which we earn a living is the platform from which we honour God and advance His mission, 3) Doing our work faithfully and well, whatever it be, is our way of transforming a career into a calling.

Eugene Peterson recounts the story of the fourth century church father Gregory of Nyssa whose brother Basil had arranged for him to be made bishop of Cappadocia. “Gregory objected,” Peterson writes. “He didn’t want to be stuck in such an out-of-the-way place. His brother told him he didn’t want Gregory to obtain distinction from his church but to confer distinction upon it.” Is this not what Christ wants for us as well? To seek the good of the small places in which he has placed us and to confer distinction upon them by serving him with humility there? The path of glory is often an obscure one. It is the way of the cross.\(^7\)

\(^{1}\) Isaiah 6:8, NKJV
\(^{2}\) Leadership Journal (ISSN 0199-7661), Winter 2013, p. 96
\(^{3}\) 2 Kings 5, NKJV
\(^{4}\) John 7:37, 38, NKJV
\(^{5}\) Martin Luther, Three Treatises (Fortress, 1970), p.12.
\(^{6}\) 1 Corinthians 15:58, NKJV

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