

## EDITORIAL

# LEARNING TO LIVE AS WE PRAY

Recently I received a gift from a dear friend living in another country. As I opened the gift, he commented that he wanted me to have something special from his country—something not purchased in the store, but something really meaningful. As I unwrapped the gift, I was delighted to see a beautiful oil painting of the earth. The green and blue colors were vivid and portrayed a living, vibrant orb floating in a sea of brilliant colors. Then my friend told me the “rest of the story.” The artist is a homeless man who each day sets up his easel on the street corner. As people come and go, they stand and watch him paint. Some buy the paintings, others rush hurriedly by. But my friend stopped and bought a painting—for me—because he wanted something meaningful. And it is meaningful. I love the painting and immediately framed it and hung it where I see it often.

I wonder about this gift. What makes it so precious? I wonder about the homeless man. Does he have enough food to eat? Where does he sleep at night? I think of my friend and his heart of love for the homeless man. My friend reached out and made a difference in one life. It seems that God has placed a desire in every human heart to respond to human suffering—giving a human being a sense of dignity even when his life might seem hopeless.

The topic of this issue of *JACL* is social responsibility. What does it mean for a Christian leader to be socially responsible at this time of earth’s history? What might you expect to find in these pages?

The doctoral leadership program at Andrews University is a competency-based program; we define social responsibility, one of our competencies, in this way: “Leadership understands social systems and is accountable to others and endeavors to see that family, community, and environmental needs are met in local and, as appropriate, in global ways” (Department of Leadership, 2012, p. 21). Leadership is

fundamentally about relationships with others; this competency focuses on “who” and “what” leadership is responsible for.

Jesus is clear: “Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” (Matt. 25:40, NKJV). Dan Jackson, in a recent sermon at Pioneer Memorial Church (on the campus of Andrews University), noted that when we are connected to Jesus, we will be planted in the soil of human need. The planting metaphor opens us to a reality of growth, of action, of getting dirty. In Oswald Chambers’ (1992) classic devotional, he wrote that Jesus Christ’s idea of a New Testament saint was “not one who merely proclaims the gospel, but one who becomes broken bread and poured-out wine in the hands of Jesus Christ for the sake of others” (February 25 entry).

In this issue of *JACL* you’ll find narratives of lives being poured out in response to human need. The interview with Herta von Stiegel, author of *The Mountain Within*, reveals how life experiences starting with her childhood behind the Iron Curtain led her to today’s focus as an investment banker on the core needs of Africa. But this isn’t just her story; she also has excellent advice for each of us. In the “Leadership Lived” section, we learn about a young woman, Azalea Lehndorff, whose struggle to get an education led her to deep gratitude for her own education and a vision to provide 100 classrooms for children in war-torn Afghanistan. In multiple narratives of abuse and neglect, Kay Schaaf captures the way family experiences led into resiliency and service for others. The common thread running through each of these articles is the way difficult life circumstances provided the soil needed to grow “humanitarian leaders”—a term coined by LaFasto and Larson (2012). In their study, they found that each of the leaders who took charge of reaching out to others in substantial ways had life stories that helped them feel empathy towards others. You’ll read similar life stories in this issue.

When speaking to the Andrews Leadership participants several years ago, Margaret Wheatley proposed that there are only three rules we need to remember in life: (1) take care of yourself, (2) take care of other people, and (3) take care of this place. The three articles I’ve mentioned are about taking care of others. But what about taking care of this place, the earth, this place where we live? Young Seok Cha helps us see the theological and philosophical perspectives of earth care, while Michael Murdoch gets practical by taking a look at the environmental literacy of Christian teachers. Does being a Christian influence in any way how we take care of the earth? You might be surprised by what Murdoch found!

As this issue came together, I noticed that the articles tended to come in pairs. Schaaf's article would be somewhat incomplete without Jasmine Fraser and Lea Danihelova's article focusing on family—in particular Abraham's family. And Cha's article complements Murdoch's article. So make sure you read these duos together.

Finally, the opening and closing articles harmonize with one another. Gaspar Colón, a long-time advocate, trainer and writer about community-based outreach, opens the issue by presenting a holistic model that links social and salvation aspects together. Our closing article, by Todd Johnson, takes our idea of social responsibility into the realm of social justice and asks the reader to dialogue about the relationship of social justice to servant leadership. You'll notice that Johnson's article is presented with several questions and is in a new section named "Dialogue." We hope you'll use these questions as a starting point to discuss with others the issues raised in this article. Can we move from awareness—reading and talking—to deliberate actions? An unknown author has named the response we hope will come with your reading of this issue.

I knelt to pray when day was done  
And prayed, "O Lord, bless everyone,  
Lift from each saddened heart the pain  
And let the sick be well again."  
And then I woke another day  
And carelessly went on my way,  
The whole day long I did not try  
To wipe a tear from any eye.  
I did not try to share the load  
Of any brother on the road.  
I did not even go to see  
The sick man just next door to me.  
Yet once again when day was done  
I prayed, "O Lord, bless everyone."  
But as I prayed, into my ear  
There came a voice that whispered clear,  
"Pause now, my son, before you pray.  
Whom have you tried to bless today?  
God's sweetest blessings always go  
By hands that serve him here below."  
And then I hid my face and cried,

“Forgive me, God, I have not tried,  
But let me live another day  
And I will live the way I pray.”

## References

- Chambers, O. (1992). *My utmost for His highest: An updated edition in today's language* [Edited by James Reimann]. Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House.
- Department of Leadership. (2012). *Leadership handbook, 2012-2013*. Berrien Springs, MI: Department of Leadership, Andrews University.
- LaFasto, F., & Larson, C. (2012). *The humanitarian leader in each of us*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.