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“WHY HAVE THE OTHER THREE GOSPEL WRITERS OMITTED FOOTWASHING BUT INCLUDED THE BREAD AND WINE IF IT WAS AN ESSENTIALLY AND INTIMATELY CONNECTED ORDINANCE?”

Church planting coordinators

In response to the February 2011 article “Reflections on the Future of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America: The Long View of Church Growth (Part 2 of 2)” S. Joseph Kidder suggested, “Church planting should be put into the DNA of every local church and conference. A church plant coordinator in every conference, one who carefully and systematically directs the planting of churches, would be one way to prioritize church planting.”

In my view, this would be an unwise way to prioritize it. This would add one more administrative position in every conference in the country. Historically, the Adventist Church has added new departments every time a great idea comes along. Rather than reducing the number of “chiefs,” we have added more, making it difficult to maintain a strong pastoral presence. Creativity in the local church must come from the local church, not from administrative bodies like the General Conference, union conference, or local conference.

We have seen a pastor-drain to the health system, conference positions, and supporting ministries.

We should not take pastors to fill a church plant coordinator position. Far too much tithe money is being used for administration. We need to use tithe to train and employ a larger pastoral staff.

—Larry Yeagley, Gentry, Arkansas, United States

Footwashing: A biblical ordinance?

Bernhard Oestreich’s article, “The Ordinance of Humility: Precursor to the Cross” (February 2011), gives some meaningful explanations as to why Jesus washed His disciples’ feet. However, Oestreich made little attempt to prove that it was a biblical ordinance. My dilemma is that there seems to be no *clear* statement by Jesus that it was. All other ordinances, such as the Lord’s Supper, are very clearly taught, but footwashing seems to be only *interpreted* as such. What is clear is that John 13:1–15 teaches that the spirit of humble service is a requirement to fully benefit from the symbols of His broken body and shed blood, this humility being demonstrated by Jesus washing the disciples’ feet.

Why have the other three Gospel writers omitted footwashing but included the bread and wine if it

was an essentially and intimately connected ordinance? Could it be footwashing was not intended as an ordinance, but as an example of a serving attitude in all spheres of life? If Peter was unwilling to be washed by the Lord, it would have shown an unworthiness to be His disciple. He had already been baptized and justified, only his feet needed washing by the Lord to clean the “dirt” (pride) still sticking to him. Must we necessarily read an ordinance being instated in that?

Furthermore, John’s account of the footwashing fails to mention the bread and wine ordinance being established—although we know it was. However, if a foot-washing ordinance was intended, it would have been a little more obvious if both ordinances had been included in the one passage.

Does cleaning another’s foot ceremonially create humility in us today? In John’s account, we visualize Jesus doing it to sinners nonceremonially, and this should inspire humility in us. But Jesus’ humility was *infinitely* better demonstrated on the cross, which the bread and wine commemorates in

Continued on page 29 ►



The Sabbath: A time for exhaustion?

I spend much of my time evaluating manuscripts and determining their suitability for publication. Some of them strike me with their theological depth and clarity, others for their practicality, yet others for their poignancy and emotional impact. The manuscript from Erik C. Carter, “From Workday to Rest Day: One Pastor’s Journey to Sabbath Renewal,” reminded me of my many years spent as a district pastor. The years were wonderful; they were also exhausting.

Now, before you jump to conclusions, I do not, by any stretch of the imagination, imply that my time spent in congregational ministry constituted a series of negative experiences. I use *exhausting* in its Latin sense of something that is drained or emptied out. In other words, I was consumed by the joy of ministering to my churches, emptying myself for their benefit. I thoroughly loved it.

Busy Sabbath days

Whether in my three-church district in the 1980s or my two-church district in the 1990s, my Sabbaths were bustling with activities—even on the Sabbaths I was not preaching. There were the impromptu counseling sessions (“Pastor, do you have a minute? I need to talk.”), afternoon programs, and evening activities. No, I obviously couldn’t attend every event; and no, many of these occasions were not stressful. But the demands on my time clearly existed. In this sense, I utilize the word *exhaustion* in the title of this editorial. For often that which is urgent becomes necessary on Sabbath afternoons; and although the pastor has preached, baptized, conducted a Communion service, conducted a baby dedication, taught a Sabbath School class, or

completed any combination of the above, the need often comes for the minister to expend just a bit more on behalf of a member or visitor.

Carter, in his article, speaks to pastors and other ministers who often feel that the Sabbath is a day of rest for everyone except them. What pastor hasn’t, at some point in time, looked forward to the close of the Sabbath and the respite the latter part of the weekend brings (unless the church board meets Sunday morning)? Read for yourselves the lessons Carter learned and ask yourselves if you need to take those same steps toward Sabbath renewal.

Busy ministers, busy ministries


While not intended, one might perceive that the theme of exhaustion runs through this month’s issue. If so, the word carries with it the definition of emptying oneself in fulfilling the gospel commission. And not just on the Sabbath. Ministry is an all-consuming calling that taxes the individual seven days a week. No time clock can measure what ministers invest throughout their lives. The article by historian Douglas Morgan on the ministries of Lewis C. Sheafe and Matthew C. Strachan reveals how these two men spent their lives—exhausting themselves—in fulfilling the gospel commission, changing both the Adventist Church and society at large. Skip Bell interviews a young pastor who, like so many other pastors worldwide, expends time and energy making a difference in the communities where he lives and in the lives of those he serves.

Maylan Schurch provides practical counsel regarding the nominating committee process—a task viewed as laborious and exhausting (in the

negative sense of the word). He shares wisdom that simplifies the process and removes the hesitancy that many experience when asked to serve on the nominating committee. Of course, the work of that committee results in the selection of

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individuals who volunteer to exhaust themselves (positive sense of the word) in service to both God and His church. Finally, when the work of the minister officially ends with retirement, after decades of draining himself or herself for the benefit of others, often the retiree transitions to a new phase of ministry. Larry Yeagley shares how one can prepare for those years to come and his personal testimony of what the retired life is like for him.

So, whether we are just starting the ministerial journey, soon to end that journey, or still in the middle of that journey—as I am—let us commit ourselves to a life of joyful exhaustion, “‘just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve’ ” (Matt. 20:28, NIV). 

Tell us what you think about this article. Email MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or write to 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

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From **workday** to **rest day**:

One pastor's journey to Sabbath renewal

As an Adventist pastor, I was beginning to feel more and more that Sunday, indeed, was becoming a “Sabbath”—a day of rest and respite—for me. Let me explain. If the Sabbath is a day of rest, ceasing from the activities of the week, where does that leave an Adventist pastor, whose Sabbath is filled with so much work? Where do I find rest? The closer I came to sunset on Friday, the more I felt Saturday’s stress rising in my heart.

To me, Sabbath was not like most days; it was the culmination of the previous six. Monday morning begins with sermon research, followed by meetings with the worship leader in the evening, prayer meeting and worship rehearsal on Wednesday, board meeting on Thursday, pastoral counseling sessions, Bible studies, and numerous other appointments throughout the week—and soon sunset, Friday. I hurry to church Sabbath morning wanting it all to be over! So, when Sunday arrives, I am ready for a much-needed respite.

Is Sunday a time to rest from a Sabbath day of pastoral work? Sometimes my Sunday rest entails nothing but sleeping in and enjoying a delicious brunch. On my post-Sabbath day, I screen my calls, carefully avoid my computer, read the Bible to feed my own soul, and

often enjoy long walks with my wife at a nearby park.

I never thought that my experience of the Sabbath, after becoming an Adventist pastor, would, in some ways, be simply a transference of what is done on one day to another. However, I had accepted the challenges of Sabbath as a necessary sacrifice in fulfilling my calling as a minister. “This is just the way it is,” I told myself.

From conflict to question

And yet, something was not quite right in my thought pattern. Obviously, I had taken a wrong turn somewhere. I just did not know how to resolve the tension I was experiencing in order to find my way back to the pre-pastoral days of Sabbath rest. Interestingly, a personal breakthrough emerged out of a church conflict regarding what should be considered “work” on the Sabbath. After studying the Scriptures, theological writings, and policy manuals with the church leadership, something happened. I started thinking about the nature of work on the Sabbath in the lives of pastors, namely myself. It was thoughts like these that propelled me to pursue further graduate study, all of which culminated in doctoral research on the subject.

The defining question for my DMin project¹ was, How do Adventist

pastors practice and experience the Sabbath? The purpose was to understand more fully the unique challenge of keeping the Sabbath in the midst of Sabbath “busyness.” Since my project was a qualitative research study focused on obtaining an in-depth description, and not developing a theory, a relatively small sample size was all that was necessary.² The five pastors I interviewed, therefore, were at different stages of life and ministry, all serving in a variety of church districts within the same local conference. The purpose of this article is to share the lessons I learned while conducting the research and reflecting on these pastors’ Sabbath experience.

Toward Sabbath renewal

The results of this study were telling. I first realized that I had made a number of assumptions about the pastor’s practice and experience of the Sabbath. I assumed that the Sabbath was the most stressful day of the week. The interviews brought out the fact that, at least for these five pastors, the Sabbath was not the most stressful day of the week, but one among many.

Streams of stress flowed into the Sabbath from various directions, but stress was not the defining experience of the day. In fact, most of the stress they experienced on Sabbath took place in the morning

hours, between waking up Saturday morning to the conclusion of the worship service around noon. This was merely 6 hours out of a full 24-hour period. Friday evening and Sabbath afternoon surfaced as the prime time to rest and (re)connect with God, family, friends, and church members.

Another assumption that I started with was if Sabbath were the most stressful day of the week, then the

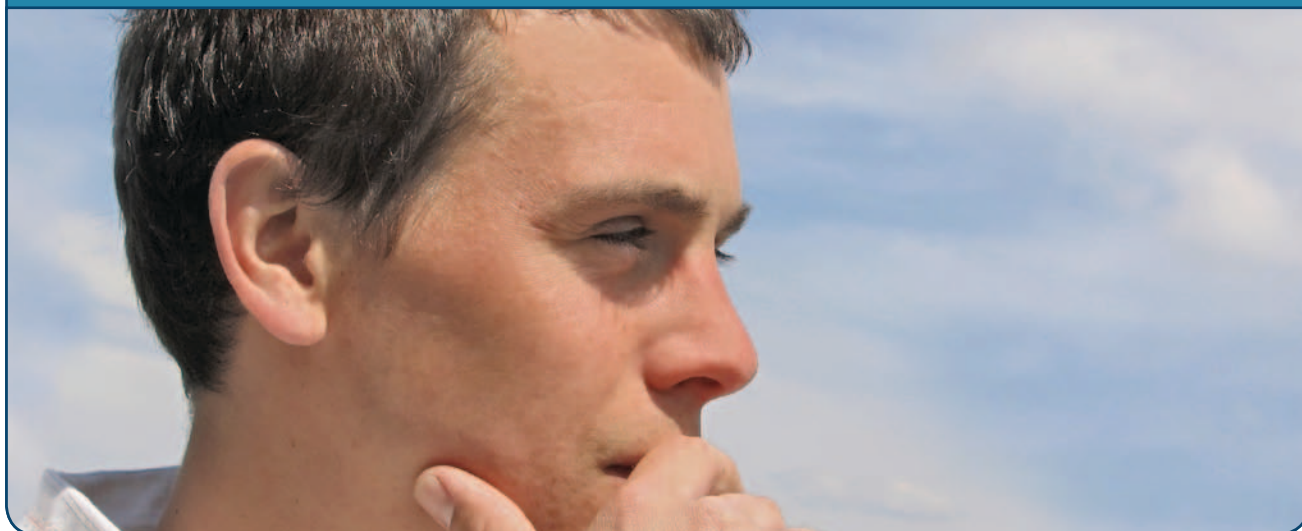
most closely associated with their stress—Sabbath morning. There may be a correlation, but not necessarily a causal relationship between the two.

Quite frankly, I was surprised by the results. I expected to find pastors who described their Sabbath experience as nothing but draining. Instead, I heard stories of fellow Adventist pastors who, for the most part, experienced their Sabbath as a delight. There was stress similar to

stressful yet joyful, draining yet energizing—all at the same time.

All but one of the pastors interviewed was older than me. Listening to and learning from pastors who have been working for many years was an education in itself. I sensed that, for these pastors, their call to the ministry was about wanting to help and serve people for the kingdom of God. However, they taught me there are boundaries and

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pastor's Sabbath experience could lead to burnout. I reasoned that this could be one of the contributing factors to pastors struggling in ministry and perhaps even a cause for resignation. After analyzing the interview data, this is likely not the case. For these pastors, the Sabbath *itself* did not cause a feeling of burnout, nor did the period of time

what I had experienced, yet there was also joy and the feeling of exuberance derived from being a co-laborer with the “Lord of the Sabbath.” These pastors were overjoyed to be used by God in a way that effected change in the lives of people, stress notwithstanding. In the end, it was clear that the Sabbath was experienced as a paradox:

limitations as to what any one person can actually do. The Sabbath literally means “to stop,” and therefore beckons the pastor to make a distinction between the simple, yet challenging choice of saying *Yes* or *No*. Thomas Swears insightfully comments on this: “Saying yes faithfully begins with saying no well, because such appropriate no’s allow the time and

energy needed for saying yes to opportunities that are more fitting to respond to in the affirmative.”³

The importance of realizing one’s finitude and establishing clear ministerial boundaries was helpful. Even more important were the contextual clues they provided to help me locate my own boundaries. All five pastors learned the importance of saying *No* to various Sabbath pastoral responsibilities largely due to their family of origin identification and family commitments. For example, one of the pastors grew up as a “PK”

Be more intentional

Another important lesson I gleaned from my research includes the need to be more intentional about preparing for the Sabbath throughout the week. To use the language of one pastor: “I know that throughout the week the closer I walk with God, the better my experience on the Sabbath. The Sabbath is not preparation for the week, but the week is preparation for the Sabbath. If I’m as spiritually strong as I need to be, the conflicts don’t usually drain me quite as bad. They still will,

acknowledge your own finitude and realize the work of ministry does not entirely rest on your shoulders; (3) consider your family and their experience of the Sabbath as a contextual clue for locating professional boundaries; and (4) based on the previous three, learn the art of saying *No*.

Indeed, Sabbath work can be experienced as a paradox. However, by implementing these four lessons, the nature of the work has changed for me. I have come to experience more rest than stress and more

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(pastor’s kid) and recalled only on rare occasions spending the Sabbath together with his entire family. Recollecting his childhood Sabbath memories, he commented, “Dad was driven in ministry; he was so focused on ministry that he didn’t have much time with and for his family.” This pastor was adamant about not repeating the same history with his children. Interestingly, the pastor who had the most difficult time with boundaries and saying *No* had no children and was in his first church district.


Listening to all of these pastors’ poignant appeals, I realized that I needed to consider my own family of origin much more carefully. Specifically, my immediate family needed to be brought into the conversation about our Sabbath practices. The probing question is, How do the boundaries I set (or lack thereof) contribute to *their* experience of the Sabbath?

but I usually have more to give and that’s simply because I’m building on it throughout the week. Prepare throughout the week and I’ll have more to give in dealing with people.”

Pastoral duties on Sabbath can be performed honestly before God, so long as the pastor maintains a sense of integrity by setting clearly defined boundaries throughout the week, not leaving for the Sabbath what can be done ahead of time. I believe this kind of holistic preparation can make all the difference in the practice and experience of the Sabbath.

Conclusion

Even though stress will always be a part of the pastor’s work on the Sabbath, it does not have to dominate or lead to burnout. Some ways to potentially manage Sabbath stress include (1) be more intentional about preparing for the Sabbath throughout the week; (2)

delight than drudgery. I now understand what Karl Barth meant when he said years ago, “The minister is the ideal case of a man who works on the Sabbath joyfully and in that way keeps it holy.”⁴ 

1 For a more detailed discussion of my project see: Erik C. Carter, “Sabbath for the Soul: A Phenomenological Exploration of the Practice and Experience of the Sabbath Among Seventh-day Adventist Pastors” (DMin Project, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 2009).

2 The strategy for the study was rooted in a phenomenological perspective, which considers individuals as experts on their own life experience and posits that an individual constructs his or her experience through language. Thus, it was through the qualitative research interview that I hoped to hear the pastor’s story. The participants were selected through a purposeful, criteria-based process with maximum variation. All five pastors were Caucasian males who served in a variety of church districts within the same conference in the North American Division (NAD) of Seventh-day Adventists. They had a range of theological education, were ordained, married, and only one did not have children.

It is important to note that the results of this study are not representative of all pastors in the NAD. Nevertheless, this does not eliminate the truthfulness of their stories, nor does it prohibit learning from their practice and experience of the Sabbath.

3 Thomas R. Swears, *The Approaching Sabbath: Spiritual Disciplines for Pastors* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 19.

4 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3 (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 1958, 1961), 68.

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Proclaiming the gospel and changing society

The Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, New York, had a guest speaker for its Sunday evening service on March 30, 1930. Under the leadership of Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., the church had become Harlem's best-known church. The guest preacher, Matthew C. Strachan, after six years of ministry in the city, had accepted a new position in Nashville, Tennessee, and Powell requested he preach his final sermon in New York at Abyssinian. Strachan, indeed, had already delivered a farewell message to his own congregation, Second Harlem Seventh-day Adventist Church, the day before. However, his homiletic finale at Abyssinian Baptist, with 200 of his members accompanying him, was fitting for a pastorate that "covered a wide variety of community service," according to a front-page report in the *New York Age* newspaper.¹

Twenty-five years earlier, in Washington, D.C., the Bethel Literary and Historical Society's second meeting of the 1904–1905 season featured a lecture on "The Rise and Fall of Nations in the Light of Scripture." The society, which met in the Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church known as the "national cathedral of African Methodism," was "the center of black intellectual life in the capital" from the 1880s to the 1920s.² The speaker, Lewis C. Sheafe, pastor of

the People's Seventh-day Adventist Church, had become well-known in the city through evangelistic meetings begun in the summer of 1902 that attracted racially mixed, standing-room-only crowds numbering in the thousands.

For Sheafe, it was a return engagement at the Bethel Literary. W. E. B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington had both been among the speakers since Sheafe's earlier appearance when his topic had been the "Christian Sabbath." This time, he "endeavored to trace the prophecies concerning the leading nations of the world," including America and the prophecy showing "how it pretended to stand for liberty and equality, but at the same time pampered oppression."³

These vignettes point to the remarkable success Strachan and Sheafe experienced in bringing the Adventist message to the great cities that not only set the pace for American society as a whole, but also held particular importance for African American culture. Though largely forgotten today, their stories shed light on how Adventism's message of hope for a new world brought the transforming power of the gospel to bear on societies in which it was proclaimed.

How did they do it? Imperfect men, subject to the limitations of their times and circumstances, obscured by a sketchy historical

record, did not provide neat, comprehensive formulas. But they may surprise us with the ways they transcended dichotomies that sometimes inhibit and narrow the church's witness, such as the personal gospel of individual salvation versus the "social gospel" of public activism, and the separating, end-time prophetic message versus interfaith cooperation. And when it comes to the matter of bringing about reform within the church, their experiences help us weigh the classic options of demanding immediate change through radical confrontation versus working for gradual change through diplomacy and compromise.

Sheafe's ministry

After graduating from Wayland Seminary in Washington, D.C., in 1888, Lewis Sheafe started out pastoring Baptist congregations in Minnesota and Ohio, garnering acclaim for exceptional eloquence as a pulpit orator.⁴ Also in frequent demand as a speaker for civic occasions, he became a forceful advocate for racial justice at a time when conditions for black Americans, after a brief period of hopeful change following the Civil War, were taking a sharp turn for the worse.

In 1895, for example, he stirred controversy with a blistering denunciation of the nation and, more specifically, the Republican Party,

for the post-Emancipation betrayal of African Americans. The radical disillusionment with the American political order he expressed may help explain a rather surprising development: less than a year after another sermon he delivered, we find the “eminent Baptist divine” and fiery civil rights orator in the pulpit of Battle Creek Tabernacle, making his debut as a Seventh-day Adventist preacher. In Adventism, Sheafe found a convincing message of biblical truth that was at the same time a promising alternative to politics-as-usual for racial advancement.⁵

When he became convinced by “present truth,” Sheafe wrote to Ellen White, “My heart leaped for joy as I thought of the possible help to come to my people through the third angel’s message.”⁶ At the General Conference of 1899, Sheafe rose to “heartily indorse” a motion to establish a medical missionary training school in the South. He appealed to the church to live up to its principles and move forward with a program ideally suited for confronting the poverty, ignorance, and disease so prevalent among the 90 percent of “his people” who dwelt in the South with the transforming power of its holistic gospel. He believed “that Seventh-day Adventists have a truth which, if they will let it get a hold of them, can do more in this field to demonstrate the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ than can any other people. The one thing needful, is that the truth shall get hold of the individuals who profess to know it.”⁷

Thus, in Adventism, Lewis Sheafe found both a better hope and more practical help for his people during the very decade in which became unmistakably clear that America was not going to fulfill its promises to them.⁸

Yet his ministry in Washington, D.C., which began in 1902, shows that this change in no way meant a withdrawal from societal concerns to issue shrill denunciations from the comfort of splendid isolation. There, in the nation’s capital city and

tried was Francis J. Grimké, pastor of the prestigious Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church for decades and, according to biographer Mark Perry, “the most influential minister in the city.”¹⁰

Yet, just weeks later, a committee, including several of the city’s most influential black ministers and chaired by Grimké, chose Sheafe as the clergy representative to speak at a special city-wide fortieth anniversary celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1903. The *Washington Post*, in giving a rundown of the dignitaries on the program, described Sheafe simply as “the well-known evangelist,” testament in brief to his impact after only six months in the city.¹¹

Pastor Lewis C. Sheafe

[Photo: Oakwood University Archives]



Pastor Matthew C. Strachan with his wife.

[Photo: South Central Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives]



A minister with tact and skill

Ellen White later observed that the Lord had equipped Sheafe with “tact” as well as “skill in knowledge” for proclaiming the “the last message of mercy” to the nation’s capital.¹² While we might wish for more detail on exactly how he went about it, Sheafe gave evidence of those gifts

by sharing the prophetic message in a forthright, compelling way, without burning bridges of cooperation with leaders of other faiths. In this way he kept open the possibility of joint action in causes of justice and mercy, thereby also sustaining a winsome influence on behalf of Adventism that could, in due time, bear fruit in a variety of ways.

Meanwhile, his evangelistic preaching led to scores of new members, including several white people, at the “mixed race” First Seventh-day Adventist Church.¹³ Though renowned for eloquence, the power of Sheafe’s preaching came not from theatrics or flowery rhetoric but from its thoroughly biblical,

the center both of black America’s elite and its largest urban mass population, Sheafe became, at the same time, an emphatically Adventist evangelist, preaching the “full message” to large audiences, and a respected, if at times a controversial, figure in the public arena.

His evangelistic success, not surprisingly, drew opposition from ministers of other denominations. The *Washington Bee*, one of the city’s two African American newspapers, observed that “Negro ministers abuse him especially the Baptist [sic] but they do not dare to answer his argument, many of them have attempted but failed.”⁹ One who

Christ-centered content and his facility in using simple language to convey basic, straightforward points in striking and memorable ways. Thus, his meetings brought spiritual revival, awakening “this sated city, among both the whites and blacks, to the impulses of a higher and truer Christian life,” according to one newspaper account. He also made his messages practical, not confining himself to narrowly religious topics or doctrinal theory, but addressing “all the intricate and oft elusive questions of the day.”¹⁴

In December 1903, with the encouragement of General Conference President A. G. Daniells, Sheafe organized another Adventist

foothold among both the white and black populations.

What they found much more difficult to accept was the appropriation of large sums of money to build segregated institutions for education and health care near the new General Conference headquarters in Takoma Park, with nothing more than imprecise and repeatedly deferred promises of future action when it came to development of parallel institutions for blacks in Washington. As full participants in the denomination’s centralized financial system, they were giving their tithes and offerings to build up an organization whose flagship institutions excluded them, without

a “loyal” black congregation in Washington to counter Sheafe’s independence movement. Cautious and circumspect, where Sheafe was confrontational and daring, a “manuscript preacher” who was no match for Sheafe when it came to pulpit charisma, Strachan nonetheless possessed keen leadership sensibilities and pursued his strategies with methodical persistence.

In contrast to Sheafe, Strachan made loyalty to the denomination’s organizational authority a bedrock commitment that would not be shaken by the church’s shortcomings or setbacks in implementing its ideals of racial equality. Grounded in that commitment, he took a gradual

THEY [SHEAFE AND STRACHAN] PREACHED WITH PROPHETIC CLARITY, CALLING PEOPLE OUT OF THE PRESENT EVIL AGE AND BUILDING THEM UP IN URBAN CONGREGATIONS SHAPED BY A POWERFUL SENSE OF DISTINCT ADVENTIST IDENTITY AND MISSION.

congregation in Washington—the People’s Seventh-day Adventist Church. Its initial membership of 51 grew to 130 in little more than a year. While inclusive of all people as a core principle, the People’s Church was predominantly black—one of the first African American Adventist congregations to be established in a large city.¹⁵

All too quickly, however, the Adventist Church’s accommodation to the surge of racism in America began wreaking intolerable havoc with Sheafe’s aspirations for it as a vehicle of racial redemption. Though they did not seek or prefer it, Sheafe and his congregation were willing to accept the expedient of racially separate churches and institutions in places where segregation was deeply entrenched, in order that the Adventist message might gain a

even second-rate alternatives yet on hand. Despairing of change through regular procedures, Sheafe and the People’s Church confronted the General Conference Committee with a petition in February 1906. Finding little encouragement from the response they received, the People’s Church declared independence from conference organization in 1907 while maintaining their claim on Seventh-day Adventist identity.¹⁶

Matthew Strachan enters

At this point the careers of Lewis Sheafe and Matthew Strachan intersected. Educated at Fisk University and Battle Creek College, Strachan stood at the forefront of an emerging corps of young black preachers in the Southern Union Conference when he accepted the unenviable assignment of raising

approach to closing the gap between the denomination’s practice and principles, using loyalty as a lever toward achieving essentially the same changes that Sheafe demanded.

Thus, even as he painstakingly built up a small congregation, Strachan drafted an appeal to denominational leadership that, in unflinching terms, called for an end to the “painful contrast” between resources devoted to educational and health institutions for relatively privileged whites, versus blacks, whose needs in these areas were so desperate. Change, he declared, would be the price if the denomination wanted to see loyal black membership thrive and not fuel the discontents that drove Sheafe’s dissident movement.¹⁷

Strachan’s appeals to church leadership made a significant

contribution to the formation of the North American Negro Department at the General Conference Session of 1909.¹⁸ Though weakened by serious flaws in its early years, the department was an important landmark in the gradual advance of the black Adventist cause. The crisis atmosphere ensuing from Sheafe's confrontational tactics in 1907 created pressure for something to be done. Strachan's unrelenting diplomacy, from the standpoint of loyalty, helped bring tangible change into reality. After a year and a half of labor in Washington, Strachan left a congregation of 32 members, which, along with a portion of Sheafe's larger congregation, became, in 1918, the sources of the new Ephesus Church in Washington, renamed Dupont Park after relocating in the 1960s.

Strachan's call to New York in 1924 came under circumstances more positive than those of the call to Washington in 1907, though still fraught with volatile potential. Adventism thrived, along with Harlem, as black migration into the city proliferated during and after World War I. The church pastored by J. K. Humphrey outgrew its building, with membership surpassing 600, and conference officials called Strachan to organize a second one—Harlem No. 2. Beginning with 80, the congregation grew to more than 250 active members during Strachan's six-year tenure. Not long after his departure, the church took the name "Ephesus."

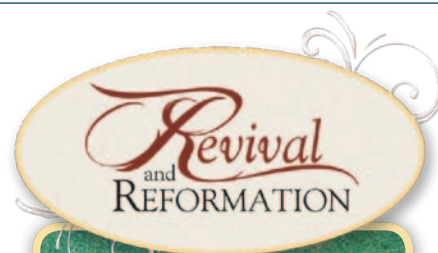
In New York, Strachan combined uncompromising presentation of Adventism's distinctive teachings, including rigorous apocalyptic critique of American culture, with broad-ranging social ministry.¹⁹ Unsparing in decrying the deep ills of society, he led his congregation, often in cooperation with those of other faiths, in direct action to heal them.

By taking on the roles of "social worker" in the municipal court system and chaplain for the black inmates in the Women's Prison on Welfare Island (now called Roosevelt Island), Strachan brought practical

help to those entangled in the consequences of crime, vice, and poverty. He served on a New York Urban League committee that developed a multifaceted program for reduction of crime and delinquency among black youth. He was prominent in the leadership of the Clio Welfare and Community Centre, serving as chair of the finance committee.²⁰ The Girls and Boys Rescue League, which he founded in 1929, was Second Harlem's own initiative in welfare ministry, albeit conducted in conjunction with other churches and public agencies. The league adopted the two-pronged strategy of working with the juvenile courts to "save girls and boys from sentences in the reformatory and workhouse" and provide an alternative residence with a program better suited for their uplift. Strachan left for his new post in the Southern Union before the home could be established, but he built a strong organizational foundation and made a substantial start in raising funds.²¹

Additionally, Strachan was not only an active participant but also a leader of interdenominational endeavors in Harlem. He seemed to have enjoyed particularly close working relationships with Powell at Abyssinian Baptist and with another of Harlem's most influential ministers, Rev. Dr. William Lloyd Imes, of St. James' Presbyterian Church.²² During the summer of 1929, the Interdenominational Ministers' Meeting and Harlem League of the Greater New York Federation of Churches called upon Strachan to serve as acting chair of its executive committee. This responsibility thrust Strachan into the thick of the struggle for black equality in political representation.²³

His duties as acting chairman that summer also included paying tribute, on behalf of the ministers, to Congressman and mayoral candidate Fiorello H. LaGuardia at a meeting of the Bethel Young People's Lyceum on July 25, attended by an audience of 600. After LaGuardia "hit right and left at discrimination and racial hatred," Strachan joined



Revival as a way of life

Revival is not about emotionalism, nor about miracles, but about a life totally committed to the Lord and nurtured by Him through study of the Scriptures, prayer, receptivity to the power and presence of the Spirit, and witnessing.

Revival implies a prior conversion; that we were once spiritually alive but have slipped toward spiritual death. In our spiritual journey, we may become discouraged and slowly weaken our union with Christ. This is called losing one's first love (Rev. 2:4). A change is needed.

Revival is the realization that we need to strengthen our spiritual life through study of the Word and through a life of prayer and service to others. As we come closer to the Lord, the Spirit will empower us to understand the Scriptures and walk in holiness, moving us to spend quality time in communion with the Lord in prayer, asking for the outpouring of the Spirit. The manifestation of the power of the Spirit in our lives directly relates to our interest in spiritual growth and engagement in the mission of the church. The Spirit is dynamic, therefore, His power is not granted to those who are indifferent to God's mission. As we approach the end of the cosmic conflict, the Spirit will come with unprecedented power (the latter rain) in preparation for the divine harvest. We should pray for this event and ask the Spirit to use us today.

—ÁNGEL MANUEL RODRÍGUEZ, DIRECTOR,
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representatives of other civic and professional groups in honoring him as “a champion of the rights of all the people.”²⁴

M. C. Strachan was at the zenith of his work in Harlem when tensions between Humphrey and the white leadership exploded, creating the most severe crisis over race relations in the history of Adventism in America.²⁵ Replicating the experience of Sheafe and the People’s Church more than two decades before, Humphrey and First Harlem separated from denominational organization but continued to espouse Adventist doctrines. Strachan remained ever the loyalist, but the perception was that he might not be forceful enough, particularly in dealing with the large West Indian sector of the population, to counter Humphrey’s influence. Strachan was called to coordinate the “Negro work,” in the Southern Union, and G. E. Peters was called to New York from his post as head of the North American Negro Department.

We can only speculate as to how Strachan’s social initiatives in Harlem might have further developed had he stayed longer. However, he by no means abandoned the public arena. After moving to Tampa in 1937 for the final assignment of his pastoral career, Strachan became president of the Tampa Negro Voter’s League and, from 1940 to 1947, president of the Tampa branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In his recently published book *Seventh-day Adventists and the Civil Rights Movement*, Samuel G. London, Jr., describes how the Tampa NAACP, with Strachan at the helm, pursued numerous legal cases to redress racial injustice, including an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to save, from the electric chair, a young black man beaten by police into confessing the rape of a white woman.²⁶

Crowning evidence of the recognition Strachan achieved as a skillful organizer in the struggle for

racial justice came in 1943 when A. Philip Randolph, the nation’s foremost civil rights leader at that time, named the 68-year-old preacher to the ten-member national executive committee of the March on Washington movement.²⁷ Randolph warned President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) of the descent of 100,000 representatives of the “black masses” on the nation’s capital to demand desegregation of the armed forces and equal employment opportunity for blacks in defense industries. When the threat of the march induced FDR to grant the latter demand, Randolph agreed to call off the event. Though an actual march became unnecessary at that point, the March on Washington movement had achieved one of the most significant advances toward racial justice in the nation’s history.²⁸

Despite their obscurity today, Lewis C. Sheafe and Matthew C. Strachan were key figures in establishing the foundations of African American Adventism. They preached with prophetic clarity, calling people out of the present evil age and building them up in urban congregations shaped by a powerful sense of distinct Adventist identity and mission. At the same time, indeed as an essential component of that mission, they placed high priority on social action in cooperation with other religious and benevolent agencies. Their stories deepen our understanding of the Adventist movement’s failures with regard to race relations and highlight differing approaches to church reform. They also point us to the possibility of holistic mission that both anticipates and makes more believable the promise of a soon-coming day when God will make all things new. 

1 “Elder M.C. Strachan, 2nd Seventh Day Adventist Church, Promoted to General Office, Goes to Tennessee,” *New York Age* (29 March 1930): 1, 7.

2 Jacqueline M. Moore, *Leading the Race: The Transformation of the Black Elite in the Nation’s Capitol, 1880-1920* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 66–69.

3 “Bethel Literary,” *Washington Bee* (15 Oct. 1904): 4.

4 While some specific references are provided in this essay, fuller documentation and further detail may be found in my biographical study *Lewis C. Sheafe: Apostle to Black America* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2010).

5 Morgan, *Lewis C. Sheafe*, 104–111; “Editorial Notes,” *Review and Herald* (21 July 1896): 16.

6 Lewis C. Sheafe to Ellen G. White, 25 May 1899, Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, MD.

7 *General Conference Bulletin* (16 Feb. 1899): 5.

8 In the two decades or so following the Civil War, constitutional promises and progressive initiatives had stirred hope of progress toward racial justice, but in the 1890s it all gave way in the “national capitulation to racism” described by C. Vann Woodward in *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

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11 “Celebration of Lincoln’s Proclamation,” *Washington Post* (1 Jan. 1903): 3; “Date of Emancipation,” *Washington Evening Star* (2 Jan. 1903): 6.

12 *Manuscript Releases* 13 (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990): 159.

13 Douglas Morgan, “‘They Preach a Political Gospel’: The Prophetic Witness of Washington, D.C.’s Earliest Seventh-day Adventists,” *Spectrum* (Summer 2009), 31–36, includes a brief treatment of the early history of the First Seventh-day Adventist Church in Washington, D.C.

14 Morgan, *Lewis C. Sheafe*, 202–207.

15 Sheafe’s own narrative of his ministry in Washington, 1902–1905, can be found in “People’s Seventh-day Adventist Church of Washington, D.C.,” *Review and Herald* (24 Aug. 1905): 15, 16. At least one other black Adventist church can also lay claim to have been founded in a large city prior to 1903—the church now known as Ephesus in New Orleans (1892). According to the 1900 U.S. Census, New Orleans had 287,104 residents to D.C.’s 278,718.

16 Morgan, *Lewis C. Sheafe*, 294–301, 304–311.

17 M.C. Strachan to General Conference Brethren, 26 Feb. 1907, General Conference Archives.

18 See “An Appeal in Behalf of the Work Among the Colored People,” May 1909, General Conference Archives.

19 Summaries of Strachan’s sermons regularly appeared in the *New York Age* and *New York Amsterdam News*, including a series of evangelistic sermons near the beginning of his tenure that presented Adventist understandings of apocalyptic prophecy in a straightforward manner. See, for example, the summary of his exposition of Revelation 12 and 13, in “Harlem 2nd S.D.A.,” *New York Amsterdam News* (18 Mar. 1925): 10.

20 “Elder M.C. Strachan, 2nd Seventh Day Adventist Church,” “Select Court Worker for Women and Girls,” *New York Amsterdam News* (11 Sept. 1929): 11; “Clio Centre Notes,” *New York Amsterdam News* (19 Feb. 1930): 6.

21 “Churches of Harlem Form Organization to Aid Delinquent Youth,” *New York Age* (10 Aug. 1929): 2.

22 See, for example, “News of the Churches—St. James’ Church,” *New York Amsterdam News* (24 July 1929): 14. Also, St. James’ was one venue for Strachan’s fund-raising efforts referred to above.

23 “Interdenominational Ministers in Strong Resolutions Condemn the Dual Leadership Proposition,” *New York Age* (6 July 1929): 1; “Harlem Voters Swamp Alien Republican Leadership . . .,” *New York Age* (21 Sept. 1929): 1.

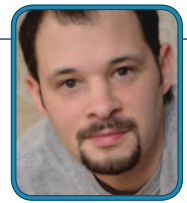
24 “LaGuardia Talks to Bethel Lyceum,” *New York Amsterdam News* (31 July 1929): 2.

25 R. Clifford Jones, *James K. Humphrey and the Sabbath-Day Adventists* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006).

26 Samuel G. London, Jr., *Seventh-day Adventists and the Civil Rights Movement* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 102–104.

27 “March-On-Washington Committee Named,” *Chicago Defender* (1 May 1943): 6.

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Beyond abstinence: Presenting God's ideal for sexual intimacy

It was the first night of teen camp. As camp pastor, I led the nightly Bible study. The camp director instructed me to let the campers choose the topic; so I gathered my eager students around and popped the question: "What would you like to study?" They flashed a few blank looks. Then, in less than ten seconds, a girl piped up, "I think we should talk about abstinence. You know, like, why we shouldn't have sex." The others quickly agreed. Clearly, this girl had heard the church's message about sex, but is it the right message?

Since my earliest pastoral days, I have had a growing sense that the Christian church does not handle the topic of sexuality well (and no one else does it better). There are sharp exceptions but, as a whole, we have missed the mark. I think back on my own sex education. I might be biased, but I think my parents did better than most, but even so, I did not get it. As a youth, I recall sex talks in the teen division at camp meeting; they were on how sex works. Looking back, I think there was a sense among youth leaders that ignoring the topic would not do, but they did not know what to say about it either.

I appreciate the intent of the sexual purity movement but statistics show that it has not worked as well as we would have liked. One study finds that "teenagers who pledge

to remain virgins until marriage are just as likely to have premarital sex as those who do not promise abstinence."¹ The emphasis on abstinence and asking teens to promise they will not have sex until marriage sounds right, but it is not enough. A pragmatic teen will eventually use the same spiritual loophole that everyone else has used at some point: just do it and ask forgiveness later. When the message is, "Yes, sex before marriage is fun but bad to do," we cannot expect much more from teens than we could expect from a toddler left alone near a plate of cookies with the command, "Don't eat any."

What is the problem? The message is negative. Attaching the word "bad" to something as exciting as sex makes the experience invalidate the message. Teens might say the right words but everything in their maturing bodies screams, "This is great . . . not bad." They are right. Sex is amazing—a gift from Almighty God, and one of His most spectacular gifts. According to Richard M. Davidson, "a number of scholars have suggested that the best translation" of a key description of sex in Song of Solomon 8:6 is "a flame of Yah(weh) himself."² If this is true, we make a grave mistake to hang a cloud of distain over it. I do not pretend to have all the answers to this complex topic; but my work with

teens and their confused parents has made me sure of one thing: our message about sex must turn positive.

Theologically, a positive message about sex is more correct than a negative one. With the exception of Paul's inhibitions on the subject—that it is good for a man not to touch a woman (1 Cor. 7:1, 2)—and passages addressing distortions, the biblical view of sex is glowing. Song of Solomon, for example, celebrates the joys and pleasures of the sexual gift.³ This comes in contrast with the past few centuries of Christian history, from periods of mummery to anti-gay crusades. Homosexuality is a distortion (Rom. 1:24–27), but this gives another example of how the church is ready to rally against sex misused while lacking a pervading, positive vision for what sex should be. Judging by his work to attack sex, Satan knows it matters. But, God's church has not yet cast a clear vision, a minority of clear thinkers excepted.

A large part of the solution includes re-framing our theology of sex—the primary focus of this piece. I suggest that we begin to change things by teaching three concepts and their implications. These concepts emerge from the Genesis creation account. First, sex is designed to reproduce God's image. This implies that it brings out our fullest potential to impact the

world. Second, sex is designed to complete God's image. This implies that it brings out our fullest potential to be rounded humans. Third, sex is designed to create an emotional bond. This implies that it brings out our fullest social potential. God intends all the joy and pleasure of sex to strengthen these aspects of our humanity.

Reproducing God's image

First, sex reproduces the image of God. God introduced the gift of sex with the words, " 'Be fruitful, and multiply ...' " (Gen. 1:28).⁴ In other words, sex is first linked to the idea of creating new human beings. Here we see just how true it was that God made mankind in *His image* (1:26, 27), but this did not only mean physical resemblance. Rather, since God creates others in His image, we create others in ours—through sex. Scripture makes this explicit, stating that Adam "begot a son in his own likeness, after his image" (5:3; emphasis added), using the same

language as the original creation (1:26). The meaning is incredible; sex is the means of emulating the creative aspect of God and fulfills God's image in us through the trait that most defines our link with Him: Creation.

This reproductive ability was given explicitly for impacting the world. "God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it ...' " (1:28). Through sex they broadened their influence. If we teach our youth that God gave sex as a gift for reproducing God's image and broadening our impact on the world, if we cast the vision for how a carefully planned home and family can change lives for God, they might think twice about trading it for a moment of pleasure. This does not, however, mean that sex for pleasure is wrong. On the contrary, the pleasure of sex intensifies our understanding of God's love, which brings us to the second concept from Creation.

Completing God's image

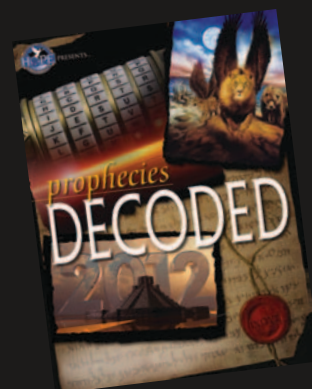
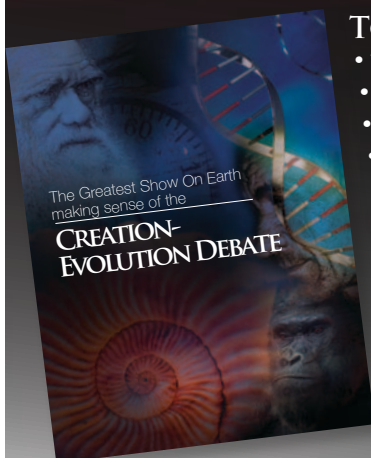
Second, sex completes the image of God in us. "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (1:27). For human beings to reflect God's image, it took *both* male and female (see also 5:1). Only at the moment when the two become "one flesh" (2:24), the ecstatic moment of pleasure when human beings fully complete God's image, can we understand Him to our fullest human capacity. The expression "one flesh" is not limited to the sexual union but it could be argued that, since it says "one flesh" and not "one heart" (or something similar), that sex becomes the best symbol of joining for completeness. The apostle Paul, for one, understood the expression in terms of sex (1 Cor. 6:16). The pleasure and joy of sex, coupled with the intense closeness to another person that it affords, creates an experiential understanding of God's love available by no other means.

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The implication for romance is transforming. This implies that the first criterion for romance would be to find a person who will complete God's image in you and for whom you will be that completion. It also implies that perversions of sex are not simple infractions but that they do violence to the image of God in us. Seeing the weight of their sexual choices in view of this might build a desire in our youth to reserve the

meant to bring husband and wife together to *know* each other more fully than any other two people ever will and so come together as the complete image of God.

This concept, if understood, will make us pause and consider that a law of Creation exists that cannot be broken. We are made to bond with one person so deeply that it can only be described as "one flesh" (2:24). Sex is a bonding agent. An academy

in us, and build the strongest emotional bond known to mankind. This deserves contemplation.

Miroslav Kis observes that "it is not possible to separate sexuality from the rest of what is native to our humanity."⁵ Denying it will not work. By contrast, if we inspire our youth with what sex can be, maybe they will come to see it as something of supreme value—something to preserve. We must teach them that

THE EMPHASIS ON ABSTINENCE AND ASKING TEENS TO PROMISE THEY WILL NOT HAVE SEX UNTIL MARRIAGE SOUNDS RIGHT, BUT IT IS NOT ENOUGH.

sexual gift for marriage. If we could inspire them with the potential for personal completeness and experiencing God's love with another person, when sex is protected, they might actually want to wait for marriage. This touches on the third concept from Creation—bonding.

Emotional bonding

Third, sex creates an emotional bond. The term that first explicitly describes the act of sex in Scripture deepens the meaning of sex further still. The idea of completing God's image through the sexual union remains the governing concept, but the verb "to know" describes the act itself. The text reads, "Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, 'I have acquired a man from the LORD'" (Gen. 4:1). There are many ways the inspired writer could have described the physical act of sex, but he chose this term of relationship. It is an act

teacher once shared with me that she can always tell when the girls in her class have been sexually active because the boy behaves like an owner. A sexual relationship opens all aspects of your life to another person. If our youth understand that they will form a lasting bond with every person they sleep with, and that the ability to bond will weaken with each new person, they might see why only sex with the person after marriage puts worth on the waiting time.

Implications of concepts

What does all this mean? The one flesh moment, the moment of intimate knowing, God designed to be a person's most godly moment. God wants the moment of sexual ecstasy to open a window into His heart. To the most intense physical pleasure humans can have, God attached the way to create others in His image, complete His image

their potential impact on the world is enormous if they choose well the person with whom to merge. We must teach them that their potential for understanding God is profound if they choose well the person with whom to join their flesh. We must teach them that their potential bond with another person is beyond imagination if they choose to only sleep with the person God gives them. Teaching youth a theology of sex that inspires them with the profundity and value God intended for it could make the difference. Then, they might begin to see that sex cannot be like a cookie to steal and ask forgiveness for later but a spectacular gift from God worth protecting.

Starting the discussion

A natural question for parents and ministry professionals to ask is this: How can I start the discussion with my youth? My own experience gave me an answer; but I decided to

ask a group of high school teachers and some youth leaders, just to be sure. Their answer was emphatic: youth do not need much encouragement to talk about sex. The example I shared at the start of this article is a case in point. We are the ones who hesitate to start the conversation. They need to know one thing from us, and then they are ready to talk and listen—they need to know it is safe to talk without fear of judgment. Remember, keep it positive. Your job is to inspire them with a glowing vision of God's plan.

Conclusion

Clearly, a negative, abstinence-focused approach to sexual purity does not always work. It is also clear that a positive vision of sex is more theologically sound. I suggest that the first step toward a successful

purity movement would include teaching our youth a positive theology of sex. This theology includes three central concepts: that sex was designed (1) to reproduce God's image, (2) to complete God's image, and (3) to create a bond that helps humans understand God's love.

Finally, ministry professionals need to keep in mind that youth are ready and waiting to talk. They just need to know it is safe to do so.

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- 4 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from the New King James Version.
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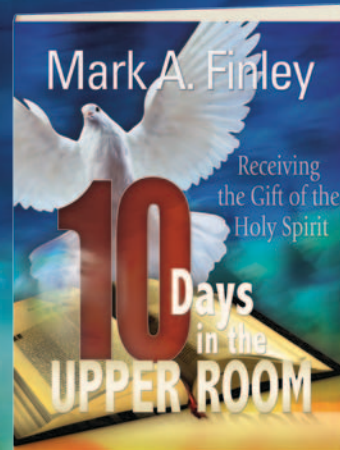


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Missional church: What it can do for church growth

Editor's Note: Skip Bell talks with Michael Cauley who recently completed a Doctor of Ministry degree at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States. His doctoral concentration involved a missional church project, leading to the establishment of a new church.

Skip Bell (SB): Dr. Cauley, tell us what the missional church is all about.

Michael Cauley (MC): The term comes from the book, *Missional Church*, co-authored by six authors and edited by Darrell Guder.¹ Guder's thesis says that the problem the North American Adventist Church currently finds itself in will not be solved through programs or methodology, but rather through a mission built around spiritual and theological renewal.² Such a renewal-based mission is what Jesus stated in John 20:21, " 'As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' " ³ The foundational principle of the Scripture is that God is a sending God. He sent His messengers, prophets, and finally the Son in the process of incarnation (Heb. 1:1). That theological foundation forms the missional church.

SB: How do you see this fulfilling a biblical gospel commission?

MC: After claiming authority in heaven and on earth, the first word

in the Great Commission given by Jesus is, " 'Go' " (Matt. 28:18–20). God's mission is a "go" mission. Just as Jesus was sent to earth to show us who our Father is, we are sent into the world to show who Jesus is. There is no doubt that we are called to proclaim the gospel as was Jesus (Mark 1:14); our challenge is that the way we live our lives is not always consistent with what we wish to proclaim.⁴

SB: What are the implications of missional church for young-adult Adventists in Western culture?

MC: How are you living your life? The missional church calls us to accountability regarding how we actually live in our community—in the world outside the church. Alan and Debra Hirsch point out, "The fact that the almighty God, Creator of all that is, hung out in a regular neighborhood doing regular things for thirty years without anyone noticing is simply staggering. So hidden was God in Jesus that even his disciples didn't quite get who they were dealing with until after the resurrection. . . . The incarnation therefore shapes our discipleship."⁵ Our lives show consistent evidence of whom we are following.

As a thirtysomething young Adventist, I must ask myself, *What evidence in my life confirms that I am following Jesus versus following self?* In Matthew 22:37–40, Jesus

quotes Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, which we refer to as the Great Commandment. After quoting Deuteronomy, Jesus links Leviticus 19:18 with the words " 'You shall love,' " which He patterns after a common rabbinic practice known as equal category.⁶ As a result, His teaching reflects the importance of loving God and loving humanity.

As followers of Jesus we are called to unify our lives under the Lordship of Christ as evidenced through our love for humanity. One of my favorite authors, Gerald Vann, challenges us to ask ourselves "whether our desire and use of good things are also good, and making for unity, or disordered, and making for disruption and rebellion against God."⁷

SB: How did you catch a vision for missional church?

MC: At the age of sixteen, I began to sense a disconnect between the traditional approach to life that I had been taught as a Seventh-day Adventist and the realities of the needs of the world in which I lived. As I sought answers from the leaders in my church to the questions that gnawed at my mind, I became discouraged. The responses I received did not adequately meet my needs. Today, as a Seventh-day Adventist minister, I examine the Seventh-day Adventist churches in North America and the realities

of the communities in which they exist, and I ask some of those same questions: *Why are so many of my peers choosing to leave the church of their childhood? Why isn't there more evidence of lives that have been changed by a local church community? Why do we try to "fix" people before we bring them to Jesus? Why are the majority of local church budgets spent on buildings and programs, both of which give an invitation to come when Jesus says, "Go"?*

SB: How has missional church transformed your life, and your family?

MC: I believe the greatest work that God has done over the last four years of my experience in missional church planting has been in me. My way of life has changed dramatically and my leadership ability has grown tremendously—results, I believe, of God pouring Himself into me as I have sought Him. As He has poured Himself into me, I have poured myself into others. Although I know more now than I did four years ago about living as a missionary in North America, I still have a lot to learn.

It has been a family journey; the support of my wife, Ashley, and the understanding of my children, Ella and Anna, has been crucial. My hope is that this journey has brought us closer to Jesus and to one another as a family. My oldest child, Ella, became a missionary when she was seven months old and my youngest Anna was born into a missionary family. Neither one of them chose this way of life. Ashley and I chose it for them; through it they have experienced miracles, but have also been exposed to a depth of depravity within the human race that I would have liked to have kept from them longer. My hope is that they clearly see Jesus' grace replaces the depravity of those with whom we live as they begin their own journey of following Jesus as Lord and growing as His disciples.

SB: Where and with whom does the missional life begin?

MC: The incarnational missional life is the life that begins by showing up in people's lives and abiding with them. Making ourselves available for our neighborhood. Living like Jesus. Having fun. Enjoying people. Loving them. Fellowshiping with them. Giving ourselves away to them.

SB: What barriers stand in the way of living the missional life?

MC: The first barrier I see is fear of what living the missional life requires, personally and professionally. Missional leaders of the Adventist Church in North America in the twenty-first century must not be satisfied with just following the institutional programs; they must seek the mission of God, listen to what He wants to teach, and engage the secular society in order to share the gospel in light of the three angels' messages. To accomplish this, leaders must listen to the voice of God and the needs of the culture in which the people are living.

The second barrier is that the Adventist Church in North America is not, in my opinion, financially structured to support mission. This is an extremely complex issue, but from my experience I see giving coming from institutional churches and primarily returning to institutional churches for ministries that are not targeting the mission field of North America. I am not advocating we cease supporting institutional churches but that we also address the mission needs in North America.

SB: How does your spiritual life support your life as a missionary in Western culture?

MC: The local church's mission must be grounded in the spiritual life of each member, beginning with its leadership. I spend time in silence listening to God, studying

the Bible for the purpose of having my life transformed, praying for wisdom and discernment, fasting through difficult circumstances, opening my life up to an accountability partner twice a month, and going on retreats regularly to hear the voice of God.

This foundation for mission stemming from the spiritual life cannot be mandated from the top down. Instead it must be a grass-roots movement that begins small and grows proportionately to its rootedness in Jesus Christ. The deeper the movement's roots are in Jesus, the greater the impact for the kingdom the movement will have.

SB: How did you launch the missional experience?

MC: I started by giving my life away. I'm still learning how to do this, but this is the process I'm currently following:

1. Spend time with Jesus through prayer, Bible study, fasting, retreat, and silence.
2. Discipline myself to live in community, beginning with my wife and daughters.
3. Extend my community to abide with broken people where God tells me to show up.
4. Die to the "isms": consumerism, materialism, and individualism.
5. Walk in this way of life first and model it for others.

SB: What has been your greatest personal challenge to live life as a missionary in Western culture?

MC: Recently, I had dinner with Neil Cole, an advocate for mission in Western culture, and several Seventh-day Adventist leaders. Cole mentioned the greatest hindrance to mission moving forward in Western society is the program-driven, consumer-oriented church model. I believe that this is the greatest challenge missionaries find themselves up against. A call to "come die with me" is not as appealing as a call

to “come consume with me.” This has been a great challenge for me as well because my commitment to living deeply with God and others takes time and there is no good way to keep score of it.

SB: If someone wishes to engage their community as a mission field, what would be the first three steps that he or she should take?


MC: First, pray. Ellen White counsels those who begin work in new areas to form a team of seven to study the needs of the city and prayerfully decide how to reach the city.⁸ If you don’t have seven people who can pray with you, start with whom you have. We had three: myself, my wife, and my seventh-month-old daughter.

Second, make it a priority to spend time with your neighbors. This is not a waste of your

time—rather the best use of your time. I made the mistake of being so overwhelmed with getting a program going at first, that I was too tired to spend time with my community. As I have changed my priorities, I am amazed at the relationships I’ve built in a relatively short amount of time—eighteen to twenty-four months.

Third, invest in the lives of those who you see changing. Challenge them to lead; teach them how to study the Bible for themselves, not only to know doctrine, but to be transformed; empower them with resources; help them get into a coaching relationship so that the change taking place in them will be grounded.

SB: Is there a support network for like-minded missional leaders within the Adventist Church in Western culture?

MC: Yes. Beginning the spring of 2011, a Doctor of Ministry program, “Missional Church: A Biblical Response to Western Culture” will be offered through the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. You can find out more information by visiting www.doctorofministry.com. My doctoral program at Andrews provided tremendous support for me, and we envision this cohort doing the same for others. 

- 1 Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998).
- 2 Alan Hirsch, *Leadership Journal*, Fall 2008.
- 3 Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible references are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).
- 4 Alan and Debra Hirsch, *Untamed* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010), 248.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 233, 234.
- 6 “Which Is the Great Commandment of the Law?” in *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 33b:647.
- 7 Gerald Vann, *Of His Fullness* (New York: P. J. Kennedy and Sons, 1939), 11.
- 8 Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1970), 37.

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The nominating committee: Streamlining the process

In north Seattle stands a humble auto shop where I have taken my cars since the mid-1980s. Every 5,000 miles, I give my car into the hands of the owner or one of his mechanics. From time to time my car needs something major; mostly, though, it gets minor adjustments.

Maybe that is a good metaphor for the yearly church nominating committee. I consider the church I pastor as vital to God's agenda and needs to be able to transport His love smoothly and dependably to the lives of our congregation and community. And the yearly nominating committee could be like the periodic trip to my mechanic where my church's functioning is adjusted for the highest performance.

During my first few years in ministry, I, like many other pastors, discovered that the nominating committee can cause turmoil. I also found that, if tuned a bit to maximize its pluses and reduce its minuses, the nominating committee can be satisfying, even fun. In our mid-sized congregation with an average Sabbath morning attendance of 130–180, we have been using the following process for nearly 20 years. Here is what we do.

Start eight or nine weeks out. A couple of months before the report's "first reading," we elect and convene the traditional "committee to select the nominating committee." During announcement time that Sabbath morning, deacons hand out slips of paper with five lines on them. Instructions on the slips tell

each member to list five individuals whom they would like to see on this committee-to-select. The slips are collected and the votes tallied immediately, even while the service continues.

Review, with the treasurer, the names. I always ask the treasurer to be present at the count in order to "filter through" only those who are faithful in tithes and offerings.

Here's why: let's say nontither John Doe gets on the committee-to-select. The committee meets and someone (unaware of John's nongiving habits) says, "Hey, John, why don't you be on the nominating committee itself?" John agrees, and when the nominating committee meets, someone might ask, "John, why don't you be an elder?" Things get awkward now because our church voted several years ago to select elders, deacons, and deaconesses—and all board members—from only those faithful with tithes and offerings.

Next, a deacon brings me the vote tally before (I hope) the sermon starts. I read the committee-to-select's choices aloud and ask them to meet with me in my office right after the service. The secretary will have provided us with copies of the church family roster, plus a list of those who served on the last nominating committee (we completely change nominating committee members from time to time except for one carryover). Our task, at this point, is to elect a nominating committee of seven regular members plus two alternates.

Include several people from children's divisions on the nominating committee. I urge this group to include at least three people who work in the children's divisions on the nominating committee. These individuals are an incredibly valuable source of information and will not only help us pack the divisions with great people, but will also be capable of the creative thinking needed to wrestle with unforeseen staffing issues.

I also urge this committee to choose nominating committee members who not only know a lot of the church family, but are cheerfully assertive enough to take part in the discussions. And we always nominate *twice* the number of people we would need for the nominating committee in case some cannot serve.

Prepare and distribute a nominating committee survey packet. On the same Sabbath we choose the committee-to-select, our greeters give each member a survey packet, containing two sheets stapled together.

The first sheet lists offices (we call them "Opportunities for Service"), followed by one-sentence job descriptions. This sheet also contains two important footnotes that give everyone some "heads-ups."

The first footnote reminds the reader that several years ago the church board voted that, because of their exemplary positions, church offices which are board positions, along with deacon and deaconess positions, shall only be filled by members who financially support

the church with faithful tithes and offerings.

The second footnote says, “A Washington Conference policy requires that anyone involved with children fill out standard background-check forms. Thanks for understanding—and thanks for serving our children!”

The second sheet is the survey itself, which starts by alluding to the “Opportunities for Service” sheet this way: “Quite a list, isn’t it? And this is just the skeleton of our church body. Now we need people—you—to add the flesh and blood, the heart and soul of Christian service. Here’s your chance to volunteer your service.”

The survey contains just four questions, which I have summarized here (to see the full survey with actual wording and additional explanations, go to www.bellevueadventist.org/Inomcom): (1) *Here are the positions I would like to volunteer for—marked as my first, second, or third choice.* (2) *Here are positions I have filled in the past, here or elsewhere.* (3) *Here are people I am suggesting for various*

positions, and why I am suggesting them. (4) *Here is a position of service not currently on the Opportunities for Service list but which the church board should think about adding.*

At the top and bottom of the survey, I put a large-font deadline date of two weeks. In recent years we have asked our secretary to put members’ mailing labels on the back of the survey sheets, in case they forget to sign their name on the other side.

Send out the survey by email as well. I send out (a couple of times) the service list and survey to those on the church email list. This always gets responses from people who might not take time to fill out the paper copy. And I have learned *not* to be discouraged by a smaller-than-expected return. This is often a sign either of modesty or of someone very happy with the role they are in. The main thing is that we have given everyone a chance to offer feedback.

When calling people to be on the nominating committee, explain the process completely.

I call the prospective members of the nominating committee the day after we select them. I have found in recent years that the selectees tend to always say *Yes* unless they know they will be out of town, and that is because word has gotten around that our nominating committees are fun and productive. On each phone call, I describe these procedures in detail, and people who have gone through weary nominating committees before, say to themselves, *What do you know? A breath of fresh air! Maybe I’ll give it a try again.*

Limit the length of meetings.

During my calls, I also say that we will be, for example, meeting four to six Monday evenings from 7:00 P.M. *sharp* to 9:00 P.M. *sharp* (never beyond 9:00, no late nights). I tell them that I will give them a reminder email a couple of days in advance of the first meeting.

Prepare a detailed nominating committee guide with all survey response information. The day before the first nominating committee meeting, we gather all the returned

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surveys and type the information into a spreadsheet. (You can see a photo of a sample of the guide at www.bellevueadventist.org/nomcom—just scroll down past the member survey packet.) I could, of course, delegate this duty, but reading and entering all the survey information makes me extremely well-informed about not only who volunteers for what but about all the comments and suggestions.

This guide generally runs about 14 pages, and it means that our nominating committee members do not have to feel their way through a gray, uninformed fog (or be controlled by one nominating committee member with strong opinions and a pre-thought-out agenda!). With this guide, the data is right there in parallel columns—who volunteered for a position, who was suggested for it by someone else, and who are the current office holders. The nominating committee is, of course, not slavishly bound to this guide, but they find the guide helpful.

On the last pages I include a list of “People to Keep in Mind for Positions.” To prepare this list, I go through the church family roster and find names of people who might not be serving in a position but should be involved.

I also include an “Additional Notes” section, which features general comments members may have written on their surveys. Bottom line: everything anybody said on a survey is right there in front of each nominating committee member. I also bring the original surveys with me to each meeting; this way we can double-check my typing accuracy.

Prepare nominating committee folders. We prepare folders for committee members. The folders include the most recent church family roster; the nominating committee guide described above; a stapled set of sheets with blank lines under the names of the offices for nominating committee members to record names of those selected for the offices; and

a suggestion sheet, “How to Ask Someone to Take an Office” (which you can also see if you scroll down at the Web address listed above).

At the start of the first nominating committee, I call the committee to order. The first order of business is prayer, asking the Lord to give us creativity and His wisdom during these delicate and important decisions. I then thank everyone for serving, and I read aloud the *Church Manual* passages about how nominating committee members should keep everything confidential. I then talk them through the contents of their folders, and we elect a chairperson and a secretary.

Fill the children’s divisions before deciding any other offices.

Once I turn the meeting over to the chairperson, we start working on the children’s divisions, birth through youth. *And we absolutely do not deal with any other offices (including elders or treasurer) until we have packed the children’s divisions top to bottom with enough kid-friendly people.*

I cannot emphasize this enough. If you have happy and burnout-free children’s division leaders, you have a happy and magnetic church. I have noticed in recent years that the division leaders are asking for more people per department so that they can use a rotating schedule. This way, not every leader has to be there every Sabbath.

Once we get the kids’ divisions taken care of, we start on the other large committees—for example, elders, deacons, deaconesses, fellowship dinner committee, greeters, and others.

Never miss a nominating committee meeting.

As pastor, I am an active participant, though I carefully avoid being in the driver’s seat. I attend every meeting, without fail, because I have a historical perspective that the average committee member probably does not. I am not a dictator, though. Every year there are instances when the committee successfully reasons me out of a position I might have originally taken.

I keep an eye on the time, and at 8:45 or so I say, “OK, let’s stop and decide who’s going to call whom.” The chairperson then starts through the groups: “Who wants to call Junior leaders?” and so on.

As much as possible, nominating committee members should call people in their area of interest.

For example, nominating committee members who work in the children’s divisions should call the potential children’s division leaders. This way they can have intelligent conversations about these roles.

Seek input from team leaders about people to fill their teams.


For example, we regularly ask the person we select as our hospitality (fellowship dinner) committee chair to suggest names they would like to see on the team.

All nominating committee members should call from the secretary’s list, not their own notes.

At the end of each nominating committee session, once the secretary has recorded who is going to call which group, dated photocopies are made and distributed to the committee, and these become the call lists. Dating the lists makes sure everyone calls from the most recent list.

Nominating committee meetings close at the announced time. I encourage nominating committee callers to make their calls early in the week.

Plan for a “buffer period.” It is great to have a couple of weeks between the final nominating committee meeting and the actual “first reading” Sabbath. There are always last minute details, and the buffer lets us present a fairly clean first reading.

Down through the years, my mechanic’s automotive adjustments have kept my vehicles functioning at top form, relieving me of a potentially overwhelming number of worries. I hope my suggested nominating committee “adjustment” suggestions can help your congregation minister happily into each new church year. 

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All submissions must be received no later than **MAY 31, 2011.**



Larry Yeagley, now retired, has served as pastor and chaplain. He now lives in Gentry, Arkansas, United States.



Graceful retirement

Retirement is a forbidden word for those who say, "I'll be a pastor until the day I die." For others, retirement cannot come too soon; they are more than ready to escape the pressures and expectations that so often robbed them of sleep. Some retired pastors resemble ships drifting; they have no sense of purpose. A few hang around large churches, ready (should they be asked) to fill the pulpit.

Graceful retirement looks different for every pastor. The view from this retiree's perspective will, I hope, erase a few negative thoughts about retirement.

Give it 100 percent

Work, especially as a pastor, deserves your best efforts. "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might" (Eccles. 9:10, NASB). Drifting through employment sets you up for drifting through retirement.

A hospital chaplain once said, "I'd begin a new program for the community, but I'm three years from retirement. It is a little late to start something new." Three years, without innovation and creativity, could well pave the way for a dull and purposeless retirement.

Long-distance runners would never think of slackening their pace during the last lap of a race. They do their best until after the finish line. A pastor would be wise to be fully engaged in his or her work as retirement nears as well.

Put family first

Pastors are not called to trample over their families in order to save

the lost in the community. Family is the first and most important mission. Neglect family before retirement and you may spend retirement devoid of family intimacy. Memories of family togetherness during employment years enrich the years of retirement. Looking at family photographs—without seeing yourself in many pictures—will not be good in your retirement, that's for sure.

Develop other interests outside of work

The importance of the pastor developing other interests outside of work cannot be overestimated. Take time to leave the study and church committees. Every pastor needs to take a break from normal work activities. These interests may carry over into retirement, making those years more enjoyable. Avocations developed before retirement often blossom afterward. One retired pastor restores antique tractors. He is often seen driving a noisy relic down the road, his floppy hat and ear protectors defying anyone to call him a preacher. A revered evangelist accomplished a long wished for motorcycle trek along the west coast of his country. School children are fascinated by the stories of this long-time missionary. She shows them unique items from the land where she served. A college religion teacher putters in his garden and takes his prize-winning produce to a local fair competition. Village children gather around an elderly minister playing musical instruments. Neighborhood children visit the home of a retiree when they do not know how to tune a guitar or

when they want to learn the high notes on their musical instruments.

Retirees who always live in the past make boring company. Developing other interests after retirement accomplishes two things: (1) you are happier and more fulfilled, and (2) you have contact with others, which opens opportunities to be a good influence.

Health clubs and fitness centers sometimes offer memberships at a reduced rate to retirees. Some insurance companies arrange with fitness centers to give memberships to retirees at no cost. One retired pastor enjoys regular exercise routines at a university center. He is challenged to push the limits when a young student races on the treadmill next to him or when a muscle-bound fellow presses more than his body weight. The camaraderie keeps him young.

Make room for new leaders

The pastor of a large institutional church complained about the retired preachers who freely added their opinions about everything from homiletics to exegesis. A veteran pastor has valuable insights that could increase the effectiveness of a current pastor. The wise retiree, however, gives advice only when asked. Learning to give advice, but only when asked, comprises one quality of a pastor who has retired gracefully.

Make way for young men and women in ministry. Shortly before you retire, compile records and pertinent church information that will be useful to your successor. Befriend and encourage them. Gain

their trust. Allow *them* to choose their mentors.

Embrace every day with a purpose

Just as there were no excuses for laziness when you were a pastor, there is no room for laziness in retirement. You can always find a neighbor who needs help in the garden or with the lawn. Volunteering in community improvement projects is an excellent way to make new friends. I met a retiree who repairs cabins and vehicles at a church summer camp. Staying busy is not a problem for those who look for opportunities.

Retirees often say, "I am so busy since I retired. I wonder how I accomplished anything when I was working." This is healthy. Filling your days with activity gives you reason to arise early.

Increase your mental capacity

Do not buy books. Good libraries are built with you in mind. College and university libraries are especially useful. Many libraries dedicate a section to newly published books. Stretch your interests. If you liked history in college, look for new books in the history section. If you want to travel, go to the travel section of the library and plan a trip.

Adult education classes offer a wide range of topics. Auditing classes at a college or university is an excellent way to keep your mind sharp. Be adventuresome. Learn to play a musical instrument. Attend an art class. Visit all the local places of interest.

The lead trombone player of a large symphony orchestra encouraged me to learn to play a trombone. "It is a good way," he said, "to keep your mind alert."

Recognize that the needs are great

A retired pastor sees a mission field everywhere. When she goes

to the market, she talks to other customers. She learns to know shopkeepers by name. One retiree taught a young store clerk how to make pies. Lonely and hurting people need a friend who listens. Being friendly opens the way for others to share their heartaches about a death, divorce, loss of a job, or troubles with a child.

The world becomes the retiree's church. When he or she no longer works mainly within the walls of a church, nothing separates him or her from the larger community. Retirees in my community are involved in community choral groups, mentoring programs for school children, quilting classes, volunteer departments at a local hospital, and home improvement projects. Their friendliness and unselfish service demonstrates a clear testimony to God's grace.

Stay young with the young

Retired pastors have time to take interest in children and young adults. A pastor in Michigan attended an open house for a high school graduate. There, the pastor saw a young man standing at the edge of the tent. He was alone. The pastor introduced himself and asked the young man about his interests. For a half hour the young man talked about his interest in electronics. His vocabulary was full of technical terms, but the pastor listened intently. When the pastor had to leave, the young man said, "Thank you for listening to me. I appreciate the time we've spent together."

Retirees can take young people into their hearts. If you do this, you will come away blessed. The young will offer genuine friendship and add to your understanding of a worldview different than your own.

My story

In retirement, I have found extreme joy in associating with children and young adults. I am the


chaplain for a seventh and eighth grade class in a local elementary school. Once a week I spend fifteen minutes telling stories, demonstrating musical instruments, and sharing life-enriching principles. They asked me to attend outdoor school with them. One girl, who always listened carefully to everything I said, caught up with me as I walked toward the cafeteria. She slipped her arm in mine and asked, "Is it OK if I call

FOR ME,
RETIREMENT
IS JUST THE
BEGINNING OF A
NEW CHAPTER.

you Grandpa?" I knew I had won her heart. When I learned about her broken home, I realized that God had used this old retiree to fill a little space in a somewhat broken life.

Once a month I meet with residents of a home for challenged seniors. Upon early arrival, I give each person time to share joys or sorrows. We sing songs from their era. I tell stories, and we laugh together. I often play instruments like dulcimers, ocarinas, and harmonicas. My heart leaps for joy when a resident afflicted with Alzheimer's disease sings familiar hymns. Frequently I tell them they are part of my family.

For me, retirement is just the beginning of a new chapter. Countless doors open to me. I am able to come alongside of God and participate in what He has already begun in the lives of the young and the old.

Retirement is what you make it. Start planning for it now. 

Tell us what you think about this article. Email MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or write to 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

Nordic Adventist pastors meet for revival

Copenhagen, Denmark—One hundred and fifty workers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Nordic countries of Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, and Finland met for three days of spiritual emphasis, study of the Word of God, and commitment to grow spiritually. They met January 5–7, 2011, in Copenhagen, Denmark. All presentations and discussions, held under the title “Revival and Reformation,” were greatly appreciated by the participants who acknowledged this as the most urgent need of our time.

Pastor Ted Wilson, president of the world church, was one of the main speakers during the meetings. He stressed the importance of revival and reformation coming from a relationship with Jesus Christ. “It is the Cross and what happened at the Cross that makes us want to be with Jesus, and it is when we reflect on the life of Jesus that we are motivated to change,” said Wilson. Pastor Wilson reemphasized the beautiful gift we have in the writings of Ellen G. White that helps us understand the importance of revival and reformation.

Pastor Bertil Wiklander, president of the Trans-European Division (TED), stated in his keynote address that “we have recognized the importance of experiencing a genuine spiritual revival,” and he

continued by saying that this will not happen unless “we become aware of our role that is rooted in the three angels’ messages.”

“Because God has a mission and His mission has a church—us, pastors, and members of the church—my vision is that God and His story will be known in Europe again through the actions of the church,” said **Pastor Janos Kovacs-Biro**, TED Ministerial Association secretary. He continued, “This way Adventism will become a positive, determining factor in Europe.”

Among the other speakers was **Jon Dybdahl**, retired lecturer from Walla Walla University and Andrews University, who brought the concept of revival and reformation right into the hearts of the pastors and taught

If you pastor more than one church—we want to hear from you

Here at the *Ministry* magazine editorial offices, we are planning another issue featuring and recognizing the work of pastors who have more than one church. In order for this issue to be valuable to ministers around the world, we need your participation. You are invited to prepare an article for *Ministry* magazine. Here are some suggested topics you may consider:

- Training lay leaders to effectively work with you
- Designing sermons to meet the needs of different churches
- Addressing family life in a multichurch district with special emphasis on children
- Organizing the evangelistic outreach in a district
- Coordinating boards and committees in a district
- Working with the communities in the district
- Creating a spirit of cooperation among the churches
- Recognizing the needs of the pastor’s spouse and children for continuity as the pastor preaches in a different church each week

If you pastor several churches, you will no doubt have other topics in mind.

NEXT STEPS:

- Email, write, or call and discuss with us the topic or topics you are suggesting.
- Once we have agreed on the specific topic, we will ask you to proceed with the writing.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

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of spirituality and the importance for pastors and leaders finding fresh ways to develop their relationship with the Savior. He presented a variety of ways that suit different people, emphasizing that it was not the specific method, but the reality of spending spiritual time that matters. **Gunnar Peddersen**, retired lecturer from Newbold College, helped the participants understand better possible distortions in our theological understanding. **Daniel Duda**, TED education director, cautioned the pastors not to go back to old baggage when someone speaks of revival and reformation; rather, to return to the Word of God and see it with fresh eyes, to “be naked before God and search for the truth.”

The participants left the meetings committed to renew their spiritual lives. They were inspired by the messages shared by highly qualified speakers, which included genuine and authentic personal life stories. [Miroslav Pujic; Thomas Muller, tedNEWS]


The Great Controversy Project

Ellen White challenged her readers to broadly distribute *The Great Controversy*. We would like to accept this challenge by launching *The Great Controversy Project* (GCP), an exciting opportunity for every Seventh-day Adventist believer to widely spread the good news of God’s plan of redemption. The goal is to ask every member to purchase copies of *The Great Controversy* at specially reduced prices and distribute them like the leaves of autumn.

During 2011, we are challenging every member to read or reread *The Great Controversy*, then during 2012 and 2013 to join in with the global Adventist family and give this precious book to friends, family members, work colleagues, and strangers. It can be given out publicly, personally, anonymously, by mail, or any other

way possible. Each copy will have a nice message in it and provide the reader with an opportunity to read more, take Bible lessons, visit one of our churches, or talk to a person. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we will see souls influenced for good and join God’s last-day movement.

Every church leader at every level in the church can do three things: (1) promote and support this project with their personal and public influence and their resources; (2) creatively use every avenue at their disposal to distribute and actually get out into the highways and hedges hundreds and thousands of copies of *The Great Controversy* in their territories; and (3) pray for revival and reformation, for the power of the Holy Spirit to do something special with this project and in our personal lives.

We are living in the end time and I know God wants to do something special with our efforts. [Delbert Baker, general vice president, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists] 

LETTERS



Continued from page 4 ▶

the fullest sense. If so, why would the symbols of bread and wine need something more, something *we* can do? Their significance is that they show faith in what *Christ* has done quite apart from our supposed humility. Perhaps Jesus was emphasizing an *attitude* of humility rather than an ordinance.

In 1 Corinthians 11:20–34, it seems that the church celebrated bread and wine as a part of their regular fellowship meal. No doubt if they had footwashing prior to the bread and wine it could have signaled for that ceremonial part of

the meal to begin, but there is no mention of it.

Today we are not asked by Jesus to allow Him to literally wash our feet, so it is no longer the test that Peter was confronted with. What He asks us to do is to have the lowly spirit He exhibited when He washed the disciples’ feet.

—Jack Lange, Queensland, Australia

Education as ministry

I agree with many of George R. Knight’s sentiments in “Two Ministries, One Mission” (December 2010). However, I would like to challenge his comment that adult converts who have not attended

Adventist schools do not place a high value on Adventist education.

I currently lecture at an Adventist school of higher education. I have attended government primary and secondary schools and have studied at four different secular universities. I have two daughters—one is entering her twelfth year of Adventist education, the other, her ninth. Our choice to send our daughters to Adventist schools was, in part, influenced by my friend who spoke in glowing terms of the school experience. Leave the generalized excuses behind; rather, let us, instead, harness parents as a school’s best ambassadors.

—Lyn Daff, Australia 



Practice Resurrection: A Conversation on Growing Up in Christ,

by Eugene Peterson, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010.

In his introduction to *Practice Resurrection*, Eugene Peterson is scathing—refreshingly so. The essence of his premise upon which the entire book is founded includes the idea that Christians have taken the biblical metaphor of spiritual

Peterson asserts that the word *worthy* is the huge word of Ephesians, and that to be worthy means to walk in response to the call. “Implicit in each gift,” Peterson says, “is an assignment” (47). There is no getting away from it: if you are resurrected into new life in Christ you must do something with that gift. Moral behavior, while not the way to salvation, is the way of “giving expression to resurrection” (194).

In the course of his exposition on the book of Ephesians,

for Jesus that our relationship *with* Jesus erodes.... We take on a role, a religious role, that gradually obliterates the life of the soul” (190).

Throughout the book of Ephesians, Peterson extracts and delivers afresh God’s plea to us for undivided relationship with Him—not a relationship of forms and rituals but a relationship as real as marriage—both the pleasant and the rocky sides of it.

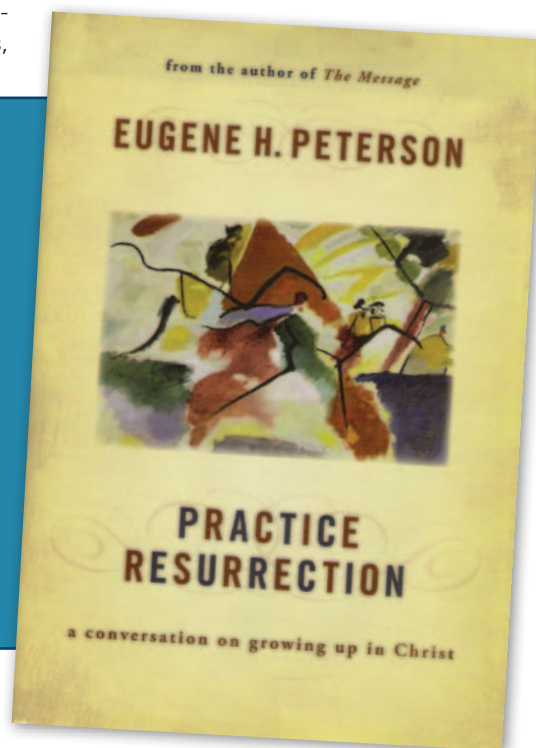
PETERSON’S IS ONE VOICE
AMONG A GROWING
CHOIR OF CHRISTIANS
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CHRISTIANS BACK FROM
LUKEWARMNESS INTO
FERVENT RELATIONSHIP.

birth to ridiculous lengths while effectively ignoring the metaphor of spiritual *growth*. In his words, it is “an outrageous perversion of the metaphor and responsible for an enormous distortion in the Christian imagination of what is involved in living in the kingdom of God” (3).

From this platform Peterson leaps into the book of Ephesians where he both systematically and poetically moves deeply into the apostle’s intent for the book: Christian growth and maturity; and intentional, ongoing spiritual formation into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

Peterson tackles a wide range of subjects concerning the practice of resurrection: the way we worship, the function of good works, the way materialism has made us into “hybrid Christians,” even our preoccupation with serving God instead of growing in a relationship with Him.

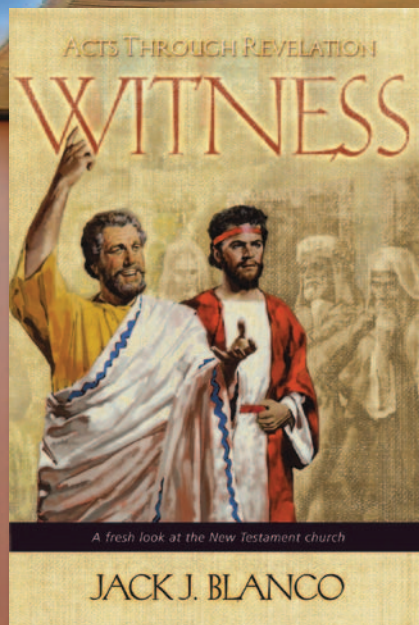
Peterson’s is one voice among a growing choir of Christians who are calling Christians back from lukewarmness into fervent relationship. “Life in the church is dangerous,” he writes. “[We have become] so diligent in learning about and working



Eugene Peterson is a poet, a master of words, and speaks in constant metaphor. I admit that I have difficulty getting through his books in their entirety. I must read with an intention of engaged study rather than relaxing review. I have found, however, that when I take Peterson’s work in bite-sized pieces, a rich reward results every time.

—Reviewed by Jeff Scoggins, pastor, Minnesota Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. 

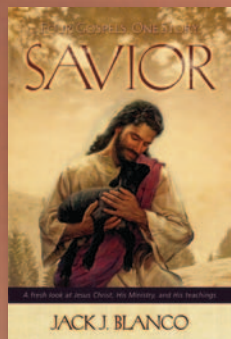
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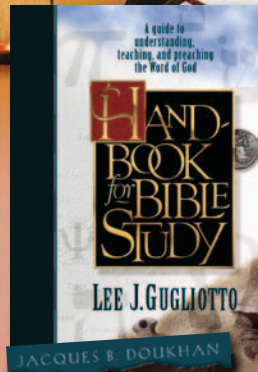


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