

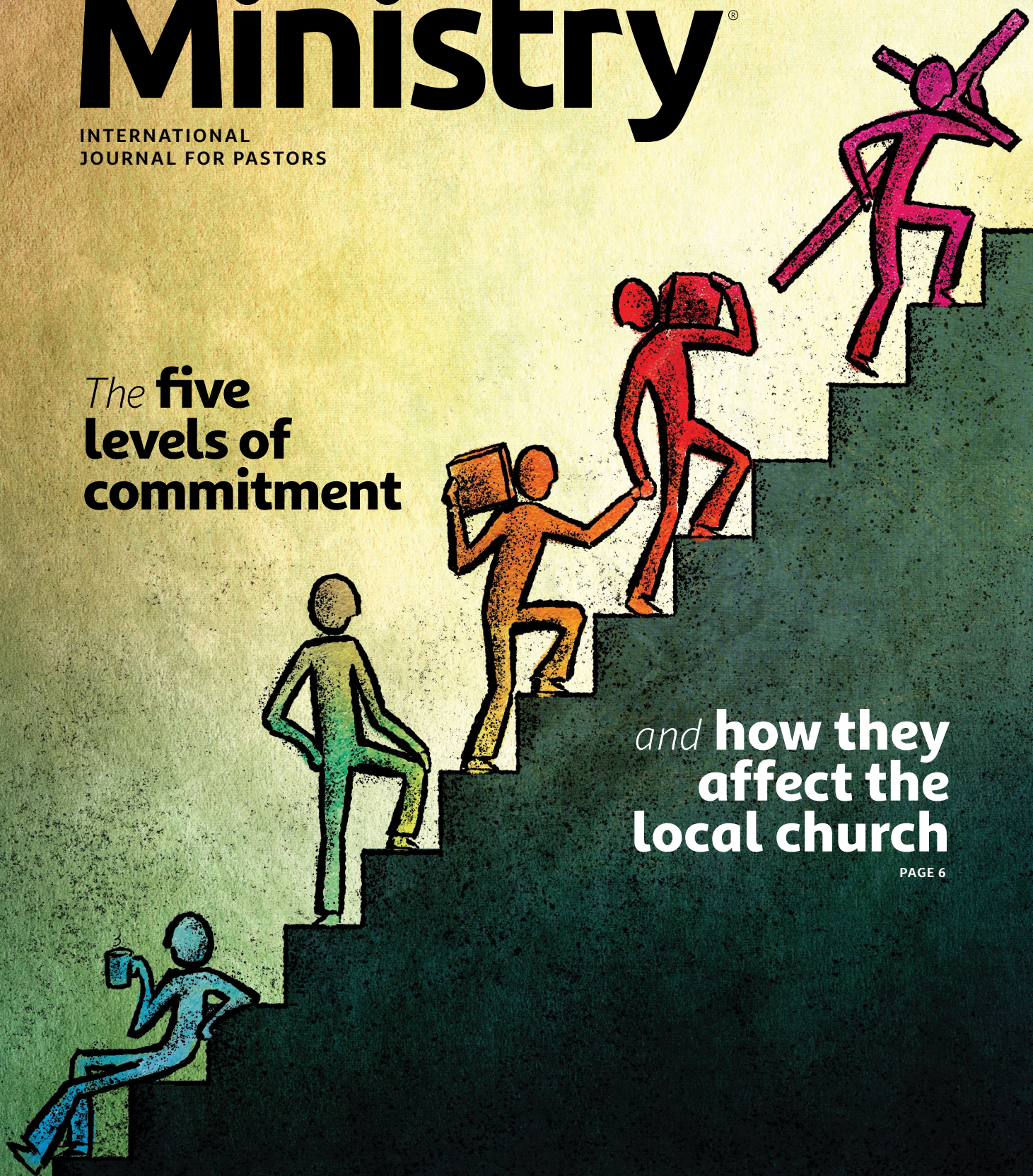
# Ministry<sup>®</sup>

INTERNATIONAL  
JOURNAL FOR PASTORS

*The* **five  
levels of  
commitment**

*and* **how they  
affect the  
local church**

PAGE 6



10

THE CULTURE OF  
ADVENTISM

14

ABRAHAM—COME OUT  
OF HER MY PEOPLE

18

PLAYFUL  
FATHERS



# INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION.

BRING YOUR YOUNG  
ADULTS ON A  
**SHAREHIM TRIP.**

Nº 036428

**NOW  
FREE** FOR PASTORS AND  
SPOUSES, INCLUDING  
FLIGHTS, MEALS,  
LODGING, AND MORE!

- Build long-term friendships with your young adults
- Awaken a passion for sharing the gospel
- Develop tomorrow's ministry leaders

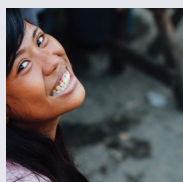
Open to NAD pastors bringing two or more young adults (age 18-35) from their districts

Cost for young adults varies by destination and home conference

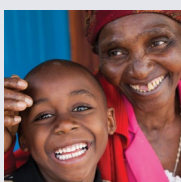


shareHim

**2020 LOCATIONS** Space is limited. Learn more and sign up now at [SHAREHIM.ORG](https://sharehim.org)  
Trips in May, June, July, August, and beyond



PHILIPPINES



KENYA



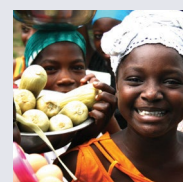
PERU



COLOMBIA



MEXICO



AND MORE...



## The five levels of commitment and how they affect the local church

DIEGO BOQUER

Are we tightly married to the ministry or loosely connected to the call?

10

## The culture of Adventism

AIMEE LEUKERT

While Adventism addresses societal culture, must it also confront its own?

14

## Abraham—Come out of her, My people

ELIZABETH OSTRING

God is still calling His people out of Babylon—even us.

18

## Playful fathers

RICHARD DALY

Fathers, let's redeem the time with our children—while we can.

22

## Sexualized narratives in preaching:

Insights for personal and professional growth

ORVILLE BROWNE

The author alerts us that we may be communicating more than we think.



4 | EDITORIAL



5 | REVIVAL & REFORMATION



9 | LETTERS



17 | PRACTICAL POINTERS



26 | RESOURCES



28 | DATELINE

International Journal for Pastors  
12501 Old Columbia Pike,  
Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600 USA  
www.ministrymagazine.org  
ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org

Vol. 92, No. 2 © 2020

### EDITOR

Pavel Goia

### ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Jeffrey O. Brown

### CONSULTANTS TO EDITOR

John Fowler, Clifford Goldstein,  
Gerald Wheeler

### EDITORIAL SPECIALIST

Sheryl Beck

### FINANCE AND TECHNOLOGY MANAGER

John Feezer IV

### MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Jonathan Walter

### SUBSCRIPTION ASSISTANT

Kathleen Burton

### INTERNATIONAL EDITORS

Chinese—Robert Wong  
French—Bernard Sauvagnat  
Japanese—Masaki Shoji  
Korean—Soon Ki Kang  
Portuguese—Wellington Barbosa  
Russian—Michael Kaminsky  
Spanish (Inter-America)—Saul Ortiz  
Spanish (South America)—Marcos Blanco

### INTERNATIONAL ADVISORS

Ron Clouzet, Michael D. Collins,  
Daniel Devadhas, Carlos Hein, Patrick  
Johnson, Victor Kozakov, Geoffrey G.  
Mbwana, Musa Mitekaro, Passmore  
Mulambo, Daniel Opoku-Boateng,  
Hector Sanchez, Houtman Sinaga,  
Elias Brasil de Souza, Ivan L. Williams,  
Ted N. C. Wilson

### LEGAL ADVISOR

Todd R. McFarland

### ADVERTISING

advertising@ministrymagazine.org

### SUBSCRIPTIONS/ RENEWALS/ADDRESS CHANGES

subscriptions@ministrymagazine.org  
+1 301-680-6511  
+1 301-680-6502 (fax)

### COVER

Aaron Burden / Unsplash

### LAYOUT

316 Creative

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

12 issues: United States US\$32.99;  
Canada and overseas US\$47.00.  
To order: send name, address, and  
payment to Ministry® Subscriptions,  
12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver  
Spring, MD 20904-6600 USA.  
www.ministrymagazine.org/subscribe.

### DIGITAL DELIVERY

Print subscribers can sign  
up for digital delivery at  
www.ministrymagazine.org/digital.

### TO WRITERS

We welcome unsolicited manuscripts.  
Before submitting, review the writers'  
guidelines at  
www.ministrymagazine.org. Please  
send manuscripts via email to  
ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org.

**Ministry  
in Motion**

Host: Anthony Kent  
Cohost: Ivan Williams  
www.MinistryinMotion.tv

Ministry® has been published monthly  
since 1928 by the Ministerial Association,  
General Conference of Seventh-day

Adventists®. Ministry is a peer-reviewed  
journal.

### MINISTERIAL SECRETARY

Jerry N. Page

### ASSOCIATE MINISTERIAL SECRETARIES

Jonas Arrais, Jeffrey O. Brown,  
Robert Costa, Pavel Goia, Anthony  
Kent, Janet Page

Printed by Pacific Press® Pub. Assn.,  
1350 N. Kings Rd., Nampa, ID 83687  
Standard mail postage paid at Nampa,  
Idaho. (ISSN 0026-5314)

Member of Associated Church Press.

Adventist®, Seventh-day Adventist®, and  
Ministry® are the registered trademarks  
of the General Conference Corporation of  
Seventh-day Adventists®.

PRINTED IN THE USA.

**BIBLE CREDITS** Scripture quotations marked KJV are from  
the King James Version. Scripture quotations marked NIV  
are from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®.  
Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used  
by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Scripture  
quotations marked NKJV are taken from the New King James Version®.  
Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission.  
All rights reserved. Please add the NLT credit: Scripture  
quotations marked NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New  
Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007, 2013,  
2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of  
Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188.  
All rights reserved.



**Jeffrey O. Brown, PhD,** is the associate editor of *Ministry*.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

## Every little bit helps

I don't know how it happened. In fact, I have no memory of it. I was just a toddler, but my eldest brother Eric tells me that, some decades ago, the television cameras came to our street in Birmingham, England. Indeed, not just to our street—but to our very house. You see, Norman Manley, the first premier of Jamaica, was concerned about integration and wanted to see an immigrant family who had settled well into the host society. Somehow, our family was chosen.

Mom says we were the only black family on our street, and the neighbors next door didn't speak to us. But when those neighbors heard that the premier of Jamaica was coming, they told their girls, "Go on over to the Brown's house!" So, we grew up with a photograph on our mantelpiece of the premier of Jamaica sitting in our living room, on our sofa.

The person on the premier's lap was little me. The person on my lap was my little sister, Jacynth. Today, my sister and I are both church leaders. And the two girls from next door? We are friends to this day. When a leader shows concern—it helps.

Headquartered in Great Britain, the Trans-European Division recently showed concern to its constituents:

"We recognize unconscious bias, ignorance, prejudice, human fears, resentments, and suspicions have affected the Church, most specifically within the British Union Conference. . . .

"While we cannot re-write history, as leaders of the Trans-European Division, we acknowledge that actions were taken that were not in harmony with God's ideal. We apologize for the failures of the Church in this regard. . . .

"While our apology is from the heart, we recognize that an apology is not enough. We must work vigorously and intentionally to eradicate any traces of prejudice and intolerance that continue to exist."<sup>1</sup>

Thank you, church leaders, for having the courage of your convictions. This is not the first time that leaders in our church have issued an apology.<sup>2</sup> It may not be the last. For some, these apologies are met with skepticism; for others, they are greeted with hope. For some, they evoke tears of pain; for others, they elicit tears of joy. But apologies, accompanied by structural change, are much appreciated.<sup>3</sup>

When the Lake Union Conference issued their apology in 2015, the *Lake Union Herald* editor Gary Burns wrote: "I dug up an old paper I wrote in 1974 for an independent study at what is now Washington Adventist University. As I read through 'The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Racial Equality,' I was surprised when I realized that not much has changed since 1974. We have a long way to go. Maybe this edition of the *Herald* will help."<sup>4</sup>

Agreed. Thank you, church leaders. Every little bit helps.



- 1 For expanded text, see the Dateline section of this issue, page 30. Trans-European Division News, "Trans-European Division Apologizes for Racial Bias in the Past," *Adventist Review*, December 19, 2019, [adventistreview.org/church-news/story14340-trans-european-division-apologizes-for-racial-bias-in-the-past](http://adventistreview.org/church-news/story14340-trans-european-division-apologizes-for-racial-bias-in-the-past).
- 2 Brenda Dickerson, "Iconic Adventist Church Celebrates 125 Years, Apologizes to People of Color," *Adventist Review*, November 19, 2019, [adventistreview.org/church-news/story14243-iconic-adventist-church-celebrates-125-years-apologizes-to-people-of-color](http://adventistreview.org/church-news/story14243-iconic-adventist-church-celebrates-125-years-apologizes-to-people-of-color); Mark A. Kellner, "Europe: German, Austrian Churches Apologize for Holocaust Actions," *Seventh-day Adventist Church News*, August 15, 2005, [news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2005-08-15/europe-german-austrian-churches-apologize-for-holocaust-actions/](http://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2005-08-15/europe-german-austrian-churches-apologize-for-holocaust-actions/); Jiří Moskala and Teresa Reeve, "Listen. Dialogue. Change.," Andrews University, May 15, 2017, [andrews.edu/agenda/44898/](http://andrews.edu/agenda/44898/); Alfred C. McClure, "An Expression of Sorrow and Apology," *Adventist Review*, December 1999, 12, [adventistreview.org/archives/pdf/1548-1999.pdf](http://adventistreview.org/archives/pdf/1548-1999.pdf); Don Livesay, "LUC Apology," June 20, 2015, [lrcsda.com/about/lrc-70th-celebration/](http://lrcsda.com/about/lrc-70th-celebration/).
- 3 See Winsley B. Hector, *Racial Reconciliation and Privilege: The Debate Within the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, Claremont Dissertations of Distinction (Claremont, CA: Claremont Press, 2019).
- 4 Gary Burns, "In This Issue . . .," *Lake Union Herald*, September 2015, [luc.adventist.org/Herald%20Site%20PDFs/Vol107-08.pdf](http://luc.adventist.org/Herald%20Site%20PDFs/Vol107-08.pdf).





# I am a child of the Most High

I have experienced what seem to be minirevivals throughout my life. One such important revival happened soon after my parents' separation. I did not have the best relationship with either of my parents leading up to this point. I had always struggled with acceptance and belonging and often sought acceptance from those outside of my family because I had wanted little to do with the family.

There came the point while studying the Bible, especially going through the lives of David and Jesus, and then comparing them, that I had to confront the issue of acceptance and belonging. Here were two men who were outcasts, not accepted by their own family, persecuted, and yet who showed great strength in the midst of it all and confidence in who they were.

But what about me? I had seen some terrible traits in my parents and promised myself I would never be like that, and now here I was, as an adult, realizing many of the traits I promised myself I would never have.

The Word of God has a way of revealing to us our many shortcomings. In Exodus 34, Moses asked God to show him His glory, and God proclaimed His goodness and mercy to Moses but ended the proclamation with the phrase, "and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children" (v. 7, KJV).

Was God visiting the iniquity of my parents upon me? It was not that He blamed me for what they had done, but it became evident that, unless we let Him intervene, we may well repeat the same mistakes.

How was I to escape this vicious cycle?

The answer came by seeing that both David and Jesus had a heavenly Father, One who does not sin. I needed a new Father as well. Could God really accept me as His son?

I knelt with my face to the ground and asked a simple question: "Lord, would You accept me as Your son?"


It was not my imagination. The word that came back was a voice, and it said loud and clear: "Always."

I began to cry. I was overwhelmed by peace and contentment I had never experienced in my life. I now *belonged* to someone.

The following week was easily one of the worst weeks in a long time, but nothing seemed to phase me. I was far too preoccupied with the joy that I was a child of the Most High God!

What I had learned was a central truth to revival that we are prone to forget. Revival denotes life and thus signifies proximity to the Life-Giver. Too often, when seeking revival, we focus on receiving God's power. Even the Holy Spirit is treated more like a thing rather than a Person when we ask for revival. The power of God is not just some *thing* that is bestowed upon us in order to perform great things, but, rather, the power of God comes as the very *presence* of God, who performs great things.

With that comes the assurance that we belong to Him, and so we rise above difficult situations, our weaknesses, and the things of this world that seek to attack our confidence in our Father.

Revival can come only after a season of complete brokenness, a season of searching for who we are in Him. When God finally sees a heart that He can truly inhabit, then His natural response will be to fill it, not just with the power of the Holy Spirit but with Christ by way of the *presence* of the Holy Spirit. True revival is a new and true relationship with God Himself, who is Life itself. 





# *The* **five levels of commitment** *and how they affect the local church*

In my first three years of ministry, I was committed to preaching—but not to sermon preparation. The result was dozens of half-hearted sermons prepared the night before to be endured by the dear saints. It took a Damascus Road experience to make me realize that if I sincerely wanted God to manifest Himself through my sermons and deeply influence people's lives, I had to be willing to commit far more time and effort than I was willing to.

I then wondered if I, as pastor, would commit in my area of ministry, perhaps others would commit in theirs. I discovered that commitment is infectious, and the results astounded me. Members began committing themselves and the church was on fire. We experienced growth, spiritual and numerical, never before seen in that church. To this day, I remain grateful to those members who loved and encouraged me, in spite of my lack of commitment.

I have identified five levels of commitment and how they affect the local churches. I have discovered that when we introduce these to our members, they not only recognize where they are but are also able to prayerfully decide to advance to the next level. Each level is progressive, beginning at level 1. If you are at level 4, it means you would have acquired the best qualities and overcome the accompanying weaknesses of levels 1, 2, and 3.

I hope the five levels will help you grow personally and will encourage your congregation to increase their levels of commitment.

## **Level 1: The slacker**

At the first level of commitment, we find the slacker. By definition, a slacker is someone who is not doing what he or she is supposed to do. For example, they may say that they are going to do something but either never follow through or do it haphazardly. The slacker always produces mediocrity.

The children's ministry volunteer may have agreed to teach the kids in the Bible class three times a month. But she is always late and never prepared, and nobody can predict when she will show up.

The pastor does not prepare the sermon and goes up to the pulpit to preach a half-hearted message that makes members wonder whether he or she put any effort into it.

The problem with level 1 is not people underperforming in comparison to others. After all, people have different skill levels. Rather, the trouble with level 1 is people underperforming in comparison to themselves. You know you are at level 1 if you always fail to live up to even your own skill set.

At level 1, a lot gets discussed, but it never leads to anything being done. Meetings are long and purposeless. People are angry and frustrated. The worship service takes place without order or any sense of reverence. Members are embarrassed to invite anyone to visit their church. And everything around the church is basically mediocre.

Paul helps us see this issue from a different perspective: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters. . . . It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Col. 3:23, 24, NIV).

Even if members cannot be enthusiastic about serving others, hopefully, they will be concerned about serving the Lord. When we underdeliver and consistently give to the Lord that which is not our very best, we dishonor His name, and the kingdom of God suffers a great loss.

## **Level 2: The responsible**

At the second level of commitment, we find the responsible member. People at this level are reliable, trustworthy, and dependent. Having a strong sense of duty, they are always there on time to complete their responsibilities no matter what



**Diego Boquer, MPAM**, is pastor of the Baltimore White Marsh Seventh-day Adventist Church, Baltimore, Maryland, United States.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

and thus do exactly what they are supposed to do. Responsible members encourage faithfulness around the church.

How different would your church be if people always did what they were expected to? However, as much as the second level of commitment is an ideal starting point, it is by no means the final destination.

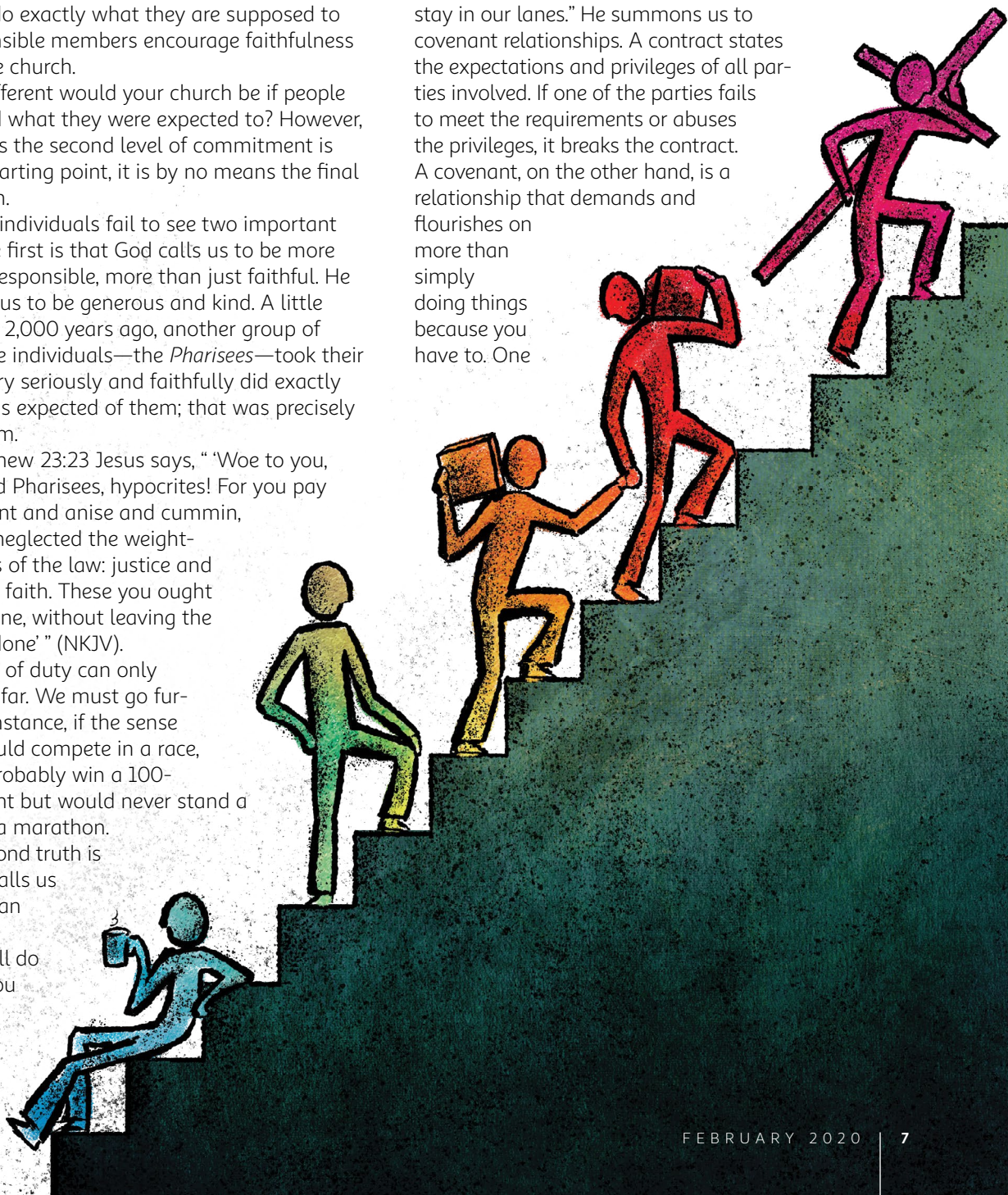
Level 2 individuals fail to see two important truths. The first is that God calls us to be more than just responsible, more than just faithful. He summons us to be generous and kind. A little more than 2,000 years ago, another group of responsible individuals—the *Pharisees*—took their religion very seriously and faithfully did exactly what it was expected of them; that was precisely the problem.

In Matthew 23:23 Jesus says, “‘Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone’ ” (NKJV).

A sense of duty can only take us so far. We must go further! For instance, if the sense of duty could compete in a race, it would probably win a 100-meter sprint but would never stand a chance in a marathon.

The second truth is that God calls us to more than a contract mindset, “I’ll do my part, you do yours, and we both

stay in our lanes.” He summons us to covenant relationships. A contract states the expectations and privileges of all parties involved. If one of the parties fails to meet the requirements or abuses the privileges, it breaks the contract. A covenant, on the other hand, is a relationship that demands and flourishes on more than simply doing things because you have to. One







can argue that what pronounces people married is the signing of an official contract, but what keeps them together is the covenant they made to do things out of love and not just from duty.

When we commit to doing only what others expect of us, we fulfill but do not excel, we please but do not satisfy, and we serve but do not love. And that is why, though you may start at level 2, make sure that you do not stay there.

### Level 3: The generous

At the third level of commitment, we find the generous and kind member. Usually comprising the core of church leaders, they go way beyond what is expected because they have a deep sense of love for God and people. Individuals at level 3 generate excellence in what they do.

The generous not only have the good qualities of level 2 and more but also understand the fundamental gospel principle known as the second-mile attribute. Jesus basically said that He summons us to do and be far more than what others expect.

Although such individuals form the core of your leadership team in church, they are not many. Incredibly generous with a deep sense of teamwork, they are responsible for around 80 percent of what takes place in a congregation but may comprise only about 20 percent of its membership.

Not offended easily, they aim for excellence. Instead of being committed to a ministry per se, they are committed to the Lord. Their motto is, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might" (Eccl. 9:10, NKJV).

Level 3 individuals have plenty of strengths, but they also have a weakness—they may grow weary. Have you ever seen members who worked so hard for so long—always aiming for excellence, having a great sense of teamwork, willing to walk the second mile—but eventually got tired and discouraged due to the lack of support from others?

Well, as much as level 3 is a great place to be, it is paramount that we move on to the next level. God has called us to something even greater than generosity and kindness.

### Level 4: The servant

At the fourth level of commitment, we encounter the servant. If level 3 individuals are hard to find in the local church, level 4 individuals are even more rare. Glowing with love, they are the embodiment of service. Besides possessing all the

good qualities of levels 2 and 3, they understand that they were saved to serve and thus rarely grow weary of doing exactly that. Level 4 individuals are an inspiration.

Such people have taken to heart the words of Jesus in Matthew 20:26: "Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant" (NKJV).

Although not concerned with recognition, they may appreciate it to the glory of God. Instead of asking, "What's in it or me?" they are concerned about what's in it for others. Filled with a deep sense of urgency for the gospel, they want their churches to become missional, and the best way they know how to make it happen is to become the example themselves.

It is amazing to see accomplished professionals cleaning church bathrooms and picking up trash and janitors delivering sermons that bring people to Christ. And they all do it with joy, love, and excellence.

Have you ever met a person who was kind and loving, who was always ready to serve with a big smile and without any hidden agenda? Take the opportunity to tell them that they are an inspiration to you.

### Level 5: The martyr

At the fifth level, we find the martyr, the person who has paid a high price, perhaps even the ultimate one, as a result of their commitment to Christ.

At first, I thought that martyrs were only those who died for the sake of the gospel. We can recall the horrific deaths of the apostles, the thousands of Christians torn to pieces by beasts for the entertainment of others. Perhaps we remember the missionaries who perished at the hands of those whom they tried to save.

On the other hand, as I visited and met with Christians who live in undisclosed Muslim countries, I heard stories of women who suffered constant beatings from their husbands for becoming Christians until eventually they had to flee for their lives—literally. Young men lost the support of their families when they became Christians. All such people have one thing in common. They faced a choice: either abandon their new faith in Jesus so that their lives could return to normal or no longer be part of their family and never return to their previous lifestyle. They all decided on the latter.

Such stories are a wake-up call to many Christians. I sincerely hope we never have to go




to level 5, but if we eventually do, we must ask ourselves a sobering question: Is the love of God worth more than life itself?

## The commitment

Just like Peter, many of us claim that we would die for Jesus if necessary, but we cannot even make it on time for church. We vow that we would preach even if it meant a lifetime in jail, torture, or death, but when asked to serve in a needed position, we reply that we are too busy. Though we might say that we would exchange all our earthly possessions for eternal life with Jesus, we cannot even return an honest tithe and a generous offering. The reality is this: we are kidding ourselves. We cannot jump from level 1 to 4 or 2 to 5. That is why they are called levels. They build upon each other, and the best time to start moving toward level 5 is today.

Finally, as you learn the five levels of commitment, I pray that you will not focus on your brothers and sisters at church but consider yourself. Reflect on your own level of commitment,

*When we commit to doing only what others expect of us, we fulfill but do not excel, we please but do not satisfy, and we serve but do not love.*

ask God to help you move to the next stage, and plead with Him to keep you growing no matter what. Jesus committed Himself entirely to us—can we commit ourselves entirely to Him? 



## LETTERS

I just finished reading Bob Pickle's article ("Independent Congregations or Worldwide Organized Church?" *Ministry*, December 2019). O, that there were more balanced, clearheaded articles like this in circulation in Adventism today! I would personally say that in any given subject, those on the left and the right who feel that some issues are worthy to split the church are wrong—and yet so far, they are the ones, in my opinion, who have dominated the Adventist blogosphere, and, to a large extent, the Adventist consciousness.

Personally, I refuse to choose between equity and unity, for I firmly believe we can have both. But to achieve both, it will require consistent education of pastors and members alike on the key topics involved, including topics such as church authority, which Pickle addresses. Keep up the good work with

articles like his! And please, do what you can to promote like-minded articles in other official and unofficial publications, as well. Why should independent news outlets be ceded the publishing high ground when the organized church has formidable resources of its own at its disposal?

—Shane Anderson, senior pastor, New Market Seventh-day Adventist Church, New Market, Virginia, United States.



**Aimee Leukert, PhD**, is an assistant professor at La Sierra University and an assistant director of the Center for Research on K–12 Adventist Education, Loma Linda, California, United States.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

# The culture of Adventism

**W**hile the Adventist denomination is grounded in a strong biblical foundation and well-articulated church doctrines, there is also a *culture* to our church family. This culture makes it possible for you to feel instantly at home in any Adventist church, to casually throw out words like “vespers” and “veggie meat” and be understood, and to find friends all over the world because they know Mrs. Smith who used to attend church with Mrs. Maxwell who used to be your mother’s nursing school professor.

But is there really a common cultural thread that runs through all of our collective Adventist experiences?

There is no question that religious organizations can also function as cultural systems.<sup>1</sup> More than just doctrines, creeds, or other external commitments to a higher Being, religion can serve as a cultural unifier within communities, guiding members’ actions, expressions, and social norms. While studies have been conducted on doctrine, very little research has been done on the *culture* of religion.

Thus, I sought to study Adventism in the United States in this light, recognizing that the principles of this study could be applied globally. I wanted to use Adventist culture as a variable—something that could be quantified, measured, and compared. This idea, however, rested on the concept that there *is* an Adventist culture that is cohesive and consistent, an idea rejected by some who argue that we were too diverse. I, however, remained convinced that a particular Adventist culture spanned the United States and that certain traditions and values crossed geographic lines.

## First Stage

I patterned the first stage of the study after the work of cultural anthropologist William Dressler.<sup>2</sup> Through friends, colleagues, and social media, I collected 61 self-described “active, involved members of an Adventist church” who equally represented the eight unions included in this study: Atlantic (AUC), Columbia (CUC), Lake (LUC), Mid-America (MAUC), North Pacific (NPUC), Pacific (PUC), Southern (SUC), and Southwestern (SWUC).

I met with each union either in person, on the phone, or by videoconference, and gave them the same prompt: Imagine a traditional Seventh-day Adventist that lives according to the prescribed Adventist culture. What behavior or characteristics would you expect to see in this individual? I then asked the participants to list everything that came to mind with the term *Adventist culture*, including their knowledge of the community and not of themselves personally.<sup>3</sup>

Most respondents had an easy time and, as they rattled off traits and characteristics, my notetaking turned into a speed-typing test.

## Vindication

It is difficult to articulate the deep sense of belonging and familiarity that came across in these conversations with complete strangers. Out of this free-listing exercise emerged countless stories of Adventist culture: meeting a future spouse at Bible camp, eating haystack at every vespers,<sup>4</sup> knowing that a list of “Sabbath chores” was waiting when one came home from school on Friday, soaking beans on Thursday so that they could be cooked on Friday morning and ready for Sabbath supper that evening—the list goes on



and on. Though different in detail and context, the stories had many commonalities and shared themes. Faint glimpses of the framework, the underpinnings, the shape of Seventh-day Adventist culture began to emerge ever so slightly from these conversations, and the prospect of defining and quantifying culture started to seem feasible.

After the final interview, I examined all my notes from each respondent for frequency and salience. I felt no small amount of satisfaction as I carefully went down each response because here was my counter to those naysayers. Regardless of where these people lived, were raised, or became a baptized member of the Adventist Church, the data were overwhelmingly similar: There was a core set of responses that, from person to person, was almost identical, and to me—born and raised in the Adventist Church—deeply familiar. This dealt with Sabbath preparation and activity, diet and lifestyle, dress, evangelism, education, and even the propensity to play musical instruments.

Consolidating and reducing the lists of responses based on redundancy and overlap eventually whittled down the total number of statements to 27. Statements included these three beliefs and practices:

- Believes that the body is a temple of God and refrains from eating or drinking harmful substances
- Prepares for and celebrates the beginning of Sabbath on Friday at sundown
- Is almost exclusively immersed in an Adventist community, both personally and professionally

## Second stage

With this list, I then proceeded to the next stage. I procured a snowball sample of 63 individuals—again, all self-described as active, involved members of an Adventist church and equally representing all eight unions. After hearing about the study summary, the respondents were instructed to rank all 27 items, beginning with what would be *most* important to a traditional Seventh-day Adventist in good standing. The purpose of this second step was to assess the degree of agreement, or consensus, among these items that had been identified in the first phase as being key elements in the culture of Adventism.

At this stage, research indicated that, indeed, a shared set of cultural knowledge exists within the population of Seventh-day Adventist church members in the USA. In other words, with this

magical number in hand, the validation of a cultural domain was confirmed.

At the beginning of this journey, I had wanted to *use* Adventist culture as a variable—which meant that I needed some sort of scale with which I could *measure* it. I now had it. The “cultural key” produced from this domain can be held up to any other Seventh-day Adventist church member in the USA to gauge their level of Adventist-ness, so to speak.

Moving forward, I developed a survey that was distributed in the summer of 2018, eventually resulting in over 1,000 responses.

The survey was divided into three main parts—Adventist doctrine (which included questions such as belief in a literal six-day Creation), general religiosity (which included questions such as the number of times a week one participated in a church service or activity), and Adventist culture. The portion on Adventist culture included 14 questions derived from the ranking process. Participants were asked to list the most salient trait/behavior/characteristic of a traditional Seventh-day Adventist down to the least salient.

## Conversation

By far, the most interesting part of my study—beyond the data analyses and chapter write-ups and literature review—were the conversations that I had along the way with varied Adventists. In the busiest part of my data collection stage, I was interviewing anywhere from six to nine people a day. I caught teachers between classes, stay-at-home moms in the wee hours of the morning before their children woke up, business executives after board meetings, and one musician during a short break at a recording gig.

So while the thrust of my research sought to establish a relationship between denominational culture and school choice, I gleaned many takeaways from these conversations that pertained to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

## 1. We are family

We are a very closely connected group of people. One interviewee told me an incredible story that illustrates this best. He recalled that many years ago, he struck up a conversation with men in a New York airport and, after a stilted conversation in broken English, learned that they were stranded with little money and no idea how they were going to get to their end destination: California. He made a snap decision to bring the two travelers home with him, assuring them that

he would do what he could to help. As his new-found guests showered and rested in his home, he rang his pastor. One call led to another, and they soon had the men on their way to a neighboring Adventist church. And so it went—one church member would connect with a fellow Adventist friend in the next city or state over, arrangements would be made, and the two travelers would be graciously welcomed into a new home, with each exchange inching them closer to their destination. The interviewee chuckled as he recalled the situation. “Believe it or not, those two young men made their way across the country, moving from one Adventist home to another.”

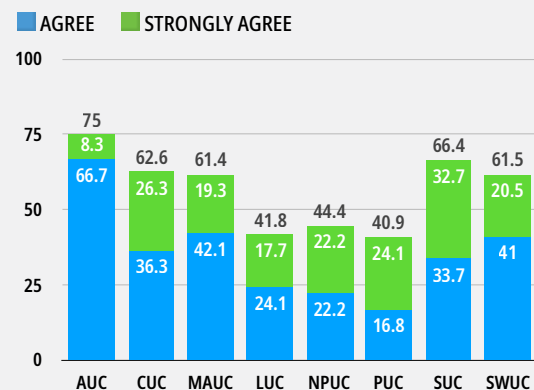
There is something profound, moving, and immensely valuable to belonging to a community of believers who embrace visitors with open arms and homes, who truly make people feel like family.

## 2. We are different

Though part of a family, we are certainly not all the same. The first part of my research set out to establish the similarities Adventists have—this shared culture—but the resulting data also revealed significant differences within the Adventist Church in the United States.

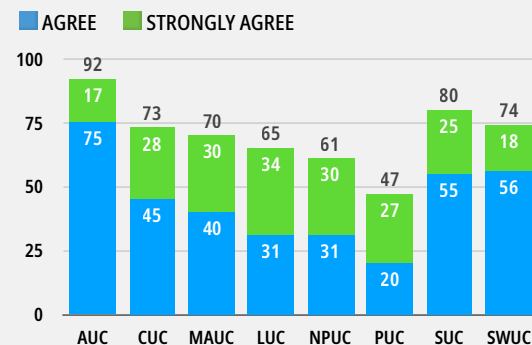
One question, for instance, asked for a response to the statement: “The Seventh-day Adventist Church is God’s true church.” The following figure displays the percentages for those who answered *Strongly Agree* or *Agree*. The data indicate that the Pacific Union Conference (40.9 percent) and Lake Union Conference (41.8 percent) had the lowest percentages of respondents who either agreed or strongly agreed with that statement.

### SDA is God's true church



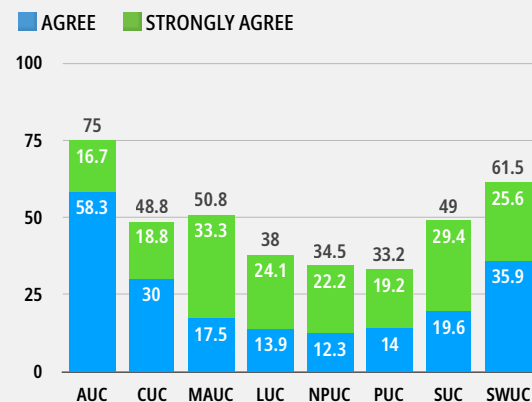
Another area in which Adventists in the USA seem to have a large dissonance in beliefs pertains to the investigative judgment.

### The investigative judgment began in the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary on October 22, 1844



Our name, Seventh-day Adventist, references our church’s belief in the coming advent of Christ. This is arguably one of the most foundational convictions in the church—a view that set apart early Adventists from other Christian denominations in the late 1800s. It is interesting to note how that opinion is held today among Adventists across the unions.

### Jesus Christ will come the second time in our generation



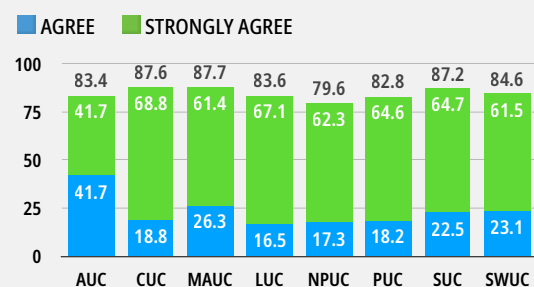
## 3. We are the same

Despite these disparities, however, there are clearly beliefs that do ring true from Maine to South Dakota to California. Adventists in all parts of the USA have similarities that belie gender, age, or regional differences.

To begin with, while we may not all look the same, apparently, many of us have a fairly conservative wardrobe. The following figure demonstrates only an 11.1 percent spread between MAUC (87.7 percent) and NPUC (79.6 percent).

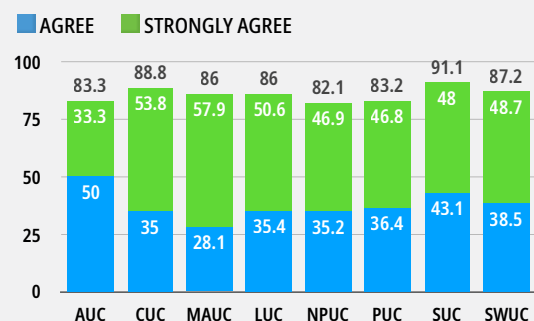


### I tend to dress conservatively



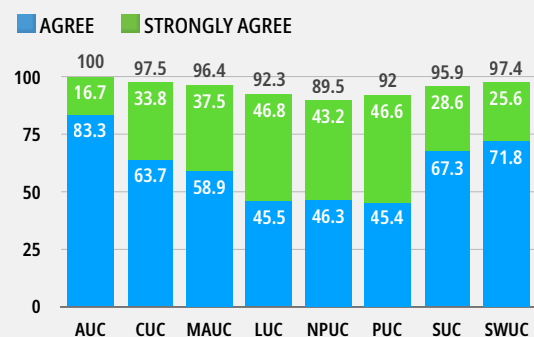
One of the bedrocks of the Adventist Church is its health message. This continues to be a stronghold, as evidenced in the following figure.

### I live healthfully, which includes not eating or drinking harmful things.



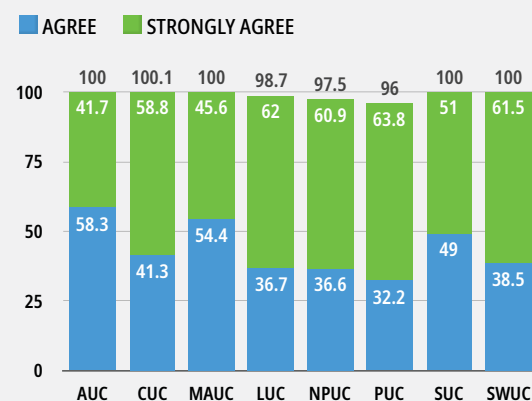
In addition to lifestyle issues, such as dress and diet, Adventists in the USA are also remarkably similar in core foundational ways as well, as seen in the next figure.

### I value our church's distinctive and unique faith



And finally, with only a *four-point* spread, almost all Adventists in America seem to try to live according to biblical principles.

### I live by biblical principles



## A shared culture

As a lifelong member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I was fascinated by the data, which provided empirical evidence to my anecdotal thoughts and feelings about our church. These general principles can be taken and applied around the world. The establishment of a shared culture within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States could not only provide a springboard to countless other studies within our worldwide denomination but also shed some light on the issues that bind us together as a global family and on the issues that are not as relevant in today's context.

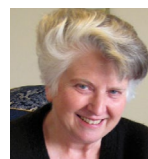
Locally, take some time to study the cultural foundations in your church. How can this information guide you as you choose sermon topics? How can it strengthen the ministry choices for your congregation? Be creative, innovative, and open to new ideas as the Holy Spirit leads.

Globally, given the current religious climate in the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church, it might be a worthwhile endeavor for church administration to take a close look at the *cultural* underpinnings that sustain, motivate, and challenge our community of believers.



- 1 Vassilis Saroglou and Adam B. Cohen, "Psychology of Culture and Religion: Introduction to the JCCP Special Issue," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 42, no. 8 (2011): 1309–1319; Leslie Stevenson, "Religion and Cultural Identity," *Theology* 101, no. 801 (May 1, 1998): 172–179.
- 2 William W. Dressler, *Culture and the Individual: Theory and Method of Cultural Consonance* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017).
- 3 Dressler, *Culture and the Individual*.
- 4 Wikipedia, s.v. "Haystack (food)," last modified January 10, 2020, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haystack\\_\(food\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haystack_(food)).

**Elizabeth Ostring, MB ChB, PhD**, a physician, theologian, and former medical missionary, resides in Helensville, Auckland, New Zealand, and serves as a volunteer pastor for *It Is Written* Oceania and Hope Channel.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

# Abraham—

## Come out of her, My people

**T**he brilliant beauty of the Bible is that the narratives of the Old Testament illuminate the issues of the New. For example, the experiences of Abraham<sup>1</sup> strongly influenced Paul's understanding of grace (Rom. 4; Gal. 3:6–9; 4:21–31) and, thus, Christian theology to this day.

Abraham's call, loaded with seven blessings,<sup>2</sup> is described as the thematic center of the Pentateuch.<sup>3</sup> Luther thought it “one of the most important in all Holy Scripture,”<sup>4</sup> while R. R. Reno claims it is not possible to overemphasize the importance of this call.<sup>5</sup>

Abraham was called to leave his country, kindred, and father's house (Gen. 12:1), which is a call dramatically corresponding to the last-day call to “come out” of Babylon (Rev. 18:4), the end-time successor of Babel. Abraham responded laudably to God's call and physically “came out” of Babel's culture, but it took many years for Babel's culture to come out of him; that is, for him to follow God with total commitment.

Tracing Abraham's struggles to become free from his culture offers valuable insights into what Christians in general, and pastors in particular, need to recognize and overcome in order for them to “come out of” Babylon today. The following thoughts were birthed and learned in the crucible of sorrowful self-examination following the mistakes and pain of my personal experience.

### Them versus us

Abraham's response to his call shows his strong commitment to God compared with that of the comfort-loving, achievement-focused nations from which he came. He recognized the spiritual failure of Babel, but his determination to follow God tended to a “them versus us”

mentality. This approach proved valuable when he joined forces with his Canaanite neighbors and fought the invading kings (note that one was the king of Shinar, the territory of Babel/Babylon). His victory was spectacular, retrieving his nephew Lot and the stolen booty, with notably no mention of any casualties (Gen. 14).

But a citadel approach to Christian living is counterproductive. Abraham's famine-generated Egyptian sojourn (Gen. 12:10–20) and, even more pertinent his encounter with Abimelech, king of the Philistines (Gen. 20:1–18) demonstrate that his polarization of people into “good and bad” was not in accordance with God's view. Abraham was afraid of the people he was living among, believing they did not fear God (v. 11) and tried to save himself by giving his wife a false identity. In Egypt, God plagued the people (Gen. 12:17) until Pharaoh recognized his appropriation of Sarah was not right and expelled Abraham from the country. Years later, when, once again, Abraham presented Sarah falsely, God spectacularly appeared to Abimelech (*not* Abraham) in a dream, and, unbelievably, shockingly, this heathen Philistine king became the outraged prophet of God reproving His pious servant Abraham (Gen. 20:6–13)! Abraham, the man, looked on the outward appearance of Abimelech, but God looks on the hearts of all people (1 Sam. 16:7). The same tragic “them versus us” attitude blinded Jonah's eyes to the miraculous work God was doing with the Ninevites (Jon. 4).

Society is still polarized. The widespread popularity of sporting events strongly emphasizes the raw appeal of opposing sides, of a “them versus us” approach to life. But this is not God's way. Abraham was, as we are, called to be a blessing, to be the instrument through which God could



connect with and bless all the families on earth (Gen. 12:1–3). Paul recognized that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female (Gal. 3:27–29), but importantly, God also made of one blood all the nations of this earth that we might all find Him (Acts 17:26, 27). Just as Abimelech the Philistine appeared to Abraham to be the least likely person to respond to God (but he did), so God’s people cannot, even while giving the most solemn warnings from God, denigrate, depreciate, or defame any person or group of people, religious, cultural, or racial.

### **My (call) versus our (call)**

Abraham clearly understood that he was called of God. But he failed to realize his call also involved the call of his wife, Sarah (Gen. 11:30). Twice, as indicated above, he dangerously risked his wife’s life by hiding her true identity and failing to understand her call. He admitted it was a “kindness” that he asked of Sarah, and she was sufficiently devoted to her husband, and his call, to be willing to make this sacrifice (Gen. 20:12–13). Although Abraham valued his wife and her suggestions (Gen. 16:1–4), he apparently did not think she was capable of being involved in the fulfillment of the prophetic promise. He focused on himself, on the importance of his own call, to the long-term, historical detriment of his family and its relationships. Like Jonah, he reduced his vocation to his own performance.<sup>6</sup>

Like Abraham, Sarah was steeped in her Babel culture of origin. Her words, “perhaps I shall be built [or built up]” by her maid’s bearing children echo the attitude of the Tower of Babel builders.<sup>7</sup> Further, by encouraging Abraham to use human methods to attempt to fulfill the prophecy of God, Sarah may have delayed the fulfillment of the promise by 14 years.<sup>8</sup> Thus, it was not just Abraham who failed to recognize that his call involved Sarah.

What would happen if pastors were to recognize that their calls involved not just themselves but also their spouses and the congregations with which they are called to work and encouraged them to respond to their own God-given calls? In contrast to his father, Isaac responded to his wife’s infertility with prayer and was rewarded with twins (Gen. 25:19–23).

During the Middle Ages, the called *kleros* of God, the clergy, failed to realize that the *laos*, the laity, were equally called by God. What in apostolic times had been the *laos kleros*, the “people called,” became two distinct groups: those called

by God, the clergy, and the ordinary people, the laity.<sup>9</sup> Like Abraham and Sarah, both the clergy and the laity had a serious lack of appreciation for the value of the laity. But this had disastrous results for *both* of them, then and now.

Eugene Peterson has recognized the “Babel” tendency both of congregations to idolize their pastor and of him or her to provide them with, in the fashion of Aaron, golden-calf idols of their market-culture choice. Peterson noted that it is not enough to get rid of the trespasses of the morality of the second tablet of the law, but pastors must be vigilant regarding the easily camouflaged spiritual sins in the first tablet.<sup>10</sup>

A pastor must be true to his or her own calling, while ever leading the congregation to recognize

***Imagine what would happen if pastors helped congregants to understand their calls rather than have congregations merely follow pastoral plans and strategies.***

their own godly vocations. A congregation does not exist to fulfill the pastor’s vocation, but the temptation to think that it does, and practice this error, is ever present. Imagine what would happen if pastors helped congregants to understand their calls rather than have congregations merely follow pastoral plans and strategies. Peterson observes how easy it is to move from managing people’s gifts for the edification of kingdom work to manipulating people’s lives for the augmentation of pastoral ego.<sup>11</sup>

### **My (will) versus Thy (will)**

Abraham’s call was to start a prophetic movement. Through him were all the families of the earth to be blessed (Gen. 12:3). But, all too often, he tried to bring about prophetic fulfillment according to his own understanding.

In the Babel narrative, the people “expressed a naive and total confidence in what human achievement could effect,”<sup>12</sup> and the aims of the tower builders represent an arrogant usurpation of the rights and prerogatives of God. These people wanted to demonstrate their greatness by a work of their own hands, and behind them lie the claims of the “king of Babylon” who wanted to be like the Most High (Isa. 14:4, 14).<sup>13</sup>

From the human perspective of the prophetic promise, Abraham achieved greatness when he fathered Ishmael. He had fulfilled his call. He pled with God to recognize Ishmael (Gen. 17:18–22), but this God refused to do. The call was to both Abraham and Sarah, and it would be she who would produce the prophetic son. God would not be diverted from His purpose or from the miracle that He planned to perform in the body of the aged and apparently useless-in-childbearing Sarah.

Eventually, with much rejoicing, the prophetic son was born. But there must have remained in Abraham some Babel-like hubris that God needed to deal with. Abraham’s second call, using words reminiscent of His first, “Go! Go!”—is surely one of the most emotionally heartrending passages in all Scripture. It lies at the chiasmic heart of the Genesis narrative.<sup>14</sup> Significantly, this passage contains the first use of the word “love” in Genesis, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love” (Gen. 22:2, NIV).<sup>15</sup> Jacques Doukhan points out that there are significant passages of “silence” in this narrative, which suggest an emptying of all human hubris and total acceptance of God’s plan.<sup>16</sup> Abraham was now willing to give up his deepest human love for God.

When Abraham submitted to divine leading and raised the knife, God revealed the planned substitute: a lamb/ram. Abraham realized that God’s provision was planned all along, that He was indeed Jehovah Jireh, the God who provides, and sees (Gen. 22:14).

## The Lamb/Ram

For Abraham, coming out of Babel was ultimately to abandon human strategies and focus on the Lamb. How much he understood when he began his journey to Moriah, Scripture does not reveal. But that he did have faith in God, and not his own ideas, is clear. He told his servants, “Stay here . . . ; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and *we will come back* to you” (Gen. 22:5, NKJV, emphasis added). He had no plan of his own but trusted that God would somehow preserve his

beloved son. And God’s plan proved to be the Lamb.

God calls pastors and other people out of the place of great human ideas and magnificent human plans. Instead, He asks for total trust in Him, with a focus on the Lamb whom He provided for their salvation. This call is not a self-affirming, polite appeal but a soul-searching, painful walk with God to the place of sacrificing our precious will, our deepest loves, even our cherished church plans for Him. Jesus called His people to leave their careworn existences, focused on human work, human achievement, and human plans, to “ ‘come [out] to Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest’ ” (Matt. 11:28, NKJV).

In these last days, God calls us, as He called Abraham, to come out and be a blessing to all the families of the earth. This can happen only as we wait prayerfully in the upper room and receive His power, the Holy Spirit, who glorifies Jesus the Lamb (John 16:14, 15).



- 1 For simplicity Sarah and Abraham’s full names are used throughout this paper, but it is recognized they did not receive these names from God until later in life.
- 2 U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Part Two: From Noah to Abraham* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1964), 312.
- 3 Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 2001), 208.
- 4 Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis, Chapters 6–14*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. George V. Schick, vol. 2, *Luthers Works* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), 253.
- 5 R. R. Reno, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2010), 139.
- 6 Eugene H. Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 161.
- 7 Thomas L. Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 237.
- 8 Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1994), 13.
- 9 Gordon Preece, “The Threefold Call: The Trinitarian Character of our Every Day Vocations,” in *Faith Goes to Work: Reflections From the Marketplace*, ed. Robert J. Banks (Washington DC: Alban Institute, 1993), 12.
- 10 Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant*, 81.
- 11 Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant*, 181.
- 12 W. J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009), 63.
- 13 C. Westermann, *Genesis 1—11: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1984), 554.
- 14 Elizabeth Ostring, *Be a Blessing: The Theology of Work in the Narrative of Genesis* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016), 142–158.
- 15 JoAnn Davidson, “Eschatology and Genesis 22,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 11, nos. 1–2 (2000): 243.
- 16 Jacques Doukhan, “The Center of the Aqedah: A Study of the Literary Structure of Genesis 22:1–19,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 31, no. 1 (1993): 18–28.





## Confessions of a chaplain: A person's greatest need

**W**hat do most people seek when interacting with you? Some years ago, talk-show host Oprah Winfrey stated that, at the end of the interview, most celebrities wanted to know, “Did you hear me, and did what I say mean anything to you?”<sup>1</sup> It is confirmation and validation that we most seek, the need to be heard and understood.

When I was working as a resident chaplain at the veterans’ hospital in Florida, I visited a young female veteran in the mental-health unit. She was of Christian faith but grew frustrated with God because she felt abandoned by her family after her diagnosis. I prepared a spiritual prescription of joy, comfort, and the usual biblical texts dealing with frustration, with Job serving as the model protagonist. It would be, in my mind, the perfect visit! However, things did not go as planned. As I entered the room, she began to lash out, saying that she was frustrated with God and did not want prayer from anyone right then. I chose to listen and stepped into her world. No Bible texts or special mantras were shared at that moment, but a connection was formed by listening to the confirming voice of the Holy Spirit. As our time together drew to a close, I asked her whether

she would like prayer, and she said yes. I asked her to do the honors and pray. She was shocked. “You want me to pray? *You* are the chaplain here!” Then she smiled and prayed whatever was on her heart.

You can provide confirmation and validation even to people you barely know. I want to share two ways, among many, to minister effectively to those we have just met in life:

*1. Practice reflective listening.* Everyone you encounter is a ministry opportunity! Ask open-ended questions that focus on the person, not on yourself. And then listen without distraction—no fidgeting, looking other places, or glancing at your phone or watch. It is said that we were given two ears and one mouth for a reason. “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1:19, NKJV).

*2. Confirm and affirm.* Allow the person to express his or her authentic feelings, hopes, frustrations, and wishes. Confirm by paraphrasing back to the person what she or he is saying. Then affirm and “esteem” them in the direction that they are trying to go in their life.

In our ministry lives, the confirmation and affirmation of the Holy Spirit are all that we need to continue ministering to whatever vineyard God places us in. Our ministry plans or mission may not be supported by all, but God has already equipped us to participate with Him in meeting a person’s greatest need by giving us a listening ear.



<sup>1</sup> Jeff Haden, “Oprah Winfrey Says Answering 1 Question Lets You Give Anyone You Meet the Most Important Gift of All,” Inc., April 10, 2019, [inc.com/jeff-haden/oprah-winfrey-says-answering-1-question-lets-you-give-anyone-you-meet-most-important-gift-of-all.html](http://inc.com/jeff-haden/oprah-winfrey-says-answering-1-question-lets-you-give-anyone-you-meet-most-important-gift-of-all.html).



# Playful fathers

**M**y wife often said that she had four children in the house. (We have three.)

Becoming a child and frolicking with my children turned out to be one of my best stress releasers. I had permission to do silly things—roll around on the ground, play tag, and make funny sounds. All of this elicited the one thing I often neglected to do—laugh. So, for me, being a playful father was more therapeutic than anything else life had to offer. And the benefits for the child-father relationship were huge.

Today, my boys are all teenagers. Being a playful father requires a different type of playfulness now. But the building blocks of a firm relationship through fun and laughter and doing things together remain etched in their memory. One such memory occurred just last Christmas—visiting a theme park and riding on the roller coasters.

When the boys were younger, I would take them during the summer holidays, but they were too short to ride the roller coasters with me. Now well over the minimum height, they all wanted to go and insisted that I accompany them. “Come on, Dad,” they said. “Or are you afraid, in your old age?” Those words pricked me, so I rose to the challenge. Needless to say, I was all too glad when the ride was over. In the process, I discovered that I had now created a new breed of roller-coaster junkies who insisted that I experience the thrill with them on every ride.





**Richard Daly, DMin**, is communications and media director for the British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Watford, Hertfordshire, England.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

## The positive effects

An article in the *Belfast Telegraph*<sup>1</sup> reports that researchers from Imperial College London, King's College London, and Oxford University examined how fathers interacted with their children and then measured cognitive development. Children whose fathers displayed more withdrawn and depressed behavior when the children were three months old scored lower in brain tests that included recognizing colors and shapes. "The clear message for new fathers here is to get stuck in and play with your baby."<sup>2</sup> Many similar reports almost seem to confirm that playing with your child brings a wealth of future positive results that even far outweigh the present joyful experience.

## The emotional effects

Being a playful father also greatly helps a child's emotional development, a dynamic that, according to researchers Paul Roberts and Bill Moseley, "becomes more pronounced as father-child relationships enter their second and third years. When playing, fathers tend to be more physical with their toddlers—wrestling, playing tag, and so on—while mothers emphasize verbal exchanges and interacting with objects, like toys. In nearly all instances, . . . fathers are much more likely 'to get children worked up, negatively or positively, with fear as well as delight, forcing them to learn to regulate their feelings.'

"In a sense, then, fathers push children to cope with the world outside the mother-child bond. . . .

"First, children learn how to 'read' their father's emotions via his facial expressions, tone of voice, and other nonverbal cues, and respond accordingly. . . .

"Second, children learn how to clearly communicate their own emotions to others,"<sup>3</sup> such as by crying, not responding, or wandering off. "Finally, children learn how to 'listen' to their own emotional state. For instance, a child soon learns that if he becomes too 'worked up' and begins to cry, he may in effect drive his play partner away.

"The consequences of such emotional mastery are far-reaching."<sup>4</sup> Therefore, there are links between the quality of father-child interactions and a child's later development of certain life skills, including an ability to manage frustration, a willingness to explore new things and activities, and persistence in problem solving.

## The social effects

Just as important as learning to regulate the emotional intensity of their interactions is children's ability to develop interactive social communication. Roberts and Moseley maintain that " 'Kids who learn how to decode and encode emotions early on will be better off later when it comes to any social encounter.' "<sup>5</sup>

They have also studied such benefits in the area of sibling relationships, concluding: "The emotion-management 'lessons' learned by children from their fathers during play are later applied in interactions with siblings—and ultimately with people outside the family—and lead to more cooperation and less fighting."<sup>6</sup>

## The negative effects

The researchers found that, stereotypically, "while a mother's more intimate, need-related approach to parenting generally continues to cement her bond with her children, a father's more playful and stimulating style steadily loses its appeal. By the age of eight or nine, a child may already be angry at his father's teasing, or bored or annoyed by his I'm-gonna-gitcha style.

"This discrepancy often becomes quite pronounced as children reach adolescence. Research suggests that preteens and teens of both sexes continue to rely on their mothers for intimacy and needs, and increasingly view her as the favored parent in areas requiring sensitivity and trust. By contrast, . . . the joking, playful style that serves fathers so well during children's first years may begin to alienate teens, giving them the impression that their father doesn't take their thoughts and needs seriously."<sup>7</sup>

"It's hypothesized that fathers' less intimate interactive style may make it easier—although not more pleasant—for them to play the 'heavy.' In any case, adolescents come to see their fathers as the harsher, more distant parent."<sup>8</sup>

"Clearly, the distance between fathers and adolescent children is not solely a result of fathers' playfulness earlier on. A central function of adolescence is a child's gradual movement toward emotional and physical autonomy from both parents."<sup>9</sup>

"Even the most dedicated dads quickly discover that the road to modern fatherhood is strewn with obstacles. . . . Jerrold Lee Shapiro, PhD, professor of psychology at Santa Clara University, says understanding your relationship with your own father is the first step. If not, you're bound to automatically and unconsciously replicate things from your childhood."<sup>10</sup>

### Infuse fun

There is just something special about active play that creates happy, genuine feelings and memories. I have learned that creating fun activities does not require taking children to major events or spending a lot of money. It's the simple things—let them ride on your back,

bounce them on your knee, race with them into stores, sing silly songs together. Take advantage of everyday things that you already do, such as taking your kids to school, eating together, getting them ready for bed, and then imbue them with a bit of creative playfulness. Forget the to-do lists momentarily and add some levity into your otherwise-stressful parenting.

### Quality time

As a multichurch pastor, I constantly had to reevaluate my time. This became more apparent to me one evening when I was out on a pastoral visit. Halfway through the visit, the father asked to be excused, saying that he had to get his children ready for bed and tell them a bedtime story. After that visit, I determined to make significant changes to my pastoral schedule, keeping as many evenings free as possible for my family.

Many fathers assume that as long as they can get a few hours' quality time at the end of the week with their children, it will make up for the absent hours during the rest of the week. While such longer hours are a welcomed treat, research has shown that shorter but more consistent periods each day with children have more rewarding results. When it comes to the question of whether

## Here are examples of practical play activities to strengthen the bond with your child:

- Blow on each other's bellies.
- Give your child a piggyback or shoulder ride.
- Twirl, spin, or toss them. Such things can all be done anytime, anywhere.
- Help them do a handstand, headstand, cartwheel, or somersault.
- Pretend to be a horse (or another animal) and let your child ride on your back.
- Have a race! *Don't* let them win every time.
- Climb trees together.
- Roll down hills.
- Go sledding.
- Throw them up into the air and catch them
- Play in the rain and jump in puddles.
- Play with a Hula-Hoop or jump rope.
- Play some tennis, basketball, football, soccer, dodgeball, or volleyball.
- Throw around a Frisbee.



quality or quantity time is better, then both would be just as important.

Too often today, we have not only distant fathers but also single mothers having to raise children with little or no fatherly support. Fathers who have no other option than to be a father outside the child's home need a different approach to becoming that playful father. What's just as important for children when playful activities are limited is knowing their father is present in their lives whether through special days out or communicating through the many avenues of today's technology. The child's mind registers such efforts to reach out as significant acts of love and care.

A study published by The Academy of Management Perspectives in 2015 suggested that working fathers who spend more time with their children will have greater levels of job satisfaction than those who don't. The report went on to say that men who pay attention to their families will become less focused on their work but not to the detriment of their careers.<sup>11</sup> In contrast, significant evidence indicates that the children of fatherless homes are more likely to have disciplinary issues in later life.

A study published in 2006 stated that "even from birth, children who have an involved father are more likely to be emotionally secure, be confident to explore their surroundings, and, as they grow older, have better social connections with peers. These children are also less likely to get into trouble at home, school, or in the neighborhood."<sup>12</sup> Fathers who find themselves separated from their children, therefore, can still have a positive influence when they make efforts to stay involved with the child and make good use of the time that is spent with them.

## Engaging play

How can fathers still engage and play with teenage children caught up in a whole new world of entertainment void of any father necessity? One easy answer is simply to join them. One day my 14-year-old son was playing FIFA football. When I asked whether I could play against him, he greeted me with a joyful smile as if to say, "You are welcome to come into my world." I sensed excitement from my son just in his knowing that I had made an attempt to enter his realm and have a taste of what he finds captivating. Needless to say, I got thrashed, which gave him great pleasure. But for 15 minutes, we were playing together and talking, which was a prized opportunity.

Getting into the world of our teenagers means understanding what things they enjoy doing. Your attempts to understand create a sense of appreciation and gratefulness. Though their peers and other interests may override the influence they received from us when younger, keeping a measured pace with them and not dropping back too far is the key. While the type of play may now be different, building a strong relationship with your teenager involves nothing more than being there.

## Values transmission

Christ's willingness to make time for children, despite His busy schedule of teaching and reaching out to the sick and outcast, is a perfect example for us fathers. He not only reinforced the importance of children in the spectrum of God's kingdom but also set a valuable lesson of what ought to be just as much a priority for fathers today, despite the pressures of time and demands of life.

Staying connected with your teenager will open new doors of fun activities that could range from going out for fast-food meals together, attending a sporting event, or, dare I say, riding the biggest roller coasters. They are the imprints of fun activities that will remain with your growing child and shape how your teenager will transfer those practices—when it's their turn.



1 Ella Pickover, "Playful Dads 'Have Babies Who Grow to Be Brainier,'" *Belfast Telegraph*, May 10, 2017, [belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/playful-dads-have-babies-who-grow-to-be-brainier-35698415.html](http://belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/playful-dads-have-babies-who-grow-to-be-brainier-35698415.html).

2 Pickover, "Playful Dads."

3 Paul Roberts and Bill Moseley, "Father's Time: Understanding the Challenges of Fatherhood," *Psychology Today*, May 1, 1996, [psychologytoday.com/gb/articles/199605/fathers-time](http://psychologytoday.com/gb/articles/199605/fathers-time).

4 Roberts and Moseley, "Father's Time."

5 Roberts and Moseley, "Father's Time."

6 Roberts and Moseley, "Father's Time."

7 Roberts and Moseley, "Father's Time."

8 Roberts and Moseley, "Father's Time."

9 Roberts and Moseley, "Father's Time."

10 Roberts and Moseley, "Father's Time."

11 Nedune, "Seven Reasons Why It's Essential Children Spend Time With Their Fathers," *Nairaland Forum*, January 14, 2016, [nairaland.com/2864985/seven-reasons-why-essential-children](http://nairaland.com/2864985/seven-reasons-why-essential-children).

12 Jeffrey Rosenberg and W. Bradford Wilcox, *The Importance of Fathers in the Healthy Development of Children*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006), 12, [childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/fatherhood.pdf](http://childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/fatherhood.pdf).

# Sexualized narratives in preaching:

Insights for personal and professional growth

I was listening to a preacher, who was single, speak about Creation. He described the Genesis 2 account of the forming of Adam and Eve.

It was a mouthwatering and romantically explicit description of Adam's first encounter with Eve and a sexualized picture painted of the couple coming together to fulfill the one-flesh command of their Creator. The retelling of the story of Adam and Eve and the gendered reactions from various congregants heightened my interest in the power of sexualized narrative in preaching and its effects on the spiritual and sexual health of congregations.

For centuries, Christianity has often downplayed or ignored human sexuality altogether as something negative or sin-related. Yet there is no doubt that “God invented sex” and that repressing sexual feelings from personal, pastoral, or congregational consideration automatically creates blind spots in pastoral caregiving. Even a superficial reader would acknowledge that sexualized narratives are unapologetically recounted and weaved through the Scriptures.

The issue under consideration here is not *if*, but *when* and *how* preachers will use sexualized narratives from the Bible, their personal stories, or stories of others.

## Awareness of sexual dynamics in congregations and congregants

Sexual dynamics that permeate congregations consist of acceptable and unacceptable sexual expressions. Acceptable expressions may be seen in the form of smiles, waves, or compliments. Unacceptable expressions may involve involuntary and prolonged handshakes and hugs, unsolicited and repeated touching, and unwelcome and intimate conversations. These unacceptable expressions are not only unhealthy but also border on sexual harassment for many.

Congregational life, however, may include intimacies of an even more direct and sexually

explicit nature, such as sexting (sending sexually explicit pictures or messages) and online meetings while congregants are involved in worship.

## Effects of sexuality on narrative preaching

The minister is at the center of congregational life and plays a pivotal role in modeling, fostering, and managing these dynamics. John McClure states, “Preaching can express—through embodiment, performance, voice, manner, and theme—genuine care for persons as sexual beings.”<sup>2</sup>

Although preaching can be viewed as a mysterious intermingling of the divine and the human and as a conduit for divine expressions or messages, sexualized narratives may be unconsciously mediated as a reflection of the preacher's personal life. This may be seen as the preacher chooses subject matter; engages in personal, spontaneous illustration; and paints dramatic or explicit pictures with words. Word selection, visual aids, or body language have the ability to direct attention toward or away from the preacher. Some sermons may even be intentionally erotic.

One preacher's sermon, replete with hand motions and sexually charged words, appeared to titillate some congregants while offending others, particularly victim-survivors of sexual assaults or rapes. Another sermon, located online, included clothing removal to illustrate stripping away sin. Female congregants were seen getting up from their seats in order to take pictures.

It is difficult to know whether the “erotic preacher” is unconsciously expressing a personal or vicarious sexual traumatic experience or sexual need from their childhood or adulthood. What is critical for ministers, however, is to explore constantly their own brokenness and neediness, which may surface during their sermons and create bonds to the sexual needs of vulnerable congregants. “If the preaching is of



**Orville Browne, ThD**, is Clinical Pastoral Education supervisor and director of spiritual care and education, Meritus Medical Center, Hagerstown, Maryland, United States.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

an emotional character, it will affect the feelings, but not the heart and conscience. Such preaching results in no lasting good, but it often wins the hearts of the people and calls out their affections for the man who pleases them.”<sup>3</sup> Thus a preacher’s sexual health and balanced life are critical to congregational health. Unfortunately, many preachers function at the mercy of their unconscious, virtually unaware of the effect it has on their pastoral functioning or the recovery of vulnerable and broken listeners.

Don Saliers underscores the importance of this awareness in preachers and the need for them to be models of healthy sexuality in the way they use their power during preaching. He further highlights the need for preachers to expound on the positive spiritual dimensions to “eros and sexuality” while emphasizing human desire that “the God has sexual overtones.” What Saliers calls nuptial images, such as Christ as the Bridegroom and the Christian church as His bride, are clear themes with sensual nuances that can be used as springboards to sermons about healthy sexuality.<sup>4</sup>

### **Insights for personal and professional growth**

*A healthy spiritual life* is imperative for healthy sexuality. Fervent prayer, the study of the Word, and a closer relationship with God are powerful and necessary tools in keeping a healthy sexual life and effective preaching.

Jesus’ words, “‘For whatever is in your heart determines what you say’” (Matt. 12:34, NLT) are highly significant. I believe that when a preacher preaches, the sermon comes from what

***Word selection, visual aids, or body language have the ability to direct attention toward or away from the preacher.***



is overflowing in the preacher’s own heart. I have found that the study of the interrelationship of sexualized narratives in preaching, the sexual dynamics in congregations, and the sexual health of preachers has provided me with insights for my personal and professional growth. It is not unusual to see the preacher’s own brokenness, traumas,

insecurities, hurts, and weaknesses surface during the sermon.

Thus, I utilize sermons as goldmines for self-exploration and self-management. I have a record of illustrations used and the frequency with which I repeat them. It may point to a recurring inner struggle or weakness. I follow three steps to explore insights into self and unconscious sex and gender issues from my sermons:

*Step 1: Adopt an attitude of self-honesty while going through the sermonic process.* I have found that I discern more about myself when I leave no stone unturned in looking at my unmet needs, which may surface in my sermons. Ronald Brushwyler says: "First, *be uncompromisingly honest with yourself.* Besides the sense of call from God to the ministry, personal needs drew you to the ministry. These needs may include acceptance, intimacy, recognition, success, etc. . . . The more you are in touch with what is inside you as a human being, the better prepared you will be to seek out necessary and helpful resources to help you maintain the trust placed in you."<sup>5</sup>

*Step 2: Select a sexual guardian.* A sexual guardian works with the preacher to identify

parts of sermons that cross boundaries or may be misinterpreted or misunderstood by listeners. By encouraging or forcing me to see key blind, weak, and even dumb spots in preaching, my spouse functions effectively in this capacity. A sexual guardian is someone (in my case, my spouse) who helps a preacher through the process of self-honesty while flagging existing or potential emotional involvement or even infatuation as a result of the act of preaching.<sup>6</sup> My spouse's input has spared me from innumerable pitfalls and helped to refine my preaching. It has also nurtured in me growing respect for, and sensitivity to, female ways of seeing the world.

*Step 3: Analyze past and present sermons to unearth intimacy needs that are more effectively dealt with in person rather than in the pulpit.* This analysis places under the microscope self-disclosures of areas of vulnerability: the use of or shift in personal pronouns, such as we, us, you, I, or me; the repeated listing of certain sins; and repeated condemnation of certain people or admiration for others. I remember a preacher at a youth event specifying in his sermon his personal relational issues with women, which were mostly

## DECLINING RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION?

**Adventist mission  
needs growing attention**

Ten years into my ministry as a pastor, I decided to join the Mission Studies program at Friedensau. God's great call made me reconsider how we do ministry in the challenging climate of my country. The Czech Republic is one of the most atheistic countries in the world and religious affiliations are disappearing fast. I am now learning to find new ways for proclaiming the gospel, planting new churches and reviving existing ones in a post-Christian environment. – **Tomáš Dymáček**



**FRIEDENSAU**  
ADVENTIST  
UNIVERSITY

**Master of Theological Studies  
in Germany**

**Two specializations:**

- Mission Studies
- Adventist Studies

**Study mode:**

Full-time or part-time  
Language: English

**More information on the website:**  
[thh-friedensau.de/mts](http://thh-friedensau.de/mts)

**APPLY NOW!**

[thh-friedensau.de](http://thh-friedensau.de)

sexual in nature. When it was time for the appeal, he asked the youth to come forward for prayer. What was interesting about the appeal was that he left the pulpit and came forward for prayer for himself.

## Self-care needs

This story marks an easy transition to the next area of personal growth, which unearths the need for self-care in the form of therapeutic consultation. Having analyzed my sermons, I have caught myself using preaching as a therapeutic tool as I used sexualized narratives of childhood, young adulthood, or current traumatic experiences. Some of these experiences may have emerged vicariously as I was triggered by the traumatic stories of congregants and risked breaches in confidentiality.

## Cathartic preaching

There are two common ways I have experienced preachers signaling their need for some form of therapy or intervention. One I will call “cathartic preaching,” where preachers use sermons to vent feelings of anger, grief, or dissatisfaction with their children, spouse, supervisors, congregation, or leaders. This kind of preaching reverses the role of the preacher from pastoral caregiver to care receiver and needy patient. The congregants then may sense the need to care for preachers in order to help them recover from their maladies.

When family life is included in cathartic expressions from the pulpit, however, some congregants might respond by playing the role of a better spouse or partner to help the preacher through his or her relational struggle. Vulnerable congregants might be traumatized by this role reversal as they may have been required to parent their parents or meet the intimate needs of others against their will. This type of preaching signals the need for preachers to find a safe and nonjudgmental place to unreservedly express their pain.

## Preconversion testimonies

Another common way of using the preaching event as therapy is through sharing personal testimonies in which preachers recount, in intimate detail, “preconversion” experiences years after they accepted the faith. I found myself practicing this kind of preaching early in my ministry. When the details of and descriptions in their testimony are so real and graphic that congregants are caught up in their past experiences, it is more than likely that they are experiencing a form of PTSD.<sup>7</sup>

I interact with many preachers whose dramatic testimonies form integral parts of their sermons. I sense that their recovery, even after “conversion,” is still in its embryonic form. I encourage them to process their trauma and emotional injury in private with a psychotherapist. I have found psychotherapy to be a useful place to deal with my own past and present trauma, along with processing vicarious trauma brought about by listening to the stories of caregivers, vulnerable clients, and patients. As a result, I now share less personal information and confidential matters in the pulpit while still being able to deal with difficult and sensitive subjects in my preaching.

## Healthy relations

It is important for preachers to be aware of the possible repercussions some stories may have on the congregants and how the wider community’s cultural narrative regarding sexuality may affect how the congregation views the sermon. Some narratives used in sermons can be powerful tools to foster sexually healthy congregations while contributing to the emotional, spiritual, and professional growth of preachers.

It is also critical for preachers to use the lessons from sex and gender to examine their past and present sermons as an integral component to self-supervision and self-care and to be open to seeking psychotherapeutic consultation as the need arises. Most importantly, a close, intimate relationship with the Lord will guide all aspects of your life, including the sexual aspect.



- 1 “This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one” (Gen. 2:24, NLT); cf. Charles Wittschiebe, *God Invented Sex* (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Assn., 1974).
- 2 John S. McClure, “Preaching and Sexual Ethics,” in *Professional Sexual Ethics: A Holistic Ministry Approach*, ed. Patricia Beattie Jung and Darryl W. Stephens (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 158.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 301.
- 4 Don E. Saliers, “Public Worship and Human Sexuality,” in Jung and Stephens, *Professional Sexual Ethics*, 173, 174.
- 5 L. Ronald Brushwyler, *Staying in Bounds: Professional Boundaries for Clergy* (Westchester, IL: The Midwest Ministry Development Service, 1996), 2.
- 6 See also the term *transference*, “a situation where the feelings, desires, and expectations of one person are redirected and applied to another person.” “Transference,” GoodTherapy, last updated September 25, 2019, [goodtherapy.org/blog/psychpedia/transference](https://goodtherapy.org/blog/psychpedia/transference).
- 7 See Mark LaFollette, “The Pastor’s PTSD: When You Cannot Bounce Back After the Conflict Is Over,” *Ministry*, January 2016, 6–9. This article falls short of recommending therapy.





## *Adventists and Military Service: Biblical, Historical, and Ethical Perspectives*

edited by Frank M. Hasel, Barna Magyarosi, and Stefan Höschele, Madrid: Editorial Safeliz, 2019.

**A**dventists and Military Service: Biblical, Historical, and Ethical Perspectives, a book of eight essays, is intended by its editors and authors to reflect “on the role of Christ’s followers as *conscientious agents of peace* and as conscientious objectors to all forms of violence” (7). The book is thoroughly documented and annotated so as to qualify as a work of scholarship but is written in styles simple enough to make it accessible to laity and pastors as well as scholars. It is well designed, as intended, to “give guidance to our young people who are increasingly faced with issues about military service” (8).

The two opening essays cover Old and New Testament views on war. The first of these, by Barna Magyarosi, demonstrates that the “holy war” pattern of the Old Testament had only very limited ancient sanction and provides no mandate for nontheocratic Bible-believers in the modern era. The second essay, by Johannes Kovar, shows that Jesus and the writers of the New Testament valorized reconciliatory peacemaking and offered no excuse for military violence. Even Paul’s counsel of subordination to the government in Romans 13 presents the government as an instrument of civil order, not of military action. Indeed, it might also have been noted that Paul presents the role of the government as “bearer of the sword” entirely from the perspective of an outsider and never anticipates any Christian participation in this role.

The approach of these essays reaches outside the traditional Seventh-day Adventist concerns regarding military service. Usually, we have preoccupied ourselves with the issue of not being involved in combat, but, particularly since the First World War, we have often failed to deal extensively with the morality of war itself. Zoltán Szallós-Farkas’s essay (chapter 4) makes a good start on this task, tracing the historical

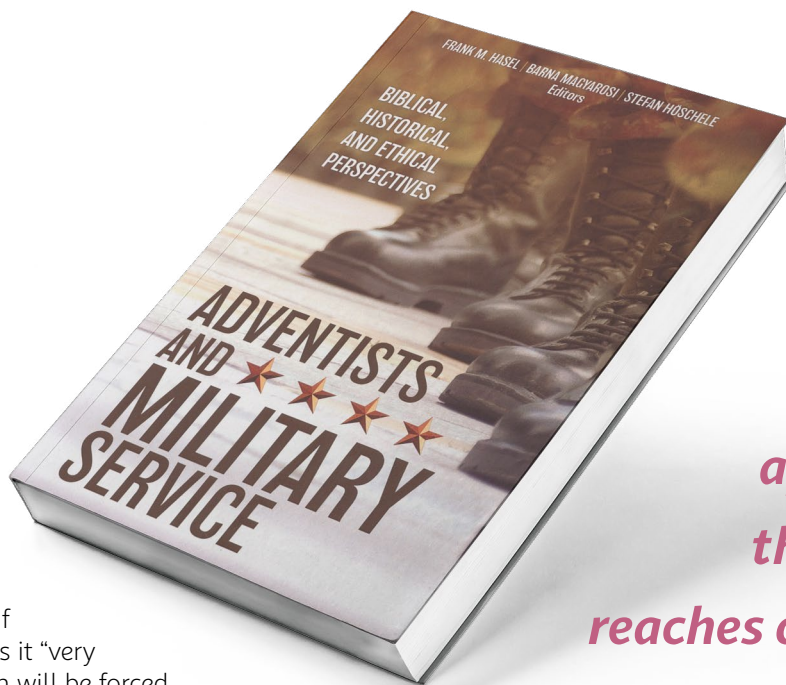
development of Christian attitudes toward war and military service and offering a brief but enlightening explanation of the just war theory in both its Christian and post-Christian development.

Kwabena Donkor’s essay (chapter 3) adds the interesting insight that war in the modern world is often caused (or greatly aggravated) by ethnic tensions. If such sins as racism and ethnicism lie near the basis of modern war (and this seems to have been the case even in antiquity), then Christians cannot keep themselves unspotted from the world merely by refusing combatant service while simultaneously giving tacit encouragement to their governments to persist in war.

The essays by Douglas Morgan (chapter 5) and Dennis Heinz (chapter 6) chronicle the gradual, undeliberate, and almost unconscious drift among Adventists, particularly in America and Europe, from explicit moral objection to war to acquiescence and, ultimately, to cooperation, a shift that seems to have been motivated more by a desire for approval and toleration than by serious theological considerations. Historically, as Szallós-Farkas shows, the general acceptance of the permissibility, legitimacy, and even the duty of military service by Christians is a legacy of Constantinianism, the heresy that, by confusing church and state, places the state as the ultimate moral arbiter. If this is so, then one must ask whether Adventists, by shifting from an initial nonviolent and anti-war position to tolerance and sometimes even to tacit approval of war, have fallen into the same moral decline that led not only from Sabbath to Sunday observance but also from peacemaking to war-making.

The consideration of ethical challenges in military service in Frank Hasel’s essay (chapter 7) forms the hortatory heart of the book. Without

**Donn W. Leatherman, PhD,**  
is a professor emeritus  
of Southern Adventist  
University School of Religion,  
residing in Bathurst, New  
Brunswick, Canada.



stridency or recrimination, Hasel makes it clear that participation in war—especially if this involves combat, but even if it does not—makes it “very likely that a person will be forced to obey orders . . . for reasons that are not entirely good or that perhaps are even clearly out of harmony with God’s word” (153). This pressure becomes even graver when, as is often the case, patriotism is conflated with religion and military action is depicted as a defense of moral values, often by both sides in a conflict.

A final essay (chapter 8), by Andreas Bochmann, deals with the psychological consequences of involvement in military activity and how Christians can assist those who are recovering emotionally and mentally from their participation in war. This important issue has received insufficient attention in the past, particularly among Adventists, who seem to have felt that their noncombatant status somehow insulated them from some of the psychological trauma experienced by others. But in a world where war is all too common, we need to be prepared to help these victims of post-traumatic stress, whether within or outside our church.

There are two gaps that could be filled by further studies on this topic. One, directed inward to the Adventist readership, would be an essay on the views of Ellen G. White on the evils of war and the dangers of militarism, along with her counsels to Adventists on the subject of military service. A second, directed outward to the broader readership, would be a larger

*The  
approach of  
these essays  
reaches outside the  
traditional Seventh-  
day Adventist concerns  
regarding military service.*

consideration of the just war theory since, as has been noted by others, the traditional principles of *jus ad bellam* and *jus in bello* would serve, in all cases, to reduce the violence of combat and, in many cases, to replace war with practical, nonviolent peacemaking.

Those who wish to pursue the issue further will benefit from the three bibliographies: the first, “Official Seventh-day Adventist Statements on Noncombatancy, War, and Peace” (201–204), the second, “Seventh-day Adventist Literature on Peace, War, and Military Service” (205–217), and the third, a “selected bibliography,” “Books Dealing With Peace, War, Military Service, and Nonviolence” (219–225). Just war perspectives are common in recent Christian history and have even begun to influence some twenty-first-century Seventh-day Adventists. The third reference above is understandably skewed toward pacifist and nonviolent perspectives. 📖



## Thousands observe UK funeral of Pastor Andrew Davis

BRACKNELL, BERKSHIRE, ENGLAND

With close to 2,000 in attendance at three venues across the campus of Newbold College of Higher Education, and hundreds more viewing from all parts of the globe, the funeral of **Andrew Davis** was one of the largest ever held in the Trans-European Division. The funeral included a full Pathfinder guard of honor (Davis had recently qualified as a Master Guide) and involved ministerial colleagues from the South England Conference.

Davis (38), a former pastor of the Newbold College Church, spouse of **Natasha** and son of former South England Conference president **Sam**

**Davis** and his wife **Rowena**, succumbed to a short and sudden illness. The tragic loss of a devoted family man, dedicated pastor, and dynamic preacher struck a raw nerve among all acquainted with the humble young minister who had a larger-than-life personality and a great sense of fun. Moments after his death, major social media platforms were ablaze with young people, and older ones, posting comments of shock and grief, while multiple venues opened their doors for an outpouring of corporate mourning.

Buoyed by a vibrant and youthful praise team, the funeral was attended by past and present conference and union presidents and was addressed by **Emmanuel Osei**, president of the South England Conference, **Ian Sweeney**, president of the British Union, and **Raafat Kamal**, president of the Trans-European Division. **Sam Neves** represented

Sam Davis bears son's coffin [Photo: Michael K. Asare, BUC News]







Natasha Davis (spouse) leads processional with Leila (7), Malachi (6), and Zoe (4) [Photo: Michael K. Asare, BUC News]

the General Conference where, during General Conference worship, President **Ted Wilson** had invited **Jeffrey Brown** to pray for the Davis family.

Notable tributes came from his parents;

his sister, **Anthea Barclay**; and his wife, **Natasha**, and their children, all of whom shared memories of the devotion of their loved one.

**Jonathan Burnett**, Davis's ministerial colleague, spoke of Andrew's love for a certain game where losing the key card results in a player picking up two cards to replace it. Under the unction of the Holy Ghost, Burnett declared that the enemy's mistake in removing one of God's own would result in the birthing of more ministers like Andrew. Indeed, when

an appeal was extended to join the ranks of pastoral ministry—two persons responded. [Richard Daly, BUC News; Jeffrey Brown, *Ministry*]





## Trans-European Division apologizes for racial bias in the past

ST. ALBANS, HERTFORDSHIRE, ENGLAND

**F**ollowing a series of consultations and a time of reflection, the Trans-European Division issued the following apology on Monday, December 16, 2019.

“This year marked the 90th anniversary of the formation of the Trans-European Division as one region of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Initially established as the Northern European Division, it has gone through several reconfigurations over the years. Starting as a predominantly Scandinavian and British Isles based unit, it has grown to now encompass countries in central and south-eastern Europe, and over the decades, it has also had a specific mission impact in West Africa, Pakistan, and the Middle East.

“While the heritage of our Division was European, the gift of mission from our early pioneers until the present has led us to grow into a highly multi-cultural and diverse entity, comprised of 22 countries with an even greater multitude of cultures—each rich and to be valued and reflected in our worshipping congregations.

“Yet sadly and all too often, a breadth of diversity does not always lead to a richness of unity, or necessarily of understanding.

“As we have celebrated the milestone of our 90-year history of mission and outreach even through the difficulties of two world wars, regional conflicts, and persecution in the Communist era, we note other parts of our history, parts for which we express sincere regret. We recognize unconscious bias, ignorance, prejudice, human fears, resentments, and suspicions have affected the Church, most specifically within the British Union Conference.

“Commenting on such issues, Ellen White was clear: ‘This grieves the heart of Christ.’ She counseled: ‘We have the same heavenly Father and the same Redeemer, who loved us and gave Himself for us all, without any distinction.’ She then urged: ‘When the love of Christ is cherished in the heart

as it should be . . . there will be no caste, no pride of nationality; no difference will be made because of the color of the skin.’ She concluded: ‘The color of the skin is no criterion as to the value of the soul . . . God has taken us, all classes, all nations, all languages . . . and brought us into His workshop, to be prepared for His temple.’\*

“While we cannot re-write history, as leaders of the Trans-European Division, we acknowledge that actions were taken that were not in harmony with God’s ideal. We apologize for the failures of the Church in this regard.

“As we focus on mission across the rich geographical, cultural, historical, and constantly changing diversity of our Division, we commit to providing a leadership model that will benefit all communities, regardless of background, in exactly the same way that Jesus modeled positive relationships, whether to high-ranking Nicodemus, the despised Samaritan woman, the outcast blind beggar, or Simon the Pharisee. These examples found in a series of Gospel stories lead towards Jesus’s wonderful prayer of unity found in the 17th chapter of the Gospel of John—that we can be one, united together, just as Jesus and the Father are one. That is something that we want to take to heart and seriously desire and strive for.

“While our apology is from the heart, we recognize that an apology is not enough. We must work vigorously and intentionally to eradicate any traces of prejudice and intolerance that continue to exist. Together with our officers, field presidents, and our division executive committee, we are reviewing policies and focusing on our strategic framework for the next five years in order to enhance our leadership and decision-making processes.

“Our prayer as the leadership of the Trans-European Division is that Seventh-day Adventists in this Division may indeed ‘be one,’ embodying the union of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; that we will ‘put on love’ and so be bound ‘together in perfect unity’; as we allow God to mold us in His workshop, regardless of our class, race, gender, nationality, or language; so that we may, together, achieve the mission that Christ has given to us.” [Trans-European Division News]

\* Ellen G. White to W. S. Hyatt, February 15, 1900, Letter 26, 1900.





# 100 DAYS OF PRAYER

**FOR GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION**

March 27 – July 4, 2020

Join praying believers all around the world in pleading for the presence and power of the Holy Spirit as we move through the 2020 General Conference Session and into the future.

For more information and resources visit  
**[REVIVALANDREFORMATION.ORG/100DAYS](https://revivalandreformation.org/100days)**





# Ministry®

1350 N. KINGS ROAD  
NAMPA, ID 83687-3193

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Nonprofit Organization

U.S. Postage

PAID

Nampa, ID

Permit No. 147



Remember the exciting mission stories that captured your imagination as a child?

## They're still happening today!

### From "Witch" to Witness

[awr.org/ranja](http://awr.org/ranja)

Ranja was held captive by the spirits that possessed her . . . until the day she turned on her radio.



### Trading Guns for God

[awr.org/rebels](http://awr.org/rebels)

Why have rebels in the Philippines been laying down their machine guns and picking up Bibles? Watch to find out!



### Taking a Bold Stand

[awr.org/wisam](http://awr.org/wisam)

Wisam's own family tried to stone him for his belief in God, but today he is an Adventist pastor in the Middle East.



These videos are perfect for playing before your worship service!



Get ready to watch videos of modern-day miracles happening around the world through **AWR360° Broadcast to Baptism**.



Adventist World Radio 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904

Let's Connect!

[f awr360](https://www.facebook.com/awr360)

[i awr360](https://www.instagram.com/awr360)

[y awr360](https://www.youtube.com/awr360)

[awr.org/videos](http://awr.org/videos)

[awr.org](http://awr.org)