COWBOYS, STOCKMEN AND ELDERS: SOME COMMON PITFALLS
I've heard many people say that the greatest characteristic of the twenty-first century Adventist Church is not its size but its quality. If we divide our 16 million baptized members into the almost 140,000 Adventist churches and companies in the world today, each congregation would have 114 members. In the United States, the average ratio is 100 members per congregation. This means that, regardless of the great value media puts on large churches, we are still a denomination of small- and medium-sized churches.

Church leaders who serve small congregations may be tempted to downplay the importance of their ministry. They may look at larger churches and feel insignificant. But this is not true! No matter its size, each church is holy ground, a precious place, because Jesus gave His life for those people. Each church is important to God, and He expects His pastors to do their best for the members. All pastors should have a sense of dignity and value. Each church is important to God, and He expects His pastors to do their best for the members. All pastors should have a sense of dignity and value.

In other words, there are no small tasks, and no one should feel insignificant and depreciated in leading a small church. There is a great work to be done, and God wants to use His pastors in a powerful way. Our major concern should not be the size of the church but the healthy characteristics within the church. Here are some pointers that can help you to evaluate your church:

- Good doctrinal foundation. Do the members of your church have a clear understanding of the major Adventist doctrines? Do they receive helpful training which prepares them to defend or witness to their faith?
- A clear vision of mission. Is mission the central purpose of your church? Is this goal being successfully reached? What is the main focus of the departments, musical groups, services, and use of funds? Is your church truly mission-oriented?
- Financially stable. Is the income appropriate for the number of members and their socio-economic status? Are members being instructed regarding the blessings of being faithful stewards?
- A positive image in the community. Has the church developed social and community projects suited to the needs of the community? Is it a friendly church? What do the neighbors think of the church?
- Good self-esteem. Are the members happy to be Christians? Are they proud of their church and their pastor?
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**WHAT IS BRI?**

BRI stands for Biblical Research Institute. In 1943 the General Conference established the Defense Literature Committee to study and answer publications against the church. It issued replies to attacks on the church and dealt with the teachings of off-shoot groups. Then in 1952 the Committee on Biblical Study and Research was appointed to examine church manuscripts prior to publication. In 1969 the two committees were combined into one, the Biblical Research Institute Committee which today has about 40 members from around the world. It consists of theologians/Bible teachers and administrators. The Biblical Research Institute is the office which oversees the work of the Biblical Research Institute Committee.

**1. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MAIN FUNCTIONS OF THE BIBLICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE?**

The different functions of the Biblical Research Institute can be grouped under three main headings: Research, Apologetics, and Service to the church. Among its more specific functions are the following:

A. Theological Research: Identifying areas in which biblical research is needed in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Exploring new areas of truth and studying issues of biblical interpretations. Organizing and conducting research using institute personnel and theologians from the world field as needed.

B. Apologetics: Responding to challenges to biblical doctrines as held and understood by the church and preparing materials as needed by the church in defense of truth. Engaging in dialogue with other religious communities in order to reduce tensions, misunderstanding, and prejudice against the church.

C. Service: Assisting the General Conference administration and the world field in matters of biblical interpretation, doctrines, and church trends. Providing seminars in biblical studies and theology for pastors, Bible teachers, administrators, and other interested workers, and teach intensive courses in theological seminars around the world as requested. Organizing and conducting Bible Conferences.

**2. WHAT RESOURCES DOES BRI PROVIDE FOR OUR WORLDWIDE CHURCH?**

The Institute provides theological resources (books, pamphlets, newsletter, website, papers, CDs, etc.) for the administration and departments of the General Conference and the world church. It identifies areas of doctrinal and theological discussion, seeking to enhance their understanding, and builds commitment to the truths of Scripture.

**3. IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT IS THE BEST WAY FOR LOCAL CHURCH LEADERS TO PROMOTE THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH?**

Church leaders can promote their church best by living out the Adventist faith in their community. This can include organizing the church for missionary outreach, holding various seminars (e.g., on health), making a positive contribution to the needs of the society (food bank, etc.), and by advertising the activities of the church in the community.

**4. CONSIDERING THE TIMES WE LIVE IN, WHAT KIND OF MESSAGES SHOULD BE EMPHASIZED FROM THE PULPIT?**

From our pulpits balanced Christ-centered sermons should be heard that are anchored in Scripture, and that include distinctive Adventist doctrines, such as the Sabbath and our understanding of end-time events, e.g., the three angel’s message. Furthermore, church members need to be instructed on God’s will for their lives.

**5. IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT ARE SOME IMPORTANT QUALIFICATIONS FOR BEING EFFECTIVE CHURCH LEADERS?**

Commitment to Christ and His church, knowledge of the Scriptures, acquaintance with the writings of Ellen White; good interpersonal relation skills; love people and be a team player; balanced judgment; spiritual discernment; organizational skills, etc., the ability to train others, set goals and develop programs to fulfill the mission of the church; as well as having a clear understanding of the message and the mission of the church.

**6. WHAT KIND OF THEOLOGICAL ISSUES IS OUR CHURCH FACING TODAY?**

The large increase in membership in recent years, for which we praise the Lord, has also had a negative side. It has produced a theological pluralism in the church, which we praise the Lord, has also had a negative side. It has produced a theological pluralism in the church, unknown before the 1980s. Whereas prior to 1980, theological issues in the church were mainly confined to specific Adventist issues, e.g., the sanctuary truth, the spirit of prophecy, the remnant, and the nature of Christ, the issues today concern primarily fundamental truths of Christianity – Is God omniscient? Is the Trinity biblical? Was the world created in six days or over millions of years? Did Christ die as our substitute or only as our example? Is the historicist principle of prophetic interpretation still valid? Can we still identify the Roman Catholic Church as Babylon? These are some of the issues we are facing today in addition to specific Adventist questions.

**7. HOW CAN LOCAL CHURCH LEADERS HELP PASTORS OVERCOME THESE CHALLENGES TO OUR DOCTRINES?**

Some of these challenges come from critical independent ministries. Local church leaders, therefore, should not support these ministries, distribute their publications, or invite their representatives to the pulpit. Furthermore, church elders should become familiar with these issues and the church’s positions on these matters so they can help the pastor protect the church members from the inroads of these teachings. An excellent help in this regard is the Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology edited by Raoul Dederen (Review and Herald, 2000) which is available in English and Spanish.

**8. WHAT IS THE BIGGEST TEMPTATION IN PREACHING TODAY?**

One of the greatest temptations for any preacher is to entertain the congregation. Pastors should avoid giving shallow messages, ride hobby horses, or address social and psychological concerns instead of preaching God’s Word.
The Acts of Mind, 6

flict occurs. Berkley further quotes the book con-
or more people pursue goals that are not shared or
istration literally meaning “to fight as a team.” In his book
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THE CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

THE CHURCH ELDER IN FACE OF CONTROVERSY

One of the church elder’s most exhaust-
ing tasks is dealing with controversy. Some elders, however, do not care for nor are scared by polemics. They argue that there is little chance of progress where there is absolute conformity and no interest in improvement.

In truth, a healthy congregation that is united and always working on behalf of lost souls has the spiritual resilience to overcome tensions and conflicts. The leaders of these congregations are not alarmed by the possibility of conflicts that could morph into crises.

The word “conflict” comes from the Latin Litigare, literally meaning “to fight as a team.” In his book Leadership Handbook of Management and Admin-
istration, James D. Berkley explains that when two or more people pursue goals that are not shared or when one person’s will clashes with another’s, con-
ict occurs. Berkley further quotes the book Church Fights, in which Speed Leas and Paul Kittleas differen-
tiate three ways in which conflict is felt:

(1) intrapersonal (restricted to one’s conscience), for example, “Should I wear this or that?”
(2) interpersonal (battle between egos); and
(3) substantive (dispute over accomplishments, values, aims, and beliefs). A specific conflict may be a combination of these types. Such is the case when discussion about something substantive (the argu-
ment between two department leaders over who is “doing” the Christmas program) generates an inter-
personal conflict (someone’s feelings get hurt).

In immature congregations, people are often frus-
trated when their ideas are not accepted. They take this rejection personally, believing that resistance to their ideas is the same as rejecting them as people. Leaders, however, cannot run away from positive, substantive conflicts that emerge during the developmental pro-
cess of a church. For example, church members might ask questions such as these: “What type of evange-
lism program should we have? 30 continuous nights of preaching or three meetings per week?” “What is

the best time for Youth Meetings: Friday night or Sat-
urday afternoon?” “What type of seats should we get
for the sanctuary: chairs or pews?”

To achieve good results as they consider these con-
flicting subjects, church elders must act constructively. Leading a church while avoiding crisis is essential for the success of the church’s mission. In principle, doc-
trinal controversies (related to beliefs) have been the worst kind of controversies. During such crises, elders are wise to obtain advice from the church pastor or from conference leadership.

The Bible describes a case of doctrinal controversy in the apostolic church that started when some Jew-
ish masters began to impose circumcision among new
converts; the story is found in Acts 15. The apostles and
elders who faced this controversy (verses 1, 2) did not postpone searching for a solution, nor did they behave like ostriches who hide their heads in the sand. Because they believed that the local church should be in har-
mony with the church in Jerusalem, they met with their
leaders (verse 6). After hearing several testimonies, they
concluded that the controversy had been started by people “with no authority” to teach the church about this subject (verse 24). The leaders decided to “elect
some men and send them” as speakers to announce the
“agreement” that had been reached (verse 25), and they considered that the final verdict “seemed good to the Holy Spirit” and to themselves (verses 28, 29).

Regarding that council in Jerusalem, Ellen White says, “The entire body of Christians was not called to vote upon the question. The ‘apostles and elders,’ men of influence and judgment, framed and issued the de-
crease, which was thereupon generally accepted by the Christian churches. Not all, however, were pleased with the decision; there was a faction of ambitious and self-
confident preachers who disagreed with it. These men
assumed to engage in the work on their own respon-
sibility. They indulged in much murmuring and fault-
finding, proposing new plans and seeking to pull down the work of the men whom God had ordained to teach the gospel message” (The Acts of the Apostles, 196).

In general, when negative controversy occurs be-
 tween church members, the elder always has two al-
terior motives: to ignore the situation or intervene. The following statements are taken from the
Spirit of Prophecy and may be helpful when you are faced
with a controversial situation:

(1) “As a witness for Christ, John entered into no

controversy, no wearisome contention” (The Acts of
the Apostles, 555).

(2) “But be not too ready to take a controversial
attitude” (Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Work-
ers, 118).

(3) “We should be guarded, that the spirit of con-
 trovery does not control our discussions of the Sab-
 bath school lesson” (Counsels on Sabbath School Work, 27).

(4) “Do not present subjects that will arouse con-
 trovery” (Evangelism, 142).

(5) “Many dwell almost exclusively upon doctrinal
 subjects, while the nature of true piety, experimental
 godliness, receives little attention. Jesus, His love and
grace, His self-denial and self-sacrifice, His meekness
and forbearance, are not brought before the people
as they should be” (Ibid., 163).

(6) “In most of the religious controversies, the
foundation of the trouble is that self is striving for
the supremacy” (Remarks to Ministers and Gospel
Workers, 71).

(7) “Let not controversy arise over trifles” (“Mind,

(8) “None are to be forward or obtrusive, but we
are quietly to live out our religion, with an eye single
to the glory of God. . . Then we shall shine as lights
in the world, without noise or friction” ( Sons and
Daughters of God, 317).

If you lost control of a situation or cannot avoid
or inhibit the propagation of negative controversy, do
not behave like an ostrich or lose hope; rather, pray to
God and ask Him for wisdom and serenity. Arguments are often caused by lack of communication regarding a specific matter. Therefore:

1. Listen, individually, to each person involved in
the controversy. Be careful not to show bias or label people beforehand as being “problematic.” Be attentive to each explanation. Maybe some explanation needs to be
given to the person. Praying with the person and asking
God for illumination are essential for the conversation.

2. Be careful not to accelerate accusations or feel-
ings of rage. Start the conversation on a friendly note, as far as possible from emotional triggers. Try to keep
the conversation on a spiritual level. The objective
should be to reach a satisfactory outcome that is in harmony with church principles and Christian ethics.

3. Don’t rush. Prioritize a list of possible solutions, considering the positive and negative aspects of each.

4. Consult with each party again to discuss pos-
sible solutions. Share the positive and negative con-
sequences of each option. Try to reach a consensus
between both parties, always in a constructive, Chris-
tian atmosphere.

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WHAT IS THE CHURCH’S POSITION ON WOMEN BEING ELECTED AS LOCAL CHURCH ELDERS? DOES THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH HAVE A DOCUMENT WITH INSTRUCTION ABOUT THIS ISSUE?

On October 14, 1984, during Annual Council, the General Conference Committee prepared the following statement about the election and ordination of women as local church elders.

**WOMEN (LOCAL CHURCH) ELDERS - ELECTION AND ORDINATION**


2. To advise each division that it is free to make provision as it may deem necessary for the election and ordination of women as local church elders.

3. To suggest that the following guidelines be used in the selection and ordination of women as local church elders:
   a. The concept should be carefully examined, discussed, and properly accepted at the local church level.
   b. If a church contemplates such an action, the entire matter should be discussed and approved by the conference committee after the conference administration has sought counsel from the union leadership. The negotiation between the church and the conference should occur in advance of the final decision and vote by the local church.
   c. The action to elect and ordain a woman as a local church elder must not be taken unless a clear consensus exists that the ministry of a woman elder is desirable and even essential to the spiritual well-being of the local church family. It should also be the consensus of the church that a woman elder will be respected as a spiritual leader and soul-winner. The church should also express its belief that there are dimensions of spiritual service and counsel which cannot be properly fulfilled by a male elder.
   d. A clear majority of the voting members of the local church must be in favor of the action. The matter should be considered at a specially-called church business meeting. Every church member should be given the opportunity to vote on this issue rather than only the few who might be present at a regular meeting where routine items of business are on the agenda. Although preliminary study could be given to this question by the church board, any final action should be taken by the church in a business meeting.
   e. Whatever the decision of the church, it should result in unifying the members and not be the source of divisiveness or alienation. The body of Christ, the Church, must not be tarnished in any way. In this important issue, as in all things, the name of our Lord and Savior must be exalted.

General Conference Ministerial Association
COWBOYS, STOCKMEN AND ELDERs: Some Common Pitfalls

So you’re an elder! Your high calling to leadership invites some words of advice. Whether your eldership is shiny-new or well-worn, your God-ordained role carries certain dangers. In many ways, the pitfalls you face are common to cowboys and stockmen. The commonality lies in the responsibility taken for and care given to herds of cattle and flocks of sheep.

The magnificent horsemen and women of the high country and plains know that if their horses throws a shoe, they are in trouble. They understand the need for rider and beast if either is in short supply. They are well aware of the paths to avoid when leading their flocks and herds to safe pasture. So whether you’re saddling up for the first time or easing back into the saddle for another year of leading your congregation, avoid these dangers:

DON’T PRETEND YOU’RE THE “MAN FROM SNOWY RIVER.”

Be yourself and ride in your own saddle. Don’t imagine you’re someone you’re not. A common pitfall of leadership is to compare oneself to others. The danger lies in imagining that you possess someone else’s special talents and skills. You can easily fall off your horse if you pretend to be someone else. Stick with your own skill set! The preferred trail is the one on which your God-given gifts and passions guide your way. Don’t pretend to be someone you’re not. “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all . . . for one is given . . . to another . . . to another” (1 Cor. 12:7-11). Paul is describing the principle of unity in diversity. God created you as a unique being, and the church will be blessed.

AVOID RIDING FROM THE REAR OR WAY OUT FRONT.

Balance! Stockmen understand that this is not just gravitational poise but also a sensitive balance between task completion and stock care. Good cowboys know the critical equilibrium between driving the stock forward and gently leading them to the next pasture. Congregational leaders are often trapped when they attempt to drive their church from the rear, shouting and barking orders to get the job done. Equally dangerous are pastoral efforts to lead the congregation from way out front, urging members to follow while leaving them further and further behind.

Sometimes Jesus led the way and encouraged others to follow Him (Matt. 4:19, 20), and sometimes He instructed others to go before Him and promised to follow (Luke 10:1). Jesus accomplished these leadership tasks because He took time to connect with those whom He sought to lead and shepherd. Don’t be detached from your congregation. Maintain your balance and stay connected. People will follow as you lead and go before you as you direct.

DON’T BE A “LONE RANGER.”

There’s something quite poignant about a lone horseman set against a remote landscape. Many identify with the emotion of such an image. Yet traveling alone in vast, untouched terrain can also be dangerous. The reality and responsibility of decision-making make “lone rangers” taboo when it comes to congregational leadership. Whether your pastor has only one congregation or cares for multiple communities, you as an elder should communicate with him regularly. After all, the wilderness is a dangerous place. You don’t want to be out there all alone, bitten by a snake, with no one to help you.

Connect regularly with your pastor every week if possible. You both need to spend quality time together seeking God’s counsel. You need his support just as much as he needs yours. Schedule times for sharing, study, praying, and planning. If a weekly face-to-face meeting is not possible, connect via e-mail or phone. The important thing is to stay in touch.

After his incredible transformation, Saul (Paul) tried to connect with the disciples, but we are told in Acts 9:26-30 that they were afraid of him. Saul understood that it was important to be connected to those to whom He had called him before. Eventually, Barnabas convinced the disciples to accept Saul, and, fortunately for Saul, they did, because they later saved his life.

Saul’s example is one you can’t afford to miss. Don’t be a lone ranger. Stay in touch with your superiors and maintain open lines of communication. It might just be a lifesaver!

DON’T BE SWAYED TO ACCEPT THE SHERIFF’S BADGE.

Disputes are common. Historically speaking, pioneers and first settlers often resolved disputes with bullets or nooses. In many pioneer communities, one person wore the official badge of authority and sometimes became a target by virtue of the badge. In truth, church life is not much different. Disputes arise. People take sides, appeal to authority, and call for justice. As a congregational leader, you are responsible for maintaining a neutral position during congregational disputes. Don’t accept the sheriff’s badge! You will be appealed to for decisive action. You will be called upon to deliver the bullet or administer the noose. Don’t do it! Stay neutral. If action is required, incorporate others in the decision-making process. Above all, don’t take sides. The moment you do, your ability to shepherd is lost. Jesus understood and practiced this principle of leadership. In response to someone calling for arbitration, the Lord replied, “Man, who made me a judge or an arbitrator over you?”

Listen, stay connected, and offer support. Seek counsel. Take the advice of Paul to Timothy: “Avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife” (2 Tim. 2:23). Practice the counsel of Paul to the Galatians: “If a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1).

NEVER LOVE YOUR HORSE MORE THAN YOUR HOME.

Cowboys love riding. Stockmen live for the thrill of the cattle drive. Horsemen dream of sitting astride a galloping steed, the wind in their hair, chasing, capturing, and branding. The adrenaline rush during these moments is intoxicating, addictive, and enthralling. It is no secret that some horsemen love their horses more than they love their homes.

Elders are faced with a similar situation. Pastoral care can be a rush. Nothing compares to the thrill of gathering souls, sharing the gospel, and being used by God to win another soul for heaven. Jesus warned that doing God’s work can become so all-consuming that our families are neglected (Mark 7:13-15).

Make time for your family. Remember that God expects you to shepherd your family just as surely as He wants you to care for others. Neglecting your family for the work of God is sin in its most subtle form.

TRAIN OTHER COWBOYS.

The best stockmen share their skills and knowledge with young, inexperienced cowboys. They know the value of skilled fellow riders. Cowboys have to rely on each other, trust one another, and work together. Failure to do this may result in long days chasing beasts that slipped the line unnecessarily.

When you serve as an elder, you are responsible for sharing what you know. Give freely of the wisdom of your experience. Help your fellow elders become stronger in their own roles. Jesus was master at this, and we should also practice this task of leadership. Calling the
12 disciples together, Jesus gave them “power” and “authority” (Luke 9:1). Never be afraid to empower others; it is what Jesus did.

Take time to mentor younger members into leadership roles. When you invest yourself in those around you, you build leaders for the future. You never know—the next time you face a tight situation, when you need some skill, expertise, and assistance, those in whom you invested may come to your aid. Begin now to teach others how to ride in leadership.

DON’T BE A HIGH-PLAINS DRIFTER.

Cowboys are tough hombres, often loners. Their independence is weathered as they drift from one camp to the next, battling the elements and dangers of the trail. Their hard, crusty exteriors and impenetrable demeanor belie an inner need for companionship, friendship, and support.

Ministry can be lonely if you ride alone. Sharing the journey and the experiences with someone who understands makes the ride more enjoyable. Treasure those individuals with whom you can share your spiritual journey—your spouse, close friends, and others who may know your heart. These relationships involve loyalty, vulnerability, trust, and truthfulness. Paul experienced this kind of relationship with Barnabas (Acts 15:12) and with Silas (Acts 16:25). Don’t travel another day without seeking to develop and cultivate individuals who will ride along with you.

So you’re an elder! Congratulations! You’re a high calling to leadership that may be brand-new or well-worn. Beware of the pitfalls, stay close to Jesus, and as you administer your responsibilities and care for your congregation, may His Spirit lead your journey to pastures green.

“[The Man from Snowy River]” is the title of a poem by revered Australian bush poet Banjo Paterson. The poem tells the story of a horseback pursuit to recapture the colt of a prizewinner. The riders give up the pursuit. But the man from Snowy River, whose horsemanship is unrivalled, spurs his pony down the “terrible descent” to catch the mob.

Colin Renfrey is Personal Ministries and Sabbath School Director, South Queensland Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church, Australia.

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Nurture: Receiving and Holding Converts

There is a definite relationship between the proper receiving of new converts and their remaining active in church fellowship.

What can newcomers expect from the church? This is an extremely important question because it has a direct bearing upon the success of church membership. It is one thing for us to expect much from new converts; it is even more important to be mindful of what we must be and do for new believers.

The responsibility of the church to new believers is clearly explained in the Word of God. In fact, the high point of the Christian charter includes the words “teaching them to observe all things, whatever I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:20). The Great Commission is a command for both evangelism and conservation of church membership. This is what Dr. John A. Broadus had in mind when he made his oft-quoted statement: “Much of the work of discipling has not included that of teaching; and much of the work of teaching has ignored that of discipling.”

In other words, establishing converts goes hand-in-hand with receiving converts.

The words of the apostle Paul present a simple and effective outline of the church’s responsibility to new members. Paul wrote to the Christian flock: “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered a while, make ye perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Peter 5:10). Obeying the call of the gospel, often through much suffering, new converts expect to enjoy the blessings of church fellowship, to become fully established in the household of God, to become strong in faith, and that the church will be their spiritual home. It is the church’s responsibility to see that these expectations are realized. By the new birth, souls enter the church, but that is only the beginning of new life. A moment is enough for life’s beginning, but the growing of a soul should be the holy, happy business of a lifetime. To a large degree, it is the church’s responsibility to bring about this prolonged, happy experience in the things of God.

New converts have a right to expect certain things from the church. First of all, converts expect that their church will have faith in their sincerity. They are beginning new, unfamiliar lives. Their pasts, doubtless known to others, are still fresh in their memories. With fear and trembling, they enter the household of the saints. At the very least, the saints should believe in the sincerity of these newborn children of faith.

At this time, Paul’s admonition should be very carefully heeded: “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not please ourselves. . . . Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God” (Rom. 15:1-7). An influx of new converts necessitates numerous changes and adjustments in church life and procedure. The receiving of new members into the church is not time for the saints to please themselves and say in their hearts, “I can’t be bothered.” Instead, the saints are to remember when they were first received into the church. They must make room for these new members and receive them in the name of Jesus Christ.

New converts can also expect that the church, in which they assume full responsibility of membership, will give
adequate instruction in the meaning of church affiliation. The emphasis here is on instruction, not criticism. New believers are learners. They are entitled to the right kind of instruction. Too often the saints have become set, formal, and inactive in church service and are therefore irked by the earnestness and zeal of new converts. They want to stifle and crush that first love, and in so doing, they deeply wound the newcomers. The attitude of such stereotyped, stilted, and crush those who seek fellowship with the church. The attitude of such stereotyped, stilted, and crush those who seek fellowship with the church.

New converts can expect the church to provide an atmosphere of heartening goodwill and pulsating, heart-warming fellowship. New members should discover that they are among friends. They should be made to feel at home. Close friends, respected superiors, trusted consultants, and dear companions should be found in the church.

Finally, new converts can expect early integration and enthrallment into the life and service of the church. It is a great honor to be a part of and participate in the activities of the church. The part may be small, yet it means much to a new believer to be called upon to serve. In this way, new members become an integral part of the body and feel wanted and needed.

The subject of receiving and holding converts requires serious and constant attention. It is hoped that the few things presented here will serve to stimulate greater concern for those who seek fellowship with God’s people. If followed sincerely and prayerfully, the simple steps described above will result in holding more of our dear people in active, happy fellowship.

H. L. Rudy was the president of the Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventists when he wrote this article.

**EXODUS 16:1-3**

As soon as they hit the highway, the Israelites began to murmur and complain. Many times we act like the children of Israel. Israelites began to murmur and complain. But God chose him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses wasn’t a geography major or an excursionist, but God chose him to lead His people. Often we want to pick our leaders based on their experience or what qualities we see in them. But God looks at the heart. After Israel rejected Saul, the Lord sent Samuel to anoint a king of Israel. Samuel looked at all of Jesus’ sons. But it wasn’t until he saw David that the Lord told him who was to be anointed king. God looks at what’s on the inside. When God chooses a leader for His people, we must trust Him enough to follow the one He has appointed over us. Just as He promised the Israelites a “land flowing with milk and honey,” He also promises us eternal life, a life more abundant, a life without sorrow and pain.

**YOUR EYES ARE ON CANAAN, BUT YOUR MIND IS IN EGYPT!**

Let us allow Christ to anoint our eyes with the heavenly eyesalve that we may see. We do not want to be blind; we want to see everything distinctly. We do not want to be marching one day toward Canaan, and the next day back to Egypt, and the next day toward Canaan, and then back to Egypt again. Day by day we are marching steadily forward.
Standing speaks of the presence of God. Your eyes. Learn from nature and feel the presence of God when we look into the heavens, we see the beauty of the Father. As we study the gospel, sometimes God comes so close in that, would we? Wrong! We often do not have the alertness. An intercessor is not a watchman, but a watchman lifts up his hands to God. Sometimes we think we can leave prayer insufficient; a team is needed. If the disciples had prayed with Jesus at Gethsemane, Peter denied Jesus three times. The fact is, though, that trials, seek to bring every problem and struggle may make us weak. A intercessor pleads on our behalf. The next city on the Israelites’ agenda was Ai. Joshua sent three of his men to Ai to see God's overall purposes so that he might discern just a little of His glory. We can't see everything about God, but this is an aspect of the nearness of God. He is always close to us.

In our worship services, we ought to come together for worship. He promised that He would be with us, saying, “Wherever two or more are gathered in my name, there I will be.” Moral order exists and is a testimony to God formed you and knows you inside and out. He knows what you are thinking. Sometimes God comes so close in moments of weakness that you can almost touch Him. It is like the sea is saying, “Come on in, there is more.” Like it or not, rules and regulations are a crisis or struggle, I am reminded to turn to the Lord. Sometimes we think we can leave prayer insufficient; a team is needed. Israel had a great victory that day. We must use our authority over the devil when we pray. What if it is not only the devil that we are praying against? Are you recording your prayers? Are you passing this praying lifestyle on to the next generation? Much is lost if the disciples ran away as Jesus died on the cross. The only women left were to look after His body. So Aaron and Hur supported Moses, and Joshua supported his hands. As a result of Moses’ prayers, Israel won a great victory that day. We let our consideration be that things can be won through prayer. I. INTERCESSORS MUST PRAY WHILE SOLDIERS FIGHT.

In Exodus 17:9-12, we see that while his spiritual son fought the war, Moses remained behind to pray. What an example of a spiritual father! No wonder Joshua became a great leader; he had a spiritual father who prayed for him. Let us look at what Moses did.

A. He stood. Standing speaks of alertness. An intercessor is not a watchman; an intercessor pleads for or intercedes on behalf of someone else. B. Top of the hill. Standing at the top of the hill gives a person an overview of everything that is going on.

Let us look at what Jesus did. Sometimes we think we can leave prayer insufficient; a team is needed. Peter denied Jesus three times. The fact is, though, that trials, seek to bring every problem and struggle may make us weak. A intercessor pleads on our behalf. The next city on the Israelites’ agenda was Ai. Joshua sent three of his men to Ai to see God's overall purposes so that he might discern just a little of His glory. We can't see everything about God, but this is an aspect of the nearness of God. He is always close to us.

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WHEN THE SITUATION SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE

Exodus 14:1-2, 13-15

I. WE MUST HAVE CONFIDENCE IN GOD (Exod. 14:13, 14).
When seemingly impossible situations arise, we must maintain our confidence in God. Let’s consider three aspects of this principle.

A. Our confidence in God must be firmly extended.
Because our confidence in God is personal, it must be freely given; it cannot be coerced. I learned a long time ago that you cannot make people trust you. You may convince them to say they trust you, but actually trusting you may be another story. You may say you trust and have confidence in God, but only God knows your heart.

In 1 Timothy 4:10, Paul tells Timothy that their trust in God has prepared them for their work and their suffering. Their laboring and suffering for Christ have not forced them to trust Him—just the opposite. We learn to freely rely on God.

B. Our confidence in God must be firmly expressed.
Trust or reliance is not a loosely-applied principle. Any deviation is “not trusting.” We may allow many things that weaken our trust. It is easy to attend church and give testimonies about trust in God for all your needs. It becomes more difficult to trust when you are diagnosed with a terminal illness, have a prodigal in your family, or lose all your material possessions. We need to remember the words of Jesus found in John 16:23. We must trust firmly in Him. One who gives us victory. We learn to proclaim with Paul (1 Cor. 15:57).

Our confidence in God must be fully experienced.
When we rely fully on God, we are proving God in my life. In life, we have experienced and seen in the lives of others that when we have efforts not bring success, in fact, they will make our situations more difficult. Our anxieties and restlessness are the hindrance that God is trying to deal through us. We can have full confidence in God because He is able to help us. Remember Paul’s words in Ephesians 3:20.

In Exodus, Moses told the people, “Fear ye not, stand still, and see.” This was good advice. Moses wanted the people to have confidence in God’s ability. As in those days, we know we can be freely, firmly, and fully have confidence in God for the seemingly impossible situations in our daily lives.

II. WE MUST PRACTICE OBEDIENCE TO GOD (Exod. 14:15).
When God makes His will known, our only option is obedience. Obedience follows immediately.
A. Our obedience should be unwavering (verse 15).
Israel going forward meant walking right into the sea. The lesson here is that God promises to do for us what we never could have done for ourselves. If we truly have confidence in God, unwavering obedience is a natural response. This is the idea the author of Hebrews had in mind when he said, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:22).

James says it like this: “Look to the faith that is in you, do not let it wax cold” (James 1:6).
B. Our obedience should be guided by authority (Exod. 14:21).
The rod of Moses was the symbol of divine authority, power, and discipline. Obedience pointed the way that the people needed to follow. Today the Word of God points us in the direction we are to go. Often people say that God wants them to do this or that. But their decision is often based on emotion, on God’s Holy Word. Our obedience needs to be guided by the authority of the Christian life, the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:14-17).
C. Our obedience should lead to separation (Exod. 14:22-29).
The Israelites moving forward caused separation. They were being separated not only from Pharaoh’s army, they were being separated from their old lives. They were seeing the mighty hand of God at work in their midst. If the Israelites did not move forward, they would have faced Pharaoh’s army, their lives being separated from their old lives. Obedience to the Lord will separate us from sin’s power (Luke 9:62).

III. WE MUST HAVE A PURPOSEFUL EXPERIENCE OF GOD (Exod. 14:14).
The Israelites’ experience with God was real and dynamic. It did not happen by chance. It was God considering God’s leading in this situation.
As in those days, we know we can be freely, firmly, and fully have confidence in God for the seemingly impossible situations in our daily lives.

Can you imagine the scene described in Exodus 14? After the tremendous challenge of escaping from Egypt, Israel faced the Red Sea, with Pharaoh’s army pursuing from behind. Everyone saw the cloud of dust coming. There were no boats to cross the water. For Israel, there was no escape. There was no arsenal to distribute so the people could fight off Pharaoh’s army. Their situation looked impossible. God requires us to keep moving forward. But how do we do this?
GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE - PART 2
UNITY IN DIVERSITY IN CHRIST

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a community of believers from diverse countries, cultures, languages, and ethnic groups. The church sees its mission as taking the everlasting gospel of Jesus to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people (Rev. 14:6). This diversity is a good and necessary thing, indeed, it can be a strength to the body of Christ, just as the diversity of gifts is. However, the expression “unity in diversity,” helpful as it is, does not present a picture of real unity and interpersonal faithfulness to be united, because he was aware that the divisions among them were more a matter of nationalism, politics, and culture than of theology. Furthermore, the divisive bickering in the church was based not on substantive theological diversity but on class and economic status. The diversities within the Corinthian fellowship had become contentious and incompatible with the spirit of Christ. Thus Paul used the “body of Christ” (1 Cor. 12:27) metaphor, finding it helpful in communicating to the Corinthians the concept of unity in diversity in Christ.

It was once a fantastic privilege and blessing for me to pastor a multicultural, multinational, and multiethnic congregation. The church motto was and remains, “Unity in Diversity in Christ. Together in Solidarity, Service, and Sacrifice.” In that congregation I experienced the interplay of diversity of cultures, races, genders, ethnicities, and national origins, and their impact on what the church can and cannot do. From time to time, I was surrounded by controversies in which certain members from different cultural realities and experiences opposed to certain practices in worship and sincerely sought change with which they would be more comfortable. They wanted things to be done as they were “back home.”

My experience in that congregation taught me that helping members from diverse cultures and backgrounds to become respectful and trusting of each other had nothing to do with conversion; rather, it was about developing strategies to create cultural harmony and build a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multicultural congregation. We achieved cultural harmony through brainstorming sessions and seminars on managing and leveraging diversity to achieve bottom-line goals and fulfill our mission: unity in diversity in Christ. Our goal: together in solidarity, service, and sacrifice. In our seminars and brainstorming sessions, we focused on race, customs, traditions, stereotypes, gender equality, world views, and national origins.

The Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy were the two sources of divine revelation that provided the framework for our conversations. Through these interactive initiatives, we triumphed over barriers that were preventing the successful implementation of our mission and vision. We created an inclusive, embracing, respectful, celebrating, and trusting faith community which had an astonishing impact on the wider community.

The education I received from my ministry with that congregation was a tremendous asset to and blessing on my interactions with students as a professor at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. Preparing men and women to live and work in an increasingly diverse and multicultural world is undoubtedly a major challenge facing the Adventist Church today. I learned that constant change means constant challenges for leadership. In this regard I found Paul’s strategy and instruction to be most helpful in my 18 years as pastor and my role as a seminary professor. Our understanding of the biblical teaching of unity in diversity is tied to our understanding of the nature and function of the church. Traditionally, Adventists have tended to work with an organizational or structural definition of unity. Within that definition there is an increasing tendency to interpret diversity as being acceptable only in the light of a unified institutional structure that is one in polity and hierarchy. And a more accurate biblical and theological image of the church is the unity demonstrated in organism rather than in organization.

CHURCH AS AN ORGANISM

When we view the church as an organism, a body or community of believers different in gender, culture, ethnicity, nationality, etc., the question of unity in diversity tends to take on theological and biblical meaning with cultural and sociological implications, rather than the limited institutional implications that often tend to dominate our vision of the church.

We know that as the church moves into the future (and the future is already ahead of schedule), it will have to become more responsive to its broadening environments without sacrificing its essential faith and unity. If the church is seen primarily as an organizational machine, the question of unity in diversity will be threatened or seriously jeopardized. This way of viewing the church will cause us to assume mistakenly that as long as the machine is properly serviced and cared for, it will function in precise and predict-
able ways no matter who issues the directives, where they originate, or to whom they are directed. We will also tend to expect that when a similar “machine” is reproduced, it will possess the same predictable features and respond in almost identical ways in any part of the world.

Organisms are quite different from machines. To influence an organism, you must look into its personal history and take into account the circumstances to which it is exposed. You must reckon with the elements of unpredictability and individuality. You have to be prepared to listen, reason, and develop new strategies for the different environments in which organisms live. If this is done responsibly, the process need not threaten or endanger the essential unity of the body; on the contrary, it will enhance authentic unity. This is consistent not only with the principles of unity in diversity but also with the divine dimension of unity in diversity in Christ, who is the head of the body (Col. 1:18).

This organism paradigm is legitimate and consistent with the diversity of the New Testament images of the church. While Paul refers to the church as a body, he also says of the body of Christ, John speaks of it as a community. Peter describes it as the people of God and the household of faith. All three apostles apply the “body” to the church, or church. These designations are more consistent with the organism paradigm than with the institutional one.

The New Testament genuinely advocates unity in diversity, not only among Christians, in love, and in diversity of forms expressing the variety within the community. This diversity does not threaten the essential unity of the church, nor does it compromise the proclamation of Christ. For example, valuing diversity with inclusion as a mission strategy need not lead to disruption of the church’s unity in places in which it is appropriate. Rather, it may provide the church an opportunity to correlate possible diversity with necessary unity. It will enrich and strengthen fellowship, deepen spirituality, create new possibilities for mission, and multiply the church’s effort to accomplish its task in the world. Embracing the differences inherent in the diverse races, cultures, and ethnic makeup of the world church will enhance the unity of the church if national, cultural, and racial identities are not made to be definitive over and above the makeup of the whole body as it receives its collective identity in Christ. “For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greek, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Cor. 12:13, NIV).

We must acknowledge that, unlike method, mission does not have a single universal pattern. We need to remind ourselves that diversity in Christ that does not threaten the essential unity of the body. The biblical understanding of diversity allows us to engage every legitimate gift God has placed in His church when it comes to gender, race, language, culture, ethnicity, tribe, and nationality. What really holds us together is not unity through polity but our common confession of one God, one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” This oneness is articulated and set forth in what we consider to be the core beliefs of Adventism. The face of Adventism will change with growth, but our essential core teachings must remain constant. Diversity of form is acceptable and should be respected. The degree of diversity required to fulfill our mission will vary from place to place, from situation to situation. The Holy Spirit has not yet exhausted the structural possibilities and forms of ministries possible in the church. The New Testament does not encourage us to think that something could not be done a certain way for the first time. The apostolic church and the Adventist church have done things that Jesus did not do. And this thinking by no means applies only to cultural and ethnic diversity. It also applies to age, gender, and race.

As I review our global diversities, I am led to conclude that the danger lies not in the decision for or against such manifestations of cultural, multilingual, and demographic changes; the danger lies in a structural fundamentalism in which unity is derived through polity, as though polity is almost to be equated with absolute truth. My plea is that we not allow structure to distract us or to sabotage our essential oneness in Christ and His mission.

The beauty of the biblical view of unity in diversity in Christ versus unity through polity is the freedom of God to work through His church in fulfilling His mission in the world. He may add a new step in one place while practice continues unchanged elsewhere, for He takes all facts, including sociological and culture ones, into account.

The crucial question is whether the Church in a particular place and time is willing and bold enough to follow God’s leading. Within the biblical and theological framework of what is common to all churches, the Church must be responsibly open to experimentation and variation or it may fail to follow the promptings of the Spirit Himself.

Historically, within the context of Adventist mission, we have sometimes allowed the church to determine what is new in a particular element. The Church must be responsibly open to experimentation and variation or it may fail to follow the promptings of the Spirit Himself.

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We have to trust that what is true and good in Christ will succeed. Like Peter and Paul, we must trust God to ensure the continuity of unity in diversity even when men and women are unsure of it. We honor God as the originator of unity by expressing unity through the diversity we share in Christ. I believe that Christ who is Head and Founder of His church empowered it with His Holy Spirit, not only to keep its memory keen regarding how He has led in the past, but also to enable it to move more confidently and creatively into the future (see Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8). The promise of the presence and power of the Spirit must be the force that drives the Church to discover new areas of service and new dimensions of mission that will challenge and enrich its life and witness in the world. Indeed, the Church, under the power of the Spirit, will learn how to deal not only with new data for new times but also with old data through research and experimentation, guided by the Spirit.

As members of the body of Christ, we must therefore continually examine our presuppositions and assumptions regarding our tenacity in defending and justifying practices and positions based on something other than authentic biblical and theological doctrines. The Church must seek to work realistically with its unity in diversity in every aspect of its life and mission.

General Conference Ministerial Association
Almost every week a church member or pastor calls my office asking the same question: Is the General Conference a member of the World Council of Churches (WCC)? My answer is always the same: No! It is not “No, but...” It is a “No, period!” However, most callers seem to feel they know the answer better than I. They believe we are secretly members or in a sub-category similar to membership, but this is not true. Visit the WCC Web site and read the list of members. You will not find our name. We are not a member of the WCC, and we are not planning to become a member. Period!

Others may ask, Does the Seventh-day Adventist Church have a relationship with the WCC? Yes, we do. From time to time we attend the WCC Central Committee and their General Assembly as observers. This fact is not a secret, and articles about it are published in the Adventist Review.

Others say they have heard that a delegation from the General Conference attends the Conference of Christian World Communions (CS/CWC) meeting every year. Is this true? Yes, it is! But the WCC is not the CS/CWC. The confusion may arise from the names of these two groups.

Let me explain the difference. The World Council of Churches is the official organization of the ecumenical movement. Its headquarters are in Geneva, Switzerland. Approximately 340 denominations are members of the WCC, representing 592 million Christians, a little more than 25 percent of the Christian world. The purpose of the WCC is to promote Christian unity. “To promote” would have been too weak for the founders, who wanted to build a visible unity of Christians. The dream was conceived after two World Wars between so-called Christian countries turned the world upside down. Christian unity would have been the fulfillment of Jesus’ prayer and a major factor for peace in the world.

Today, unity—even among the members of the WCC—is a real challenge. Orthodox and Protestant members cannot share the Eucharist together after a half century of meetings, statements, and studies. The majority of Christians are not members of the WCC, and the most dynamic wing of the Protestants, Evangelicals, and Pentecostals has not expressed an interest in becoming members. The Roman Catholic Church is very influential within the WCC but is not a member.

When we think about the WCC, we must remember its purpose: the visible unity of Christianity. This concept may have different interpretations, and attaining this goal may seem a long process, but the WCC is the only religious organization totally committed to this goal.

What is the Conference of Christian World Communions? The Adventist Church is not a member of the WCC but is a member of the CS/CWC. The difference is that the CS/CWC is not an organization but rather a conference of Christian leaders. It is made up of Secretaries General or other top officials representing world church organizations. Its purpose is not to build the visible unity of the Christian family but to share information, concerns, and reports, and to become better acquainted with one another. No one is encouraged to change beliefs or create new Christian churches. Doctrinal issues are not on the agenda. Leaders represent their denominations and their beliefs. They are accepted as they are.

This group of Secretaries represents about 2 billion Christians and covers more churches than any other organization, including the WCC. The Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church are represented, as are the Roman Catholic Church, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Mennonite Convention, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Baptist World Alliance, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and many others. Adventists have played an important role in this conference in opening it to Evangelicals. Dr. Bert B. Beach was the Secretary of the conference for 32 years. I have held this position since 2002. Our presence in such an elite group, which represents the Christian world, has been extremely helpful for our church around the world. It has shown that we are a Christian church recognized by the Christian family of leaders, that we are not a cult or a dangerous group of fanatics but a Christian denomination.

How are the relations between the WCC and the CS/CWC? The relations between the WCC and the CS/CWC were difficult in the beginning but have since improved. The CS/CWC accepted churches as they were and respected their differences; the WCC believed that this did not build unity. Today the WCC has a representative within the CS/CWC. Will the CS/CWC join the WCC? Some people on both sides think a close cooperation would be good for all, and a consultative commission was set up last year. But other members of the CS/CWC don’t want the conference to change its main purpose, which is to be a unique fellowship of Christian leaders who spend time together, pray together, read the Bible together, and try to better understand each member of the larger Christian family.

Adventists have always been open to developing good relationships with other churches and religious groups while staying faithful to our mission and beliefs. We are not an isolated church, but we believe God has called us to fulfill a specific mission and to proclaim a specific message for the last days. Meeting other Christian leaders gives us a great opportunity to be better known and to share our mission, as we are able to respect others without compromising our identity and our faith.

Building one Christian church is the dream of many sincere Christians. The Seventh-day Adventist Church also prays for Christian unity based on the Word of God and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But our church is not a member of the WCC even though we respect this institution and recognize its positive initiatives. We believe we can build good relations and show respect for everyone without being a member of the WCC!
God’s priority is reaching lost people with the gospel; nothing is more important to our heavenly Father. He has poured out all of heaven’s resources into the plan of salvation. Jesus—heaven’s most priceless gift—came to earth on a redemptive mission. The gospel of Luke states it in clear, unmistakable words: “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Ellen G. White adds this clarion call: “Evangelistic work, opening the scriptures to others, warning men and women what is coming upon the world, is to occupy more and still more of the time of God’s servants” (Evangelism, page 17).

When the church fails to place priority on reaching the lost, it fails in accomplishing its God-appointed mission. Any church not passionate about soul-winning has missed its calling. Soul-winning churches are alive. Evangelistic churches are vibrant, growing, living churches. Whenever a church turns inward, focusing predomi-
nantly upon its own needs, it will begin a downward spiral toward spiritual death. In the spiritual as well as in the natural world, activity is the law of life.

In 2008, Seventh-day Adventist churches throughout North America and around the world will have the unique opportunity via the Hope Channel to participate in Discoveries ’08. Each meeting will be sent via satellite live from Orlando, Florida. The series will begin on October 24 and continue through November 29.

Discoveries ’08 will take you on an incredible journey through the ancient past to unlock millenniaums-old mysteries which speak to us in the twenty-first century. Eternal truths will leap off the pages of Scripture with a new freshness and relevance to a generation seeking the deepest questions of life. Each presentation will be fully illustrated with all-new graphics, presenting Bible truth with clarity and power.

During Discoveries ’08, you will hear the best in Adventist music. Soloists and musical groups from across North America will inspire you with uplifting music. Throughout Discoveries ’08, we will feature YouTube-type questions so your church can be actively involved. Your members and guests will be able to videotape a question locally, post it on a Web page, and listen for the answer during Discoveries ’08. Questions will be selected for the following evening. Lecture outlines will be posted on the Internet so every church can download materials free of charge to be passed out locally. Satellite evangelism has been a highly successful form of soul-winning in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The first satellite series, “Discoveries in Prophecy,” was launched in 1995, live from Chattanooga, Tennessee, with 676 churches participating. Since that time, more than 200 satellite events worldwide in more than 50 languages have resulted in over 1 million baptisms. But satellite evangelism is not a substitute for member involvement in witness; rather, it is a focal point for involvement. Some satellite series in local churches have not been successful at all. Why? The answer usually lies in a failure to prepare adequately. Someone has said it well: “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.”

Here is what you can do to be absolutely sure Discoveries ’08 will be successful for Christ in your church:

• With your church board, develop a master plan for evangelism.

• Set aside times to pray earnestly for specific people who need to know God’s end-time message.

• Launch an active visitation program to former members and others who have expressed interest in your church.

• Organize social events, concerts, picnics, and other church activities for your guests.

• Prepare for Discoveries ’08 just as you would if the pastor or a conference evangelist were coming to town.

• Order handbills, put up posters, place an ad in the newspaper, invite your friends, and watch the Holy Spirit work.

• Get involved. Plan something big for God. Don’t sit on the sidelines discussing why evangelism won’t work. Roll up your sleeves and go to work for God. He will do “exceedingly, abundantly, all that we ask or think” for the glory of His name.

To register for Discoveries ’08, log on to www.acn.info or call 1-800-ACN-1119 (226-1119).

Mark Finley is a vice president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
MISSION SPOTLIGHT: A TRIBUTE

Every quarter for 37 years, Mission Spotlight whisked Sabbath school members off to faraway places to experience the intriguing world of Adventist mission.

It all started with a handful of slides and stories created by Oscar Heinrich, who, as communication director of the Southern Union Conference, agreed to accompany a youth group to Guatemala and prepare a presentation of the trip for his local Sabbath school. It was a hit. Other Sabbath schools requested similar programs, and the concept of Mission Spotlight was born.

From its inception, Mission Spotlight was a family ministry. Oscar’s wife, Judy, traveled with him and wrote the scripts. Through the years, each of their three children contributed to Mission Spotlight until its last issue in 2007. Jerry Heinrich handled the photography, audio recording, and program editing. Judy (Heinrich) Carter managed the finances, promotion, and circulation. And Ginger (Heinrich) O’Neil wrote and narrated the scripts.

“To make these reports, we have gone to more than 160 countries,” Heinrich said. “We traveled in every thing from ox carts to jumbo jets, climbed through mountain jungles from early morning to dusk, waded streams and forded rivers, and spent nights in thatch shelters.”

When he was a boy, Heinrich listened in wide-eyed wonder to stories about “wild men from Borneo, cannibals in the South Seas, and man-eating tigers in India.” He would never forget these riveting tales or the unselfish spirit of the missionaries who told them. From 1970 until his death in 2002, Heinrich dedicated his life to telling the stories of those who had given their all to reach an unreached world with God’s love.

“Mission Spotlight is not about the problems of the world, crime, AIDS, famines, terrorists, wars, or natural disasters,” said Heinrich. “It is about faith, hope, love, and promises fulfilled. It is about people.”

The Office of Adventist Mission would like to pay special tribute to and thank the Heinrich family for their commitment to keeping the story of Adventist mission alive. Only in heaven will the results of their service be fully realized.
The art of speech: WHEN YOUR THROAT IS SORE AND IT’S DIFFICULT TO SPEAK

What could cause someone to feel constant pain in the throat, even when the throat is not infected? A person who constantly feels pain in the throat is probably abusing his/her throat and not realizing it. Talking too loud, screaming, talking nonstop for a long time, and breathing inadequately are factors that may cause such pain. We are tired and tense, we have a tendency to bend forward. This posture makes the diaphragm (the muscles that support proper breathing) move with difficulty. Observe your posture and try to relax the muscles around your neck and shoulders. If needed, apply a warm towel or heating pad to these areas. This will help the muscles relax. Practice a light sport such as walking or hydrogymnastics and avoid activities such as body-building and martial arts that may overload the shoulders and neck.

I can’t sing because my throat itches and I start coughing. Lack of water or insufficient water damages the voice. Drink eight glasses of water each day and check if your urine is light-colored and your saliva is not thick. Eat more fruit, especially citrus. Try to control your cough by drinking water every time you want to cough (always carry a water bottle).

I have been teaching for five years. It is hard not to talk loudly, and sometimes I even scream. Teachers should take care of their voices. It would be best to use a microphone in the classroom; if that is not possible, use new strategies such as asking students to present their work or divide the class into small groups and explaining the subject separately for each group. Students often talk during class, so the teacher has to compete for their attention. Unfortunately, the voice does not tolerate so much effort and gets irritated. Don’t talk at the same time your students do.

Pray and ask God to give you creativity to plan classes attractively without having to scream. My voice is getting worse every day. It’s gotten to the point where, for a few minutes, my voice disappears completely because I talked too loud or screamed. It is not normal to lose your voice, even for a short period of time. When you lose your voice, are you anxious or nervous? Our voices reveal a lot about us. Evaluating the connection between our voices and our emotions can be very helpful.

I’m allergic to perfume; it irritates my throat. Allergy is another factor that can damage the voice. Discover the cause of the allergy and try to eliminate it. The air we breathe goes through our vocal cords, and if that air is not pure and healthy, it may irritate the nose and walls of the larynx, damaging the voice. A good alternative is to wash the nose with saline nasal spray, use a vaporizer, and gargle with warm salt water (one teaspoon of salt for each cup of water).

My dental arch is crooked, and my teeth press against my tongue, which makes speech difficult. I’ve had braces, but they didn’t help. The problem could be corrected with surgery, but it is costly and I can’t afford it. Look for a speech therapist to treat your case; he or she could tell you more specifically what to do. You could also go to a school of dentistry that treats cases such as yours at no cost.

I hope these suggestions help you, but don’t forget to seek an ear, nose, and throat specialist. These physicians are qualified to perform exams that may aid in getting a more precise diagnosis.

Alexandra Sampaio
Speech therapist in Belo Horizonte, Brazil

We often neglect the sobering work of disciplining in favor of the much more exciting process of gathering new converts. The dazzle of public preaching, coupled with the joy of witnessing thousands being baptized, makes disciple-building seem mundane and, thus, too easy to neglect. We neglect follow-up at our own peril and at risk to the kingdom. Jesus’ great commission intends that newborn believers will be continuously preserved, nurtured, and built into His body as strong disciples. All of this is evangelism—the whole process. As Peter Wagner so eloquently reminded his church growth classes, “Any scheme which separates evangelism and follow-up into distinct functions has already built into the system its own defeat.”

So what do new members need? In a word, everything! Just as newborns depend totally upon their parents for survival, so newborn believers depend completely upon their church. Evangelism must always be understood as a process, not an event. Jesus intentionally chose the familiar imagery of love, family, conception, gestation, birth, development, and maturity to describe the process by which individuals are brought to belief and matured into disciples. If we wonder what new believers need, we can simply apply what newborns need to the spiritual development of new believers.

TOTAL CARE. Loving nurture, tender care, acceptance, relationship, companionship, conversation, admiration, high-touch bonding, appreciation, security, simple food, cleaning, copious companionship, and consistent attention are vital for the survival of babies and believers. DISCIPLINE. Long before reasoning allows an infant to comprehend dangerous situations, a firmly-worded “No!” command is essential to protect the baby from placing its hand in a flame. Protection is essential to learning the authority of both God’s Word and the responsible parent. Discipline is not harshly punitive; it is protective. Abandoning a baby to its own conclusions would be destructive abuse. INSTRUCTION. The milk of the Word is repetitive assurance of God’s love, acceptance, and forgiveness, weighted not so much with information as with reassurance and taught by mentoring example, not reasoned logic. Infants learn to walk not by a discourse on the dynamics of locomotion but by a pattern of “walking with them” until they eventually take their first steps.

EVIDENCE. Believers must next be taught to think for themselves. Education is not just an assimilating of information. Education is learning to reason for oneself rather than merely reflecting the thoughts of others. “Why?” questions are essential in the educational steps.

DISCERNMENT. Youngsters must learn to distinguish between the genuine and clever counterfeiters. When my brother John was a toddler, he drank a glass of gasoline thinking it was ginger ale. Deadly consequences were averted only by immediate intervention. Believers must be taught to test the “winds of doctrine” that are swept their way by all manner of well-meaning and ill-intentioned individuals.

DEPLOYMENT. Believers must receive ministry assignments; otherwise, they cannot grow and will remain immature and dependent. The work of the pastor is to “work” the members.

PARTNERSHIP. Those being deployed must also be partnered with experienced leaders who teach by associational example what they have experienced themselves. From the very beginning, Jesus designed a partnership role for the most effective pursuit of any good venture. It is dangerous to work alone.

SUPERVISION. The deployed must also be closely supervised to assure their success and to prevent mistakes from becoming habits. When Jesus sent His disciples two-by-two, He also brought them back together after a short time to evaluate their performance, rejoice in their successes, and instruct them for even greater achievements.

ACCOUNTABILITY. Embrace accountability both to leadership and to their fellow members. Independence in belief or action indicates immaturity. Unwillingness to accept the counsel of the wider body disqualifies anyone.

RESPONSIBILITY. As disciples mature, they will value the things their Savior values. His priorities will be their priorities. His mission will become their mission. They will earnestly pray and diligently work to build up His church and to hasten His coming.

REDEVELOPMENT. Maturity exists only when disciples are winning other new believers and helping them to become disciples. When these disciples are effectively engaged in birthing new believers, the church’s evangelistic process is complete.

James A. Cress
General Conference Ministerial Association Secretary

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It is easy to build a wall.
More difficult to destroy it.
Even more difficult to build a bridge.
Yet easy to destroy it.
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NEXT EVENTS:

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July 9 to 13, 2008

Nairobi, Kenya
(regional to East Africa)
August 14 to 17, 2008

Montego Bay, Jamaica
May 13 to 17, 2009

More information: www.gien.adventist.org

The Global Internet Evangelism Network is a community of evangelists and technologists who are committed to using the Internet to share the good news of the gospel. In addition to sharing, it is committed to discipling and preparing people for Christ’s return.