

STRONGER TOGETHER

A RESOURCE FOR MINISTRY SPOUSES | Vol. 41 | Issue One 2024



TEAM MINISTRY

STRONGER TOGETHER

Issue 1
2024



ON THE COVER

This issue's theme is "Team Ministry." The most vital members of our team are God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. Our team also includes our family as well as our local church and the larger Seventh-day Adventist organization. It might include our community and extend to a worldwide network of supporters and resources. We want you to remember every time you read *Stronger Together* that you are not alone in your ministry and that we are indeed stronger as we share stories, challenges, ideas, and prayers and when we team up with the Godhead.



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SCAN FOR AUDIO



Team

SPOUSE MINISTRY

A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON SERVING TOGETHER

ANNA AND DAVID, A YOUNG Seventh-day Adventist couple, lived in a peaceful neighborhood in the eastern United States. They loved the Lord and desired to share His message with their neighbors. After praying about how to begin, they were impressed to plant a church in their home.

Anna and David believed that Jesus was coming soon, and they wanted to share this news with everyone they came in contact with. They decided to open their home to neighbors and friends for Bible lessons. Soon their modest home turned into a place of learning and faith.

The couple embarked on an ambitious project—building a church in their basement. With the support of their family, they transformed the space into a beautiful place for worshipping God. The first service was a moment of great joy, with friends, neighbors, and curious souls eager to learn more about God’s Word. David and Anna, as spiritual leaders, led the service with heartfelt sermons and music.

As time passed, their church grew in numbers. They dedicated themselves to preparing sermons, organizing outreach programs, and providing pastoral care to their congregation. Their commitment and simplicity of faith inspired their neighbors to become members of the church.

David and Anna served as lay leaders in their church for many years, and many members mistook David for a pastor due to his devotion and commitment. Over time, David began to feel that God was calling him to become a pastor, so after much prayer, he and Anna enrolled in a theology program at an Adventist university. David graduated with a theology degree and was called to serve as a pastor, and they were blessed abundantly throughout their ministry.

David and Anna attribute their success in ministry to their dedication to serving God together as a couple. They recognize that their partnership has been a key factor in their success, in addition to their faith in God.

STRONGER TOGETHER

Working together in ministry as a couple is a tremendous blessing. Team spouse ministry is a profound and spiritually enriching journey that couples can embark upon. It involves working together to serve God and the church, drawing strength and inspiration from each other.

Working together in ministry is a tremendous blessing.

Let's explore the biblical perspective on team spouse ministry, highlighting fundamental principles and examples from the Bible that demonstrate the beauty and significance of couples working harmoniously in God's service.

1. God's design for marriage: The Bible presents marriage as a sacred institution designed by God Himself. Genesis 2:24 says, "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh." This unity signifies a physical, spiritual, and emotional bond. In team spouse ministry, couples can live out this unity in their service to God.

2. Complementary roles: In Ephesians 5:21-25, the apostle Paul provides guidance on the roles of husbands and wives in marriage. He instructs them, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." This passage emphasizes the importance of mutual respect and submission between spouses within the context of a loving relationship. The husband is called to lead with love and selflessness, while the wife is called to support and submit to her husband. These complementary roles can be a source of strength and unity in ministry and in life.

3. Shared ministry in the Bible: The Bible provides various examples of couples working together in ministry. Priscilla and Aquila, as mentioned in Acts 18:26, taught Apollos "the way of God more adequately" alongside the apostle Paul. Their teamwork demonstrates how married couples can impact others by teaching and mentoring them in the faith. Zechariah

and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist, were both involved in priestly service, and their faithfulness and shared devotion to their calling set the stage for the birth of John. He played an essential role in preparing the way for Jesus, as mentioned in Luke 1:5-25. Lastly, Mary and Joseph, the earthly parents of Jesus, were entrusted with the most profound ministry of all, raising and nurturing the world's Savior. Their obedience and shared commitment to God's plans demonstrate the profound impact of a united family dedicated to God's purpose.

4. Mutual support and encouragement: Hebrews 10:24, 25 encourages believers to "consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another." In team spouse ministry, couples can be each other's most significant sources of support and encouragement, motivating one another to continue in love and service.

When rooted in biblical principles, team spouse ministry can be a profoundly fulfilling and effective way for married couples to serve God and their communities. It allows couples to embody the unity, complementary roles, and mutual support exemplified in the Bible. As couples seek to live out their faith together, they can draw inspiration from the rich biblical examples of couples who walked hand in hand in God's service. In doing so, they strengthen their marriage and magnify their impact in advancing the kingdom of God.

Remember that your partnership in ministry is a testament to the love of Christ. By working together with passion, dedication, and a shared commitment to serving others, you can create a nurturing and impactful ministry that touches the hearts of many. May your marriage be filled with God's grace, wisdom, and abundant blessings as you continue to shine His light in your church and community. **I**

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Special Quotes

by Ellen G. White

The work of God demands most earnest labor, and the Lord would have ministers and their wives closely united in this work. The husband and wife can so blend in labor that the wife shall be the complement of the husband. The Lord desires them unitedly to watch for His voice, to draw closer and still closer unto Him, feeding upon His Word, and receiving light and blessing to impart to others. They should be as free as possible to attend campmeetings and other general gatherings. And the wife may continually be a great help to her husband in visiting and other personal labor. . . . The wives of many of the Lord's servants have united heartily with their husbands in the work of saving souls. Through her unselfish interest to advance the cause of God, the wife has made her husband's work much more complete.

—*Pastoral Ministry*, p. 76

The work of co-operation should begin with the father and mother themselves, in the home life. In the training of their children they have a joint responsibility, and it should be their constant endeavor to act together. Let them yield themselves to God, seeking help from Him to sustain each other. Let them teach their children to be true to God, true to principle, and thus true to themselves and to all with whom they are connected. With such training, children when sent to school will not be a cause of disturbance or anxiety. They will be a support to their teachers and an example and encouragement to their fellow pupils.

—*Child Guidance*, p. 319

When you respect each other, you will respect Jesus Christ. You are to show no preferences; for the Lord does not show preferences to his chosen ones. He says, "I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." This is the confidence that the Lord would have you cherish in each other. Unless you do this more than you have done in your past experience, you will not walk and work under the dictates of the Spirit of God. God would have you united in pleasant cords of companionship. As the Lord's workmen, you are to open your plans one to another. These plans must be carefully and prayerfully considered; for the Lord will leave those who do not do this to stumble in their own supposed wisdom and superior greatness.

—*Christian Leadership*, pp. 39, 40

The truly converted man has no time to think or talk of the faults of others. His lips are sanctified, and as God's faithful witness he testifies that the grace of Christ has transformed his heart. He realizes that he can not afford to talk discouragement and unbelief; he can not afford to be harsh and faultfinding. He has not received orders from God to punish the erring by heaping abuse upon them.

My brethren and sisters, be afraid to find fault, afraid to talk against your fellow beings, lest you lose the sense that you are dedicated to the service of God, and that as a faithful servant you must keep his interests in view. You are to live a life that will convince others that you are a child of God, under the training of the Captain of your salvation, that you may be prepared for active service. You have enlisted to fight against Satan's forces, and you have no time to fight against your fellow soldiers.

—*Review and Herald*, May 10, 1906



GROWING TOGETHERNESS

YOU NEED JUST FOUR INGREDIENTS.

IMAGINE THAT YOU REALLY want a chocolate cake. You have all the ingredients in your cupboard. You even have a recipe, a cake pan, and a stove. But for some reason you decide to sit still and just long for a taste of the delicious chocolate cake. You even pray for a chocolate cake. And at the end of the day, you are utterly disappointed because you never got the cake you wanted.

So, what happened? You knew how to make the cake. You had everything you needed. But you never tasted a crumb of the cake or a lick of the frosting.

Relationships are like chocolate cake. We want to have closer relationships with people. We even have all the ingredients we need as well as good recipes. But we struggle to do the things that will help us create warmer connections and experience deeper togetherness.



FIRST THINGS FIRST

The first ingredient of any closer relationship is always kindness. When we feel loved and cared for, we feel safe and happy, and our hearts are open for a deeper connection. A smile, a gentle touch, a helping hand, a thoughtful treat, some loving words all help to develop warmth and trust.

Imagine that blending the softness of butter and the sweetness of sugar are like creating the caring foundation for closer relationships, just as they are the basis for a good chocolate cake. It's important to mix them smoothly and thoroughly so the cake has a good consistency.

Jesus started each new relationship with compassion and kindness. He saw everyone He met as a beloved child of God. He wanted to show them how much God loved them, because they had no idea how loved they were. He noticed their need, moved closer, listened to their story, and reached out in kindness to bring healing, comfort, grace, and peace.

LET'S TALK

The second ingredient of a good relationship is the ability to have authentic and vulnerable conversations. These help us learn more about each other. We don't share everything about ourselves all at once. We share a few drops and watch for the effect that it has on the relationship. Does it bring us closer together or push us further apart?

Then the other person may share a few drops. We mix them into our relationship, and they become part of our growing understanding of each other. We slowly add teaspoons of information about ourselves and our values, beliefs, opinions, and ideas. Eventually we feel safe enough to talk about the vulnerable parts of ourselves, hoping that each time we do, the other person will continue to accept us as we grow in trust and love.

We don't share everything about ourselves all at once.

This communication process is like adding eggs to the cake mixture. Most cakes need at least two eggs. The eggshells need to become “vulnerable” and crack so they can share their contents with each other. We add the beaten egg to the butter and sugar mixture a little at a time so it can be gently integrated into the batter. If we put all the egg in at once, the mixture may be hard to blend, or it may curdle.

In the hours before His death, Jesus told His disciples that they were more than servants—they were His friends. That’s when He had told them everything the Father had told Him. Jesus communicated deeply about His love for His disciples and the whole world (John 15:9-17).

WORKING TOGETHER

The third ingredient in a deepening relationship is doing things together. As our care and communication increase, our trust in each other grows and we feel more confident about taking on a project together.

When we work together in practical ways, we learn how to balance our skills, how to collaborate, how to give and take. In a home, this might be growing a garden together, freshening up a room, raising children, or being involved in mission projects. In a church context this might be developing a children’s ministry, decorating the space for a wedding, or starting a ministry to the community.


Working together grows relationships because it involves the ingredients of caring for each other and of open communication. This is like sieving the flour, cocoa, and baking powder together and mixing them into the butter, sugar, and egg batter. All these ingredients need to work together to make a good chocolate cake. None of them would work on their own.

Jesus taught His disciples the importance of collaboration. Together they fed more than five thousand people. Paul described the church as a body in which everyone is an essential part of a well-functioning one, each gifted with spiritual gifts and designed for loving and caring relationships (Romans 12).

GIVE IT UP

The fourth ingredient of healthy relationships is the ability to give to one another in a balanced way. This involves listening to each other so that we are aware of each other’s relational, spiritual, emotional, and physical needs. It involves having a generous spirit that enjoys giving to others, because “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Relationships in which each person is blessing the other, by giving kindly and freely in ways that bring their loved ones joy, are like well-watered trees that flourish and grow delicious fruits.

Every ingredient needs to give to the others to make a good cake. If any ingredient refuses to share, the cake will be spoiled. Selfishness, self-importance, and expecting others to give to us without giving loving care in return will not result in the delicious relational “cake” that God planned for us. Jesus showed us how to have happy and healthy relationships by following His recipe of loving care, vulnerable communication, collaboration, and generosity.

So if we want a slice of that delicious chocolate cake, and if we want to have rewarding relationships that transform our lives and the lives of others, let’s pick up those ingredients, follow the recipe, and practice making the loving cakes that will bring joy to our marriages, families, churches, and communities. 

Karen Holford is the Family, Women, and Children’s Ministries Director of the Trans-European Division. She loves baking healthy cakes and healthy relationships!

balance

HOW OPPOSITES CAN MAKE A STRONG TEAM
IN THE HOME AND IN MINISTRY.



SCAN FOR AUDIO



She got a bit huffy and said, “I all done.”

I BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW THIS, but if you put a straw in your cup with your elbows, you're probably going to spill the smoothie on the couch. My daughter taught me this. She's quite unique. Her creative 3-foot-high self is always doing things in ways I never would have tried:

- Kneel-walking through Walmart.
- Brushing her chin with a toothbrush. (It really cleans the pores.)
- Blowing bubbles in the toilet. (I mean, the water's always there for the playing.)
- Oh, and let's not forget that watering a garden most certainly means watering yourself and any innocent bystander as well. (Sorry, Amazon delivery guy!)

Truthfully, my life would be a lot less adventurous without my 2-year-old's (almost 3) constant creativity.

MUFFIN MIXUP

I was in the kitchen making muffins when my sleepy-eyed baker wobbled in from her afternoon nap. Seeing that I had all the bowls out, she said, “I help!” So we pulled up her handy-dandy helper-stool-counter-stair thingy (I highly recommend this for anyone with littles), and we began to measure out the ingredients. She loves the scooping/pouring of the whole baking process and loves tasting every ingredient that goes into the bowl even more.

As she was scooping the baking powder, I realized that each scoop we were counting was getting more and more full until her last tablespoon was equivalent to $\frac{1}{4}$ cup. I said, “Remember to swipe it off before you pour,” and I grabbed the tablespoon just in time to swipe before we'd end up with super acidic muffins.

She got a bit huffy and said, “I all done.” She climbed off her stool to play with her baby dolls.

I stood there for a minute not knowing how to handle this. *Clearly*, I was teaching her a great life lesson on measuring baking ingredients to get the perfect muffins every time, and she didn't want to learn.

I know there are those of you who are on different sides of the issue:

- a. Some are saying, “She just let her daughter quit something when she didn't like the way it was going.” Yeah, I did. No excuses here.
- b. Others might say, “But you had to teach her how to do it properly or she'll forever be making acidic muffins!” to which I would completely agree. There's a correct way to measure, amiright?
- c. And others will say, “Ehh, she's 2—let her discover a love for the art of baking, let her make the mistakes and learn from them; she'll eventually learn on her own!” Well, I thought of that too.

Seriously, y'all, I had all of these thoughts in 2.5 seconds. It's crazy how the mom brain works. But I think what stood out the most to me was a feeling. A feeling that I made my daughter so miserable with my “correcting” that she didn't want to bake with me anymore. And yeah, she's not even 3 and she had just woken up from a nap and hadn't had a snackie (we *live* by that snackie schedule). There are lots of reasons she could have quit before we finished the job, but it shook me.

MASTER MICROMANAGER

It shook me because of my childhood, when my dad would micromanage every aspect of whatever I was doing. It drove me crazy and drove quite a wedge in our relationship that we are still working through today. (Healing is a journey!) Those feelings of “I can't do anything right” from childhood all came flooding back like a tidal wave. And then I realized something.

I do this to my husband too. I'm constantly in his work (because, *hello*, it's ministry, and the expectation/need/desire is for us to be a #PowerCouple serving together). And it's not all a bad thing. We really do complement each other. He's a fantastic listener; I'm really good at making a list and getting things done. He's great at preaching; I'm great at visiting and making people muffins—despite my 2-year-old's attempts to overmeasure things. He's thoughtful and educated and *sooo* romantic; I'm good at getting things done.

Are you seeing a pattern here? I live fast; he lives life slow. I see how much I can cram into my day—I literally have been fighting insomnia, so I got up at 3:30 this morning after two hours of “trying to go back to sleep.” And I've had the most productive morning all week! He's still in bed and will probably get up around 6 and start with some devotions before heading to the gym.

We are complete opposites in so many ways. But that's what really balances us out. He helps me enjoy life under a cottonwood in a hammock. I keep him on track with my impressive lists. #Balance

Sometimes my aggressive helpfulness isn't as appreciated as I'd like. A few months ago I reached out to the GC Spouses Facebook Support Group (a resource that never lets me down!) asking for advice to help my very busy, very introverted husband do more visitation.

I had hoped this group would come back at me with a myriad of stories and lists of steps of how to get this done. That did *not* happen. In fact, they came back with the most eye-opening realization I had had in quite some time. God made Dominick introverted. He called him to the ministry as an introvert who connects very well one on one. He didn't call him to pastoral work to make him an extrovert. In fact, he called him to show the beauty of being an introvert—and there is so much beauty in the thoughtfulness of an introvert. He called him to a three-church district that keeps him very busy. *He* called. Not me. And my expectations and “helpful lists” were more my way of grasping at control than of being a helpful partner in ministry.

Well, that was a big old piece of reality pie that I didn't enjoy eating. But the story doesn't end there. I sent my husband an incredibly emotional email. Like ugly cried while writing the whole thing. It was honest and raw and a bit discombobulated, but I had to get my feelings out on paper.

When he came home from work, we sat on the couch for over an hour and fleshed out our feelings and came to a place of beauty through boundaries. Now I still have a deep-rooted desire to control things (and my lists are definitely here to stay), but I am more self-aware, and it's because of the honesty of some supportive pastors' wives who have lived through the muck and are willing to share their life with me. After all, if we have to live through the highs and lows of ministry, it's nice to know we're not alone.

Oh, and as for the muffins, next time I'll just let her scoop as much baking powder as she wants. #YOLO

Ashley Alipoon (Ash) is a pastor's wife in Oklahoma. She calls herself a magnificent wife, a motivational mom, and a mighty muffin maker.

Sometimes my aggressive helpfulness isn't as appreciated as I'd like.





TIPS TO THRIVE

DEXTER

DEXTER WAS A WORLDLY young man who did not take life very seriously. One evening he and his friends sat at a bar talking, laughing, and telling smutty jokes. Someone mentioned God.

The conversation then turned to the Bible, and Dexter became interested. He listened as several of the men told what they knew about God. But the bartender broke in, saying, “Knock it off, guys! If all of you get religious, you’ll quit coming here and I’ll lose my business. Change the subject! If you want to know about God, go see John Jones who lives out in the country.”

When the drinking party broke up, Dexter went to the bartender and asked where John Jones lived. The bartender gave him some very vague instructions on how to wind through the countryside to find John.

Dexter left and eventually found John’s house, which was dark and silent. Looking at his watch, he saw it was 2:00 a.m. *I can’t knock on the door at this hour,* he thought.


Then he saw a light come on in the house, but it went off immediately. John had turned on the light momentarily to see the time and then turned it off again. But that let Dexter know that someone was awake, so he knocked on the door.

DIVINE APPOINTMENT

That very day John had finished studying the Bible with someone who gave his life to Jesus. So when he woke up in the night, he got up and prayed that God would send someone else he could study with—and here came Dexter.

When Dexter knocked on John’s door, a sleepy-looking man in pajamas answered the knock. Dexter told him he wanted to learn about God.

John invited Dexter inside, and their conversation lasted until after dawn. Amazingly, Dexter’s mind was clear and he “drank in” every word, for the Holy Spirit was moving on his heart. He returned to John’s house regularly to study the Bible, and after a time he was immersed in the waters of baptism.

Still passionate for God, he felt impressed to become a minister, so he enrolled in an Adventist college and graduated with a degree in theology. He served the Lord in ministry for the rest of his life. What an amazing God who can arrange divine appointments like this! 

I can’t knock on the door at this hour, he thought.

Evelyn Griffin is a retired pastor’s wife. She and her pastor-husband have four children and 14 grandchildren.

GOD'S COMPASSION

HOW TO HELP IT FLOW TO AND THROUGH US

THE WORD “COMPASSION” points to the act of reaching out to relieve the distress of another. Hence, my contemplation on the theme of compassion transports my mind to Psalm 139, where some strong allusions to a compassionate Creator can be found. Let's focus on a few of the verses that loudly proclaim the intense care and kindness of our heavenly Father toward fallen humanity. These promises not only relieve our distress but also remind us of God's omnipresence in our lives.

THE COMPASSIONATE CREATOR

In a world of sin, where we find ourselves striving to walk in the Spirit and sometimes falling short because of the war against the flesh, it is consoling and encouraging to know that we were created by a compassionate God. The following text assures us of this fact: “O Lord, you have searched me and known me! . . . You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me” (verses 1-5).*

The psalmist, David, reminds us in verse 1 that God is omniscient. There isn't anything about anyone of which His knowledge falls short.

Yet still, in verse 5, we find this mortal human being, who was once lost in sin, rejoicing in the fact that his heavenly Father is actively protecting him by hiding his life in the palm of His closed hand. What a beautiful literary depiction of divine protection!

COMPASSION TO SELF

It is a liberating experience to accept the compassion afforded by our Savior's sacrifice. In this process, we accept the gift of forgiveness from Him to us, and furthermore, we cannot help but be compassionate to ourselves when we adopt His nature.

When the Bible states “You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways” (verse 3), it speaks of God's constant care to each individual. It means He is familiar with and concerned about all aspects of our lives.

For this reason, we should be compassionate to ourselves by relaxing in His constant care and trusting in Him to fight and win all of our battles for us, rather than enduring unnecessary stress.

SCAN FOR AUDIO



It is consoling and encouraging to know that we were created by a compassionate God.

COMPASSION TO OTHERS

There are many today who suffer with great psychological distress as they search their own minds and lives, only to realize the depth of their wretchedness. Most psychologists believe that extreme feelings of wretchedness are so detrimental that they can lead to suicide.

What then is the corrective measure for such feelings? Those of us who have recognized the Father's compassion, as King David did, must understand our responsibility to share the therapeutic treasures found in God's Word with the hopeless. Many souls would be relieved by the knowledge found in the following verses: "For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. . . . My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you" (verses 13-18).

A compassionate Creator is found here, revealing the most brilliant hope ever offered to humans. These verses provide all the answers to our universal quest for meaning. In this powerfully packed passage, the poignancy of figurative language allows for a delightful connection between the text and the reality of who we are as humans. God possessed tender loving care for us even while we were in the embryonic stage in our mother's womb.

While He has power and control over the entire universe, yet still His compassionate nature prevails and is evident in His care for all of His feeble and dependent creation. In fact, it was compassion that caused Him to create the human body as an awesome and magnificent mechanism (verse 14), which is resilient beyond the understanding of many scientists. Were this not the case, many of us would have already been consumed by various illnesses.

In a book I am currently writing, the Lord has been giving me inspiration to share on the supernatural nature of God's grace. It is the grace of God that opens human minds to understand and accept God's compassionate nature. By extension, His grace transforms us, thus enabling us to extend a like-minded spirit to our fellow human beings. ■

*All Bible texts are from the English Standard Version.

Grace Eversley-Jacott is an educational leader at a university in Trinidad. She also serves as a chaplain for ministerial spouses in her conference and an advisor for women's ministries. By God's grace she will soon publish her first book, There Are Rainbows in Your Wilderness.

MARRIED TO A PASTOR?
Discover a safe place to fellowship, ask questions, and learn from others on Facebook and Twitter!

DISCUSS SHARE CONNECT

Official groups for ministry spouses online:
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NEW <https://www.facebook.com/groups/esposasministeriales/>

INTERGENERATIONAL *Worship*

**DON'T MISS THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO
EVANGELISM IN YOUR CHURCH EVERY WEEK!**

*“I’m so happy when we’re
all enjoying worship
together.”*



SCAN FOR AUDIO



We can learn from God's pattern of worship.

"I REALLY ENJOYED CHURCH today!" Jonjon smiled as his family climbed into their car to go home.

"What did you enjoy the most, Jonjon?" asked Mom.

"I liked how the youth group did the Scripture reading. They used the words from the Bible, but it came alive when they were all dressed up and acting out the story of the great feast."

"What did you like best, Kyra?"

"I liked that we sang one of my favorite children's songs straight after the children's story," said Kyra. "But most of all I liked looking around the church for objects that remind us of parties and feasts, like birthday candles, balloons, and napkins. And Pastor Filip even used them to illustrate his sermon!"

"Yes, that was fun!" Mom smiled. "I also liked getting this special invitation to heaven." Mom took the beautiful card out of her purse. "What about you, Dad?"

"I really liked seeing you and Kyra enjoying the service. I'm so happy when we're all enjoying worship together."

"Mom, why does Pastor Filip make services that everyone can enjoy?" Jonjon was curious.

"Because he learned that people remember more of what he says when they're involved in the service and when they enjoy it and understand it. He knows that churches that involve children in their services every week grow quicker than churches that don't. The children like to come, they enjoy being involved, and they bring their friends and family members along too."

"Oh, that's cool!" Kyra smiled. "I'm glad he's our pastor."

WHAT IS INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP?

Intergenerational worship (IGW) is a worship service in which leaders intentionally involve people of all ages: children, teens, young adults, older adults, and seniors. The leader uses diverse worship activities—including good visual content, words and songs, and even some movement and interaction—to help children and adults learn and remember the important messages.

WHY MIGHT WE NEED TO RETHINK OUR WORSHIP SERVICES?

The pattern for most Christian worship services hasn't changed much in several hundred years. But our world has changed. Throughout the Bible, worship changed many times to adapt to the context: in a garden, around an altar, in a tabernacle, in tents and homes, in the Temple, on a hillside, by a beach, in a market, in synagogues, and in house churches. God did not give us one fixed way to worship because worship needs to be adapted to the context. Also, the traditional services on which we base many of our church services were designed by theologians and priests who didn't have children, so they didn't consider youthful needs in the service.

Today most of our church service is verbal—announcements, prayers, hymns, Scripture reading, sermon, and benediction. The only part of the service that is interactive and nonverbal is putting money in the offering. Most adults, and nearly all children under 12, prefer visual, sensory, and active learning rather than sitting and listening to words.

God gave His people a beautiful model for a tabernacle and an interactive and multisensory sanctuary service, plus special instructions for regular intergenerational and interactive festivals. We can also learn from God's pattern of worship as we plan meaningful worships today.

HOW DID JESUS TEACH?

Jesus was reaching diverse audiences. He told short parables that children understood. He asked questions, used lots of illustrations, and taught new and unexpected things that caught people's attention. He taught outdoors where children could play on the ground, run around, and pick flowers. The outdoor meetings provided beautiful visuals for people to look at, and Jesus often referred to the flowers, birds, and sheep. Jesus made sure everyone felt welcome to His teaching and preaching. And He blessed the children.

God did not give us one fixed way to worship.

EVERY WEEK EVANGELISM

Intergenerational worship is “every week evangelism.” The unbaptized children and young people are still deciding whether to follow Jesus and be baptized, and the more they are involved and included in services that they enjoy, the easier it will be for them to choose Jesus. The big question that many IGW leaders ask is “How did this week’s service bring children and young people closer to God? Or did it push them further away?”

HOW CAN WE START INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP?

1. Make changes slowly. Ask everyone, including children, what they like best about the current worship services and build on that. Find out what the children don’t like about the service and cut back on those things or adapt them. Most children struggle to sit for more than an hour, and when the service goes past their usual lunchtime, they will start to feel hungry and unsettled.

2. Start by involving all ages in the service.

Children can choose an appropriate song or hymn and introduce it or write an introduction for others to read. Teenagers can make video clips to illustrate a Scripture reading or the theme for the day, or they can video church members’ comments about a topic or what they are grateful for. Children can create artwork to accompany a service, play instruments, or sing in choirs. When children and young people are

involved in the service, they feel special and learn that they belong to the church.

TRY THIS IDEA!

One church involves children and young people in the reading of the Scripture each week. These youngsters prepare several weeks ahead by meeting with a child-safe mentor, Sabbath School teacher, or parent. They read the Bible passage and discuss it together so each young person understands what they are reading. Then they work together to design an interesting way to present the Scripture. One child dressed up as a shepherd to read Psalm 23. Another drew pictures or took photos to illustrate each of the Bible verses, and these were photographed and projected onto the screen. A teenager found a piece of classical music to accompany their passage. This process helps them learn more about the Bible and adds simple creativity to the service. **1**

Karen Holford is the Family, Women, and Children’s Ministries Director of the Trans-European Division. In a future issue she will share 60 ways to involve children and young people in your church!

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Karen Holford has written a book about intergenerational worship for the General Conference Children’s Ministries Department called *Altogether Wonderful*.

It is available from Advent Source at this link: <https://www.adventsource.org/store/childrens-ministries/leadership/altogether-wonderful-exploring-intergenerational-worship-38996>.

It is also available as a pdf: <https://ted.adventist.org/family/spirituality/igw/igw-book/>

She has a simple web page with links to recordings of an online European training about involving children and young people in worship:

<https://ted.adventist.org/family/spirituality/igw/>

<https://ted.adventist.org/family/spirituality/igw/igw-training-sessions/>

You can also find links to some of her services in St. Alban’s Seventh-day Adventist Church in England:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-0084OigDo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XHvnfaeQzvM>

PRESSING INTO GRATITUDE



SCAN FOR AUDIO

**IT'S HARD TO THANK GOD FOR THE HARD THINGS,
BUT I CHALLENGE YOU TO TRY THIS EXERCISE.**

FOUR YEARS AGO WE MOVED to the Middle East to serve. That move equaled all our children leaping out of the nest and my not being able to work as a nurse. Ouch! Talk about an identity shift and new seasons.

Yet life has been far from dull with trying my hand at starting an organization serving refugees, and there are advantages to an empty nest in long days of ministry. However, deep in my heart there has been a small but low rumble of discontentment—a longing to be in the same country as my adulting children and to be able to work with patients in a clinical setting.

Recently I felt impressed that this lack of 100-percent contentment needed to be dealt with. I pulled up my bootstraps and tried to will myself to have a better attitude and not think about “other” possibilities. However, it just didn’t seem to be working. I asked God to change my desires and make them His. I wanted to be like Paul and say, “I have learned to be content in everything . . . *whether without my children or working in my profession.*”

JUST TWO THINGS

In the past I found that giving specific praise for the very thing I was struggling with had transformational results. So I decided to press into another season of giving thanks about these two situations. How does that work?


Simply, at the end of my devotional times I write down six things I am grateful for, two of them being specifically for my area of discontentment. On day 1, for example, I wrote that I was thankful “my children

are thriving” and “I am growing in other areas.” Day 2: “You (God) are more concerned about my children than I am” and “I get to journey with amazing, resilient people.” Day 3: “my children were able to spend many years in another culture” and “You (God) choose the poor because of their rich faith.”

Honestly, some days I will stare at my paper for a long time before thinking of a unique word of gratitude. At some point I will stumble across some thought of gratitude that will shift my entire perspective. This may happen a few days into the specific gratitude journey, or it may be months into it. However, this change reaches deeper than my thinking and reasoning—it changes things at the soul and heart level.

I don’t want to just survive in this life journey; I want to thrive. Once again, pressing into gratitude is helping me to be content with my current situation.

I am reminded of Luke 6:38: “Give, and it will be given to you.” Give what? Money? Grace? The previous verses are all relational (don’t judge; give forgiveness). What if we are to give gratitude? The reward is this: “It will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

If you long for this kind of grateful heart, join me in pressing into gratitude in the hard things. I can truly testify that the measure I have received from this exercise has been a good measure, running over with a peace and contentment that passes all understanding. 

Ruth Boyd enjoys tea and scones, encouraging women and pastoral spouses, and supporting her husband in ministry. A nurse by training and mother of four adulting sons, she also works with refugees in Beirut, Lebanon.





> Pastor and Mrs. Sitorus

SCAN FOR AUDIO



WRITING GOD'S LOVE LETTER

**MY WIFE AND I HAVE RECEIVED SUCH BENEFITS
FROM THIS PROFOUND ACTIVITY.**

I BELONG TO A FAMILY OF Seventh-day Adventists in Indonesia. My father was well-accepted in the community for his enduring faith and for upholding family values as a faithful Adventist Christian father. We grew up without TV and other sources of worldly entertainment. Reading the Bible and other books was our everyday practice.

I started studying medicine with the hope that one day I would be an Adventist medical missionary, enabling me to witness in the Muslim community and make a difference for God. My plan was changed when I was in my third year of study. I was asked to write an examination on Sabbath at the secular medical school where I was enrolled. I brought this problem home and consulted with my family. With their advice and prayer, I decided, without hesitation, to shift my course to pastoral study and theology at Indonesian Adventist University (UNAI).

This decision also gave me the opportunity to meet my future wife, a wonderful partner in ministry. Being born in Adventist families and in an Asian context, we did not have much time to socialize with the opposite gender as it was considered somewhat improper. I was also very careful and selective in looking for my prospective life partner. I always expected her to be a God-fearing person who demonstrated His divine character. She must have an inward beauty that would last for eternity. Marrying someone was more of God's inspiration and His guidance for me.

The regular writing of Bible verses has allowed us to develop spiritual bonds.

I met Christine Marion Mangoal when we were students at UNAI. I noticed that she was another child of God who had come from a reputable Adventist family. She demonstrated great respect and honor to her parents.

THE RIGHT START

I wanted our relationship to start right from the very beginning and with God's blessings. So our way of getting close and intimate with each other was the writing of a journal that we have been faithfully keeping as a tradition. The content of our shared journal is not our love story and how it got started, but instead the love story of God toward His children narrated in the Bible.

I am thankful to God that Christine and I have the same belief and attach the same values to marriage and relationships. We both know that our way of living and interacting in this institution of God is very important to our spiritual journey. In the book of Genesis, we are reminded that marriage and lifetime companionship are God's design to serve the true purpose of life as well as His mission. It is an intelligent way of our Maker to sanctify His children and mold in them a character fitted for heaven.

The preparation for receiving the eternal gift of salvation and experiencing everlasting togetherness begins right here on earth. Thus, sitting side by side and writing God's words with our hands is our normal way of interacting with each other in a silent but purposeful way.

Our real interaction with each other began from the time we started writing Bible verses. As we frequently prayed with one another, we felt destined to spend our lives together. We received God's impression that we were both to serve in His vineyard. I was impressed continually during our courtship that it was not only our choice to be together but also His choice for our relationship to bloom and prosper. We discussed more of our future and what we could do to serve God after marriage. The regular writing of Bible verses had allowed us to develop these spiritual bonds.

FROM THIS DAY FORWARD

Even after marriage, whenever we feel there is incompatibility and experience some challenges, we never allow self-seeking interest to get into our relationship and push us apart. God controls and guides us through His words; the inspiration we receive from reading them has been our shield and protection. 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 says, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."



HOW WE DO BIBLE WRITING

This is how my wife and I include Bible writing in our lives and our relationship, with amazingly positive results:

1. We copy Bible passages into notebooks. I write on the left side, and my wife writes on the right.
2. After we have completed writing one chapter, we check over the words. My wife or I will read the chapter aloud while the other follows along in the Bible to make sure we've copied it correctly.
3. At this point we have copied the Bible into eight notebooks, which we take with us when we travel to other cities or countries. We write on planes, trains, and ships.
4. We have done this for eight years and have written in more than 70 cities and 10 countries.


The more we copy or write God's words, the more we are charmed by them.



Over the years of Bible writing, we have found great joy and true happiness in making it our routine. We can testify to everyone how God's promises in the Bible are felt and experienced endlessly in our lives. We strongly believe that it is God's original intent that His children in all relationships, including the husband-wife relationship, will learn to develop resiliency and rise above the differences, proving that God's unconditional love is real and effectively working in His children's lives.

The first Bible writing in the Bahasa language took us eight years to complete. We learned so much of God's intended plan for marriage and how we could rightly define and realize the added value God has for this institution. God intended it to be a great blessing to both of us, and we indeed feel His blessing every time we start writing.

The more we copy or write God's words, the more we are charmed by them. His words of love, promise, strength, comfort, and empowerment etch deep into our hearts.

Both of us started writing the Bible in English in 2019. Bible writing continually opens more opportunities to connect and reconnect as a pastoral couple, to be in each other's presence, and to read and hear from each other. This is our way of keeping our family continually experiencing God's blessings and allowing ourselves to hear Him speaking the language of love to us directly every day. In this way we can replicate the same love to others, beginning with our very own family! 

Sugih Sitorus is president of the West Indonesia Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists.

UNEXPECTED

AT ANY POINT WE CAN SUDDENLY FIND OUR LIFE CHANGED.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

I SURE DIDN'T SEE this coming! It started out like any ordinary morning. However, it didn't take long for me to notice my right ear seemed plugged, like the feeling of fullness in the ear following swimming. As I tried the usual yawning and tipping my head to the side, I became alarmed to note something else too: I couldn't hear on that side—not a sound!

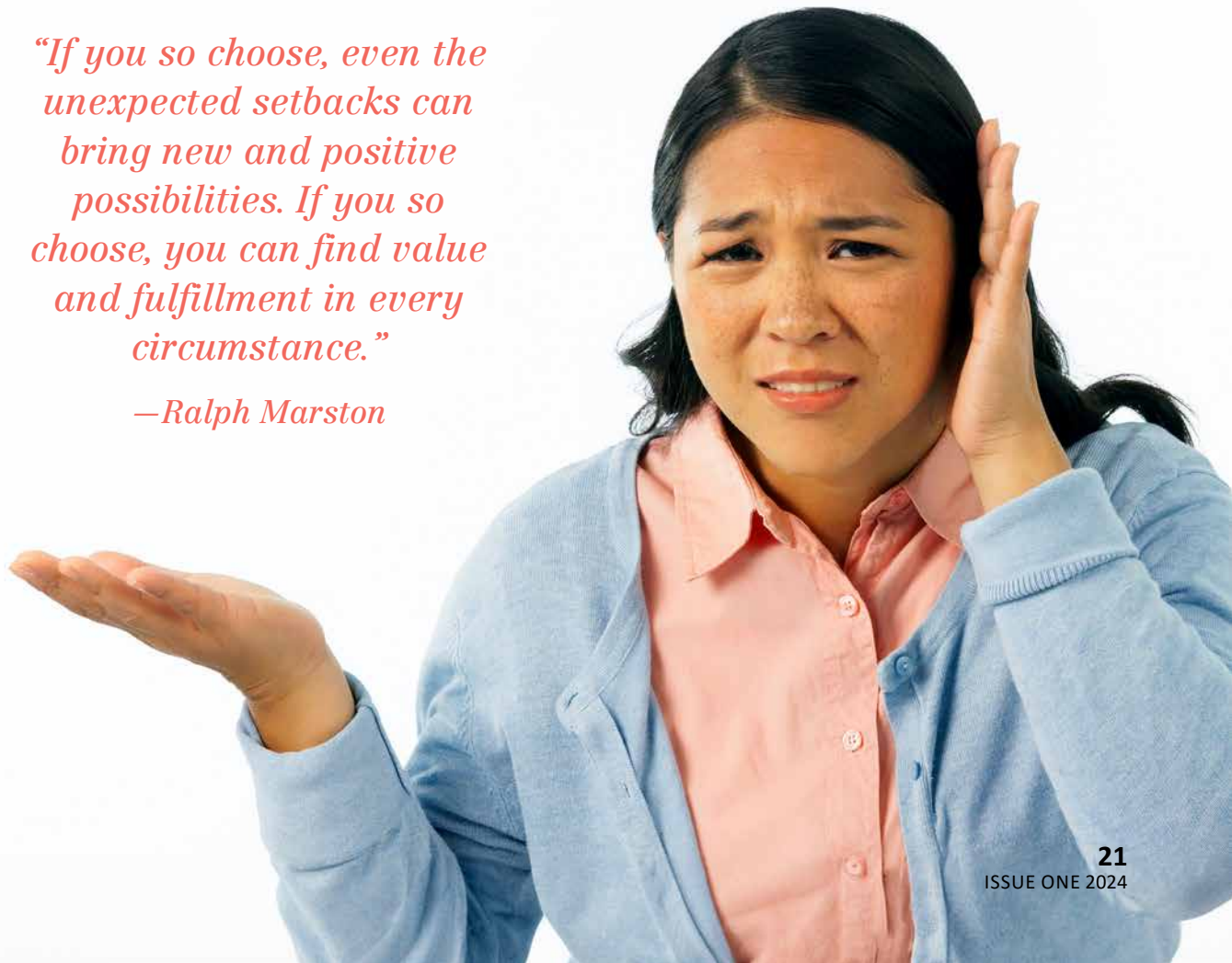
All that we call normal can change suddenly. Most of us go along day by day expecting to meet appointments, accomplish routine tasks, and enjoy association with friends and family without interruption. Of course, we know

subconsciously that good or bad surprises can occur at any time to anyone, but we mostly choose to downplay such thoughts, believing that the bad things happen primarily to others. After all, we are healthy, living a good, clean lifestyle, and have no genetic propensity to debilitating disease. Right?

But life on this earth offers no absolute guarantees. A natural disaster, the sudden death of a friend or relative, loss of job or property, the breakup of a friendship or marriage, loss of a pet, or a sudden medical diagnosis are just a few of the hard hits that can sweep us off our feet, initiating confusion, stress, anxiety, and change to quality of life and familiar routine.

“If you so choose, even the unexpected setbacks can bring new and positive possibilities. If you so choose, you can find value and fulfillment in every circumstance.”

—Ralph Marston



All that we call normal can change suddenly.

THE BRAIN'S DILEMMA

As a nurse I realized that the sudden loss of or change in any body function should be regarded as a red flag, a warning that needs immediate attention and investigation. In any crisis, the brain's conflict sensors jump into action and can be thrown into chaos as they struggle to interpret and deal with disruptive stimuli. The flight or fight signal goes into action, causing an increase in heartbeat, respiratory rate, and blood pressure. Alertness is enhanced, as are levels of stress, anxiety, and fear.

In my situation, I found myself alarmed and confused. My right ear wasn't working. I felt dizzy. What was happening? What should I do?

SUDDEN HEARING LOSS (SHL)

SHL happens to around 70,000 people a year in the United States. People normally have one ear that hears better than the other, and in the aging process gradual bilateral hearing loss is quite common. But the sudden loss of hearing ability in one ear (or sometimes both) without warning

and for no obvious reason is not so common, and the associated risk of permanent damage therefore renders it an emergency. This loss of hearing is attributed to the hearing organ of the inner ear—the cochlea.

Among medical professionals, the cause of sudden hearing loss cannot be diagnosed with certainty. However, some possible contributors may include:

1. Blocked blood flow
2. The disruption of fluid balance in the inner ear associated with Meniere's disease
3. An autoimmune inner ear disease
4. A ruptured membrane in the inner ear
5. A viral infection to the inner ear causing swelling around the auditory nerve
6. A mini stroke
7. A tumor
8. Head trauma

Many people delay in seeking medical evaluation, thinking the cause may be related to a head cold, buildup of wax, or water in the ear. Attempts at self-treatment, such as using ear drops or trying to clean the ear, only cause detrimental delay in getting the all-important early potential hearing-restoring medical treatment needed before it's too late.

Following emergency tests and evaluations, the patient is referred to an ear, nose, and throat (ENT) specialist for treatment and continued evaluation. Medications include treatment with an antiviral course of pills and corticosteroids taken by mouth or by injection over several weeks. At each follow-up appointment the hearing is tested by an audiologist in attempts to determine if hearing ability is being restored. However, appropriate and timely treatment isn't always fully effective, and ultimate results can vary depending on the individual's overall health, time when treatment was initiated, and degree of hearing loss.

THE REST OF MY STORY

Evidence of God's care for me during this crisis includes my husband being home to take me to the emergency department for immediate evaluation. In addition, my daughter-in-law, who is an ER physician, attended to me there,



seeing that all the appropriate procedures were initiated and cared for. Tests were inconclusive about the reason for my sudden hearing loss. It was determined the cause was likely a viral infection, believed to be the most common cause.


During weeks of follow-up, ENT doctor appointments, and taking prescribed medications, the hearing tests showed slow improvement to my ear. Now it is a waiting game of several months to determine if more improvement is occurring.

Things I have learned through this experience include:

1. God knew what He was doing when He gave us two ears. We need both ears to balance what we hear, both in quality and clarity.
2. With one ear not working, voices, music, noise of groups, and even the ringing of a cell phone can all sound unnatural, distorted in clarity, and sometimes uncomfortable in volume or confusing in location of sound.
3. I have been amazed at how people I know and associate with have hearing issues of one type or another, something I never focused on before.
4. I've learned how important position is to someone who is struggling with hearing. Face-to-face conversation works the best.
5. Some of my friends' and family members' voices are very soft, causing embarrassment to me (and possible annoyance to them) when I must ask them to repeat what they have just said. Am I conscious of the volume of my voice when conversing with others?
6. I'm becoming more patient with myself when I make mistakes due to hearing

misinterpretation. Seeing the humorous side of incidents is good medicine.

7. Although this experience has included a journey of adjustment, I'm thankful for my good left ear and for every little bit of improvement to my right ear. It is God who heals and restores, who leads and comforts, and who is true to His promises. I offer Him my praise and thanksgiving for His faithful presence in the valleys of life.

"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). 

RESOURCES:

<https://community.thriveglobal.com/5-unexpected-life-events-and-how-to-react-to-them/>

<https://www.bustle.com/p/how-to-deal-with-unexpected-life-change-according-to-psychologists-18567643>

<https://www.accountantsgrowthclub.co.uk/16-ways-to-cope-when-life-changes-suddenly>

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/now-hear-this-dont-ignore-sudden-hearing-loss>

<https://www.mountsinai.org/locations/center-hearing-balance/conditions/sudden-hearing-loss>

<https://www.nextavenue.org/how-to-cope-with-sudden-hearing-loss/>

Rae Lee Cooper is a registered nurse. She and her husband, Lowell, have two adult married children and three adorable grandchildren. She spent most of her childhood in the Far East and then worked as a missionary with her husband in India for 16 years. She enjoys music, creative arts, cooking, and reading.

Dear Readers:

"Unexpected" is the story of my sudden health crisis.

Do you have a story you could share—something that caused you to stop everything in order to deal with a sudden life-altering situation? What happened? And how did you cope with all that was involved? How did the experience strengthen your faith, your family unit, your awareness of the experiences of others, and your ministry focus?

Write your story in 100 to 150 words and send it to Shelly Lowe at: lowes@gc.adventist.org.

Your testimony may very well encourage and strengthen someone who needs to know that they are not alone in the big struggles of life and that there is hope because there is a God who hears, who loves, and who cares.

Looking forward to reading your incredible testimonies,
Rae Lee Cooper



NEW ROLES

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THREE MEN WHO ARE PASTORAL SPOUSES?

IN THE 1970S I WAS in college at La Sierra University. I was dating a theology student who was scheduled for an interview in hopes of getting picked up by a conference. We were newly dating, but he asked if I wouldn't mind coming to the interview because it looks good to have a potential spouse there. So I accompanied him to help him out.

It went so well that one of his friends asked me if I would go with him also. It got to the point where the conference personnel were scratching their heads commenting, "He is new, but haven't we seen you before?"

Times have changed. Some embrace the new challenges, while others are not in favor of change. But regardless, this is where the current church is at. There are conferences now that don't even allow the spouse to be part of the interview. The thinking behind this is that they are hiring the pastor, not the spouse. Sometimes there are legal and ethical restrictions to interviewing a non-employee. We also have women pastors, and some come with a male spouse.

For this article I interviewed three men who are spouses to their pastoral wives. All the men were willing to talk to me, but anonymity was a concern, so some of the names have been changed. Following are the questions I asked them:

- Express an experience that you treasure in this role.
- What are some of the challenges?
- What would you like other male pastoral spouses to know?
- Was there a difference you experienced from the beginning to your current time in this role?
- Should there be a spouse role in the church today?
- What would you like to tell the congregation if you could?



“Ministry as a spouse is a privilege.”



“It has taken some time to adjust to this role.”

RICHARD

Richard is 47 years old. His wife has been a pastor for nine years. He told me that his best experience in this role was in another country. When they arrived, all the members brought food and remained late into the night putting their belongings away. “It made us feel at home,” he says. He appreciated the love and support from those people, and it is a memory he treasures.

Some of his challenges have included moving around while trying to go to school and transfer credits. At times he has also been made fun of and told “It’s not the way it’s supposed to be.” When I asked him to elaborate, he said that people comment to him that he, the male, should be the pastor. It is said in jest, but he knows what they mean.

“I just treat them as I would want to be treated,” he comments. “Ministry as a spouse is a privilege. We are just human and working for God.” He wants the congregation to know that “children make mistakes and sometimes we do also. So lower your expectations. My main role is to pray and support my wife always.”

PETE

Pete is 66 years old. His wife has served as a pastor for one year, and he is currently retired from his employment. He hasn’t spent a lot of time in this role as a pastoral spouse, but he did have a few things to say.

He likes the opportunity to be with his wife Sabbath mornings in church and meet old and new people. But he admits, “It has taken some time to adjust to this role. It’s a different pace. I’m not a fan of moving either.”

Currently he is not directly involved in her work. He mostly supports her. He said that if he could tell the congregation one thing, it would be this: “Pay attention to my wife’s needs and support her.”

DANIEL

Daniel is 40 years old. He has been married for 13 years and has two children in elementary school. He states that the time he cherishes is leading worship and music with his wife. It is something he did even before they were married.

One of the challenges he faced is the stress and frustration that came from the COVID pandemic, both in his personal job and as a spouse to his wife. “There were some life-threatening illnesses throughout the congregation,” he shares.

Other things he didn’t expect were judgments from people regarding his choice of musical instruments. He also never dreamed he would have to make suggestions to his wife about her choice of clothes and hairstyle on Sabbath mornings. To be herself but not too trendy.

Regarding the pastoral spouse role, he says, “I think it depends on the couple. I hear about the needs of the church, and I attempt to pitch in when I can. I am thankful and proud of my wife. I try to be patient and supportive. And if I could tell the church anything, it would be to also be patient and supportive. It can be a challenge to balance my work, children, and church activities, but we make it work!”

DIFFERENT BUT SIMILAR

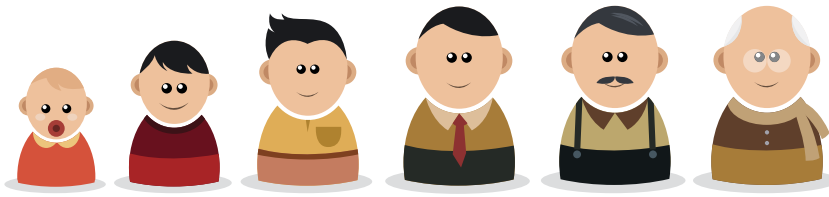
Being a pastor’s spouse myself, I was inspired by these men. We have similar interests, but these men face some different issues from what I have experienced over the years. I also realized that it can be easy to dismiss someone who is male in this role. People think that men can take care of themselves. Individuals also need to realize that if the pastor’s spouse participates in church, that is just a plus and should not be required.

Male spouses of pastors are looking for where they fit and are needed in the work of God. Just like all people, male spouses require our love and support. Being a pastor’s spouse, either as a female or male, has its privileges and challenges. ■

Anne Fergusson is a retired registered nurse. She lives in California with her husband, Ed, an administrator for the Northern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. They have twin sons and four grandchildren.



SCAN FOR AUDIO



GENERATIONS OF BLESSINGS

In the Bible there are lots of stories of older people and young children blessing each other. Look up the stories about the older people, and write down the name of the child in each story.

OLDER PERSON	CHILD	BIBLE VERSE
Simeon and Anna		Luke 2:25-38
Lois		2 Timothy 1:5-7
Naomi		Ruth 4:14-17
Abraham and Sarah		Genesis 21:1-7
Eli		1 Samuel 3
Zechariah and Elizabeth		Luke 1:57-66
Mordecai		Esther 2
Naaman		2 Kings 5



SHARE JOY!

Make a list of the older people you know well—family members, church members, and neighbors. Work with your family to write a list of 10 ways you could bring joy to an older person. Invite them for a meal, take them on an outing, bake them a cake or loaf of bread, make them an encouraging card, ask them questions about their life, and find ways to help them.

Can you see a pattern in these stories? The children brought joy to the older people, and the older people enjoyed caring for the little ones! They taught them, guided them, and blessed them. Choose your favorite Bible story from this list and act it out with your family. Perhaps your favorite seniors would like to see and hear this story too!



THANK YOU, SPECIAL PEOPLE

Make beautiful thank you cards for the senior people in your church community. Thank them for loving God for so many years. Thank them for the special things they have done for your church. Bless one senior each week with a lovely card.



SENIOR TREAT BAGS

Work with your family, Sabbath School class, or Pathfinder club to pack “treat bags” for the seniors in your church. Make them for the older people who can’t come to church very often. Create a card with your favorite Bible verse on it. Write a short prayer of blessing and thanksgiving. Include cartons of juice, soft treats, loving gifts, and a big paper hug (see below).



LET'S VISIT!

Senior people often enjoy short visits filled with joy. They can easily get tired, so don't stay too long. Bring a simple gift, like a small cake, homemade bread, soft fruit, or flowers. Sing a happy song. Pray. Recite or read a Bible verse. Tell or act out a Bible story.

Give them a picture you have drawn. Finish with another song and a prayer. Choose some of the special questions from the list below and listen to their stories.



Use a roll of plain wallpaper or stick several sheets of strong paper together. Lie on the paper and stretch your arms out to each side. Open your hands. Ask a grown-up to draw around your arms and hands, ending when they reach your shoulders and chest. Stand up and draw two lines across the chest area, joining the outlines of the arms together to make a long strip with an arm and hand at each end. Cut out this long shape. This is a paper hug! The person who receives a paper hug can imagine the long arms being wrapped around them.

Decorate the paper hug in any way you like and write loving and happy messages on the strip, as well as Bible verses and short prayers. Fold it in half and carefully roll up the hug, starting with the hands so the fingers are safely inside. Tie it with a bow and give it to a lonely senior person to remind them that they are loved.

QUESTIONS TO ASK OLDER PEOPLE:



- How did you come to know Jesus?
- Tell me one of the best things that God has done for you.
- What do you most want to thank God for this week?
- How has God surprised you?
- What has God made that fills you with wonder? Why?
- Who is your favorite Bible character? Why?
- What other questions would you like to ask older people?



MEET THE SENIORS!

Involve teenagers and older children in a video project. Ask them to make short videos of the senior church members telling stories about their relationship with God and their faith experiences or sharing something about their lives that maybe no one else knows. One young person discovered that an elderly gentleman in her church had won a gold medal in the Olympics! These videos can be shown as special spotlights in a service, perhaps in the month when it is the senior person's birthday. Or they can be used in a special program to celebrate seniors.

SENIOR TEA PARTY

Hold a tea party for seniors in your home or at church. Help the older children and teenagers make food that the older people will enjoy. Teach the children how to serve the food politely by carrying plates and offering different things to the older people. Perhaps you could also have a concert including talent from the older people as well as the children so they learn more about each other.



ADOPT A GRANDPARENT/ GRANDCHILD

Match the children in your family or church to an adopted "grandparent" of the same gender as the child. Encourage them to visit with each other, along with one of the child's parents, after the church service each week. The child can give a small gift to the older person, such as a handmade card, bookmark, homemade cake, produce, or flowers. The senior person could bring a small treat for the child based on their interests, such as stamps, seeds to grow, storybooks, or a small cake or sweet. The adopted grandparent and child can pray for each other and tell each other what they have learned about God each week. ■

Karen Holford is the Family, Children's, and Women's Ministries Director of the Trans-European Division. She likes to laugh with children and learn from older people!

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

General Conference

Annual Council meetings were held at the Adventist World Headquarters in October 2023. Spouses met together for meetings about team ministry and spent time praying for their children and grandchildren. Featured speakers were Willie and Elaine Oliver from GC Family Ministries. The spouses also spent a day of fellowship at a local museum.



Nancy Wilson, Ministerial Spouses Association sponsor, gave words of encouragement to the spouses at Annual Council.



Delegate spouses attending Annual Council enjoyed an outing to a museum in Washington, DC.



Spouses had a special meal together during Annual Council.

Inter-American Division

In February 2023, the Central Mexican Union Mission held a ministerial council, "I Will Go Be Your Witness," in Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo, Mexico. The event was attended by Ramón and Aurora Canals from the General Conference and Josney Rodríguez and Pedro and Cecilia Iglesias from the

IAD. About 123 families from the five fields of the union territory enjoyed inspiring messages, socializing, and a balanced program at the paradisiacal port of Guerrero. At the end of the council, five pastors were set apart for holy ministry through a solemn ordination ceremony.



In February 2023, pastoral families met in Central Mexico.



Pastors' kids gathered in Central Mexican Union.



Five pastors were ordained in a special ceremony in Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo, Mexico.



Ramón and Aurora Canals spoke at the Ministerial Council in Mexico.

Northern Asia-Pacific Division

Taiwan Conference (TWC) Ministerial Spouses Association aims to provide a platform that combines learning, growth, interaction, participation, communication, and dialogue. This helps pastors' spouses establish a holistic view of ministry that includes body, mind, and soul, enabling them to face the joys and challenges in pastoral ministry.

Last year TWC Ministerial Spouses Association held an annual retreat with sessions on the role of the pastor's spouse, interpersonal skills, and recreating pastoral couples' relationships. Spouses also enjoyed activities such as group discussion, prayer sessions, and fellowship. Spouses from various regions enthusiastically participated, surpassing previous attendance numbers.

We were honored to have Raquel Arrais from NSD as the main speaker. Her insights profoundly inspired those attending and illuminated the broader scope of service for spouses: "We are not confined within the walls of our own churches; we are meant to venture out, connect with new souls, and engage in the ministry of relationships. It is



Pastoral spouses met for "The Best You Can Be" retreat in Taiwan.



Ministerial couples gathered in Taiwan for a weekend of meetings.

through extending comfort, encouragement, and sharing that we too experience personal growth and the joy of service.”

Those who attended were deeply nourished in body, mind, and spirit. Whether through the enriching seminars, the thoughtful messages of the speaker, or the hands-on activities, the retreat brought new commitment, blessings,

and inspiration to continue our ministry along with our spouses in these challenging times.

We offer our gratitude to God for orchestrating this retreat in such a beautiful way. Through Him, we can be “the best we can be.” “Let the kindness of the Lord our God be over us. Make the work of our hands last. Make the work of our hands last!” (Psalm 90:17, CEV).



Ministerial spouses gathered for a group picture in Taiwan.

Southern Asia Division

A Shepherdess Council for pastors’ wives in Southeast India Union (SEIU) was conducted at Oxford Sainik Academy, Amaravathi, in July 2023. Krupa Victor, ministerial spouse coordinator for SUD, conducted a meeting on “Role of the Shepherdess in Soul-Winning.” Another session, by Mrs. Queen Mary, brought out that Shepherdesses are separated by God like Aaron to carry out God’s work.

In the afternoon a special program was conducted by Mrs. Elizabeth. A cross was placed on the stage, and a call was made for Shepherdesses to write the names of people whom they are unable to forgive and nail the paper on the cross. Many came forward to nail names on the cross and commit themselves to God to be a forgiving Shepherdess. In the evening the consecration service was by Pastor John Justin, stewardship director, SEIU; he talked about letting go of worries based on Matthew 6:34. In his message he shared that when our minds are filled with today’s problems, we pile up tomorrow’s worries along with today’s. The council ended with thanks for the glory of God.



Shepherdesses brought names and nailed them to the cross as an act of forgiveness.



The council in Southeast India Union inspired 121 Shepherdesses in ministry.



WORLD CHURCH QUARTERLY DAYS OF PRAYER & FASTING

April 6, 2024 | July 6, 2024 | October 5, 2024 | January 4, 2025

Find the program materials at
revivalandreformation.org/prayerdays

