

# MINISTRY

*International Journal for Pastors*

*August 2006*



ONE PASTOR, MANY CHURCHES

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# MINISTRY

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# IT'S GREAT THAT WE SEND MISSIONARIES ALL OVER THE WORLD TO REACH VARIOUS GROUPS. BUT WE MUSTN'T FORGET THOSE GROUPS WHO ARE RIGHT HERE AMONG US, AND THAT INCLUDES THE DEAF.

## Bravo! *Ministry*

Your articles on ministering to those persons with disabilities have rightly hit the nail on the head! I have personally heard the headmaster of the Ghana School for the Deaf (Jamasi) reiterating the need for Seventh-day Adventists to incorporate sign language into their pastorates. This [headmaster] wished his deaf students could have a part in this message.

Our institutions stand for one thing: mission. In her article, "Including all—omitting none" (June 2006), Charlotte L. V. Thoms closed by saying, "Disabilities is a ministry whose time has come." Arthur Griffith, in his article "A Hidden Mission Field" (June 2006), also added, "The point is simple. As a church, we can do much more to reach this important segment of our population. It's great that we send missionaries all over the world to reach various groups. But we mustn't forget those groups who are right here among us, and that includes the deaf."

These writers are speaking the same tongue with Christ, "'Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage'" (Matthew 22:9, KJV). Both the gospel and the church's mission are all-inclusive. Let's gather them.

Bravo to *Ministry*!

—Clifford Owusu Gyamfi, Valley View University, Accra, Ghana.

## Availability of past articles

Please let me know if you still have the reprints from the November 1976 issue of *Ministry*. At the time of printing, the copies I possess have a single copy price of 15 cents. I would like to order 100 copies, or whatever quantity is in a bulk unit. My husband and I are helping plant a Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gallia County, Ohio, and we can use these to give to our Bible study students.

—Gloria Hinson, Bidwell, Ohio, United States

## The challenge of postmodernism

Thank you for the excellent articles by Jon Paulien about the challenge of postmodernism (February and April 2006). After following the discussions about the postmodern culture in *Ministry* for quite a while, this was the first Adventist writer I have read who not only gave a description of the emerging culture, but also addressed the Christian church's possible responses. Far more, he claims God's hand in the postmodern condition.

Serving as a youth minister of the Adventist church in Germany I can state that our youth already live in the postmodern condition. Therefore, the future of our Adventist church in the western part of the world depends highly on our ability to adapt to postmodern thinking and to respond in the suggested ways. As indicated, this involves changes in many areas. Moving in this direction, we should keep in mind that this change is for the sake of lost people. God is focusing on lost people—in modern and postmodern cultures.

—Pastor Wolfgang Dorn, South-Bavaria Conference, Germany ■

## EDITOR'S NOTE:

Unfortunately we do not have extra copies for those years. But the issues are available in another format. Every issue of the journal is available online from its inception in January 1928 through December 2005. To access, go to [www.ministrymagazine.org](http://www.ministrymagazine.org), then click "Ministry Collection 1928–Present." Or for more specific searches, click "online archives."

# A specialty to be coveted?

WILLIE E. HUCKS II



Pastoring multichurch districts has become a worldwide phenomenon. I once had a three-church district with a ninety-minute drive from one end to the other and church members scattered over ten, mostly rural, counties. In some countries like the Philippines, pastors often have to care for twenty to twenty-five churches with no better transportation than the city bus.

Such pastoring of multichurch districts poses many challenges—not just territorial and logistical. How do pastors do it? Where do they turn for counsel and encouragement?

## Multichurch life

While single-church districts have challenges of their own, the challenges of multichurch districts exceed theirs. For example, distance between churches, inter-church tensions, choice of Sabbath School locations for the pastor's children, and attention to stewardship and church growth are a few of the problems such pastors face.

As a result of my own experience, I advocated to my ministerial students in their pastoral ministry class to view multichurch district ministry as a specialty that is to be coveted. Coveted? What might a pastor covet when driving great distances, and dividing their time and attention among several churches that can often be different in temperaments and worship styles? It could be argued that such a ministry benefits pastors in that it can increase their people skills and sharpen their organizational skills—at least that has been so in my case. Pastoring more than one church at one time made

me a better pastor, and more than that, it made me a better person. Interacting with varied temperaments and experiencing differing worship styles broadened my ministry in a manner that I could not have experienced otherwise. Each member in each setting contributed to me in ways that they may never know.

## A joyful ministry

My burden for multichurch districts was born when I was about eight years old. Our district pastor occasionally visited our small, out-of-the-way church, some thirty miles from the larger church. I wondered why he didn't come more often. At that very young age I vowed that if I ever became a pastor I would not shortchange my smaller church for the larger one.

Many years later, those days and nights during which my newlywed wife and I shuttled back and forth among our three churches in southeast Texas, were some of the sweetest days and nights of our lives. I wouldn't trade one experience from any of those days, including the frustrations, for anything else in the world.

But there are pastors, such as those whom I met during a recent visit to Nairobi, Kenya, who pastor more than twenty churches and companies at one time. How do they do it? Is it exhausting? No doubt about it! Do they face challenges that others can only attempt to imagine? Indeed! But do they love what they do? The joy was written on each face.

## We salute you

To these and countless other pastors of multichurch districts we dedicate this issue. This issue does not promote multichurch pastoral ministry as a stepping-stone to the "higher calling" of single-church ministry. Rather, it affirms, celebrates, and strengthens these pastors and their families to press on in the name of the One who called them to this great work that they so faithfully fulfill.

In this issue Nikolaus Satelmajer, Reger Smith, Jr., and I personally interviewed, contacted by telephone, or communicated by email with a number of pastors in several countries. Reger Smith, Jr., in the lead article, tells you the stories of some of these district pastors—stories about the joys and challenges in their ministries, insights into their spouses and children who share in their pastoral experiences, and many other things. Discover how they face tasks and mount challenges that seem insurmountable, but regardless of their locale, the issues remain the same.

Ellie Gil, a pastor's wife, shares her experience and counsel with other pastors' wives through her article. Juleun Johnson writes both from the perspective of a pastor and a pastor's son. Finally, Barry Kimbrough, Marty Thurber, and Joe Webb share counsel in managing multichurch districts.

We thank these writers for their contributions. May this issue be just a start in the process of affirming and empowering the men and women who have taken on this glorious task of shepherding more than one church at a time. ■



# One pastor, many churches

**Reger Smith, Jr.**



*Reger Smith, Jr. is an associate director of communication for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.*

**T**he megachurch grabs headlines in most parts of today's world—the media-savvy pastor with a large staff serving congregations of 10,000 to 20,000 attendees, the huge, well-equipped sanctuary (arena in some cases), and the large amounts of money and community influence that flow into and out of this center. This phenomenon seems to mark the pinnacle of the “successful” church.

But worlds apart from that excitement, down the side street and into the country, sits the church known to the majority of Christians—small and simple and sometimes struggling to survive. And it doesn't have a pastoral staff—for the pastor usually serves a staff of churches. The multichurch district presents the most common challenge for today's pastor.

Is one pastor for many churches an effective method of ministry in today's world? Or does the multichurch district function best as a springboard for the young pastor who wants to prove himself or herself? Is the district pastor as called and gifted as the megachurch pastor? Can this ministry traveling among many small units also be a definition of pastoral success?

We talked to a sampling of pastors from around the world who fill similar roles and created a portrait of today's district pastor.

A group of six Seventh-day Adventist pastors sat down in Nairobi, Kenya, to discuss their experiences. We interviewed two pastors of rural districts in central Pennsylvania, United States,

and got their stories. And we received input from pastoral districts in Europe as well as other parts of the United States.

## Advantages

District pastors named several unique advantages that come with the territory.

It's a special event when the district pastor comes to serve. This “specialness” relates to the number of churches and their geographic location in the district. While the average pastor in our sample serves between three and five congregations, some, especially in Kenya and eastern Europe, serve as many as nine or ten or more churches in addition to several smaller companies. For them, this confers the status of the pastor as a special guest, a change from the routine, with all the trappings that it can bring. Members are happy to see the pastor and lay aside some of their mundane concerns for an attitude of celebration. One Kenyan pastor compares this to an evangelistic event.

“There's a sense of revival and high expectations,” says Peter Mbugua, the youngest in the Kenyan pastoral group. He has pastored for 10 years in rural and urban areas and currently serves 9 churches and 18 companies. And he spoke of an additional bonus. “I can improve on my sermons through repetition.”

The relative ease of getting members involved in the life of the church is another advantage according to Tom Hennlein, pastor of a district in central Pennsylvania, United States. “I spend much less time and effort with nominating committees assigning church functions than in a larger, single church. Everybody knows they have to do something; they know it's not just on the pastor's shoulders to make the church run.”

## Challenges

As usual, a flip side exists to these advantages.

The “specialness” of the pastoral visit can get in the way of true pastoral duties, keeping the pastor from becoming involved in the nuts and bolts of the congregation. The celebration atmosphere of the visit can make a member hesitant to bring up issues that might dampen



Photo: Nikolaus Satelmajer

*(L to R) Pastors Simon Maina and Peter Mbugua*

that special spirit—further distancing a pastor from true shepherd duties.

Johnson Othoo, a pastor with 33 years experience in districts and administrative leadership, asks, “Can you be anything other than a guest? Can you really address problems? Can you do true pastoral work while serving so many churches in a district?” Othoo also points out that the repetition of sermons can lead to laziness in sermon preparation.

“I don’t spend as much time as I’d like with my district congregations,” adds Hennlein. “I put that time into

churches, but after I explain it to them, they usually understand.” The members want to see the pastor *and* the family, so he plans regular times when his family accompanies him to the other churches. More often, however, they worship at the home church.

The African pastors noted that their personal concerns extend to privacy and finances.

“Our home is always visited,” notes a 16-year pastor with three children and three churches, “especially if the parsonage shares the church compound.

very intentional about explaining the role of the pastor and his family to our children.”

Pastor Othoo laments the lack of time the pastor has with his own children. Simon Maina, a Kenyan pastor with two children and six churches, states that it’s particularly tough on small children, especially as children develop preferences for certain churches and friends.

## Local church leadership

The most commonly agreed answer to the challenges of the district pastor lies in cultivating local church leadership, especially among the local elders. These men and women often play the role of lay pastor, so their empowerment and training can make the difference in the vitality of each district congregation.

“I have several elders of the churches who are well prepared,” says Phillippe Langjahr, a pastor of two churches in Switzerland. And a Swiss colleague says that a local tradition is for church elders, not the pastor, to lead the church business meetings. “I am rarely leading any meeting,” says Arnold Zwahlen (three churches), “but I am supporting the elders and department leaders in the background. Teamwork between local leaders and the pastor stays as a key for learning and self-support in any area of church business.”

Sicalo says that his elders are the key when he rotates between two churches each week. They are prepared and equipped to fill his roles when he is away.

Hennlein says it’s the role of the pastor to empower the elders. They must be given the freedom to operate and use their ministry gifts. He had one elder approach him and say, “I know this is your territory, but would you be upset if I were to preach an evangelistic series?” Hennlein said, “Not a problem!” and gave him the go-ahead. When the elder said this would be his first experience preaching a series, Hennlein recommended that he share the load. Two weeks into the meetings, the elder came and thanked him. “I’m so glad you didn’t let me do this whole thing by myself.” His enthusiasm and Hennlein’s

# IS THE DISTRICT PASTOR AS CALLED AND GIFTED AS THE MEGACHURCH PASTOR?

working with the local leaders. Even at that, I get stressed trying to get to all the leaders,” a fact echoed by Othoo, that leads to less face-to-face time with individual members.

## Family life

There are some distinct disadvantages to the family and personal life of the district pastor.

Conrad Reichert (Pennsylvania, United States) mentions the need to select one church for his family, particularly for the benefit of his children. “My family needs stability,” he says. “We pick the one that’s best for them, usually the one with the most young people their age. That doesn’t always sit well with the other

It’s hard to say ‘no’ to guests, and no privacy exists. We are expected to be the hosts of the church. On wedding days, for instance, the wedding party uses the pastor’s house. The guests of the church expect the pastor’s family to feed them. Overnight guests use the children’s rooms on a regular basis. There are no funds provided for such entertainment so these expenses come out of the pastor’s salary. And, on top of that, if you object, you are then not considered to be a ‘man of God.’ ”

It’s also a tough job for the pastor’s wife. In addition to serving as the social host and chief cook, she is seen as the assistant pastor, noted the Kenyan group. When he is not there, she is expected to fill the role. She handles the problem issues just like the pastor, but she doesn’t receive any pay.

All the pastors noted the toll and potential for problems on family life. It’s a particular problem when children are missing an absent parent and are at the stage of establishing their own social community.

“When my children were small, my seven-year-old son would cry when I wasn’t around at worship time,” shares Juan Sicalo of MD, United States. “My wife would tell him ‘Dad is working for Jesus—and we are too!’ We had to be



*Pastor Conrad Reichert and family*

experience helped make the series a success.



Photo: Reger Smith, Jr.

Pastor Tom Hennlein

The Kenyan pastors agree that elders must be empowered. They hold monthly elders' meetings in their districts, and some churches have up to 40 elders in one congregation. They warn, however, of some challenges they've experienced down this road.

"The elders are closer to the members," pointed out one of the pastors. "Some of them have been known to use this closeness for political purposes, to sabotage the influence or program of the pastor. When elders are filling the role of pastor the majority of the time, it is difficult to fight that type of negative attitude when a pastor must spread himself among ten or more churches."

### The call

One of the challenges the district pastor faces may not be so much performance as attitude and status. This can vary from place to place; but if the pinnacle of pastoral ministry is seen as the senior pastor position in a large congregation, where does the rural multichurch district pastor fit in?

The pastors surveyed had a fairly uniform and positive view of their role as district pastors. Some noted, however, that a lower perceived status of a district pastor is often more prevalent among members.

"I've seen congregations who felt they had 'risen to the top' when they were finally able to have a pastor all to themselves," notes Reichert. "I haven't been to other countries, but I suppose

we have more of that mindset in North America than elsewhere. I would hope that a pastor doesn't have the idea that he is starting 'down there' when serving in a multichurch district, and that he is working his way up. I don't see either situation as more important than the other. I think there are probably pastors who function better in different situations."

Which brings to mind the question of a calling. Is a special gift required to be the successful district pastor, or is it something every pastor must excel at in order to advance in their ministry?

Reichert replies, "I think there are pastors who can pastor one church better than multiple congregations and vice versa. I guess there is a process of discovery about that for some and others just know where they fit best. Some pastors don't allow their members much freedom in ministry or don't allow lay persons and, rarely, guests into their pulpits to preach. This would be almost impossible to sustain in a multichurch district."

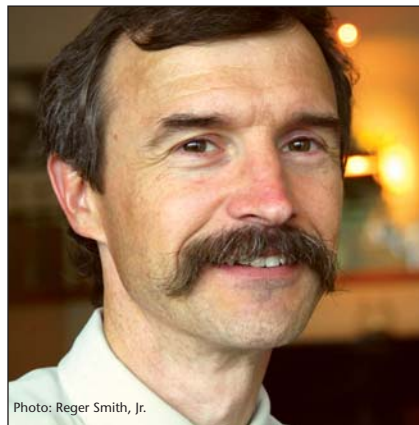
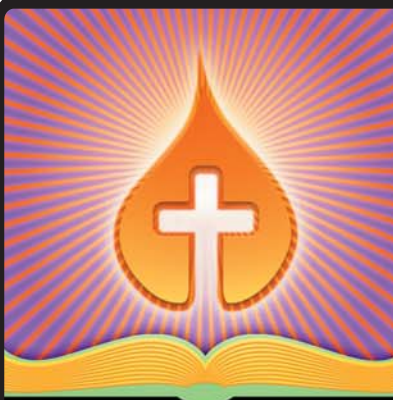


Photo: Reger Smith, Jr.

Pastor Conrad Reichert

### Suggestions for a more effective ministry

While pastoral status may often be known (or at least perceived) to be an issue from the viewpoint of some church members, it did not register among pastors with demonstrated ability in handling many churches. However, several suggestions were given that could improve effectiveness of ministry and lower levels of stress or other concerns for district pastors.



# ACTS 100

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## Consistency more than quantity

Read the Bible daily. Although the amount of Scripture read may vary from person to person, believers who read the Bible daily are better prepared spiritually for the journey ahead.

"Those who are willing to immerse themselves daily in God's Word will find that He reveals enough to keep them busy for the day at hand!"  
—Henry and Richard Blackaby, *Hearing God's Voice*, p. 110.

Read the Scriptures in the morning. Even if you intend to read more later in the day, do not start your day without taking in God's Word. To better concentrate on the text, consider using a Bible that does not have annotations or study aids. They can be distracting and keep you from the actual text. Using different translations each year can help you "see" passages in a new way.

—Don Pucil, *Lifeway Christian Resources*

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There is a limit to the number of churches a pastor can effectively handle. This was voiced by the Kenyan group who face the financial limitations shared around the world in multichurch districts.

"It's best not to have more than five churches, depending on the location," says Joshua Njuguna, ministerial secretary for the Central Kenyan Conference, who has pastored as many as ten churches at once. He suggests that urban pastors be limited to two to three churches and rural districts from three to five.

Finances figure in several suggestions, including salary increases, better support for the additional duties placed on the district pastor (hosting and feeding) and additional education and training. Other suggestions center on the areas of approach or of attitude.

Pastors Lucas Otwerwa and Simon Maina ask for increased moral support for district pastors from church leadership and members alike. Othoo thinks it would help if more time were taken to understand the role and challenges of

the pastor. And Mbugua wishes for impartial treatment of pastors, without distinction between those with one or many churches.

There are also suggestions of differences that pastors can make for themselves. Among them exists the need for the pastor to treat the churches in the district with equality. Visits among congregations should be spread evenly, no matter how long it takes. Efforts should be made to occasionally unite the congregations that share a pastor—some recommend this on a regular basis. And the district pastor must deliberately play up the advantages while not letting the potential problems of multichurch districts overwhelm him.

But foremost among the advice is the attitude that, whether by necessity or choice, the multichurch district



Photo: Nikolaus Satelmajer  
 Pastor Lucas Otwerwa

continues to be an opportunity where God can bless, where ministry can happen.

Hennlein relates this incident: "I was talking with a pastor friend who just had a sixth church added to his district. The congregation was brought in kicking and screaming; they didn't want to share a pastor with five other churches but there really was no choice because of their size and financial condition. After about six months they started realizing what was happening in the other district churches, how they were growing and thriving. They began to come on board with the concept and, as their attitude changed, they began to grow and thrive as well. Their mindset changed from one where they thought the pastor was there to do the work to one where they realized they were the ones to get the work of the church done."

District churches may not look like megachurches, but, as Zechariah states, it is " 'not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts' " (Zech. 4:6, RSV). ■



# Lessons from a successful two-church district

Barry Kimbrough



Barry Kimbrough, M. Div., is pastor of the Taunton and Foxboro Seventh-day Adventist Churches in Massachusetts, United States.

**E**ver thought of district pastoring as a challenge? Consider the story of J. Frank Norris.

Born in 1877, he grew up in a dilapidated shack in Texas, and was often beaten by his alcoholic father. Nearly killed in a gun fight at age 15, his Christian mother nursed him back to health, telling her son that God had called him to be a preacher. Her prophecy came true. He would become known as the “Texas Tornado,” taking the country by storm with his colorful, flamboyant, and controversial ministry.

Norris wasn’t afraid of multi-tasking. In 1909 he assumed the pastorate of the First Baptist Church of Ft. Worth, and he did everything he could to make it the biggest church in the world. He produced a daily radio program that flooded the airwaves, and edited a religious newspaper that reached a circulation of 70,000. He achieved his goal: By 1924 the church had 5,000 in attendance.

In 1934, at age 57, he was invited to pastor the Temple Baptist Church in Detroit, Michigan, which he accepted without giving up the Ft. Worth church. For the next 16 years he pastored both churches though separated by 1,300 miles, commuting by train and later by plane. During those years the Sunday School attendance of each church exceeded 5,000. By 1949 the churches’ combined membership had reached 25,000—at that time the largest membership under one pastor in the world.

His accomplishments are especially impressive in light of his limitations. From a poor, troubled

home, he had few advantages. He did not have a great preaching voice. His combative personality was a liability that often caused the loss of key supporters, yet he became a master pulpiter, attracting huge numbers and powerfully reaching hearts.

I stand in awe. After ten years of district pastoring, I know the difficulties of this juggling act. The task can seem overwhelming. We are called to reach entire cities or towns with the gospel, build up two or more churches in different communities, and keep up with the never-ending demands of a pastor—all at the same time! Not long ago I was secretly complaining of my plight. *This surely would be easier if I only had one church,* I thought.

## The challenge

Then I came across Norris’s story.

It gave me much pause for thought, and a challenge began to form in my mind. His example showed that big things *can* happen when a district preacher does his best with God’s help. A new vision gripped me.

His unusual two-church ministry seemed to add new dignity to the role of the district pastor. Here was a very talented megachurch leader who could have easily stayed with his one large parish, yet he willingly chose to oversee an additional church. Far from being a lesser ministerial task, such ministry must indeed be a higher calling.

I discovered several of his inspiring personal qualities. A man of vision, he boldly aimed for significant church growth. Everything from his provocative sermon titles emblazoned on large canvas banners to his personal contacts was bent toward this end. I was reminded of two statements from the pen of Ellen G. White: “Success in any line demands a definite aim.”<sup>1</sup>

“We are altogether too narrow in our plans. We need to be broader minded. . . . His work is to go forward in cities and towns and villages. . . . We must get away from our smallness and make larger plans.”<sup>2</sup>

Norris’s preaching was described as “heartrending and convincing,” and I readily agree after listening to an audio file of one of his powerful sermons.<sup>3</sup>

He firmly stood for his convictions, and his fearlessness attracted the common people. He wrote: “. . . I had a broad axe and laid it at the tap root of the trees of dancing, gambling, saloon, houses of ill fame, ungodly conduct, high and low, far and near. . . . I asked no questions. . . and went in arm and hammer brand style. The crowds came; large numbers were saved!”<sup>4</sup>

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## Four principles

But what he did for his two churches got my attention. I found four principles that can be applied today:

*Valuing the churches.* Imagine the impact when his Sunday-morning hearers knew he had traveled 1,300 miles to stand in the pulpit. By doing this regularly for 16 years, he showed that he valued both of his churches equally and served them at great personal sacrifice. Such valuing would surely inspire members to give of their service in return. By my presence I reveal how much I value a church, and this becomes a major principle of successful district work. "We never see the pastor" is a sad but honest complaint sometimes voiced by the smallest churches in multi-church districts. One minister faced the daunting task of a five-church district, but he was able to make weekly contact by holding prayer meeting Monday through Friday evenings, each night in a different church. In today's multichurch districts, it may not be possible to give exact equal time to every congregation, but if we have Paul's "deep concern for all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:28),<sup>5</sup> it will be revealed by our actions. Paul set a fine example: "He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches" (Acts 15:41).

*Training leaders.* In 1939 Norris founded the Bible Baptist Seminary. A number of the graduates went on to establish some of the largest churches in America. He also conducted a weekly one-hour exegetical Bible study class for his 250 Sunday School teachers. This underlines the importance of training. "Every church," wrote Ellen White, "should be a training school for Christian workers."<sup>6</sup> Training events attract both long-time and prospective members, and they help keep the newly baptized in the faith. For the skills I can't teach, video-training resources are available.<sup>7</sup> People are hungry to discover and use their spiritual gifts, and they will be attracted to a church that can teach them how. Trained leaders make for stronger, vibrant churches and happier, less overworked pastors.


*Empowering leaders.* Norris appointed leaders to take care of day-to-day operations in his churches. One of his special burdens was child and youth ministries. In 1913 he hired Louis Entzminger, known for his organizational skills and passion for child evangelism, to direct his Sunday Schools. In 1924 he hired G. B. Vick to superintend the teen and young adult department. Attendance grew by thousands, and no other Sunday School in the land

could claim such numbers. Our districts may not be staffed with child ministry professionals, but having well-trained leaders will go a long way toward making the churches attractive to families. Every church has at least one person with a gift for working with children. Encouraging and empowering that person will be a richly rewarded task. Over the past decade the Kuna Seventh-day Adventist Church in Idaho has grown from 20 to 100 families, with 120 kids under the age of 18, largely as a result of emphasizing a child-friendly focus.<sup>8</sup>

Whatever the department, sharing the leadership makes it possible for ministries to continue in our absence. In one district I was blessed with an outreach-minded head elder who enthusiastically shared evangelism ideas with the congregation before the worship service each Sabbath morning. As a beginning pastor I wanted to be a good leader, so in my well-meant (but misguided) zeal, I phoned the gentleman and suggested that I should take over this role. A humble man, he graciously agreed. But I soon realized my error and asked him to resume his leadership, which he did. He was able to be there every week when I couldn't. We worked as a team on several outreach events. Eventually church attendance doubled, and this elder was largely responsible. Other good leaders in this congregation made it easy for me to attend to needs in the second church, which also had fine leaders and began hosting lay-led evangelistic programs. "There are diversities of activities," wrote the apostle Paul, "but it is the same God who works all in all" (1 Cor. 12:6).

*Using media.* Any "means of communication that reaches the general public" is the dictionary definition of *media*.<sup>9</sup> In 1924 Norris led his Ft. Worth congregation to purchase and operate a radio station. Eventually they had to sell it, but the church retained broadcasting privileges for the next 50 years. He also published *The Fundamentalist*, a widely read religious newspaper that included his sermons. All of today's churches use some media, but as I look at my ministry I see ways I could use it more. Bulletin inserts, newsletters, press releases, DVDs, radio or TV programs, and Web sites, for example,

speak to large numbers at once and that is the advantage of media to pastors of multiple churches. By using the few forms of media that were available in the ancient world, "all who dwelt in Asia heard" (Acts 19:10). If that could be done without electronics, certainly twenty-first century districts can make effective use of today's technology. We have more media options than either the apostles or J. Frank Norris. From signboards to satellite evangelism, media continues as a necessary tool of any growing district.

While not an encyclopedic list, the four principles above are key factors for success. If one gifted man could use them and see grand results, why can't we do the same by working diligently with the tools at hand?<sup>10</sup> 

1 Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1952), 262.

2 ———, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 1946), 46.

3 [www.learnthebible.org](http://www.learnthebible.org).

4 Quoted in [www.higherpraise.com/preachers/norris.htm](http://www.higherpraise.com/preachers/norris.htm).

5 Scripture references are from the New King James Version.

6 Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1942), 149. Further counsel on training from this page: "... members should be taught how to give Bible readings, how to conduct and teach Sabbath-school classes, how to best help the poor and to care for the sick, how to work for the unconverted. There should be schools of health, cooking schools, and classes in various lines of Christian help work. There should not only be teaching, but actual work under experienced instructors."

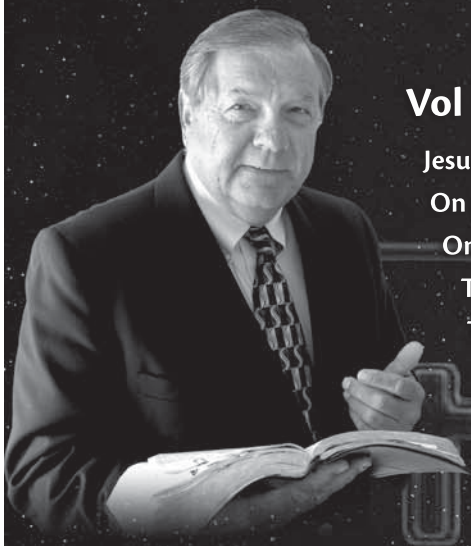
7 Some resources can be found at: [www.AdventSource.com](http://www.AdventSource.com), Seminar in a Box at [www.ministerialassociation.com/resources/viewRelated.php](http://www.ministerialassociation.com/resources/viewRelated.php), and Children's Ministries at [www.childmin.com/PDFs/Certification/acma-self.pdf](http://www.childmin.com/PDFs/Certification/acma-self.pdf).

8 Noelene Johnson and Willie Oliver, "Creating a Family-friendly Church," found at [www.adventistreview.org/2003-1523/story2.html](http://www.adventistreview.org/2003-1523/story2.html) and a May 25, 2006, phone conversation with Aileen Sox, a Kuna church children's leader.

9 *New World Dictionary of the American Language*, second college edition (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 882.

10 Other sources used: Robert J. Morgan, *On This Day: 365 Amazing and Inspiring Stories about Saints, Martyrs and Heroes* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997), May 8 reading: "Fighting Fundamentalist;" [www.biblepreaching.com/bionorris.html](http://www.biblepreaching.com/bionorris.html); and [www.answers.com/topic/j-frank-norris](http://www.answers.com/topic/j-frank-norris).

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# Finding balance in a multichurch district

Ellie Gil



*Ellie Gil is a freelance writer, mother, and wife of a multichurch district pastor in Concord and Salisbury, North Carolina, United States.*

**W**hether you are the type of pastor's wife who is up front and visible alongside your husband or the quiet strength in his shadow, you have to find your place in ministry. It might not be a job you asked for or ever dreamed of, but it's the one that comes from having married a minister.

We often have the challenge of trying to fit in, to share our gifts and talents, and to find balance between serving and living. Of all the normal challenges of ministry, you will likely have to face the reality of a multichurch district, where you're pastoring two or more churches with your husband.

To every question about successful service in a multichurch district, there is usually not a clear right or wrong answer. The following, however, are a few answers that have worked for some pastoral families working in a multichurch setting.

## **Benefits of serving in a multichurch district**

Serving in a multichurch district has not only challenges but blessings as well. Sometimes we might be called to serve in a church where turmoil and discord reign. At those times we might feel every bit of joy drained from our soul. It is then, though, that we have the opportunity to escape (usually every other week) and serve another church that usually, either by Conference design or divine providence, will boost our spiritual energies and help us keep

going. When one church might be draining, the other usually is Spirit-filling.

We also have the benefit of getting to know and serve two congregations. I enjoy the challenges of moving from district to district as I meet and befriend those whom I expect to spend eternity with. It is truly a blessing to serve many.

## **Challenges of serving in a multichurch district**

Over and over I hear the same concern from pastors' wives: It is difficult to balance the time factor in wanting to give equal service to both churches. Yet each church is unique in needs and expectations. The 50/50 ratio of time is not a rule you must follow. Learn what the needs are of your congregations; then prayerfully ask for the Lord's guidance as to how and where to share your gifts, time, and talents in order to meet those needs. Some churches function well with little involvement from the pastor and his wife; others are much more dependent.

As a pastor's wife you must find balance between serving the churches entrusted to your care and serving your family. Always remember that your children, marriage, and family come first. If your home is in turmoil, your ministry often suffers.

The service you may offer will differ depending on the age and needs of your family. Often young pastors' wives feel alone and overwhelmed as they try to serve the church while juggling small children during Sabbath. When the children are small and their demands great, we must not overload our plate with trying to do more than we can.

When our families are young, we should serve in a helper capacity only. Do not take on responsibilities that will stress you to the max. When you feel overworked and overextended, your children and your husband will usually be on the receiving end.

As your children grow, you will find it easier to take on leadership roles, if you feel that is your calling. More often than not, successful pastor's wives are not always upfront and visible. Many church members appreciate the quiet commitment of a dependable helper. Remember—it is their church, and we are there only to help lead and serve.

## **Choosing between the needs of my family and being visible**

We have to choose what is best for our children. Sometimes in a multichurch district

one of the churches will have a stronger program for our children, yet we may feel an obligation to give equal time to the other church. I don't have a definite answer to this question, other than to tell you that the spiritual needs of your children should come first.

Early on in our ministry, at our first district with three churches, I felt that I should always be with my husband. I would make our oldest son, then two years old, sit through two church services with no Sabbath School. I did my best to record Bible stories

other special occasions. This has worked well for us.

Many times a family will mentor your children when your responsibilities call you to the other church. If this happens, always make sure that the family that helps you has the same standards you have taught your children.

### **Serving the churches even when I'm not visibly participating**

If you have time to accompany your husband during visitations, especially to

some point the nominating committee will ask you to take on a leadership role.

First, you must learn the art of saying No. But never say No right away; always take time to prayerfully consider each opportunity for service. Let the Holy Spirit guide you as to where your talents can be best used. Always consider how much time such a commitment will take from your family. If you would like to take a challenge but are concerned about time, ask the nominating committee

**A**LWAYS REMEMBER THAT YOUR CHILDREN, MARRIAGE, AND FAMILY COME FIRST. IF YOUR HOME IS IN TURMOIL, YOUR MINISTRY OFTEN SUFFERS.

on cassette so that he could listen to something he liked and be quiet and still. One Sabbath a dear saint told me that it was highly irreverent for my child to be listening to tapes during the sermon. The following Sabbath, I took a book for my son during the sermons, and after about three weeks of this, my son told me, in tears, that he did not want to go to church. In my effort to please others, I had neglected to make meeting Jesus every Sabbath a happy occasion for my son. At that moment I decided that the spiritual health of my children would come first.

I decided, with my husband's blessing, that I would choose the church with the best Sabbath School program as my home base. I would attend there three times a month, and visit the other churches on the other week. I have continued this practice, and now that my children are 19, 14, and 11, I allow them to attend their home base church alone when my husband and I are at another church. We do ask them to be with us in the other church at least two to three times a quarter, for special Sabbaths, church socials, picnics, and

the church you attend less frequently, the members will not feel that you are neglecting them. Prepare a big batch of vegetable soup and freeze it to send with him to a sick member, along with a note of care and concern. Take advantage of your cordless phone while you're are cooking or doing chores to make a quick phone call and pray with someone who is discouraged. During your break at work, mail a word of encouragement to someone you have not seen in a while.

Invite members from your churches to a Sabbath lunch or to share a vespers worship with your family. Each of our churches usually has one potluck a month, leaving two Sabbaths open, one of which we keep for a special family Sabbath; on the other we enjoy the fellowship of our brothers and sisters in Christ. All of these are ways to be active in ministry without always having to be visible.

### **Accepting leadership roles at either church**

No matter what your choice is as to the level of involvement in ministry, at

to elect a co-leader to serve with you. This will ease your load and also allows you to mentor a church member for more church responsibility. We are successful when we equip God's people to serve.

Another concern for many pastors' wives is to accept a position on the board. Over the years, when any office that I have held in the church called for me to have a board position, I have always refrained from voting. This way, if I disagreed with my husband's vote, the other board members would not have something to talk about when the meeting was adjourned.

Finally, speak to other wives that you may feel have a successful multichurch ministry. They will have a plethora of knowledge and advice. Talk to your husband about your concerns and pray together through the hard decisions.

No question, a multichurch-district ministry comes with many challenges, especially if you let the work overwhelm you. But the blessings are there too, once you learn to juggle the fine line between serving and living. ■

# Remembering those closest to us

Juleun A. Johnson



*Juleun A. Johnson,  
M. Div., pastors a  
three-church district:  
Canton, Rolling  
Fork, and Yazoo City,  
Mississippi, United  
States*

**I**n the rush of daily routine, often the significant slides down our priority list. Such is the case with our families.

As a pastor's son and now a pastor, I have heard from other pastors' kids the memories of their formative years. Some of them recount the enjoyable days of camp meeting with friends and the times when they did fun things with mom or dad. Others do not have such happy memories.

Once I was riding with another pastor. We arrived at his home shortly after his son came home from school. With hope springing in his voice, the son asked, "Can we play ball?" "Not now," the father replied and went on with his routine tasks. Ministry—whether you are a pastor, an administrator, a chaplain, or a professor—is a serious calling from God. But that calling must not prevent you from spending time with your family. After all, you have a responsibility for the spiritual life of your family.

We should more than just hope that the spiritual needs of our children are met. We need to ensure that our children, dedicated to the Lord while they were infants, have the best opportunity for salvation. Although salvation is a personal choice (Phil. 2:12), the Bible admonishes parents (and fathers in particular), "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4, NIV). This is an admonition and a promise from God.

Training our children in the things of the Lord is a vital part of our ministry.

Perhaps you are an excellent administrator who prays for your children, but you do not spend time with them. Or maybe you are a wonderful chaplain who meets the needs of others, but you do not take time to minister to your children. Or perhaps you are a brilliant professor whose books are read by many, but you overlook or are not aware of your daughter's issues. Perhaps you are an evangelist who can hold the attention of masses with the gospel message, but your children seldom see you because you are constantly on the road. Or maybe you are an innovative pastor, admired by other pastors and members, but pay little attention to your spouse or children once you arrive home. Nothing you do should keep you from spending time with your family.

## It's not too late

What do you do if you have neglected your family? First, ask forgiveness. It is never too late to ask for forgiveness. A friend tells about getting to the point in his ministry where he asked forgiveness from his spouse and children for being away so much. Realizing that every relationship needs cultivation, he used this experience as a catalyst for a change in his ministry emphasis. If you can nurture relationships with church members and ministry leaders, you can do it for your family, too.

Second, encourage your children to experience Jesus Christ for themselves. Be patient with them, for they must make their own decisions about their spiritual life. As a minister's son, I was always around preachers, and that was good. But I did not develop a personal relationship with the Lord until I went to high school. My spiritual development was challenged and encouraged during a week of prayer at the school. The speaker spoke candidly about his relationship with the Lord. He admitted flaws as well as successes, and for the first time in my life I saw the real Jesus who should head my spiritual life. It took someone sharing their experience with me to begin my relationship with the Lord.

Third, encourage your children by sharing your spiritual journey. They will be blessed if you share the challenges and joys of your spiritual life. They may not always tell you, but your stories will encourage them and deepen your relationship with them.



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Fourth, show your family that they are valuable. As ministers, we know how to let others know their importance. Potential members are treated as

attention to individuals who until recently were strangers to us, what about our families? How much should we focus on them?

## Now is the time

Ministers often tell others, "now is the time." Now is the time for decision—for baptism, for change, for a new life. Now

ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILDREN TO EXPERIENCE JESUS FOR THEMSELVES. BUT, BE PATIENT WITH THEM, FOR THEY MUST MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS ABOUT THEIR SPIRITUAL LIFE.

individuals who are important to us. We visit them, introduce them to church members, and treat them as special people—and that they are. We invest time in them and do our best to win their confidence. Their nurture and growth are a significant focus of our ministry. If we pay that much

God does not expect us to ignore our families. Even if our children make choices that we don't approve, they are still our children. Their actions must never cancel the love we have for them. Our words and actions must always assure them that they are an important part of our lives.

is the time for change. How often have you said something like that? The apostle Paul challenges his readers that "now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).

Now is the time for us to remember our families. We, who often remind others of God's invitation, need to respond to that same invitation. ■

# Help! I am addicted!

Mihail Baci



Mihail Baci, D.Min.,  
is a Seventh-day  
Adventist pastor  
living in Superior,  
Wisconsin,  
United States.

I have discovered something. I've discovered that I am addicted. Not to alcohol, to smoking, or to pornography. No—I am addicted to the praise and affirmation of others. After more than 20 years of pastoral ministry, I have discovered that the well-being of my soul, my interior comfort, and my professional satisfaction all depended upon the reactions of people toward me. I needed constant affirmation from my parishioners. I had to have it. I had to hear words like "Thank you, Pastor, it was a great sermon" or "You are such a good speaker!" or "You are the best pastor I have ever had!"

Is appreciating a little encouragement an addiction? No. But the fact is I desperately needed encouragement like a drug addict needs drugs. I waited for it like a delicious dessert after a good meal. If it was missing, something was wrong. As I went home, I would start to think about the quality of the sermon, the opportunity of the message for that time, and so on until I worked myself into a panic.

Also, in the pastoral visits, people I visited would tell me, "We have never had such a good pastor like you. No one before you worked so hard" or "No pastor ever visited me. You are the first pastor who has visited me and prayed with and for me." Hearing this made me feel like the hero, and without it, I felt lost, a hopeless failure. Regardless of their reasons, I felt good when someone appreciated me, especially when they compared me favorably to other pastors.

I went home happy that night, and my sleep was full of sweet dreams.

Another aspect of my relationship with people around me, specific to addiction, was evident when someone ignored me, despised me, or gossiped about me. I felt hurt, depressed, and my sleep was agitated and full of nightmares.

Slowly but surely, step by step, I allowed people or situations to take control over my feelings and thoughts. I built up a life philosophy depending on the attitude of people toward me. I loved many people just to gain their love and appreciation; I placed myself in the middle of praises instead of allowing Jesus to be the center. I reserved for myself the best place of acceptance and attention.

All those who didn't feed my addiction to appreciation and praise I considered as sinners who urgently needed to repent. Being very interested in their spiritual life, the next Sabbath I preached a sermon on repentance. When situations and people around me were not feeding my addiction, I considered myself a victim, a martyr for the Lord. Actually, I was a victim of my own system of thinking and acting.

I made huge efforts for the Lord. From morning to evening I visited people in hospitals and in their homes; I attended prayer meetings and board meetings, and it was all because of my desire to be lavished with praise and words of appreciation. I *had* to have it.

I also thought about my leaders in the conference office. I needed their affirmation too. Woe to me if that appreciation didn't come. Again, agitated sleep full of nightmares.

Nancy Groom writes, "If you are a codependent, you please other people because you believe that no one would choose to be with you unless you are serving them. You constantly feel you must earn their love, and you neglect your own needs because you do not feel that you are worthy enough to deserve to have your own needs met."<sup>1</sup>

Have you ever felt like this? If so, you are addicted too.

## Solutions

What can be done? If you don't make any effort to manage your life, feelings, and ministry according to God's plan for the human being, you will never be happy. You will wear a mask of satisfaction, trying hard to overlook every slight. It is like covering a mess in the corner of your room with a blanket but pretending that everything is in order.



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Ahab was an example of a person who didn't know how to manage his life according to healthy principles (see 1 Kings 21:4). When a business deal didn't work, he became angry—refusing to eat or sleep. He was like a child who cannot have his favorite toy. Ahab needed someone else to step into his life to solve the problem, and what an intervention: a lie and a crime. Why? Because Ahab was addicted to successes and to acceptance by people around him.

What can we say about Jesus? Did He ever have a nightmare because someone didn't accept His work or because two of His disciples betrayed Him? Was Jesus mad because His own people, to whom He gave His own life, crucified Him?

Remember when His disciples came back from a mission? They came to Jesus with their hearts full of joy for their successes. "The seventy-two returned with joy and said, 'Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.' [Jesus] replied, . . . 'However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven' " (Luke 10:17–20, NIV).

If my happiness is because of the successes I have in my ministries, the acceptance of people in the church, this is an addiction. While appreciation is a fundamental human need, the question is, how do I feel when I am not appreciated?

Jesus knew both His identity and His mission. He came from His Father, and He knew that " 'the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost' " (Luke 19:10, NIV).

If you are fully aware of your mission as a pastor, if you are aware of your calling, if you are aware of the value of the talents that God gave to you to serve Him and His church better, why should you orient the radar of your heart toward praises and appreciation from others? Why not allow Jesus to enlighten your soul with His presence? This will happen in your ministry only when you place Jesus at the center of praises, appreciations, and acceptance. Only when the statue you have created is "removed from there, smashed to pieces, and the rubble thrown into the Kidron Valley" (2 Kings 23:12, paraphrased).

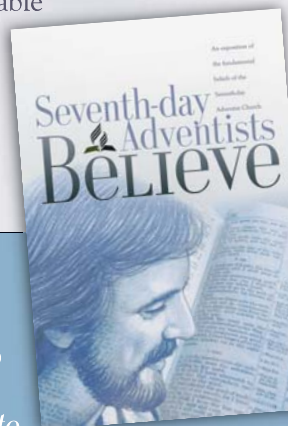
One more aspect of emotional addiction: In order to be considered a good and efficient pastor, I have to be available to my churches 24/7. When I started my ministry, a conference leader told me, "A good pastor should be available for God's work 24/7. He must be everything in the church: pastor, builder, driver, cook, gravedigger, and day man . . . everything except midwife, . . . but in an emergency . . . you can do it."

My personal needs—rest, health, recreation, time of meditation, and

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so on—forget about them, for I am a pastor! Or my family's needs—time for playing with my kids, walking in a park with my wife, or spending a weekend far from home—"God's work is in the first and last place of your life," I was told. Unfortunately, and to my detriment, I believed it.

What is the secret for efficiency and satisfaction in ministry? I've learned the hard way: Don't be afraid of people's

but in the righteousness of Christ, which through faith is imputed unto him."<sup>2</sup>

"Many make a serious mistake in their religious life by keeping the attention fixed upon their feelings and thus judging of their advancement or decline. Feelings are not a safe criterion. We are not to look within for evidence of our acceptance with God. We shall find there nothing but that which will discourage us. Our only hope is in 'looking unto

## THE SOLUTION FOR MY MISTAKES IS NOT TO SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES SILENTLY.

opinions of you and don't expect praise from them. The Bible says, "Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe" (Prov. 29:25, NIV). God's assessment of you is what matters.

Maybe sometimes you think, *They're behaving this way toward me because I deserve it. I made many mistakes, and now, their attitude is the consequences of my mistakes.* Nothing is worse than this! The solution for my mistakes is not to suffer the consequences silently. Rather, it is faith in God's promises. Moreover, no one member of the church has the right to punish me for my mistakes.

Do you think that feelings play an important role in the process of happiness and professional satisfaction? Are you afraid of failure, of people, or of disciplinary punishment?

Perhaps some of these words from Ellen White's writings will help. "The soul that loves God, rises above the fog of doubt; he gains a bright, broad, deep, living experience, and becomes meek and Christlike. His soul is committed to God, hid with Christ in God. He will be able to stand the test of neglect, of abuse, and contempt, because his Saviour has suffered all this. He will not become fretful and discouraged when difficulties press him, because Jesus did not fail or become discouraged. Every true Christian will be strong, not in the strength and merit of his good works,

Jesus the author and finisher of our faith' (Heb. 12:2). There is everything in Him to inspire with hope, with faith, and with courage. He is our righteousness, our consolation and rejoicing."<sup>3</sup>

In another place she reminds us that Jesus should be our focus. "Trust in the Lord. Let not the feelings, the speeches, or the attitude of any human agent depress you. Be careful that in words or acts you do not give others any opportunity to obtain the advantage in hurting you. Keep looking unto Jesus. He is your strength. By beholding Jesus you will become changed into His likeness. He will be the health of your countenance and your God."<sup>4</sup>

Sure, as ministers, we like a little affirmation. Nothing's wrong with that. It's when we need it, demand it, and *have* to have it that we must face the fact that we have an addiction, one that can lead to the ruin of our ministry if not overcome in the name and power of Jesus. ■

1 Nancy Groom, *From Bondage to Bonding: Escaping Codependency, Embracing Biblical Love* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1992), 95.

2 Ellen G. White, *God's Amazing Grace* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 2001), 109.

3 *Ibid.*, 185.

4 Ellen G. White, *This Day With God* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 1979), 245.



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# Can you be in two places at once?

**Marty Thurber**



*Marty Thurber is pastor of the Fargo and Valley City Seventh-day Adventist Churches, North Dakota, United States.*

**C**an you be in two places at once? It's not as hard as you think. Years ago I had four churches in western Kansas and Nebraska. Two were in the United States Central-Time zone, and two in the Mountain-Time zone. My wife and I would drive to one in the Central-Time zone, where I'd preach at 11 A.M., and then we would drive quickly back to the church in the Mountain-Time zone, arriving just in time to preach at 11 A.M.

That's how I could be in two places at once.

Of course, not all our church districts are lined along time zones like that, so the question is, what other ways can you do a good job of getting out into the district each week? Here are five ideas that might help.

## **Find out how the last pastor did it**

First, call the previous pastor and ask what he did and what might be done differently. Find out who in the district has shown interest in preaching. Could they preach in that church? How often did this pastor go to that church? Would changes in the schedule be helpful?

Such questions are not the final answer but simply starting points for creative thinking. Your first words and actions will likely set the stage for most, if not all, of your ministry with those members, so it's important to start off on the same page and with good reasoning for your preaching/visiting/prayer meeting schedule.

Spend time with members. This investment in them grows and brings returns. Explain your time usage and share some of your schedule with them so they know what you're up to. The best way to share your schedule with them is by being involved in their lives at work, at home, or on the farm or by stopping by their businesses. A quick visit often yields great returns. They know you're busy; they just don't know what you're doing all the time. Show them by spending some of that time with them.

## **Negotiate with the churches for a better future**

Some churches are located in great areas for growth, and some just aren't going to change much. Because you alone manage your time, you have to get the most out of it. Other people will offer their thoughts, but you are the final timekeeper. Though you need to be tactful, you must make it clear that you're going to invest as much time in that church and their community as you can, and as seems profitable. God alone can direct you in the final amount of time you spend. To Him you must be ultimately faithful.

A negotiation can be defined as two or more sides talking and, we hope, becoming one. When one side feels neglected or abused, they really want to be heard and understood. A good negotiator listens carefully for what lives inside the hearts of people. They want their pastor to love them, and they need you to show it. Sometimes, we're tempted to think that they need us too much, and often that's true. We just have to wean them from overdependence, and that takes time and trust.

If you speak truthfully to them from your first day in the district about these things, you will have more room to be flexible. They will give you permission to try new approaches, to add new items to the schedule, or to drop something that is not working or that has become stale.

They might let you switch a church service to the afternoon or to the early morning. Just let them know what you're trying to do—and why. Give yourself some time to work it out; let them get used to the changes. If you're just coming into the district, it takes time for people to get used to the way you do things. Be open and consistent from the start as you tell them the truth about your plans and ideas. Even if those ideas are not complete or certain, you can avoid inflating their expectations.

## What should be your focus?

You'll have to focus on one or two churches that are positioned to do well. This concept hurts, because most pastors want to keep all their members happy in all their churches. The minute that church members get the idea that you are going to spend more time with the other church, they may think of themselves as the stepchild in the district, and so you take on impossible tasks and run to the beat of a frenetic schedule. I've known pastors who tried to preach and do prayer meetings in all three churches each week. They didn't last long.

for what goes on there, but you could replace yourself with this lay pastor and possibly enhance your effectiveness there and elsewhere.

Here is a good principle for district pastors: *Do not do for others what they can do for themselves.* Pastors in other parts of the world seem to live by this rule. They have trained and encouraged others to preach and minister in their churches.

Of course, there are always excuses. "We don't have anybody good enough to preach or to lead out in prayer meeting." Or "No one wants to do it." Or "The person I think should do it

see how the members respond. If you're going to be away from your district for vacation or some other appointment, ask them to play one of the DVD sermons for church. It's like having a good guest speaker.

If your members have difficulty accepting this idea of time shifting, be patient. Some may never get used to this digital world. But give it a try.

The time will come, and might even be here now, when you can preach in one church and, through broadband Internet connections, be seen and heard at the other churches in your district. Some pastors have used telephone hookups

# THEY MIGHT LET YOU SWITCH A CHURCH SERVICE TO THE AFTERNOON OR TO THE EARLY MORNING. JUST LET THEM KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO DO—AND WHY.

Instead, you will have to focus your time in the area that will be the most productive, even though we often feel guilty when we get that phone call from someone whom we've neglected. We feel like we are not measuring up to their needs, so we redouble our efforts to make them happy.

If we have truly neglected someone in our churches, we must visit them and minister to their needs. On the other hand, if you can easily recall the times and activities that you have spent with that person or group, you should not feel guilty. Learn to tell the difference, or you'll never be happy or successful in ministry.

## Leadership prospecting

Who's going to preach when you're not there? What if you took time to train someone to preach in one of your churches? What might happen if you gave them a sense of pride and ownership for the ministry in that community and church? You would still be the pastor and still be responsible

isn't respected or liked by some of the members."

We simply have to get past these excuses and find ways to help our members regain ownership and responsibility for their church and its ministry to the community. As a church leader, we should always be prospecting for other leaders.

## Don't forget time shifting

In today's digital world, you can listen to a sermon or message anywhere you want to. All you have to do is record it onto an MP3 player and then press the button. If you want to record *It Is Written*, you press a button on your recorder and it records it automatically. When you're ready, you sit down and press another button, and there's the program.

You can do this in your ministry too; it's called time shifting. Here are some ideas. Get the DVD series called *Adventist Preaching*.<sup>1</sup> These DVDs have some excellent sermons and preachers. Take a DVD player and a TV to prayer meeting, play an Adventist Preaching DVD, and

to speak to two or three churches at once. This works for a small group. I look forward to the time when I'll be able to say hello to all of my church members at the same time from one location, even though they worship in several places. Some will be able to watch from home too. And the ones who were away or unable to attend church will be able to download the service and play it later.

It all sounds a bit futuristic maybe, but it's here. These ideas will start to show up in more and more churches because we want to be effective pastors and share the message with as many as possible.

The good news is that through technology, we really *can* be in two places at once, and without having to rush across time zones either. ■

1 To purchase Adventist Preaching DVDs, call 800-ACN-1119 or 402-486-2519 or order them online at <http://www.acn.info>. For information on the latest Adventist Preaching DVD from Adventist Communication Network (ACN), please refer to the advertisement in this journal.



# Initiating worship renewal during church building projects

Daniel Schramm



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**C**hurch building projects, whether new construction, a renovation, or the purchase of a building, are a major undertaking for any congregation. During such a process there is usually openness for change. Often there is a window of opportunity to initiate worship renewal.

This article will consider the needs, challenges, ideas, and strategies for worship renewal during a church-building transition.

## **The need for worship renewal**

Across denominational lines, congregations need worship renewal especially if they value relevancy in our fast-changing contemporary society. While postmodern individuals value spirituality, Christian congregations now exist with many spiritual options and cultural changes that minimize the church's influence. According to George Barna, "Most adults do not have much confidence in Christian churches."<sup>1</sup> Many vote by their feet that congregations and worship are irrelevant, and many who *do* attend church are often unsure if they have experienced worship.

## **The challenge of initiating worship renewal**

Those who desire worship renewal often discover that attempts to change liturgy lead to resistance. Worship has divided many churches, leading to pastoral and congregational burnout.<sup>2</sup> Worship beliefs and practices tend to be strongly

based upon feelings and culture—often more than upon Scripture. If you doubt this, try celebrating the Lord's Supper on Thursday evening as originally celebrated. Because of the importance placed on worship, people tend to be very sensitive about worship renewal or change.

"This is why perfectly rational people will roar with anger when someone moves something as simple as a chair in the sanctuary of a church. . . . Although everyone in the congregation knows that the order of the service is likely to have some changes. . . . you better not mess with the eleven o'clock hour!"<sup>3</sup>

## **A biblical account of worship renewal: King Solomon's temple**

A biblical account related to a church building transition describes the construction and inauguration of the Solomonic temple. This narrative provides a forum to discuss rituals in worship, ways of keeping God at the center of a major building project, and the planning of special dedication services.

When King Solomon led the construction of the new temple, variations in worship developed. At the dedication of the new facility, Solomon (the king as opposed to the priest) played the leading role in worship as He led the procession of the ark to the temple (2 Chron. 5:6).<sup>4</sup> Solomon presided over the offering of animal sacrifices, in blessing the assembly (2 Chron. 6:3), and the dedicatory address and prayer (2 Chron. 6:4–42). At this dedication service, 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep were sacrificed (2 Chron. 7:5) and "fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the temple" (2 Chron. 7:1). Solomon went all out to dedicate the new temple, epitomizing how worship can involve considerable variety, effort, change, and cost.

Music played a major role in worship during the monarchical period including instruments, anthems, and mass choirs that made worship a delight (2 Chron. 5:12, 13). Meditative silence was also a part of worship (Pss. 4:4; 46:10). Today, more worship planning, including musical and liturgical variety, would likely impact worship renewal.

A probing question to encourage reflection about worship: Are the best days for worship in this congregation in the past or the future? We need ongoing renewal to avoid being fixed on the glory days of the past as Israel experienced with Solomon's temple.

## Worship renewal—King David and the Psalms

When considering worship renewal, along with Solomon's account, consider King David and the Psalms. David, a paragon worshipper, danced, sang, played instruments, and praised God with all his heart, and this involved an active response. Psalm 134:2 says, "Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the Lord" (NIV). Psalm 47:1 states, "Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy" (NIV). David found great pleasure in worship and was dubbed "a man after [God's] heart" (1 Sam. 13:14, NIV).

The texts on worship in the Psalms are numerous, encouraging, and convincing. One psalm says: "My soul yearns, even faints for the courts of the Lord. . . . Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. . . . Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere" (Ps. 84:2, 4, 10, NIV). A sermon series on the Psalms, King David, King Solomon, and the temple would strengthen the biblical foundation for worship renewal during a church building transition.

## Reasons and strategies for worship renewal

Change, during a church building transition, can be described as "in the air." New ideas for growth will be more plausible when presented at the appropriate time. A building transition often changes the congregation's power structure; new leaders develop, while others take less active roles. These changes can provide avenues to initiate worship renewal.

Focusing on worship during a church building transition can temper burnout. Pastors and members often become enveloped in the technical aspects of a transition, which can lead to personal exhaustion, family disintegration, spiritual decline, and church tension. Transitions rarely turn out as smoothly as planned, for costs commonly go over budget, schedules are often not met, conflicts abound, and those in leadership roles often hear numerous complaints. These pressures may increase to an extent where pastors elect to transfer to another



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congregation while members become frustrated and quit. Focusing on worship during a major transition can mitigate stress, help provide balance, direct mental energy to spiritual concerns, and avoid an overwhelming emphasis on technical issues.

## Working with a worship committee to initiate renewal

As the church facility begins to take shape parishioners tend to begin to consider their first services—especially the grand opening, holiday programs, concerts, or other community programs. Members likely feel a sense of pride in their building and want to showcase their church at its best. Special services can utilize the extra energy often inherent in a building transition to experiment with worship rituals.

If a congregation does not already have a worship committee, this provides an opportunity to build one, so that solo worship planning can give way to the team approach.<sup>5</sup> "Congregations served by collaborative planning teams will find that the worship life of their church has a different tone."<sup>6</sup> Transitioning into an updated facility presents, for the congregation, a good time to ponder a congregation's past, present, and future direction. Worship committees,

especially during transitions, provide a forum to brainstorm about future liturgical rituals.

A successful project, like an updated church facility, is often determined by how it begins. A business, athletic team, or a baby born healthy has a better prospect than one beginning with poor health. Likewise, inspiring first worship services help perpetuate healthy worship.

This article introduced the need, challenge, biblical ideas, and reasons to focus on worship renewal during a church-building transition. While not the ultimate goal, having a better building can be a wonderful blessing. When worship remains as a primary reason to have a church sanctuary, other pressing and urgent issues will not take precedence. ■

- 1 George Barna, *Index of Leading Spiritual Indicators* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1996), 43.
- 2 Loren Mead, *Transforming Congregations for the Future* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 1994), 86.
- 3 Ibid., 104.
- 4 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references in this article are from the New King James Version.
- 5 Scott Dyer, *The Source for Effective Church Service Planning* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 9.
- 6 Norma deWaal Malefyt & Howard Vanderwell, *Designing Worship Together* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2005), 7.

# Training lay preachers

Joseph A. Webb



Joseph A. Webb, D.Min., is the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Director, North New South Wales Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Wallsend, New South Wales, Australia.

No doubt pastors worldwide are in the same situation as we in Australia—they do not have the luxury of leading only one church unless they have a very large congregation. As such, this poses the following interesting scenario (I know that some pastors have more than two churches, but for our purposes I'll assume that most have two): There are 52 Sabbaths in the year. A pastor with two churches has a maximum of 26 possible Sabbaths in each church. Take away 4 Sabbaths of annual leave and there are 24 possible Sabbaths for each church. Take away another 2 Sabbaths for camp meeting, another for annual workers' meetings, and another 2 for retreats or training weekends. Let's assume that the pastor rosters himself or herself off duty one Sabbath each quarter as a special Sabbath treat for the family. Furthermore, let's be very harsh and allow that the pastor will take only one other Sabbath off because of illness, family crisis, or just to take a break.

We are left then with about 19 Sabbaths in a year when the pastor preaches in each of the district churches. This means, of course, that on the other 33 Sabbaths the pulpit is filled by others, i.e., retired pastors, elders, youth groups, lay people, or even by a speaker on the big screen.

When we look at it this way, we become acutely aware of the tremendous commitment of lay people—expected and willingly given. It is probably no exaggeration to assume that there

may be more lay people than professional clergy preaching on any Sabbath.

In Australia we now have extra competition with the introduction of satellite broadcasts by the church. Although these satellite television channels are certainly not offered as an alternative to the Sabbath sermon at church, a number of people are staying home and watching these programs.

Sabbath television programs may never replace the weekly corporate worship experience, but that some members consider them even an occasional option should compel us to review each Sabbath's presentation. The number of lay preachers in pulpits demands that serious consideration be given to properly equipping them. From personal observations, I believe that the majority of lay preachers (at least in our part of the world) have received little or no training and certainly no regular and ongoing support.

I am not suggesting that lay sermons are inferior to the ordained minister's. We must continually strive to deliver God's Word as well as possible. Nevertheless, though some lay preachers can research, prepare, and deliver a good sermon, the vast majority who preach only occasionally do struggle.

## The pastor's responsibility in lay preaching

Because many lay preachers speak from the pulpit only on occasion, we pastors have often not recognized our responsibility to ensure that the preaching continues as best it can be. When lay people preach, we pastors are usually at another church and, unless we hear complaints, we assume that everyone is happy.

With the pastor (or so we've been told) responsible for the pulpit, they usually have the final say on who preaches. Though this protects the congregation from, for example, critics and troublemakers, more involvement becomes necessary than just filtering who gets up to preach.

Some pastors have their own seminars that equip members for the pulpit, and some good preaching resources are available in book or visual form. While certainly not exhaustive, the following suggestions attempt to show how pastors can enhance the contributions of lay preachers.

*Don't just assume.* Many times I have asked a lay preacher scheduled to preach the next Sabbath, "Is everything OK?" They usually answer, "Yes, everything is fine." Two points we need to note here. First, we should get



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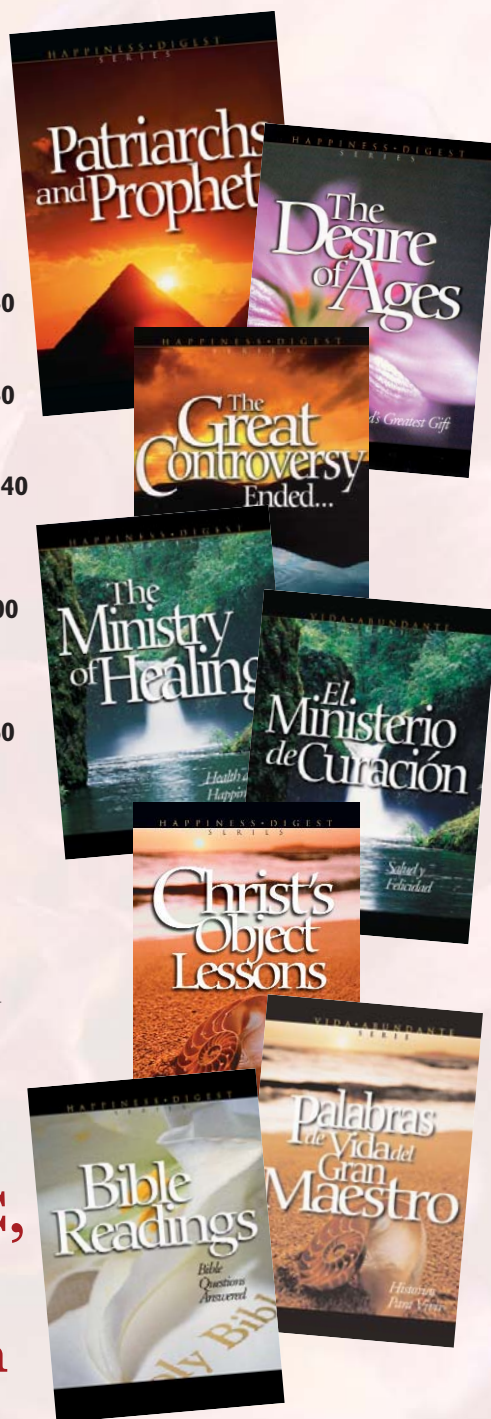
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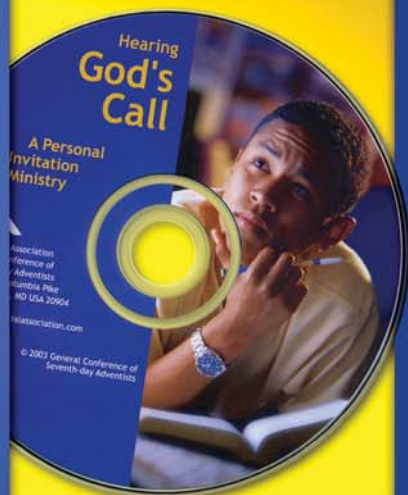
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into the habit of checking with the lay preacher more than one week ahead of the sermon. Second, don't assume that everything is OK just because they say it is. Many struggle with sermon preparation but don't bother us because they may think we are too busy. Often, when I have continued to question after the "Everything's OK" answer, I have discovered their desire for me to read through their notes, explain a passage to them, or to lend them a book.

*Plan the lay preaching year.* When planning a sermon year many pastors consider only the Sabbaths when they will be in the pulpit. If, as stated above, the pastor has only about nineteen Sabbath preaching appointments in each church, then this can hardly be called a sermon year. I have discovered the benefits of including the lay preachers in the sermon planning. Meet with the lay preachers who will be asked to preach throughout the year, share with them

worship service followed by a preaching service. Preaching should be viewed as part of worship when the sermon lifts up the One who draws people to Himself in responsive adoration and thankfulness. As the Spirit-empowered speaker communicates God's love to the congregation, the people's heartfelt response to the Savior has, indeed, become worship.

*Be aware that preaching contributes to church growth.* Do you make sure that someone counts attendance every Sabbath? I have found that this information helps in charting church-growth trends. The graphs produced from these weekly statistics, presented at the quarterly business meeting, keeps the congregation informed regarding our effectiveness in reaching people for Jesus. What happens in the pulpit is a factor in church growth.<sup>1</sup> Help your lay preachers understand that they are not simply filling a blank in the preaching plan.

WE PASTORS HAVE OFTEN NOT RECOGNIZED OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT THE PREACHING CONTINUES AS BEST IT CAN BE.

the dates when you plan to preach and what you plan to preach on. Discuss other topics and themes and invite them to decide upon their preaching dates and topics. Assure them of your support in the stages of sermon crafting. You may even schedule a monthly meeting with your preachers to give guidance and instruction. Perhaps some of the following points could be discussed at these planning meetings.

*Don't separate preaching and worship.* Help your preachers understand that preaching exists as an integral part of worship. Many times a church elects a worship committee and then assigns to them a few preliminary responsibilities. Impress upon your people that Sabbath morning should not be considered a

Show them how their pulpit ministry becomes a vital part of church life as they seek to fulfill the gospel commission of Matthew 28:19, 20. Therefore, they should seek the help of the Holy Spirit in sermon preparation and delivery.

*Explain the definition of a sermon.* Help lay preachers sense the awesome responsibility of preaching. Explain the reasons for preaching and the blessings that come from God that they may communicate from the pulpit. With a sermon as a precious time for people to connect with their God, it also becomes an important opportunity for the preacher's personal spiritual growth, and a blessed occasion to show a congregation the relevance of God's written Word.

*Explain what a sermon is not.* When I first began preaching as a lay person, no one explained to me even the basics of sermon preparation. I had just been appointed as an elder in my local church, and it was expected that preaching was part of the elder's responsibility. Looking back, I see that some of my early attempts at preaching were not really sermons but more like newspaper reviews—all good information but not very Christ-centered or biblically based. From conversations that I have with church members throughout our conference, I suspect that in many instances the Sabbath sermon is less than it should be. As pastors we need to convince lay preachers that the preaching time should not be viewed as an opportunity to push their own views or to criticize a congregation—and certainly not the place to preach doubts and fears.

### Example of good preaching

Only when we as pastors consider our responsibility toward lay preaching will the best possible messages be delivered from our pulpits every week. Of course, we ourselves must model good preaching as our lay people will learn much by observing professionals. And that's not just our preaching. Listeners observe, consider, and place in a good or not-so-good tray in their minds everything we do in the pulpit. From our response to the elder's welcome, through the children's story, through the sermon and even the benediction, lay preachers consider what we do and how we do it. What a responsibility to set a standard of Christ-centered, biblically-based excellence in preaching, as well as helping our lay preachers rise to the challenge placed before them.

No question, lay preaching continues as a crucial part of ministry, especially in multichurch districts. Thus, there's also no question that, as full-time professional pastors, we must help them do theirs the best they can. ■

## Suggested resources for training lay preachers

1. Marvin Hunt, *So You've Been Asked To Speak? A Practical Guide to Preaching and Public Speaking* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association), 1996. Available from: [www.ministerialassociation.com](http://www.ministerialassociation.com).

*Comments:* The reader will be pleasantly surprised at just how much information is packed into so relatively few pages. It covers all areas of the sermon from choosing a topic to delivery.

2. W. Floyd Bresee, *Successful Lay Preaching* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association), 1997. Available from: [www.ministerialassociation.com](http://www.ministerialassociation.com).

*Comments:* If you are a pastor who wants to conduct a lay preaching seminar, you will find all the materials you need in this book. Make sure your church library has this one too.

3. Joe A. Webb, *Book of Sermons 2* (Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia: Avondale Memorial Church). Available from: Cooranbong Adventist Book Center. Email: [abc@nnswabcc.com](mailto:abc@nnswabcc.com)

*Comments:* 24 full sermons covering many topics and including special days such as Mother's Day, Communion day, and baptism day. Volume 1 and volume 2: currently available and volume 3: available late 2006.

4. Scott M. Gibson, ed., *Preaching to a Shifting Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books), 2004.

*Comments:* an excellent volume that reminds us that cultures change from time to time and place to place. Good material to share with lay preachers to help them understand local church cultures.

5. Warren W. Wiersbe, *Preaching and Teaching with Imagination* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books), 2004.

*Comments:* Wiersbe surveys the poetical and metaphoric nature of Scripture and challenges us to preach the word pictures. He urges us to communicate God's Word with imagination.

6. *Seventh-day Adventist Elder's Handbook* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association), 1994. Available from: [www.ministerialassociation.com](http://www.ministerialassociation.com).

*Comments:* This valuable resource covers various areas of elder responsibility.

7. Seminar in a Box videos (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association).

*Comments:* In this video series, at least six tapes are on preaching and worship. Available from: [www.ministerialassociation.com](http://www.ministerialassociation.com). ■

1 Roy B. Zuck, ed., *Vital Ministry Issues: Examining Concerns and Conflicts in Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1994), 132–138.



# Dateline

## Eastern Africa leaders meet

Church leaders representing more than 2.2 million members from the Seventh-day Adventist churches in ten east-central African countries met in **Nairobi, Kenya**, June 12–18.



*Nikolaus Satelmajer and Willie Hucks meet in Nairobi, Kenya, with ministerial secretaries and shepherdess coordinators from East Africa.*

One of the groups that met included the ministerial secretaries who provide support to pastors. **John Kakembo**, ministerial secretary for the Seventh-day Adventist churches in eastern Africa, and Nikolaus Satelmajer and Willie E. Hucks II, from the church's world headquarters, led in the training. **Milliam Kakembo** coordinated meetings that addressed the needs of pastors' spouses and families.



*Dr. John Kakembo, ministerial secretary for East Central Africa Division*

The meetings climaxed with an all-Sabbath event in the Nairobi Central Park led by **Geoffrey G. Mbwana**, president of the church for eastern Africa, with more than 30,000 members attending. During the event, Mbwana and Satelmajer challenged the members to participate in the mass distribution of the new edition of the book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*.

## Boonstra to unravel the mysteries of the sanctuary during *The Presence*

For centuries, a sacred treasure has been missing, and to this day, no one knows where it is. Legends predict that it will be found, and movies have been made portraying its discovery. Today, some are still looking for it and are convinced that it has something to do with the end of the world. Are they right?

From September 29 to October 3, join *It Is Written* Speaker/Director **Shawn Boonstra** for *The Presence*, a five-night satellite event available at a Seventh-day Adventist church near you. This special series will focus on the sanctuary in the context of final events and reveal what the Old Testament says about the true nature of Jesus. Each night, Boonstra will take a closer look at how ancient rituals and age-old prophecies weave an amazing story of redemption.

This event will also answer many questions that may be in the hearts of countless people who watched or read *The Da Vinci Code*. "Through *The Presence*, we now have a chance to undo the damage that has been done to the faith of so many people," said Boonstra.

If your church would like to host this series, have your pastor call 1-877-507-3239 or fill out the online form at [www.thepresence.com](http://www.thepresence.com).

## Middle East pastors' council

Cairo, Egypt—About 30 Seventh-day Adventist pastors from across the Middle East gathered June 5–8 for their regular quinquennial pastors' council at an Egyptian Red Sea resort in Ein Soukhna. The theme was "On the Journey of Hope."

**Dr. Bertil Wiklander**, president of the Trans-European Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (TED), along with **Dr. Daniel Duda**, **Janos Kovacs-Biro**, and **Don McFarlane**,

TED departmental directors, were the lecturers. **Dr. Kjell Aune**, the president of Middle East Union Mission (MEUM), and **David Cox**, associate MEUM ministerial secretary, were also involved in teaching. Topics addressed included theological foundations of Adventist ministry, the role and the work of the pastor, righteousness by faith, and evangelism. Ministry and anthropological issues were also discussed.

"We had an excellent pastors' council," said Aune. "These presentations helped our pastors to grow spiritually and intellectually in understanding our mission and the work that we need to do. I am sure our pastors will now be better equipped to do their work more effectively."

## A heroic pastor remembered

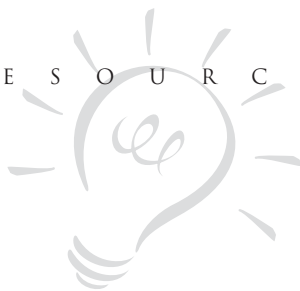
A Holocaust memorial service was held June 3 in Budapest, Hungary, honoring Laszlo Michnay, a former president of the Hungarian Union of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Michnay rescued approximately 60 Hungarian Jews during the World War II Holocaust. He and many other members of the church hid the Jews in the building where the memorial service was held and in houses in Budapest for months, providing food, clothing, and hope for them. Andor Peterdi, a Hungarian poet, wrote in a poem, "You are a godly priest, ministering to the oppressed."

Also honored by the government of Israel, Michnay was entitled to plant a memory tree in Jerusalem, in Yad Vashem Park. However, the political situation did not allow him to do so. He was hoping to travel to Israel in 1965, but he passed away in Singapore before arriving there.

A retired pastor, **Laszlo Erdelyi**, noted that Michnay taught us that "in order to be successful in a time when the whole society is against some groups of people, a pastor does not need to collaborate with

*continued on following page*



## BOOK REVIEW

### Faith Step By Step: Finding God and Yourself

Reinder Bruinsma, Stanborough Press Ltd., Grantham, England, 2006.  
Reviewed by Lowell C. Cooper

The goal of this book is to “talk specifically to people who have traveled a considerable distance along the path from modern to postmodern.” Reinder Bruinsma, author of 16 other books and numerous scholarly and popular articles, serves as president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Netherlands. His purpose in this book is to discuss the claims of Christianity with readers who live in a world that is suspicious of absolutes such as truth.

Bruinsma addresses ten themes: meaning, truth, faith, hope, grace,

rest, community, responsibility, and commitment. He does so without using the typical faith-sharing approach of quoting Bible texts. Although he clearly approaches these themes from a particular Christian perspective (that of Seventh-day Adventist), his treatment of each topic does not presume that his readers share his worldview. Instead, through a conversational writing style, he engages the reader in a discussion using insights from philosophy, rationality, and experience. Whether one agrees with Bruinsma or not it is obvious that the author respects people who have deeply held convictions contrary to his. This respect does not mute his arguments in favor of faith and a deeply personal relationship with God.

*Faith Step by Step* is a fine example of how to think and talk with people who reflect the worldview described as “postmodern.” (In the opening pages of the book Bruinsma helpfully

clarifies what he understands by the term.) Perhaps it represents only a beginning and serves to identify the huge challenge there is for Christians to express their convictions in vehicles of thought that can be understood by those of other faiths or of no particular religious persuasion.

The thrust of the book is unapologetically Christian. This is stated from the outset and may lead many who describe themselves as postmodernists or secularists to proceed no further. Those who engage with Bruinsma in this book will discover fresh facets of thinking about the most important questions of life. Although the book was not written for the Seventh-day Adventist believer, it will be highly profitable to those who read it. Bruinsma provides a very helpful contribution in being “prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15, NIV). ■

### Dateline continued

any ruling government. He must have a living relationship with God, by which all can gain wisdom. This is needed for the appropriate relationship with anyone, even the oppressed.”

On behalf of the family, **Pastor Peter Zarka**, a grandson of Michnay, stated, “Back in his time, Laszlo Michnay was brave enough to call evil what it was: evil.”

### Euro-Africa ministerial advisory

**Prague, Czech Republic**—The Euro-Africa Division held its ministerial advisory March 12–14 in Prague, Czech Republic. **Peter Prime**, associate ministerial secretary from the General Conference, was the facilitator for the meetings with ministerial leaders from



Dr. Peter Prime (far left) meets with ministerial leaders of the Euro-Africa Division.

various countries of Europe and northern Africa. Bruno Vertallier is the ministerial secretary for Euro-Africa.

The mission statement, approved by all participants, gives a clear view of the prevailing thoughts of the leaders: “During the quinquennium 2005–2010 the ministerial association of the EUD wants to enhance the spiritual life, the

professional values and skills of the pastors in order to contribute to the unity, the quality of life and the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist church so that it fulfills its mission with love, joy and compassion.”

### 2007 Professional Growth Seminar

The next Ministry Professional Growth Seminar will be on **Wednesday, April 18, 2007**, in **Cambridge, England, United Kingdom**. According to **Anthony Kent**, seminar director, the programming will address living the principles of Christianity in a counter-Christian culture.

For more information on this worldwide broadcast, check future issues of *Ministry*. ■

# Extending your call

JAMES A. CRESS



**"Y**ou don't remember, but twenty years ago you hired several students for some manual labor, and at the end of the project you suggested that perhaps God could call me to ministry. I had never considered the idea before, but your affirmation began the process."

Those words, spoken by a pastor, startled me. And they reaffirmed something that I have believed all along, which is that some of us reject recruiting others into ministry because of the misguided belief that a call to ministry is so mystical that we should never interfere in this highly personal, inwardly-focused experience.

The fact is, a genuine call to ministry cannot be limited to an individual's own sense of God's purpose. There's more: First, along with the Spirit's impression/invitation to the individual comes the Spirit's distribution of essential gifts to accomplish the task; then comes the Spirit's conviction upon the church that the potential candidate must be set aside for specific service. If these other factors are missing, even a sincere desire does not constitute a genuine call.

**Valid calls are never self-authenticated.** All three elements are essential: God's personal calling to the individual, God's Holy Spirit gifting the one who is called beyond natural talent or innate capabilities (although these will certainly become enhanced within a genuine call), and God's church recognizing and affirming the work of the Spirit.

As a minister, therefore, I have the significant privilege and responsibility to seek out and recognize the potential in others. And, rather than merely awaiting a lightning strike, I can spark the flame.

**Volunteers make poor candidates.** Jesus personally invited each of the Twelve, except Judas. Some people overestimate their potential or mistakenly confuse the general call to discipleship (which comes to every

believer) with a specific call to gospel ministry. Many others never imagine what they could accomplish, so they fail to volunteer. Seeking and recruiting potential recruits was Jesus' method for obtaining workers.

**Not every recruit will accept.** The rich young ruler (Luke 18:18-23) declined the same invitation that Andrew, Peter, James, and John accepted. Your expression of confidence in someone's ability may ignite their responsive mind, or they may, like the ruler, turn away.

**Disciples will learn.** Willingness to learn (discipleship) is more important for developing pastors than are innate capabilities. Time spent with Jesus is more productive than a theological or exegetical analysis of Jesus or His teachings.

**Leaders are not born.** The myth that leaders are born perpetuates mediocrity. Likewise, leaders are not made. They are not created out of nothing. Leaders are developed by other leaders.

**Learning best comes through association.** Potential pastors learn best from associating with godly leaders, such as pastors, teachers, local church elders—"the elect," if you will. This is why intern development is such an essential part of ministry.

**Start with youngsters.** Recruitment cannot begin too soon. As you discover gifted children, ask them to consider whether God might call them to His ministry. (For a helpful tool, see the advertisement in this issue on *Hearing God's Call*.)

**Local churches are incubators.** Our congregations have an important role in developing potential pastors. By valuing and cooperating with their own pastors, they build confidence in youth who might be considering a pastoral career.

**Never reject possibilities.** Don't assume that you know each person's full potential. Trust the Holy Spirit to develop the most unlikely prospects into outstanding ministry candidates.

**Reject false criteria.** Christian churches are forbidden to use race, social status, or gender when considering who might serve God's cause (Galatians 3:26-28). Jesus' call to the Samaritan woman at the well crossed racial, social, and gender barriers in order to make her the first public evangelist (John 4:1-42).

**Become a talent scout.** Pastors have the privilege of serving as talent scouts. Encourage your member families to anticipate that God might use their children in ministry.

**Identify successful strategies.** Schools and the church should work together to reduce role expectation conflicts between the recruitment/education process (which emphasizes study, research, introspection, discussion, and reflection) and the deployment/field process (which emphasizes action, leadership, social interaction, and extroversion activities such as public speaking, administration, people skills, or visitation).

**Emphasize positive contributors.** Your church culture will factor strongly in whether a young person considers ministry. Preach participation in Jesus' mission. Extend opportunities for youth involvement in new ventures. Support active growth and family discipleship. Express your own joy in hearing and speaking God's Word as well as your reward in seeing others saved to God's kingdom. ■





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It Is Written is partnering with local host churches across North America for this 5-night satellite experience. This interactive, seed-sowing event is designed to bring visitors through the doors of your local church. It can also serve as a perfect follow-up to *The Appearing* and *Revelation Speaks Peace—Unlocking the Signs*.

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