

MINISTRY

International Journal for Pastors December 2006

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Reflection*

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MINISTRY

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AFTER ALL, SHOULD NOT THE REMNANT BE LIKE THE ORIGINAL?

Multichurch districts: New Testament model?

Thank you for dedicating an issue of *Ministry* magazine to ministry in the multichurch district (August 2006). Having been the pastor of a multichurch district, I understand the challenges of this situation. In fact, most of our pastors have these kinds of districts.

However, the truth is that the multichurch concept is closer to the biblical example of the early New Testament church. There don't seem to be any examples of paid pastors hovering over a church. The New Testament churches were lay-led churches—led by elders, deacons, and other dedicated laity. Those paid by the tithe functioned as church planters/evangelists who raised up believers in unentered areas.

What would happen if the Adventist church chose to follow that example? Perhaps place five to six lay-led churches in a district and allow the pastor to spend part of his time training and equipping them and the other part of his time evangelizing those cities with no Adventist presence.

After all, should not the remnant be like the original? Some of the other world fields, such as the African divisions,

are already following these principles. I believe North America needs to consider the same.

I realize this idea is not popular, but it is biblical. It makes the mission of saving the lost a priority. And after all, isn't that what the remnant is all about?

—David Klinedinst, *Personal Ministries* director, *Christian Record Services*, Lincoln, Nebraska, United States

Preaching without notes

Thanks for the article by Derek Morris on "Preaching Effectively Without Notes" (October 2006). His article set me free from the pulpit! So far, I've preached three sermons without notes. While I'm still apprehensive about not taking my manuscript into the pulpit, my preaching has gone well. The tips were just what I needed. Thanks for printing the article. At least one pastor's preaching life has been changed!

—Jeff Scoggins, *pastor*, *Minnesota Conference of Seventh-day Adventists*

"Through a land not sown"

What a fine, fine *classic* of Christian experience, integrity, and service was featured in the interview of Kari Paulsen by Sharon Cress; with what a fitting text

and title to that interview ("Through a land not sown," *Ministry*, October 2006).

I was enthralled by the natural simplicity of Mrs. Paulsen's recital of the life experiences of her husband and herself. To me it could not but be reminiscent of that scriptural classic of felicity and faithfulness, the book of Ruth. The recounting of their experiences breathes the freshness of their native Norwegian mountain air and the unspoiled simplicity of heart of country folk.

Now I feel I *know* our world church president: warm, humble, unsophisticated, and always ready to help. *Never* driven by ambition, yet, step by step, their lives have moved forward and Elder Paulsen's responsibilities increased. In whatever capacity he has served, he was in the place God's providence had appointed, faithfully fulfilling that task, and, when some higher responsibility needed to be filled, he just seemed to be the proper person for that task. So their lives progressed, never looking back. Now, as ever, in the same spirit, effectually fulfilling the service to which they have been appointed.

What a fine classic of genuine Christian experience and devoted service!

—Ronald V. Edwards, *pastor (retired)*, England



CORRECTION:

• In the October 2006 we attributed to Pastor John Skrzypaszek the title D.Min. He is, however, currently a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Ministry, with hopes of successfully defending his dissertation in 2007—The Editor.

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A walk through God's garden

NIKOLAUS SATELMAJER



Recently my wife and I visited Friedensau Adventist University, located within an hour's drive from Berlin, Germany. It's one of the many postsecondary schools operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church that provide ministerial training as well as classes in other areas.

On the well-kept campus we visited the attractive Bible garden, which features a selection of the 110 plants, trees, flowers, vegetables, and herbs mentioned in the Bible. Most of us have no doubt read the texts that mention these, but it's a special experience to see so many of them in one place. Though they represent a period long after God's Garden of Eden disappeared, they nevertheless remind us of His creative power and love of beauty.

God's garden

As we walked through the garden, it reminded me that God has another garden—a garden of people. Specifically I am thinking of a garden filled with those called to be ministers—pastors, administrators, professors, chaplains, or other ministry roles. What does God see in this “garden of ministers?”

God sees some ministers as valuable “apples of gold in settings of silver” (Prov. 25:11*). Such value comes, not from the positions we hold, but rather from the roles we fulfill. In fact, some of us make the mistake of determining our worth by our position. God does not do that. Some of the most valuable ministers are those who are faithful to their calling but are unknown outside of their immediate area of responsibility.

Other ministers “spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams” (Isa. 44:4). Perhaps during this year you have experienced a renewal in your ministry. Or perhaps you have helped a colleague experience such a renewal. In either case, new joy has entered your life.

However, reason for concern does exist within the garden. After a few words of introduction, the prophet Joel paints a discouraging picture of judgment upon the land and the people. He ends the section with these bleak words:

The vine is dried up
and the fig tree is withered;
the pomegranate, the palm and
the apple tree—
all the trees of the field—are
dried up.

Surely the joy of mankind
is withered away (Joel 1:12).

Tragically, these verses may describe the ministry of some. Ministry may have “withered away,” and they find little hope in their future. Some do not see any reason to continue their ministry because the joy of ministry has withered away. What a tragic condition.

A garden of hope

But there is hope. In the same garden we find vines and the hope associated with them. Jesus' words “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener” (John 15:1) give us the needed hope. We are under God's care with no need to despair. All of us—even those who

have little hope—will find life from the One who is the Vine of life.

December marks the end of the year in most countries. We may find this a good time to review our lives, for just as a gardener must assess the condition of the garden and just as God reviews His garden—His garden of ministers—we need to assess ourselves. Those who find that pride has become an obstacle can turn to the Servant of servants—Jesus Christ. Those who are discouraged can take this opportunity to renew their life in the Lord. Those who have lost their focus can start following Jesus—the One who was always focused on His mission. Those who have been wronged can listen to the words of One who never hurts us. Those who are ready to give up can spend time with the One who will help them find direction for their ministry. Those whose prayer life has withered away can call upon the One who can repair that dried up connection.

With December as an opportunity for recommitment, we who minister to others often ask them to recommit their lives. I am suggesting that this may be a good time for us to recommit our lives to the One who invites us to “remain in me, and I will remain in you” (John 15:4). What a wonderful way to end a year and to look forward to the future that is in God's hands.

There is hope for God's garden. That's the assurance from the Master gardener. ■

* All Scripture texts from NIV.

Prayer: a theological reflection

Ángel Manuel
Rodríguez



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A theology of prayer should examine the nature of prayer and its contribution to a better understanding of God and our relationship with Him. This should lead us first to look at the theological concepts that are foundational to prayer and then to view prayer as a theological expression.

Theological foundation of prayer

Prayer takes place within a set of theological beliefs, even though we may rarely think about such beliefs. We may have conceptually embraced such beliefs, but we do not directly connect them to prayer. Here are some of those concepts.

Prayer presupposes biblical theism. Prayer begins with the affirmation that there is a God and that we can communicate with Him. This theological statement immediately rules out deism, according to which God is the absent Lord or Creator, who, after finishing His work of creation, abandoned it. A theology of prayer will also rule out pantheism, according to which God is conceived as an impersonal power that permeates everything, including us. In that respect biblical prayer distinguishes itself from eastern meditation, which seeks integration into cosmic consciousness while prayer seeks communion with a personal God.

Since the biblical doctrine of God is unique, Christian prayer is also unique in a very special way. It operates within a Trinitarian understanding

of God. When we pray, we address the Godhead with the faith-conviction that each of Them is actively involved with us as we lift our souls to Him. The Holy Spirit listens to our feeble expressions and articulates them in order to express the real intent of our being (Rom. 8:26). Then the Son mediates them to the Father, who is the object of our prayer (Ps. 5:2), and the Father releases the power we need in response to our request. This specific view of God provides a theological frame of reference to prayer.

Prayer and God's immanence. The question of the nature of God's presence within His creation remains theologically complex. Theologians and philosophers have been discussing it for centuries without being able to reach a common understanding. Pantheism is one of those attempts, but it is unsatisfactory because it sacrifices the personhood of God. Panentheism is also unsatisfactory because it conceives God as not yet here, but as a participant in the process of becoming. Contrary to those views, the biblical God is! He is the "I AM" (Exod. 3:14). He is not only the Self-existing One, He is also here with us. He is so near that He can hear us when we pray (Deut. 4:7; Ps. 6:8, 9; Matt. 6:6).

To a large extent, Greek thought was responsible for incorporating the concept of an impassive and emotionless God into Christian theology. This God could not hear us because He was the distant One. But prayer operates within the theological conviction that God is with us, that He experiences our joys, sadness, and fears, and that He listens to us when we invoke His name (Exod. 3:7). He is not the hidden God of the philosophers, but the God who is so near to us, we can touch Him through our prayers and He can caress us through His loving response.

Prayer as communion with God. The communion and fellowship we have with God is unique because through it we enter into a dialogue with the very source and fountain of our life. There is indeed a profound *koinonia* in prayer. In order for fellowship to be real and meaningful, the parties involved must have a common gravitational center that brings and holds them together in a communality of interest and goals. Prayer finds this gravitational core in the person of Christ, in whom God was present reconciling the world to Himself (2 Cor. 5:17).

We hardly understand or comprehend what happens to the human mind and soul when through prayer we enter into communion with God (cf. James 5:19). In this encounter with God through prayer, our minds become morally

and spiritually renewed, with our being nurtured and reenergized, and we are enabled to stand before Him to serve Him (Luke 22:32; Acts 6:4; 1 Tim. 2:8). The power and the grace of God directly and personally reach us through prayer. The tax collector poured out his soul to

described as an act of rebellion against the forces of evil. When we pray, we witness to the fact that we have not submitted ourselves to the claims of the enemy, that we only recognize the claim of Christ over us as Creator and Redeemer. Like Daniel, we have chosen

on Christ's redemptive work for us. Prayer is fundamentally a re-presentation of the good news of salvation. The key elements of the gospel are embodied in the very act and experience of praying.

Prayer and need. In a narrow sense, biblical prayer seems to be motivated

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the Lord and went home justified before God, spiritually renewed and strengthened (Luke 18:10–14; cf. 21:36). It was during prayer that Jesus was transfigured before some of His disciples (Luke 9:29). At times we are brought so close to the Lord that we experience a renewal of even our emotional and physical energy (1 Sam. 1:10, 18; cf. 3 John 3). The experiential significance of our communion with God through prayer reaches so deep about which we now know very little.

Prayer and God's love in Christ. Prayer presupposes that something took place at a cosmic level that made it possible for us to move from inaccessibility to God to accessibility to Him. We have accepted as an unquestionable reality that God, in His love, manifested in the redemptive and sacrificial death of His Son, made Himself accessible to us. The condition of the human race has changed in a radical way, thanks to Christ's achievements for us. We are no longer alienated from God's heavenly temple (1 Kings 8:49; Jon. 2:7).

Prayer and the cosmic conflict. From the perspective of the church and the heavenly family, we offer prayer to God from a world of sin and death that has neither accepted nor universally recognized God's sovereignty. Our prayers reveal to the universe and to the forces of evil that we have taken God's side in the conflict. Within that conceptual and experiential setting, prayer can be

to pray publicly, before the universe, in order to reveal where our true loyalty lies (Dan. 6:11).

Through prayer we ask God to manifest His power over the forces of evil that oppose our service to Him. We intercede for others in order for God's power to work for the benefit of others (Rom. 15:31; cf. Col. 4:3; Heb. 13:18, 19). We can pray because we know that Christ was victorious over evil powers and that His victory is now by faith our victory. Prayer is not a crusade against the enemy but the appropriation of Christ's victory over them through communion with our Savior. We approach God in prayer, not because we fear the enemy but because we want to have fellowship with God, who through Christ already defeated the enemy. Out of that fellowship with Him through Christ's blood we overcome by appropriating His victory.

Theological expression of prayer

What is the theological significance of prayer? What contribution does prayer make to our understanding of the glorious work of salvation that Christ achieved for us? Prayer becomes a subject of theological reflection *in connection with Christ's redemptive work*. Prayer cannot be separated from Christ's work of salvation. Praying is not simply talking to God, as important as that is; it is also a religious act through which we proclaim our need and constant reliance

by need—temporal, emotional, spiritual needs. Indeed, prayer revolves around need. The prayer of praises anticipates a need, or responds to a need that was or will be satisfied. In prayers of thanksgiving, we express gratitude for God's blessings through which our needs were satisfied.

With need also as an intrinsic part of our beings, prayer invites us to reevaluate our self-perception and to recognize that we are by nature in constant need. We need others, and we need an abundance of other things in order to realize ourselves and develop the potential God entrusted to us. This is particularly the case in a world of sin and death, in which our very being is almost, if not always, being threatened. This deep awareness of need brings us to our knees before the Father in prayer.

It is here that prayer begins to reveal its profound ties with the gospel of salvation through Christ. The work of Christ for us presupposes that humans were in desperate need of salvation. This was our ultimate and supreme need. Every other need is, in a sense, a *type* or, perhaps better, a *sign* of that most important need for reconciliation with God, deeply hidden in the human heart. Sin tends to numb that supreme need of the soul, deceiving sinners and leading them to conclude that they do not have to pray because they have no needs. But we all have needs. All our needs can be provided for because the fundamental

need of redemption has already been provided. Consequently, when we bring our needs to God, we are proclaiming that the need of our soul for union with God has already been satisfied through Christ. Prayer memorializes that experience and keeps alive in our spiritual life the awareness of our constant need for and dependence on the gospel of salvation through faith in Christ.

Prayer and self-sufficiency. Prayer rules out self-dependence and has its roots in the humble realization that we lack the knowledge, power, and even the willingness to supply our personal needs. Prayer states that when it comes to our full self-realization, we are helpless, unable to master both creation and our lives. We are not self-sufficient. Without that conviction of insufficiency, prayer would become almost irrelevant.

This conviction lies not only at the base of our prayers but particularly at the very core of the gospel. The gospel pulverizes our claims of self-sufficiency, humbles us, and casts to the ground our inflated egos. The gospel illumines us, allowing us to perceive our true condition not only as needy creatures but particularly as beings that are unable to help ourselves. The inability we face in meeting our needs moves us to pray and points to the total insufficiency we experienced when confronted for the first time with the gospel of salvation in Christ.

Prayer and God's self-sufficiency. Prayer is based on the conviction that God prevails as the only One who can provide for our needs. According to the Bible, those who pray made a significant discovery of God's sufficiency. Hence, with God as the only object of our prayers, He becomes our Partner in dialogue. Therefore, we pray as an act of worship through which we express the wonderful conviction that God's all-sufficiency overcomes our insufficiency. Consequently, we do not need to offer prayers to spiritual powers that compete for our service. Christian prayer proclaims that only God has the ability to amply provide for all our needs.

The gospel emphasizes in a unique way the surprising fact that only God can pull us out of our needy condition, out of

our predicament and impotence. When we pray, we not only recognize God as the only One who could supply our needs but also affirm that He provided for our deliverance from the powers of sin and death even before we asked Him. He provided for us abundantly (Rom. 5:21).

Prayer and mediation. Christ taught us in a unique way the value of prayer because He personally practiced constant communion with the Father through it. He knew that sin had alienated us from God, but He also knew that the Father wanted to have fellowship with us. He announced that in His own person a channel of communication had been created to bridge the gap between us and God (John 16:23; cf. 14:13, 14). The Son's mediation does not presuppose unwillingness on the part of the Father to listen to us. It rather assumes a divine willingness to have so intense a communion with us that He created a means by which He could listen to us in spite of our sin (Ps. 69:13; 4:1). As our High Priest, Christ identifies Himself with our needs and joys and imbues our prayers with heavenly efficacy.

Whenever we pray in the name of Jesus, we reaffirm our commitment to the good news of salvation through the mediation of the Son. It was through His sacrificial death on the cross that God mediated to us His reconciling love. The mystery of this most profound transaction is memorialized in the act of prayer, in which we constantly recognize that He "always lives to intercede for [us]" (Heb. 7:25, NIV).

Prayer and God's will. When we pray, there could be a conflict of wills. What we think we need and what God knows we need may not always coincide. Consequently, Jesus taught us to pray, " ' "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" ' " (Matt. 6:10, NIV). This dimension of prayer opens the mystery of the so-called "unanswered prayer." Through the requests that were never granted to us exactly as we wanted, the Lord was revealing to us that even in His dialogue with us He remains the sovereign Lord. The biblical way of resolving a possible conflict of wills in the experience of prayer is for the human will to

bow before God's will for us. The prayer of faith is characterized not only by the firm conviction that God always listens to our prayers but also by the equally important conviction that God's will always seeks our good.

In this act of adjusting and even relinquishing our expectations and plans to the will of God when we pray, we are simply recalling the moment when we surrendered our will to Him through repentance, confession, and conversion. From that moment on we began to walk in newness of life according to God's will for us. We submitted to Him because through the work of the Spirit in our hearts we were absolutely persuaded that His will for us was always good. In the surrendering of our will, prayer and the gospel intersect each other.

Prayer as a response. Prayer includes not only talking to God, but also proclaiming our dependence on Him, as a response of our love to God's saving act in Christ. Consequently prayer is not only asking, but also praising, thanking, blessing God for His goodness, loyalty, and mercies toward us. But in a very particular way, gospel and prayer come together when we bend our knees and ask for forgiveness. This is the goal of the gospel because at that moment human pride collapses and we are ready to receive from the Lord what we really needed—forgiveness of sin. Every prayer is a living echo of that moment.

Prayer expresses itself as a response to God's loving mercies with our response to God not restricted to our mind alone. The mind and reason, our emotions, and our body are all involved in prayer, and through each one of those aspects of our being, prayer shows itself to be a response to the presence and goodness of God.

Conclusion

Prayer integrates theology and the practice of personal devotion to God in a way that perhaps no other act of worship can. Framed within some of the deepest theological topics in Christian theology, it represents our first encounter with the good news of salvation in Christ. Prayer is essentially a proclamation of that gospel, a ritual embodiment of it in the act of worshipping the Lord. ■

Reflections on prayer

John Watts



John Watts, D.Min., Ph.D., is senior lecturer on the faculty of education, Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.

From a Christian perspective, living can be described as the continuous worship of God in a universe that has a sacred origin. Spiritual relational worship means offering oneself as a living, holy sacrifice, acceptable to God (Rom. 12:1). Prayer has much to do with restoration for living or abiding in God. The spiritual photosynthesis enables us, as spiritual beings, to regenerate throughout life by preserving the sacred and separating from the profane. Far from being a ritual, prayer is a way of life—as breath is to the body, so prayer is to the soul. Without spirituality (in simple terms, a personal encounter, engagement, and resultant saving relationship with God), prayer cannot survive. Without prayer, spirituality cannot survive.

The limits of language

Fundamentally, as a spiritual unifying presence between living beings who know, love, and care for one another, prayer transcends language or words. Prayer, therefore, is not always about asking or seeking, though it retains a significant, intimate conversational, supplicatory, and intercessory character (Matt. 7:9–11). Rather, it exists as a means by which we are restored to and remain within God's family and are able to sustain a relationship with God, to reverence, honor, and glorify Him. Words, then, are relatively unimportant in a life of prayer. Far more important is the attitude, the intent, the meaning that words can only superficially represent.

Of course, we do pray for one another with words. These words, however, are merely the representation or expression of our deepest soul feelings and attitudes. Prayer is one of the many rays of the powerful light of love connecting lives, expressed in thoughts, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that are sometimes beyond our own understanding. Often we do not know how to express a prayer, how to properly dialogue, because our thoughts and feelings lie so deep within the soul and, by comparison, our language is so limiting. The Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf, because human language is too reductionist and cryptic. Human language reduces and fractures what we understand and what we intend to communicate. The Holy Spirit receives and clarifies our prayers, making them whole, specific, and personal. Simultaneously, the Holy Spirit dialogues with us when we are prepared to be silent and to actively listen to the "Word of the Lord."

Pray for peace

Prayer brings balance—balance in life, worship, work, leisure, communication, relationships, race, gender, and community. Prayer leads to inner peace, and that allows outer peace with others. The reality behind a faith of integrity resides in personal experience. Without a personal experiential relationship to God, religious profession is merely theory or ideology. Prayer relates to God through personal experience and faith. We need to differentiate between a genuine experience of God and a mental conceptualization of God in much the same way as we need to differentiate between the Christ portrayed in the Christian Bible and the metaphysical and often romanticized Christ constructed by modern societies.

Even on the cross, the thief experienced a real and immediate experiential and prayerful encounter with Christ, a new spiritual-birth experience based on faith alone. The thief turned away from himself and turned to Christ in humble penitence, turned away from selfishness to godliness, by faith. His short conversational supplicatory prayer to Christ was immediately answered, and the thief died at peace with himself, the world, and with God. Significantly, though, he was not relieved of his physical and emotional suffering, and he experienced an excruciating death. Prayer is a natural inner fruit of a conversion experience bound up with faith. Conversion is the necessary prerequisite for prayer, and, therefore, prayer goes beyond religion. Prayer evidences faith in Christ (1 Tim. 2:1; 5:5)—a means by which

we can understand ourselves and feel connected to God. It contrasts with separation or absence or decay and coheres with wholeness, presence, and growth.

Prayer and suffering

Prayer ameliorates absence and grief in a world of evil and death. Death as the enemy of life regresses presence to absence. Suffering and death separate and absent our loved ones from us, sometimes in the most painful circumstances. In coming to terms with the absence of our loved ones, and the associated deep grief that naturally accompanies such absence, we can, through prayer, keep ourselves mindfully attuned and committed, as beneficiaries of God's grace, to the realities of the Christian life. Prayer underwrites our faith in the ultimate things to come, when suffering and death themselves will be separated and absented from the future promised world. Prayer, then, can be identified as the spiritual antidote to world-induced unhappiness, for it recognizes that only through suffering is holiness achieved. Prayer sustains our ability to love and hope and endure throughout our life's journey.

Prayer consists of a reflexive attitude of mindfulness in daily life—not passive introversion, or a series of requests, mantras, or praises only. It is mindfulness of one's being *in* the world but not being *of* the world. Consequently, prayer consists of a transcendent relational communication with God (not being of the world) thoroughly embedded and embodied in the practical and pragmatic concrete realities of the world (being in the world). The life and words of Jesus admirably demonstrate this mindfulness aspect of prayer. He modeled to humanity the real nature of living mindfully: what is real and how humans should live. Prayer as mindfulness is firmly rooted in the trials and tribulations that all of us face on a daily basis. At the same time, however, prayer, as a God-oriented attitude of mindfulness, connects and

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ONLY SUPERFICIALLY
REPRESENT.

unifies us to the whole cosmos, so that we move from a life of fragmentation and separation to a life of wholeness and integration with God's cosmos.

Prayer and the kingdom of God

The Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9 ff. and Luke 11:2 ff.) portrays Christ's mindfulness of being in, but not of, the world, for it addresses both God's holiness and our human needs. The Lord's Prayer is especially significant to Seventh-day Adventist Christians because the prayer is highly likely to be a significant depiction of the Ten Commandments in the context of the Exodus experience. Christ prays for the incoming kingdom of God, anticipated by the fourth commandment, which has retrospective and prospective orientations, directing us back to the original Creation and to the future redemption that we shall enjoy under the reign of God in the new kingdom. The roots of the Lord's Prayer are situated in the two central pillars of Seventh-day Adventism, namely, Creation/re-creation (salvation) in Christ with the seventh-day Sabbath as its signifier, and the second coming (advent) of Christ to inaugurate the new eternal kingdom of God. Prayer, then, effectively means to be a continuous Sabbath experience, wherein we find rest in God as, similar to the Exodus Israelites

in their wilderness wanderings, we wander through a foreign land until the coming of Christ. Prayer becomes the medium to bring deep peace and joy to the soul, to authenticate a sense of belonging, and to fulfill the promise of entering fully into the kingdom of God at the return of Christ.

Prayer and faith

Prayer is respectful and not ostentatious, and respect acknowledges the sacred in all living things. Respect induces honor—a sense of dignity, humility, and reverence. Christians are mindful that "our Father" (Matt. 6:6–9) is God, the Almighty, and that Christ is God, the Creator. Though Jesus taught His disciples to pray to God as their personal Father, their "Daddy," the emphasis focuses on Christians having a childlike and humble trust in a personal loving Father-God who willingly converses with them, and not on falsely assuming that it gives license to treat God as some "sugar daddy" to be addressed in shallow, phony, or arrogant familiarity. Public prayer reveals the soul.

Faith, hope, and love (1 Cor. 13) are essential components of any religious faith tradition. For Christianity, the faith-hope-love triad is centered in and empowered by Christ, producing harmony in the souls of individuals and churches. Prayer is the glue that binds them together and gives them presence and power. Without prayer, faith, hope, and love are absent. Christianity based on a personal and continuing engagement with Christ ceases to exist, and, at best, it becomes an ideology. Prayer, then, is neither an addendum, nor a feminized subdivision of religion mostly for women and children, nor only ritualistic words read from a prayer book (though there is a significant role to be played by mindfully written prayers). Prayer is presence, prayer is power, and prayer is life for the Christian and for Christianity. As with faith, hope, and love, prayer is a gift of the Spirit.

Let us, indeed, pray. ■

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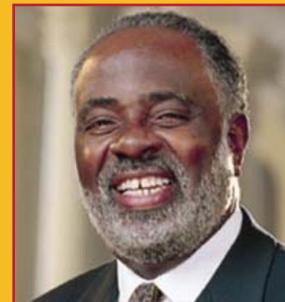
Barry C. Black is the 62nd Chaplain of the U.S. Senate. The Senate elected its first chaplain in 1789. Prior to Capitol Hill, Chaplain Black served in the U.S. Navy for over twenty-seven years, ending his distinguished career as Rear Admiral and Chief of Navy Chaplains. Chaplain Black opens the Senate each day in prayer and provides counselling and spiritual care for senators, their families, and staff—a combined constituency of over seven thousand people. Chaplain Black has been selected for many outstanding achievements. He and his wife, Brenda, have three sons: Barry II, Brendan, and Bradford.



Randy Roberts was born in South America of missionary parents. Until college age, the majority of his life was spent in Latin American countries. Dr. Roberts has extensive experience as a church pastor, hospital chaplain, marriage and family therapist, and lecturer in religious studies. Randy has fulfilled speaking invitations to many varied audiences, both nationally and internationally. He has written articles for various publications and has authored the book *The End Is Near (Again)*. Currently Dr. Roberts serves as senior pastor of the Loma Linda University Church of Seventh-day Adventists in Loma Linda, California. Dr. Roberts and his wife, Anita, have a son, Austin, and a daughter, Miranda.



Dr. Gordon Moyes recently retired after 50 years of preaching, the last 27 at Wesley Mission in Sydney, Australia. During this ministry, his church grew to be the largest in Australia with 4,200 paid staff ministering in 500 buildings. Moyes became the first minister in the world to raise and spend over one billion dollars in one church. He also served as a national television and radio minister for over forty years. Since retirement, Moyes has been elected as a state senator and is an advisor to the Australian prime minister, who describes him as “the epitome of Christian leadership.” Moyes, who has authored fifty-six books, has also received highest national honors including Companion of the Order of Australia (2002) and the New South Wales Father of the Year (1986).



Robert Smith Jr. serves as professor of Christian preaching at Beeson Divinity School, Birmingham, Alabama. Previously he served as Carl E. Bates Associate Professor of Christian Preaching at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he received the 1996 Findley B. Edge Award for Teaching Excellence. An ordained Baptist minister, Smith served as pastor of the New Mission Missionary Baptist Church for twenty years before returning to complete his Ph.D. He has also authored a study of ministry in the African American church, *Preparing for Christian Ministry*, and co-edited *A Mighty Long Journey*. His research interests include the place of passion in preaching, the literary history of African American preaching, Christological preaching, and theologies of preaching. He received Beeson’s “Teacher of the Year Award” in 2005. Dr. Smith and his wife, Wanda, are the parents of four adult children.

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Called to preach: an interview with E. E. Cleveland and Benjamin Reaves

Derek J. Morris

Derek J. Morris, D.Min., is senior pastor of the Forest Lake Seventh-day Adventist Church, Apopka, Florida, United States.



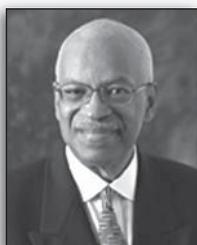
Dr. E. E. Cleveland is an internationally known evangelist.

He has been honored as one of the outstanding black preachers in the English-speaking world,

and in 1993 he was inducted into the Martin Luther King Jr. collegium of preachers and scholars at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, United States.



Dr. Benjamin Reaves is recognized as an outstanding preacher and teacher of preaching. He has been a frequent contributor to the Chicago Sunday Evening Club.



Morris: It's a privilege to speak with two outstanding preachers about the sacred work of preaching. How does a person know if he or she is called to preach?

Cleveland: One knows if they are called to a preaching ministry when the necessity of preaching the gospel eclipses and excludes all competing professions.

Morris: You began your preaching ministry as a boy preacher in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Did you ever consider any other professions besides being a preacher of the gospel?

Cleveland: No! I was a child with a one-track mind. I have never wanted to do anything else or be anything else. When I was a boy preacher, my father would take me to different churches—Baptist, Methodist, Congregational. Over the past sixty years, I have preached the gospel on every continent except Antarctica. It's too cold there for my Alabama blood!

Morris: Why is preaching so important to you?

Cleveland: Preaching is the supreme unction function of the Holy Spirit. It is by the foolishness of preaching that people are persuaded to enter the kingdom of God. Preaching is God's primary means for saving men and women. In order for preaching to be effective, it must be Holy Spirit actuated. The Word of God must be interpreted to the mind and through the mind of the preacher. A human being so ordered by the Divine calling is a power to be reckoned with.

Morris: You have mentored many young preachers through the years. One of those outstanding young preachers was Benjamin Reaves. Dr. Reaves, you actually began your preaching ministry working with E. E. Cleveland. How have you developed your potential as a preacher?

Reaves: Since my early years, I have been a voracious reader. That put me in touch with a feel for language rhythm and sound. As I'm writing my sermon manuscript, I'm listening. H. Grady Davis talks about writing for the ear. Words need to be spoken in a way that addresses the ear. I love a well-turned phrase. Those words will come back to people over the years. Having a feel for language rhythm and sound has been a tremendous asset.

Morris: What kind of books helped you to develop a feel for language rhythm and sound?

Reaves: I read everything! As a child, I read Zane Grey. Anything written by good writers.

Morris: Fred Craddock would affirm the value of reading good writing. Poetry. Historical fiction. Anything that is written well.

Reaves: Then, if you write something that's awkward, that's not falling right on the ear, it jumps out at you. It doesn't sound right. You have developed a feel for language rhythm and sound.

Morris: How do you begin the process of developing a biblical sermon?

Reaves: It starts with an idea that drives me to a text or with a text that drives me to an idea. Either way, I end up with a text. As Henry Mitchell put it, "If you ain't got a text, you ain't preaching!" My authority as a preacher is not just linked to Scripture. It is chained to Scripture. I'm a disciple of H. Grady Davis, so my first question is, What is the text saying? That's ground zero for me. I'm not in the sermon yet. I'm working with the passage. What is the passage talking about? What is it saying about it? I look at various versions. I look at exegetical commentaries. Once I get past that study of the text, I may have an outline that is going to shape the sermon. At least, I have a clear understanding of

is not absolutely necessary for the preaching of this sermon. I need to begin some element of writing by Wednesday at the latest. I know that I will add to that. But getting started with the writing process helps me to clarify what I am saying and what I am saying about it. Because of my initial study, I know where I'm headed. My subconscious says, "Now I can help you." Things begin to come to mind. Insights begin to open up.

As you walk through your sermon, you need to have a sense of time. It irritates me when someone says, "Well, I won't have time to finish this!" What do you mean? What were you doing? I get bothered when I see filler, treading water. You need a sense of time.

hook and the bait that you throw into the water are designed to catch the fish. Persuading people is the principal object of preaching. So it's important to make an appeal, to give an invitation. Let me share with you an incident that confirmed in my own mind that the object of preaching is decision getting. One Sunday evening I was preaching in Chicago. I had preached a tough sermon, and I couldn't see how anyone would respond. I even discouraged myself. So I ended the sermon and sat down without making an appeal. During the closing song, a man came charging down to the front. He responded to an appeal without me even making one! I resolved that day that I would never again preach a sermon without making an invitation.

Morris: How do you craft that invitation?

Cleveland: I tell people that God is willing, God is able, and God is available. That's the structure of the invitation. God is willing—I preach the Cross. That expresses God's willingness to save us. God is able—I talk about the thief on the cross, and how the Lord saved him! If the Lord can save a thief on a cross, He can save anybody! And then I tell people that God is available and He wants you to come to Him now!

Morris: It has been said that demons tremble when preachers boldly declare the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit. The forces of darkness don't like to see individuals take their stand for Jesus. What are some spiritual battles that you have experienced in your preaching ministry?

Cleveland: I remember one time I was preaching in St. Petersburg, Florida. One of our church members in that area had married a killer, a very mean man. She had dropped out of church but started attending the meetings that I was conducting. One Friday night she came to me with tears streaming down her face. She said, "My husband told me that if I get baptized, he is going to kill me and he is going to kill the person who

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what the passage is saying.

I need to settle what the text is saying before I go to the next question—What do I want to say about it? Someone might say, "That's already settled! You need to tell people what the text is saying." But I may want to focus on a small subportion of the text. Now I'm asking myself the structural questions What do I want to say? and What do I want to say about it? I'm going to come out of the process with some kind of structure. I need that skeleton. Otherwise, a lot of time is wasted gathering material that may not be used.

After that initial period of study, I need to back off and let the subconscious deal with that material. That can happen while I'm visiting, while I'm driving, doing anything actually.

Then the task is to put meat on the bones. Generally, that's when I begin to write. Writing helps me to eliminate what

The final step of preparation is to let the sermon speak to you. Sometimes, this final step reveals that something is missing. There is a link that is missing for the hearer. Or something needs to be eliminated. That awareness comes after the mechanical part of writing the sermon manuscript is over. It's in that final step of letting the sermon speak to you that the passion is reignited. That's where the fire comes.

Then, when you preach, be open to the fact that there might be a shift in the congregational dynamic. You might find yourself elaborating on a point that was not part of the original plan.

Morris: What about making an appeal at the end of the sermon?

Cleveland: I always make an appeal when I preach. Jesus told His disciples, "I will make you fishers of men." The

baptizes me. What should I do?" I said to her, "He can't kill me and he won't kill you." The next weekend she was sitting in church, ready to be baptized. As I was preaching, I could see out the front doors of the church. A red Chrysler pulled up in front of the church, and that lady's husband was in the car. I found out later that there was a loaded gun on the seat beside him. I knew what he had come for, but I just kept on preaching. Suddenly, I heard sirens wailing, and an ambulance pulled up next to his car. They pulled that man out of the car. He was dead on arrival at the hospital. The man who planned to assassinate me ended up losing his own life.

On another occasion, I was preaching in North Carolina, and a man came to the meeting and sat down. He had a gun in his pocket and his finger on the trigger. Four times during the sermon, the gunman moved forward and then moved backwards. Finally, he turned to the man next to him and said, "Every time I try to get up to kill that man, a sheet of flames separates us." Then the gunman got up and half-walked, half-ran out of that place!

Morris: How did you find out about that story?

Cleveland: I baptized the man who was sitting next to the gunman, and he shared his testimony of what he had seen that day! It was spiritual warfare, but the protection of the Almighty was over me!

Morris: I'm impressed that preachers need spiritual protection when proclaiming the Word of God.

Reaves: A preacher also needs to remember that success can hurt you. Success can put a monkey on your back. If you lose a sense of what preaching is all about, if you start thinking that preaching is all about you, then you're on the treadmill. You are into the performance trap. Early in your preaching ministry, you can be deluded by your church members into thinking that you're the greatest thing since Swiss cheese! Later in your preaching ministry, you begin to delude yourself. You love the invitations that you get, and you begin to

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delude yourself. Either way, the delusion is still the same. It can be just as hurtful. You need to remember that it's not about you. I remember one time that I spoke and someone handed me a note which said, "Your reputation for excellence is well deserved." I enjoyed that note too much. I lost sight of what really mattered. I let that little note monkey with my thinking. I don't want to live like that. That's what will send you galloping off in panic. No matter how successful a preacher you are, there will be other days. Unless you remember that it's not about you, you won't be able to handle those other days.

You also need to remember that your life needs to back up your preaching and your preaching needs to grow out of your life. I know that there are people who can live any kind of way and still be very impressive communicators. But I'm of the opinion that the power of the anointing will not be there if your life does not back up your preaching.

And then, just be yourself! Don't buy the lie that

you have to go with "the flavor of the month." Some preachers watch the living technicolored televangelists and then are tempted to think that they have to reproduce that in their churches. You need to be yourself. Be who you are and let God use you. At the same time, you need to work at preaching well. Being who you are is not like rolling off a log. You need to work at it! That's a lifelong commitment. If you are going to be the best of who you are as a preacher, it's a work of a lifetime. ■

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Overcoming ministry mediocrity: three steps to a wholesome ministry

Arthur D. Canales



Arthur D. Canales, D. Min., is associate professor of theology and ministry at Silver Lake College, in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, United States.

Most ministers do not consider themselves mediocre. Nor do they believe ministry is work that may be done in a mediocre way. Nevertheless, with a little introspection and honesty, most ministers will admit that from time to time every ministry suffers from mediocrity.

There are the same old service, the same old sermon, the same old songs, and the same people in the pews.

As bizarre as it might sound, God cares just as much about the minister as He does the ministry. Essentially, God is in the people business. He is concerned primarily about His people. He is more occupied with the individual minister above and beyond their individual ministries. God is faithful to His people, even to the point of allowing a person's ministry to fail. Often times when a ministry is not successful, we tend to look upon that as failure instead of opportunity. When ministry becomes mediocre, then it provides an opportunity to reflect, remove our rose-colored lenses, and be open to the self-awareness that comes from such an arduous process.

To overcome ministry mediocrity, ministerial horizons need to undergo a change. This calls for an altering of behavior. For instance, an athlete must at times alter behavior and direction in order to be successful. Similarly, ministers must make a shift in order to get out of the "pastoral slump" in which they may find themselves. Of course, like most pastoral theology, it looks good

on paper, but how is it actually applicable to the individual minister who is experiencing ministry mediocrity? Let me offer three practical suggestions that will help empower those ministers who find themselves in such situations.

"De-stress" yourself

It seems so simplistic—ah, but it is! Over the years, as a youth minister, college minister, and associate pastor, I have found that a periodical change in routine activity can be "de-stressing." The less stress in life, the more fruitful ministry may become. An activity that you enjoy, an entertainment or recreation that is appropriate for a person of the "cloth" can do the needful. It may be sports, visiting a museum, attending a musical concert, or just dining out. Whatever is appropriate, go out and experience it. "De-stressing" can prepare you for a better, more relevant ministry.

Maintain physical wellness

As a former college athlete and current fitness enthusiast, I find it utterly amazing how many people in our society do not take the time to exercise regularly or recognize the serious health benefits from exercise. I am a firm believer of developing the total person: mind, body, and spirit. However, my perception is that most ministers do not exercise as much as they should. In fact, most of my previous pastors with whom I have worked never exercised. I am not suggesting a highly intense fitness program, but a program that will ensure overall wellness and wholeness in the life of the minister.

Most exercise physiologists maintain that lifting weights regularly three to five times a week for 30 to 40 minutes each time is the number one stress reliever. Personally, nothing keeps me more in tune with myself than working out. We also need to establish a cardiovascular regimen. Cardiovascular activity includes, but is not limited to, running, cycling, stair-stepper machines, treadmill walking, and swimming. Again, cardiovascular exercise ideally needs to be done three to five times a week for 30 to 40 minutes at a time. Sorry golfers, golf does not constitute real exercise (and I golf).

When you get better rounded and work toward a wholistic wellness program, you will be surprised how much more effective your ministry will become.

Meditate

This seems obvious enough; after all, we are Christian ministers. In reality, unless you live in a

monastery, meditation and contemplation are usually far removed from your daily lives. Ministers, like everybody else in our fast-paced society, have little time for quiet reflection. Without focusing ourselves on God and His Word, how

contemplation of well-chosen Scripture passages; and (4) thanking God for the meditation experience.

The problem I typically run into is that I do not meditate as often as I need to. Meditation often clears the mind,

motions with a head full of worry, doubt, and skepticism. Adequate contemplation of God's role in your life will lead you to surrender to God's will.

My point is simple: overcome ministry mediocrity by improving

WHEN MINISTRY BECOMES MEDIOCRE, THEN IT PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY TO REFLECT, REMOVE OUR ROSE-COLORED LENSES, AND BE OPEN TO THE SELF-AWARENESS THAT COMES FROM SUCH AN ARDUOUS PROCESS.

can we come to a self-awareness of what God expects from our ministries? In my life, meditation has always taken on different stages: (1) being still and quiet; (2) praying silently; (3) discerning God's will by listening to His voice through

gives us ample time to reflect upon our issues, and helps us to search ourselves with personal introspection. Such meditation requires that the minister set aside special times each week for precisely that purpose, and not simply go through the

yourself. Try one of the above tips this month, add one next month, and another afterwards. You will turn "ministry mediocrity" into a ministry that is thriving upon a rejuvenated and empowered minister. ❏

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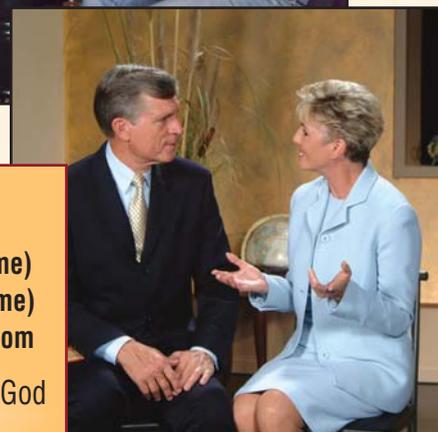
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The Voice of Prophecy

Effective committee meetings: a guide for congregations

Barry Oliver



Barry Oliver, Ph.D., is general secretary of the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia.

We have all heard and shared humorous stories and anecdotes about committees. Quips such as “committees keep minutes but waste hours” and “what else can you do but get bored at a board meeting” are well known to most of us. Committees have come in for some bad press.

But it does not have to be that way. The information shared in this article will help those who have been selected as members of church committees make their participation effective and efficient. We do not govern by autocratic dictate, but we do govern on the basis of broad-based participation and representation. We depend on groups of people who take part in the decision-making process. These groups of people that have been empowered by the church body to make appropriate decisions, we call committees.

Types and functions of committees

The executive committees of the church at large are, of necessity, larger committees generally conducted in a more formal manner, following well-prescribed rules of order. The committees of the local church tend to be smaller and generally conducted with less formality. Nevertheless, if the principles that are discussed here are applied and used, especially in the local church, local church committees will work much better.

Broadly speaking, committees are established for one or more of three purposes:

A committee may be set up to study or investigate a matter. In this case the work of the

committee includes bringing back to the body that established it a report of its findings and can be considered complete when it has fulfilled a specific assignment.

A committee may be asked to investigate and make a recommendation with respect to an issue. This will be particularly so when more than one viable alternative exists. A nominating committee established to nominate or recommend persons for office in the local church represents this type of committee.

A committee may be established to take specific actions. Most long-standing committees in the church are empowered to take actions. Committees should recognize the importance of this prerogative in accordance with guidelines set out in the *Church Manual* or in the terms of reference that were articulated at the time when the committee was established.

Whatever purposes they serve, committees are answerable to the bodies that established them. No committee has the right to extend its functions beyond those that were determined when established. The body that establishes a committee should agree on terms of reference that describe in simple point form the aims, objectives, and functions of a committee. When a committee has been clearly told what to do, the members are then able to work more effectively and efficiently. When clear terms of reference have not been provided, the committee is less likely to get the job done to the satisfaction of the parent body because it simply does not understand the expectations.

The mission of the church

Because we are speaking about processes in the church as they relate to the committee structure, we cannot simply take principles that may apply in committees that transact business in secular organizations and assume these can be transported into the church. We are to be about our Father’s business. Therefore, for every meeting conducted in the church, the agenda should first deal with items that specifically focus on the mission of the church. Unless our committees contribute in some way to the fulfilling of the mission of the church, they should not meet, for this represents a waste of time. Churches and church members everywhere need to focus on the most essential items. In every committee we should find ways to express, discuss, and make decisions with reference to matters that specifically enhance our capacity to fulfill our commission. Committee members need to be apprised of how their actions and decisions



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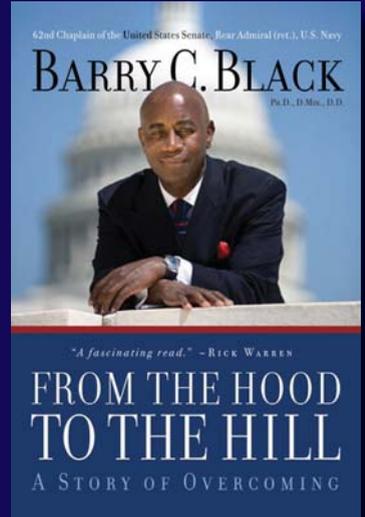
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MAKING MINISTRY MEANINGFUL

are contributing to our most essential objectives.

Do not take it for granted that the people on the committee will somehow automatically assume that what the committee does relates to the mission of the church. Take time to articulate, discuss, and decide exactly how this can be accomplished. Listen to reports that relate to how past actions of the committee have enhanced the mission of the church. Take time to pray, seeking the blessing of the Lord in the work of the committee and its relation to the mission of the church.

The primary responsibility for seeing that the mission of the church remains preeminent belongs to the chairperson. Chairpersons should have the capacity to articulate the vision and see its accomplishment. Otherwise they are no better than the airline pilot who is said to have announced, "The good news is that we are making very good time. The bad news is we are lost."

Preparing for the committee

A direct correlation exists between preparation for a committee meeting and the productivity of the meeting. How many committee meetings have you attended in which you became increasingly agitated because you were wasting your time? In discussing essential preparation, several factors need to be considered:

Know the purpose of the meeting. Have you ever asked yourself these questions: Why is this committee being held? What outcome is expected? There should be an expectation that the meeting is going to achieve results. The chairperson and the secretary should have discussed the purpose of the meeting prior to calling it so that members do not doubt that it is really necessary.

Carefully prepare a written agenda. The preparation of an agenda serves two important purposes: It clarifies in the mind of the chairperson the items to be discussed, and it communicates to the committee members vital information that should be available to them before the meeting commences.

However, a word of caution follows. While one discussion item on an agenda

is good, there should not be too many such matters. By their very nature, discussion items are open-ended. If there are more than say, two or three discussion items, the chairperson will almost certainly have difficulty in keeping the meeting to time.

Give prior information. In addition to the distribution of the agenda before the committee meeting, wherever possible both the starting time and expected finishing time of the committee should be given in advance. Clearly state those who are expected to attend. Ensure that everyone entitled to attend knows the location of the meeting. Giving people adequate information before the committee meets enables them to feel valued. In fact, a wise chairperson will actively encourage committee members to be seeking the Lord in prayer as the essential preparation for discussing the matters at hand.

The meeting should be so well planned in advance that adding agenda items at the last minute rarely happens, for then the committee members are deprived of adequate preparation and prayerful consideration of the matter. Only in matters of great urgency should anything be considered without proper preparation.

The functions of the chairperson

The chairperson holds the most responsibility for ensuring that the meeting is conducted decently and in order. In fact, the quality of the meeting almost always resides on the quality of the chairmanship. The chair position carries both responsibility and privilege. Chairpersons should not approach the responsibility lightly and without due regard for the position that they occupy. In order for the chair to function effectively, several important guidelines need to be observed:

The chairperson should know the key issues to be discussed in all agenda items. Effective chairpersons prepare thoroughly and can speak, if necessary, to any item on the agenda. They are well aware of the specific purpose of the meeting and keep that purpose in mind throughout. Homework, done prior to the meeting, is essential and should include, if necessary, consultation and

discussion so that the chair has been well apprised of important issues.

The chairperson should encourage discussion of all sides of an issue. Those in the chair need to be sure that all sides of the argument are examined fairly by allowing those who wish to speak to an issue to do so. If some members of the committee do not seem to be speaking to an issue, the responsibility of the chair includes empowering them appropriately by inviting them to express their opinion on the issue. If, on the other hand, someone monopolizes the meeting, the chair needs to inform them that while their input is valued, all members of the committee need to be given opportunity to contribute.

On occasions a chairperson may wish to express a strong opinion on a particular issue. When that happens, the chairperson asks another person to occupy the chair temporarily in order to make the point that needs to be made.

The chairperson should know the dynamics in the group. When a committee meets for the first time, it is not usually possible to anticipate what group dynamics will operate. As time passes, however, patterns begin to emerge in the dynamics of a group that may strengthen or, alternatively, impede the work of the committee. A good chairperson retains sensitivity to such dynamics.

The chairperson will have carefully prepared appropriate opening remarks well before calling the committee to order. The chair should prepare well both to open the meeting and to introduce each item on the agenda but not necessarily present each one. For example, the chairperson could ask and introduce another person to conduct a short devotional at the beginning of the meeting.

In presenting each item, the chairperson needs to be factual, appropriately cheerful, topical, and focused on the discussion items. In a sense, the chair should capture the interest of the committee members in such a way that each member is ready and willing to actively participate in the discussion of the issue.

The chairperson should articulate a clear and fair summary of each item being discussed before putting it to the vote. In making this summary, impartiality is

WE DO NOT GOVERN BY AUTOCRATIC DICTATE, BUT WE DO GOVERN ON THE BASIS OF BROAD-BASED PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION. WE DEPEND ON GROUPS OF PEOPLE WHO TAKE PART IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS.

absolutely vital with the focus on the issues rather than on the personalities involved. From time to time the chair should be prepared to ask questions seeking clarification of issues that may not have been well expressed.

The chairperson should remain courteous and in control. Never should the chairperson permit the chair position to be usurped. Neither should the chair be dictatorial or rude, even with a committee member way out of line. No chairpersons should ever increase or even maintain their authority by participating in inappropriate, unethical, or unchristian conduct.

At the end of the meeting, the chairperson should make sure that responsibilities for the implementation of the actions have been assigned. Many committees approve excellent actions that are never implemented because members are not sure who needs to do what. The chairperson should ensure that all are clear as to who is responsible for implementing the action.

Finally, the chairperson should make sure that the committee meeting ends positively. For example, make sure that you thank people for coming to the meeting. It may be appropriate to make some personal remarks about some members of the committee. A reference to the date, time, and place for the next meeting of the particular committee may be in order.

The functions of the clerk or secretary

The secretary works together with the chairperson to ensure that the committee meeting operates efficiently and effectively. There should be ready communication and consultation between the chairperson and the secretary. The duties of the secretary follow.

The secretary formally calls the meeting. The secretary, in consultation with

the chairperson, usually holds the responsibility for announcing the meeting in the manner appropriate for that specific committee.

The secretary makes the physical arrangements for the meeting. The secretary, again in consultation with the chairperson, usually makes the physical arrangements for the meeting. For example, the secretary will prepare the venue, the seating, the provision of heating or cooling, any writing or written materials, and any other items deemed desirable for successfully conducting the meeting.

The secretary assists in preparing the agenda. The secretary will generally choose the means by which the agenda will be distributed before the meeting. The agenda will usually be accompanied by appropriate reference material that will provide information to assist in the decision-making process.

The secretary prepares and circulates the minutes after the conclusion of the meeting. Minutes consist of a brief formal record of proceedings at meetings. They need to be concise while at the same time providing sufficient information to be readily understood by a person not at the meeting. They include details of the type of meeting; the place, day, and date of the meeting; the names of those present; apologies; approval of the minutes of the previous meeting; and an accurate record of actions taken.

As well as providing a record for future reference purposes, minutes help those who must implement decisions to do it correctly. It is good practice for the secretary to prepare the minutes as soon as possible after the meeting. The chairperson should read the draft of the minutes to ensure that they accurately reflect the proceedings of the meeting.

Approved minutes must not be altered in any way. A resolution can be passed at a later meeting to correct any

error discovered after the minutes have been approved. If so, alterations should be included in the record of the later meeting. Minutes should not contain a record of anything that happened after the close of the meeting. The secretary also holds the responsibility for the preservation of the minutes.

The duties of committee members

A number of points need to be made with reference to the role and responsibilities of those who serve on the various committees and boards of our church. I believe in the privilege of serving as a member of a group of people called to transact the business of the Lord.

Committee members conducting the Lord's business should conduct themselves with appropriate Christian decorum, not making frivolous, irrelevant, unnecessary, time-consuming, or obstructionist speeches or motions. Generally, a person should speak to a particular issue only once in order to give adequate opportunity for as many as possible to speak to an issue or motion. However, the chairperson may give a person who has already spoken the opportunity to clarify previous remarks or answer a question.

At the discretion of the chairperson, persons who do not normally have the right of attendance may attend and address the committee as invitees. However, these persons do not have the right of making or seconding motions, nor do they have the right to vote. The chair has the right to ask attendees who are not committee members to leave the committee after the item under discussion has been finalized.

All remarks and discussion should be directed to or through the chairperson. This may appear somewhat ponderous at times. However, experience has shown that this wise practice helps dif-

fuse potentially difficult situations when people who are highly committed to differing positions begin to address their remarks to each other.

Appropriate rules of order

Those who participate in committees should be familiar with the almost universally accepted manner of transacting items through the committee.

A member makes a motion. When the chairperson introduces an item, they usually also ask for a motion. If proper preparation has taken place, the chair will know who should make the motion or there will be a formal written recommendation. Motions should be worded as clearly and as exactly as possible.

In some cases, some discussion may be needed before the chair entertains a motion. In such cases, discussion should be kept to a minimum before a motion is on the floor.

Another member seconds the motion. All motions require another person to second them in order to be considered. The purpose of the second is to inform the chair that more than one member wishes the motion to be considered. A second does not mean that the one who seconds the motion also favors the motion. It means that the one who seconds agrees that the motion should be brought to the committee for discussion and consideration.

The members discuss the motion. The motion is then discussed under the direction of the chair. If in the course of the discussion it becomes evident that an amendment is desirable, a motion for an amendment must be moved, seconded, and voted independently from the original motion. If the amendment is accepted, the motion as amended can then be discussed in preparation for the vote.

A member calls for the question to be voted. When discussion has proceeded to the point where all aspects of the matter have been aired, a member of the committee may call for the motion to be put to the vote by calling question. The chairperson then asks the committee to vote on whether they want discussion to cease and the matter to be put to the vote. If the vote to put the question to

the vote comes in the affirmative, the original motion can then be put to the vote. If negative, discussion continues until a vote to put the question to the vote is resolved in the affirmative.

The chair puts the motion to the vote. Before putting the motion to the vote, the chairperson clearly restates the motion and ensures that all members understand exactly for what they are voting. The chairperson needs to always give opportunity for those who wish to vote in the affirmative and for those who wish to vote in the negative to submit their vote. The vote can be submitted by voice, by a show of hands, by standing, or by secret ballot, with the method of voting at the discretion of the chair. However, the chair should keep in mind that matters of a sensitive nature or which are of considerable importance should always be decided by secret ballot.

Unless a committee's rules say otherwise, the chairperson may choose to break the tied vote by voting in the affirmative or in the negative. However, the chair may choose to abstain and thus allow the motion to be defeated. The chair may also cause the motion to be lost by voting to obtain a tie, in which case the motion would be lost. This could occur when, for example, affirmative votes number 50 and negative votes number 49. If the chair were to vote in the negative, the vote would then be tied and the motion lost.

The chair announces the vote. Finally, the chair announces the result of the vote immediately after putting the question to the vote. Every motion made in a meeting must go through this basic process. All who participate in meetings should be familiar with this process.

Objective problem solving

Robert E. Firth has written some excellent material specific to the effective and efficient conduct of our committees.* Here are the points in the process as listed by Firth:

Define and clarify the problem to be resolved. The problem should be clearly stated before further action is taken.

Gather appropriate information. If the problem is not stated correctly, the

information-collecting process will be impeded. Remember that decisions are likely to be only as good as the information the decision-makers have at their disposal.

Organize and analyze the data. When analysis of the data shows the need for further information, the chair should clearly point to a solution, or suggest alternative courses of action.

Choose from alternative courses of action. Most suggested solutions have advantages and disadvantages. A decision is a judgment of the best alternative in the circumstances. Every action therefore has ramifications that should be considered and the likely impact ascertained.

Implement the decision and reevaluate it. The committee should evaluate the results of the decisions that are made. The quality of the evaluation is directly related to the quality of subsequent decision-making.

Problem-solving techniques are developed in the course of experience. The simple principles that have been announced by Firth are well worth the time taken to become thoroughly familiar with and to be applied in the context of the committees in which we are involved.

Conclusion

If you wish to read additional material, I suggest three books: Mack Tennyson, *Making Committees Work* (Zondervan, 1992); Roberta Hestenes, *Turning Committees into Communities* (NavPress, 1991); Charles M. Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards into Communities of Spiritual Leaders* (The Alban Institute, 1995).

We have covered many important points that will help you make your committee effective and efficient. Committees are here to stay in the church. To dispense with them would lead us in a direction that may be chaotic. When conducted properly, they ensure appropriate, broad-based participation in the work of the church. ■

* Robert E. Firth, *Guidelines for Committee and Board Members* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 1973), 71–83.

And God was fine with that (Exod. 33:17–19), for God is willing to show us all we can handle.

You shall be changed as you spend time with God. After 40 uninterrupted days with God, Moses' face began to shine with God's light. Some members didn't like hanging with Moses so much after that (Exod. 34:30–33). Sunny dispositions don't always attract the saints of God. But don't be surprised that a large quantity of time spent with God will brighten you as a person and a pastor.

You shall not defend your pastoral leadership. God does a better job of defending you than you can. At times He has opened up the ground and swallowed up problem people (Num. 16:2, 3, 28–35). Forgive me, but I love the story in the aforementioned verses. It's always a terrible temptation to defend oneself and one's leadership, but God is capable of doing a better job. Interestingly, the spirit of rebellion against God's appointed leaders was always considered by God as a challenge to His own leadership.

You shall delegate. Try to hand off as much as you can to other leaders. Share the blessings. Exodus 18:21–23 records the sage advice of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law. Getting volunteers to share the load is easier said than done, but it remains good advice.

You shall have less honor among those you love most. Don't be surprised that those closest to you are among your greatest second-guessers. Familiarity can breed problems because those closest to you can better see your blemishes. Numbers 12:2, 5, 6, 8–10 records Moses' troubles with his brother Aaron and his sister Miriam. Jesus also noted this dynamic when He said that a prophet was not without honor, except in His own home. (See Matthew 13:57.) This can mean more than family, for sometimes close friends can surprise you. Only God can be consistently relied upon to be there for you.

You shall not listen to habitual complainers. Ten of Moses' 12 spies correctly ascertained Canaan's difficulties. Complainers can undo a lot of good in a hurry. The reactions of Israel to the spies' reports can be found in Numbers 13:30–32; 14:2, 3. The complainers didn't make it to the Promised Land, even though they were right about the giants. Churches that listen to habitual complainers walk in circles as did the children of Israel in the wilderness.

Ten commandments for pastors

Stan Hudson

Moses has always been my favorite Old Testament hero. His qualities of character were such that God chose to speak directly and uniquely to him.

The difficulties Moses faced as the shepherd of Israel have proven to be a great comfort to me as a pastor. There's nothing quite like hearing the problems that other ministers face to help diminish your own. Listed below, in no particular order, are ten commandments for pastors that I've learned from Moses.

You shall learn how to pray effectively. Always pray from God's agenda, not your own. Moses was an expert not only in getting God's ear but also in getting help. He tried to keep the big picture in mind (Exod. 32:11–14). Here Moses prayed from a great-controversy perspective; he appealed to God's desire to be accurately known by nonbelievers and to have His promises seen as though they also had been written in stone. To glorify God is always the best motive for prayer.

You shall know God face to face. Moses didn't ask for a peek of God after the plagues, but he certainly did ask after God forgave Israel's golden-calf sin. The gracious character of God in granting Moses' petition for Israel's forgiveness was what made him want to get a closer look.



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You shall surround yourself with supporting leaders. When Moses' arms grew weary during the Midianite battle and they began drooping, Israel also began to droop. God wouldn't give Israel victory until they had learned that they would win only when Moses won (Exod. 17:8–13). When a pastor gets droopy, a church that wants to succeed will pitch in and hold him up because supporting God's appointed leaders will bring victory. And to some extent, a pastor should have some say as to whom he works with best.

You shall remember that congregations forget. After a number of obvious victories God had given Israel through Moses, they could still dump him in a heartbeat. Numbers 14:4 records that after plagues, sea-partings, and miraculous daily bread, Israel could drop their pastor at the very borders of Canaan. "So they said to one another, 'Let us select a leader and return to Egypt' " (NKJV).

Short memories are still a great cause of faith loss.

You shall trust God's leading. God rarely leads in straight lines. In fact, God purposely tested Israel by taking them to uncomfortable places, and this always looked as though Moses was a poor leader. Deuteronomy 8:2,3a records God's purposes in zigzagging through deserts. It's when we don't seem to have enough earthly wisdom or strength to deal with life's problems that we look upward for help.

These are ten commandments for pastors. There is one more important point that pastors need to remember—realize that the time will come for you to turn over your responsibilities to others.

You shall not put off retirement. Even Moses couldn't handle 40 years (Num. 20:10–12). Moses was so tired of pastoring Israel and listening to their complaints that he wanted to hit

something—anything. So, he ended up striking a rock, the symbol of Jesus.

Throughout Moses' years as Israel's shepherd, he was accused of arrogance, not caring for his people, incompetence, mean-spiritedness, poor judgment, and more. Yet for the most part he remained humble before God, awed at the privilege of close communion with Israel's Savior. He learned how and when to take off his sandals.

When the resurrected Moses appeared to Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, he represented those saints who will have tasted death, yet will be saved to fellowship with Christ for eternity. I'd like to think that Moses also represents those of us shepherds who have had our own moments of victory, as well as moments of apparent defeat, yet stayed the course and tried to help some sheep get to the River Jordan. May we all have that special time with the King of Glory.

Just the thought already has a brightening effect on me! **M**

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From the Office of Adventist Mission and the world church headquarters

The phenomenon of energy exchange

V. Peter Harper



V. Peter Harper, a retired minister, writes from Young, New South Wales, Australia.

It was our first appointment after graduation. Coming from years of farming background, my wife and I moved into the new pastoral intern assignment with much anticipation to learn and work. But it turned out that for most of the first year, the senior pastor was away, and I, in a sense, was *the* pastor. The evangelistic outreach conducted the following year did not go well, and among the members the church morale was very low. The congregation was not that involved in the outreach program anyway, nor did they have *one* social event in more than two years. They were overcrowded in their primitive facility and resided in a major growth area of the city. The membership was mostly young families having limited income capacity for any renovation. In fact, their plan for a new building was limited to architectural drawings made some seven years earlier, and their building fund balance had not increased during those years.

At the end of my second year, I was appointed senior pastor. Early in February, with the members settled down after the holiday period and school concerns, I called a business meeting. I asked the members if they wanted a new church building, knowing perfectly well they didn't.

"No, we don't," they responded.

"Neither do I," I responded. "What would you like to do with the architectural plans?"

After a long silence, one timid voice squeaked, "Can't we draw up our own?"

"Sure, I see no reason why you should not," I replied.

Another long silence, eventually broken by an elder, who said, "I am actually a draftsman by training. You tell me what you want, and I will draw it up for you."

The church was reborn that night. Energy exchange had begun. Each was empowering the other. Over the next 90 minutes we thrashed out what we really wanted in a new building, and how we wanted it to look. Before we concluded the meeting, we arranged for a social evening when we would first have some fun, then lay before the entire membership the proposals that had come out of the meeting. Those proposals would be (1) the new drawings for the church on display for member inspection; (2) organizing the membership for fund-raising; (3) an appeal to members to kick-start that fished building fund by personal donations.

I had no role in these proceedings. The entire evening was under the leadership of newly appointed leaders of various departments—Social Committee, Fund-Raising Committee, and others. One member, the only one who could be described as moderately well-to-do, promised a significant donation. Over the next two years, the church building fund was growing at a rapid rate. At the end of the second year, construction began.

Energy exchange: a component of community

As a fragile component of community life, energy exchange is a sociological phenomenon, and religion can use it effectively. At that time I obviously had no neat conceptual apparatus to define what was happening, and I find it easier to describe what takes place than to explain why and how. We can talk of giving people *ownership* of those things that are of collective importance to them, but energy exchange has little to do with selfish motives. On the contrary, it awakens a spirit of sacrifice, of giving of oneself to a higher cause. However, as morally and qualitatively neutral, energy exchange will work for evil as effectively as for good.

Workings of energy exchange do not have any conceptual, spiritual, ethical, or practical boundaries, with its empowerment available to saint and sinner, the upright and the criminal, as it moves across the spectrum of community activity. Continuing the story outlined above, that church had not seen kingdom growth for a number of years. Yet in those two years we saw 31 baptisms. Once the members had that *fire* in their belly, members would come to me at church and say, "Peter, we have made friends

I TOOK MY OWN PATH, AND THE CHURCH MEMBERS CAUGHT ON.

with the couple next door to us, and she is an ex-Adventist. Do you think you should visit them?" Another might say: "Look, there's this fellow at work. He's been critical about the Sabbath. Lately he seems to have changed, for he even asks me questions. Could you drop around and see him?" The dynamism of the Holy Spirit was now touching the community.

Discovering spiritual gifts

The burst of energy the members experienced moved across the divide from their preoccupation with the new church to be built to a previously unknown awareness of spiritual *placement* in the wider community. They had not the slightest notion they were actually witnessing to people in their day-to-day life. There was not a shred of intentionality about what they did, but they were the real factor in that startling jump in membership. I just did my job—visits and Bible studies.

While not necessarily pain-free, energy exchange may engender interpersonal conflict, especially when entrenched power structures are threatened. Another church to which I was appointed had existed for the past 35 years with the same head elder. It seemed as though he owned it. As could be expected, it had been in steady numerical decline for much of those 35 years and had a social structure that could be cut with a knife. There were the leading office bearers, and then the rest of the church members. Midway through the first of our five years there, I realized what the leading elder actually meant when he told me on our first Sabbath, "Whatever you do here, we will support you." The *we* was the operative word, and what he actually meant was, "I run this place; you play ball, and I can deliver."

I took my own path, and the church members caught on. Here and there personal views and opinions began to be publicly expressed that would not have

been privately breathed a year earlier. Three times this elder tried to have me shifted, but in the end he took his membership elsewhere. Even long before he moved, however, energy exchange had kicked in, and from that point, the church experienced regular baptisms, growing well beyond its previous high in membership.

What I am writing about here describes a dimension inseparable from the freedom of the human spirit to respond to its deepest longings and convictions. While on the one hand, energy exchange requires leaders and followers, on the other, it necessitates the integration of the individual ethical consciousness into a communal consciousness of similar ethical grounding. Thus the body becomes greater than the sum of its parts, and its wider influence through the general community is inevitable. The spirit of servant-leadership, modeled so profoundly by Jesus, took hold of the disciples, and from them it swept through the Jerusalem community. Individuals are never so free as when they become embodied by personal choice and desire in an individually empowering environment. Perhaps that is as close as I am able to come to a definition.

Empowering members to participate

With variations, we have experienced energy exchange in some other churches. Never automatic as a result of technique or theory, trivial circumstances can dampen energy exchange overnight. With control as its greatest enemy, *effective leadership* means giving people freedom to speak, to try, and to do; *control* means the denial of that freedom. I have had my fingers burned more than once through my willingness to let go of the reins and give people that freedom or through doing things in an unconventional manner, but there is really no alternative if we are to be honest to our calling. If ever there was

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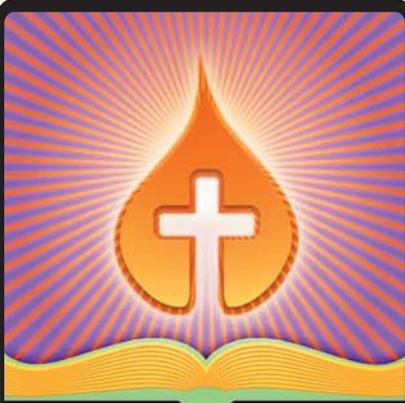
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Reading the Scriptures is our primary vehicle for knowing and serving God. In an authentic, passionate relationship with God, His Word fills our hearts and our homes (Deuteronomy 6:6–9).

If you struggle with a reading plan that takes you through the Bible in a year, just relax. God wants to meet you in His Word throughout your life. There is no biblical requirement to complete the entire Bible in a year. In fact, every 7 years the nation of Israel was supposed to gather for a public reading of the first five books of the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 31:10, 11). When was the last time you came across a 7-year Bible reading plan?

Do you really want to read through the Bible in a year? You will need about 80 hours. Be prepared to commit 10 to 15 minutes per day.

You can also read through the Bible in a year by simply reading four chapters per day. A more aggressive approach is to read three chapters in the Old Testament and three chapters in the New Testament each day, which will help you read through the Old Testament once and the New Testament four times each year.

— Harold Cunningham, Georgia-Cumberland Conference

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a person who took risks with people, it was Jesus. " 'It is to your advantage that I go away' " (John 16:7, NASB). What an incredible thing for Him to say!

Control is not playing safe, nor is it protection for the body. With that as the standard excuse, *control* can be defined as a fabrication and a denial of individual inner freedom. Control seeks power.¹ It brings death to energy exchange, for it cuts the flow—the reciprocation of energy—and requires that the energy of the body be channeled toward one unit or cell that has set itself above and over the body and sucks the life-force from it. "All such control mechanisms are self-defeating. The more conduct is institutionalized, the more predictable and thus the more controlled it becomes. . . . The more, on the level of meaning, conduct is taken for granted, the more possible alternatives to the institutional 'programmers' will recede, and the more predictable and controlled conduct will be."²

Two elements for church vibrancy

Two key elements in establishing vibrancy of church life are worship and social interaction.³ Worship is primary, but the social element in church life is equally indispensable, for without it worship may become ritualistic regardless of how "contemporary" we try to make it. The other hazard, which is becoming pervasive in some divine services, can be described as a deliberate casualness attached to the worship hour. This is a subconscious attempt to conflate worship and play because the body has not been led into structured social life, distinct from worship. Life of the church as a body, and with it the energy exchange, shrinks when the whole body does not participate in social life. Energy exchange enhances body life, but it will never realize its potential if worship and play are not distinctive elements of the life of the church community. The mistake made by the people at the foot of Mount Sinai was not that they played; rather, it was that they combined worship and play.

Elias Canetti draws a distinction between the "open" and the "closed"

crowd. "The closed crowd renounces growth and puts the stress on permanence. The first thing to be noticed about it is that it has a boundary. It establishes itself by accepting its limitation. It creates a space for itself which it will fill. . . . The boundary prevents disorderly increase, but it also makes it more difficult for the crowd to disperse and so postpones its dissolution. In this way the crowd sacrifices its chance of growth, but gains in staying power. It is protected from outside influences which could become hostile and dangerous, and it sets its hope on *repetition*. It is the expectation of reassembly which enables its members to accept each dispersal. The building is waiting for them; it exists for their sake and, so long as it is there, they will be able to meet in the same manner."⁴

The stratifications of society at large and of religion in particular parallel each other regardless of the extent of secularization of society. In the west, people live in a society based on "civil religion." The renunciation of power, and of the forms and codes of civil religion that certify that power, are the key to energy exchange. The manner in which a church comes to mirror the mores of the culture in which it is planted, even while resisting them, is something we know exists but fail to identify in ourselves. *We battle it with our forms and codes*, not realizing this is the failsafe mechanism of the culture around us, a mechanism guaranteed to prohibit the energizing influence of the Spirit. These words should in no way be seen as a "pitch" for congregationalism. In fact, quite the reverse.

Whatever term we choose for it, what we are considering must have its genesis in worship, otherwise it becomes a configuration of human creation: "For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell" (Col. 1:19, NKJV). Pentecostals are familiar with the logistics of energy exchange, but they tend toward a technique of *milking* the congregation to achieve it. Jocular quips and other preaching modes are regularly inserted into the address, and ultimately the response can become automatic.

By contrast I will never forget the church service I attended in Dallas when,

as a member of a Church Growth tour party in 1985, I heard W. A. Criswell preach. The humble warmth of the man, combined with his spiritual authority and his ability to make you feel he was talking to *you*, generated a strong reciprocation of energy.

"To truly catalyze the greatest amount of energy, to strike a resilient chord in the hearts of its people, to seize the day, a ministry must penetrate to a much deeper level. It must touch people at a level that gives their lives greater meaning and significance. How does a ministry accomplish this? . . . Values give servants a greater sense of meaning in their service, but not just any values and not just biblical values. The answer is shared biblical core values. . . . If any Christian ministry desires to capture the great energies and gifts of its people, it must share to some degree their common core values so that its people, in turn, find common cause with the organization, which leads to authentic biblical community."⁵

Some congregations have worked through the exercise of setting their core values, and nothing happens. This may be for at least two reasons: First, the agreed-upon values may have been those the members *thought they should have*, rather than those their hearts dictated; second, the values are a veneer spread over the stereotyped mechanics of church life. Nothing has changed. That *authentic biblical community* has not come to pass. Until people are trusted, there will be no reciprocation of energy even if they have not earned that trust (see John 15:15, 16). ■

- 1 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn.), 6:397; *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn.), 212, 213, 301–304.
- 2 Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 80.
- 3 White, *Messages to Young People* (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Assn., 1974), 405.
- 4 Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000), 17. Emphasis supplied.
- 5 Aubrey Malphurs, *Values-Driven Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 22, 23.

RESOURCES



Booklet on deaf ministry now available

Adventist Deaf Ministries has just released a new 22-page booklet on deaf ministry. A must-read for everyone, *Can You Hear Us?* was authored by Esther M. Doss. A quick reference guide to deaf ministry, while not an all inclusive volume, *Can You Hear Us* includes amazing tidbits, the discovery of myths about deaf people, shocking statistics, some how-tos, and heartwarming stories. No matter how much or how little you know about deaf people and this culture, you can be sure that you will learn something.

"Deaf ministry is not left only to those who know American Sign Language," Doss explains. "Deaf ministry is not simply interpreting. This ministry goes far beyond that. The most important part of this ministry is friendship. Even if you don't know how to sign, you can still be a friend."

Esther M. Doss works in Development and Public Relations at Adventist Deaf Ministries, based in Mesa, Arizona, United States. Her parents are both deaf, and she knows well the struggles deaf people have in their spiritual journeys. In *Can You Hear Us?* the author shares a few experiences she had living in the deaf culture. Doss longs to see

the day when deaf people will thrive as Christians in the Adventist Church.

The booklet is available to you free, with a small charge for additional copies.

To receive your copy, please write to Adventist Deaf Ministries, P.O. Box 6114, Mesa, AZ 85216. You can also make your request by e-mail: adm@deafadventist.org.

Updated church statistics now available

The 2005 Annual Statistical Report, first and second quarters of the Secretary's Statistical Report, 2006 Annual Council Statistical Report, and miscellaneous statistical documents are now on the Web: www.adventistarchives.org. To access, click on "Adventist Archives," then choose "Annual Statistical Reports" or "Statistical Documents." ■

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Dateline

Adventist UN representative calls for greater commitment to end religious intolerance

New York, New York—The United Nations, governments, and society all need to do much more to end religious intolerance and discrimination, concluded delegates to a key conference held in New York on October 5 and 6.

The conference focused on ways to implement the United Nations 1981 Declaration on Religious Tolerance as part of the celebration of the declaration's 25th anniversary. Delegates from the UN diplomatic corps and local religious freedom activists met with a group of high-level leaders from overseas that included government officials, judges, academics, and human rights proponents. The Seventh-day Adventist Church was represented by its UN liaison director, **Jonathan Gallagher**, a speaker at the conference.



L to R: Jonathan Gallagher, Felice Gaer, Matt Cherry, Paul Martin, Bani Dugal.

In his address, Gallagher explained that Adventist involvement in the drafting of the 1981 Declaration, in particular the section dealing with the right to a day of worship, was followed by the church's gaining consultative status with the UN in 1985. "As a result, Adventists consistently protest religious liberty violations at the annual UN Commission on Human Rights and actively lobby ambassadors for action on cases of freedom of conscience," he added.

The church has also co-sponsored many regional and world congresses on religious freedom with the International Religious Liberty Association. "These congresses, together with country

visits, demonstrated our commitment to educating for religious freedom and ending discrimination based on religion or belief," Gallagher concluded. "The upcoming world congress in Cape Town, South Africa, from February 27 to March 1, has the theme 'Combating Religious Hatred through Freedom to Believe.' In this way we are contributing to the implementation of the 1981 Declaration, and we call for far greater commitment to ending religious intolerance." He also presented and distributed the church's statement on the 25th anniversary of the 1981 Declaration that was drafted for this occasion.

Felice Gaer, chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), gave the "tortuous history" of the 1981 Declaration, which took some twenty years to be produced because of the many objections to the rights to the practice and expression of religion or belief. She also highlighted the ongoing need to work toward better implementation of the Declaration, indicating that it was the mandate of the USCIRF to hold accountable nations for violation of religious freedom by recommending that they be categorized by the U.S. State Department as "countries of particular concern."

Bani Dugal, representing the Baha'i International Community, spoke of the watering down of provisions for religious freedom, in particular the right to change one's religion. "In the 1948 Declaration there is the clear right to change religion, but in later documents this has become only the right to adopt or to have a religion."

Paul Martin, executive director of the Center for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University, who chaired the meeting, summarized the presentations in three issues. "Firstly, the importance of the freedom to change one's religion, and the concept of proselytism. Secondly, equality and women's rights in the religious context. And thirdly, education for freedom of religion or belief, and building trust between religions."

The conference was jointly convened by the International Center for Law and Religion Studies at Brigham Young University, the Columbia Center for the Study of Human Rights, and the United Nations NGO Committee for Freedom of Religion or Belief. [PARL News]

Children's Sabbath School lesson in Arabic now online

Nicosia, Cyprus—An Iraqi mother and her daughter have produced the first translation into Arabic of the Gracelink Kindergarten Sabbath School curriculum lessons.

Hanna Katrib, a long-time children's ministries leader of the Baghdad Seventh-day Adventist church, began translation as soon as funds became available earlier this year. Her youngest daughter, **Basma**, working from the Seventh-day Adventist Middle East region headquarters office in Cyprus, has been responsible for the design and layout.

"This is a dream come true for the Arabic-speaking Sabbath School teachers and children of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Middle East region," says **Valerie Fidelia**, Children's Ministries director for the Adventist Church in the Middle East.

She urges, "We encourage all Arabic speaking people to visit our Web site and download the lessons, for free, for the benefit of their Sabbath School teachers and children."

Each week's lesson gives a full outline of the program, the readiness activities, lesson, applying and sharing the lesson, and two pages of activities to be used at home during the following week.

The entire project will result in the translation of eight books covering a two-year cycle. "From these modest beginnings, having completed and uploaded the first book, we hope eventually to have the whole set of lessons available for free download from our Web site," states Fidelia.



BOOK REVIEW



Life in the Fish Bowl: Everyday Challenges of Pastors and Their Families *F. Belton Joyner Jr., Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 2006*

Life in the Fish Bowl takes a real and somewhat humorous look at what it's like for pastors and their families as they encounter the day-to-day challenges of parsonage life. And when the author uses the word *parsonage*, he means it in the strictest sense of the word. Being from the Methodist tradition, he views parsonage life as more than what takes place inside the home of a pastor, but rather what life is like in the pastor's house, which is, fortunately or unfortunately, owned by the local church. Although at times he does use the term loosely to refer to a pastor's home in general, for the most part, his idea of parsonage life centers solely in the context of the place that a church provides as the living quarters of its pastor.

Dr. Joyner, through the use of his fish-bowl analogy, clearly sets forth as his main objective presenting a view of parsonage life that equates with both fairness and balance. This is not merely the one-sided view that many in ministry are acquainted with—that of pastors and their families—but a unique insight as to what it's like being on the outside of the fish bowl looking in.

As a retired Methodist pastor of 40 years, Joyner makes it clear that those who

not company. But something in a home is always begging to be cleaned, folded, ironed, cooked, watched, or answered. Peace can be hard to find—even in a quiet place. Somewhat reluctantly, I walked into Salisbury Hall.

"Immediately, a peaceful ambience pervading the foyer relaxed some of my

look from the outside in are doing so, not merely out of curiosity alone, but rather because they have a vested interest—not only in what takes place behind those walls but in what actually happens to those walls. He reveals a sense of ownership and pride among some of the members of these congregations. He points out that both, if not carefully managed, can create a challenge for the pulpit as well as for the pew. To further drive his point home, Joyner exposes his readers to many real-life situations, some of which are taken from his own pastoral journey while others are borrowed from the lives of various pastoral families. If he had not shared that these were "real" occurrences, in many instances the reader might find a lot of them hard to believe. With Joyner from the Methodist tradition sharing insights into their way of managing parsonage life, I believe pastors from other faith persuasions will find this book interesting as well as informative.

Although much of this book does seem to focus on the advantages as well as disadvantages to life in the parsonage, Belton makes it clear that in order for both parties to live harmoniously together, each must be willing to see the parsonage as more than just a piece of real estate. In essence, it should be viewed as a symbol that a spirit of unity and cooperation can truly exist in the body of Christ. Joyner claims that in order for this to become a reality, "the pastor's parsonage and the congregation's parsonage must be yoked in service together for Jesus Christ."

—Charles A. Tapp, M.Div., is senior pastor of the Seabrook Seventh-day Adventist Church, Lanham, Maryland, United States. ■

defenses. . . . Throughout my time there, in silence, I talked, sang, questioned, listened, shouted, laughed, cried, and, finally, rested. Others came and went. Smiles were exchanged, but no intrusion was felt. I left with a quietness and confidence I've not felt for a long time."

[Helen Pearson/ TED News] ■

"Should anyone wish to contribute to the funds for printing, the Middle East Union would be happy to receive any donation," says **Amir Ghali**, publishing director for the region. "Eventually, the plan is to print the material in book form for wider distribution in more rural areas where Internet access is not readily available. But funds are only in hand for translation and layout at this time," he adds.

Fidelia adds, "We hope and pray that this will help to revitalize our Sabbath Schools under the guidance of the Holy Spirit."

To download the lessons, visit www.adventistmeu.org. [Alex Elmadjian/ TED News]

Quiet Church—a Newbold first

Bracknell, England—Nobody spoke an audible word, nobody sang a hymn, nobody preached a sermon at a silent worship service at Newbold College this week.

Quiet Church was the beginning of a monthly series offering to students, staff, and the wider community an opportunity to take time out with God and each other in a quiet space. Salisbury Hall, one of the college's assembly halls, was open and dimly lit for two and a half hours during the evening. Staff, students, and community members came and left quietly in their own time, praying, reflecting, meditating, or reading Bibles or other devotional materials.

"The aim of Quiet Church is to provide a peaceful space where people can be with God," said Dean of Students Pastor Henrik Jorgensen, one of the organizers. "In silence we may hear the voice of God, so often drowned out by the noise of other activities and people, even in worship. In Quiet Church we want to give people an opportunity just to be with God and really listen to what God might be saying to them. Our motto for this activity is 'Let God be God.'"

Between 20 and 30 people came and went during the service. One person, initially dubious about the idea, reflected, "After a busy, noisy day I wanted peace,

A new start for your ministry

JAMES A. CRESS



Most pastors are too busy; the majority carries a far heavier load than God intends.

Consider a new approach that will renew your ministry to the extent you invest your energies in expanding your leadership team as the model and measure of pastoral success.

Resign your position as *the one* who directs and implements all ministry functions. Your assignment does not include doing the work of ministry. You are called to put your members to work *doing* ministry.

Renew your ministry by doing less and expecting more from others. Leading your elders to accomplish the Lord's will enables your own ministry to accomplish far more than you ever dreamed.

Reconfirm your responsibility not to do everything—a burnout guarantee. Instead, determine to expand your ministry base by increasing the number of individuals assigned to and involved in your ministry.

Recruit new elders who will join with you in accomplishing heaven's goals for your ministry. From the very beginning Jesus envisioned his kingdom moving forward by teams. His own method involved bringing a small group of leaders together and then deploying them in pairs as He sent them out.

Reject volunteer leaders. Typically those who offer their services are full of uneducated enthusiasm but are not prepared for the costs of long-term service. Among Jesus' disciples, only Judas volunteered. The others were personally recruited by the Lord.

Remember your own origins. If the potential leaders you recruit appear to lack what ministry needs, reflect on how God has led in your own life. I recently

fellowshipped anew with two successful pastors who once had been new converts and later were elected as elders before studying for ministry. Potential is often easily overlooked.

Rejuvenate your own spirit by sharing the load with other dedicated leaders, men and women, whom God will call to work alongside you. A team approach of pastor and elders cooperating together will breathe new strength into your own vision.

Recognize innate talents and gifts that God can use. Match assignments for newly recruited elders to their own talents and interests in order to multiply their effective service. Avoid forcing introverts into public, upfront roles or shutting people persons away from visitation and personal interaction.

Require specific commitments from each elder whom you recruit. Do not generalize. Define specific responsibilities with well-written job expectations. Include an estimate of the minimum hours per week that will be necessary to perform the tasks. Ask whether they are able and willing to commit.

Release those whom you elect to accomplish their assigned tasks. They may work differently than you. But remember: while they are engaged, you will be freed to pursue different objectives.

Risk that these tasks may not be performed with the same skill level you might bring. Of course, the even greater ego risk comes from realizing that your elders might do a *better* job.

Resource your laity leaders to do their assignments. They may need training or equipment. They will surely need mentoring. Whatever the church invests will be repaid in more effective service.

Reference helpful tools in training your elders. Specific resources such as *The Church Manual*, *Elder's Handbook*, *Minister's Handbook*, and Ellen White's *Pastoral Ministry* should form a basic library for every laity leader (order at www.ministerialassociation.com).

Relate to your elders so that each becomes part of the larger team with a desire and commitment to achieve the group's objectives. When Jesus trained His own disciples, He invested quality time in doing ministry with them, in their presence, before He sent them out two-by-two.

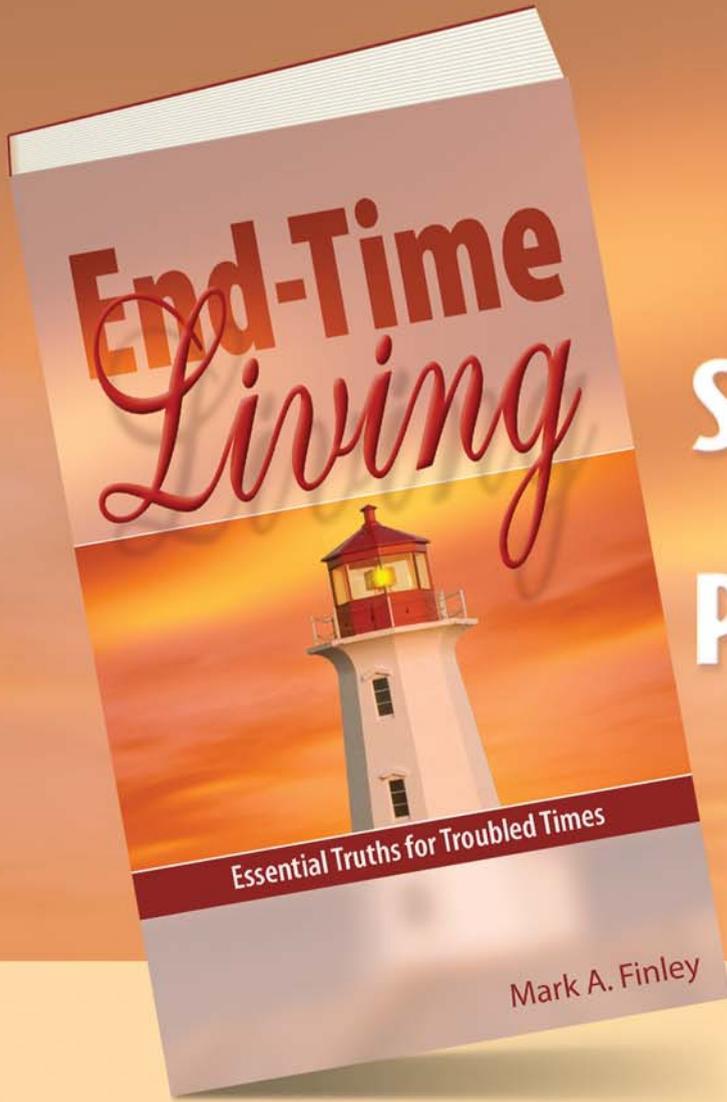
Replicate your own pastoral care in the ministry of your elders. Provide them church business cards so that when they visit hospitals, contact potential converts, assist members, or engage in church business they are designated as "the pastoral team."

Respect the Scriptural view of the priesthood of all believers. The greater your own confidence in the role of laity leaders, the greater will be their individual ministry performance.

Review your group's goals, accomplishments, and challenges in regularly scheduled meetings with your leadership team. Help each elder understand that their contribution will set a higher standard for the church.

Revitalize and retool your own pastoral skills with the extra time you gain from effectively utilizing elders.

Rejoice when your leadership becomes reduplicated in the lives and work of your elders. ■



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