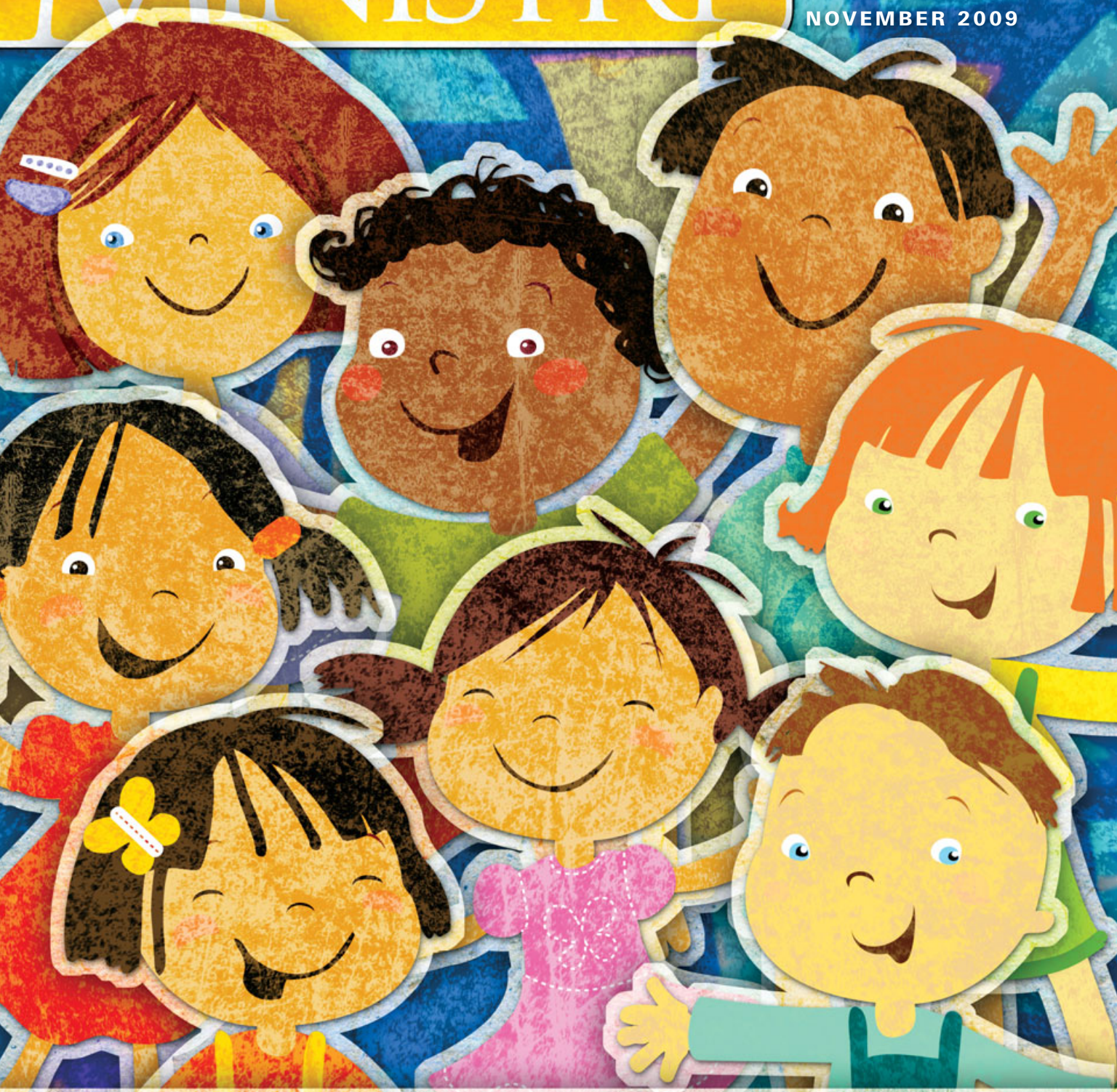


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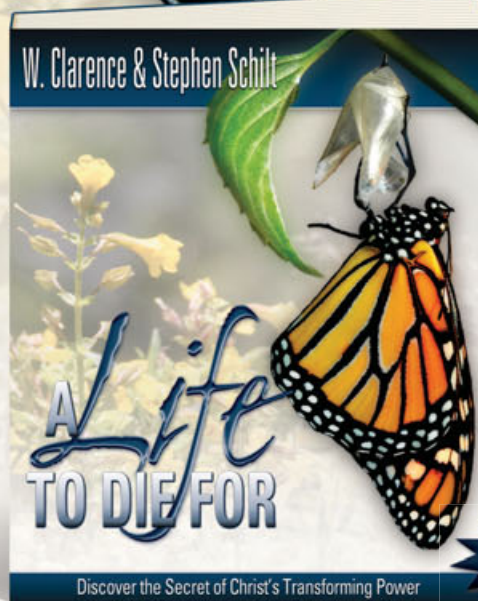
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ISBN 13: 978-0-8163-2308-1

ISBN 10: 0-8163-2308-9

\$17.99

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

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

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## OUR READERS RESPOND...

### Thank you for the September issue

The September issue of *Ministry* has a number of very helpful articles: "Ten Things to Be Learned in Pastoral Ministry," "Pastoral Care of Veterans and Their Families," and "Evangelism's Big Picture: From Baptism to Discipleship."

But I particularly appreciated L. S. Baker's article, "Covered With Blood: A Better Understanding of Exodus 12:7," and the implications of the doorposts and lintels with the blood covering the name. I had not thought of the houses being of mud and the temples and tombs of stone but the lintels and doorposts also of stone so the person would live forever in the afterlife. Thank you for bringing out this insight.

—David Glenn, Chehalis, Washington, United States

The September issue of *Ministry* was exceptionally spiritual and intellectual of the highest caliber. Thank you for the diversity presented by the contributors.

I noted a difference, minor though it may be; yet it only serves to reinforce the diversity. L. S. Baker's article, "Covered With Blood: A Better Understanding of Exodus 12:7," regarding the Egyptian mode of constructing homes, pointed out that the doorposts and lintels of the mud-brick homes were made out of stone for the reasons stated. In contrast, Engin Obucic's article ("The Strength of the Covenant") stated that the blood of the sacrificial lamb was placed on the wooden doorframe.

Of what was the doorpost and lintel constructed—stone or wood? Does it really matter? The point is, it was the shedding of innocent blood and obedience to God's instructions that mattered drastically.

—Jodie Jackson, email

### The importance of evangelism

I have just concluded 59 years in ministry with an emphasis throughout my ministry in evangelism. Evangelists all through the years, and Mark Finley in recent years, have been a huge inspiration to me. They have continued to whet my appetite for sharing the gospel and helped to keep me doing what I believe is our first work—seeking the lost sheep.

Mark Finley's recent article in *Ministry*, "Evangelism's Big Picture: From Baptism to Discipleship" (September 2009) stirred my heart once again. It seems to me that every elder in every one of our churches would benefit by absorbing what he has written.

At times I feel we show too little interest or concern for the newly baptized, regardless of how they came to understand "the truth as it is in Jesus." If anyone of our members should become interested in nurturing the newly baptized, it should be the lay leaders of our churches. Far too many of the new sheep and lambs, for whom a lot of time and effort have been expended, slip out of the baptistry and are too soon out the back door without the notice or concern of the lay leaders—or in some cases, even the vital concern of the pastor.

Each year I conduct baptismal classes in one of our elementary schools. Each year we baptize five or ten children and young people; but how many of our churches show an active interest in an age appropriate follow-up program that could be employed for these children? In my study of work for children, I have found that many who became prominent in ministry gave their hearts to Christ while they were children. Matthew Henry, who wrote a commentary on the Bible, gave his heart to Christ at age eleven. Isaac

Watts, well-known poet and hymn writer, gave his heart to Christ at age nine. Jonathan Edwards, a preacher for Christ, surrendered his heart to Jesus at seven years of age. Count Zinzendorf, a promoter and protector of the Word of God in Germany, while he was only four years old, signed his name to these words: "Dear Saviour, do Thou be mine, and I will be Thine."

These newly baptized children, every bit as valuable in God's eyes as adults, may become future church leaders. My appeal is that we all take very seriously the words of Jesus when He admonished us to feed His lambs.

—C. Lloyd Wyman, Westlake Village, California, United States

### Ministry to veterans

Thank you for the well-written article, "Pastoral Care of Veterans and Their Families" (September 2009). The points made, information shared, and ideas promoted will be of substantive help to many who gave much. Veterans are often forgotten in our communities and churches. This article will help change that.

It is true: "Some gave all, and all gave some." We who have been separated from our families and have served in combat situations long for reasonable recognition for the sacrifices we have made. We don't need bands, banners, or accolades, but recognition and appreciation would be deeply appreciated. I personally waited almost 20 years before someone outside my family thanked me for serving my country in Vietnam and said, "Welcome home." The needs of current military veterans will be even more critical than in the past.

Thanks for a beacon of brightness for some who have seen only starkness and darkness.

—Dick Stenbakken, email

Continued on page 19 ▶



# A positive spiritual atmosphere

Obviously, the musical group standing in front of the congregation had rehearsed, and sang enthusiastically while trying to encourage the congregation to participate. Unfortunately, with the exception of a small number of individuals, the vast majority of the congregation were only lip-syncing with the music leaders. While observing this disconnect, I concluded that there was very little congregational worship taking place. I had no doubt that everyone in the church that day had come to worship God and fellowship with each other; but somehow they were not connecting.

Worship planning is challenging; and, most likely, no worship service will be enthusiastically received by every participant. But I suggest that those who plan for worship need to focus on defining worship and how to help those who are present to be enthusiastic participants. In order to do that, the planners should realize the importance of evaluating those who sit in the pews and how they would feel most comfortable in worshipping the Lord.

Who is sitting in the pews? The middle-aged husband and wife are sitting there, for whom we usually plan the worship service. But what about their five-year-old granddaughter, Sally? How can she see Jesus in the worship service? And when Bill, the man who lives next door to the church, enters a church building for the first time in 20 years, how can your members minister to him so that he has a meaningful worship experience, falls in love with the Lord, and eventually wants to come back into the fellowship of the congregation?

Our lead article by Karen Holford focuses on the children in our

churches—an important but often-forgotten group. She specifically discusses how to plan worship services that will be meaningful to them as well. In another article, Drexel C. Rankin also shares suggestions on re-evaluating how visitors see your church and what impressions they will take away with them upon leaving. The question? After they visit your church, will they want to come back? Thomas C. Fillinger's article will guide you in your first steps in finding out how to make worship more effective for the majority of your congregation. In reality, not every worship service will equally appeal to every individual, so focus on some identifiable groups in the congregation when prayerfully planning the worship services.

## What I have learned

My ministry gives me the privilege of participating in worship services around the world. This provides an opportunity to observe successful planning and implementation that focuses on particular segments of the congregation. I will share a few such examples.


At one church, at the beginning of the school year, the pastor invited all of the teachers and students to come forward to recognize them as special individuals within the congregation. The student group ranged from those just beginning their formal education to graduate students. Part of the service included a special prayer for this group of teachers and students, and then a number of them participated in the service that day.

Another congregation made it a point to utilize the talents of their older members, including them actively leading out in the worship service.

Songs, for example, were chosen by a senior, and the congregation as a whole enthusiastically participated in the singing. By recognizing the seniors, the congregation focused on a group of people who were, to a significant extent, responsible for the development and continuation of the congregation.

In yet another congregation, it was proposed that several 13- and 14-year-olds present the sermon. At first, there were questions as to whether they were qualified and able to speak with authority to such a large congregation. Finally, however, the decision was made to invite three young people to give short sermons. Each one presented a message that was biblically sound, organized, and enthusiastically delivered. Not only were the youth who led out in the worship service blessed, the congregation as a whole was also blessed.

## What's next?

To allow worship to just *happen* from one week to the next may be all too tempting. In fact, in some congregations very little planning goes into worship. At times, the question as to who will pray, read the scripture, and what songs will be sung is only decided minutes before the leaders stand in front of the congregation. Lack of planning does not provide for a holy atmosphere. Worship should concentrate on helping people come together to focus on God—with God as the center. At the same time, we need to remember each group of the congregation and each person individually as we plan the worship service. What would bring them closer to God? What are your plans for the next worship service? 

Tell us what you think about this editorial. Email [MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org](mailto:MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org) or write to 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

*Karen Holford, MA, is associate director of Children's Ministries for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in south England.*



# Creative celebrations: Involving children in your special services

*Editor's note: In the May 2009 issue, Karen Holford addressed involving children in the divine worship service. This month, she expands the discussion to include involving children in other church events.*

What would happen if we took the time to consider the children's experiences in our congregation and put their needs at the heart of our church? What would change if we worked out our worship, mission, and service from this radically different perspective?

Here are some ideas to start you thinking about involving children in the special events of your church. Churches are in different places along the journey of child inclusiveness, and various cultures find some things unacceptable or have different local meanings for actions and symbols. So, a wide range of ideas has been included, not as prescriptions, but as ideas to stimulate thoughtfulness and creativity.

## Involving children in baby dedications

1. Invite children to welcome the new baby into their church family by coming to the front of the church and whispering in unison, "Hello (name of baby)! Jesus loves you and so do we!" or use another welcoming phrase. If you have just a few children and the parents are willing, each child could gently touch the baby's feet.

2. Give older children a sheet of paper on which you have printed the baby's name, one letter to a line, along the left-hand edge of the page. Ask them to create a simple blessing, prayer, or phrase where each word begins with one letter of the baby's name. Include the name of the child who wrote the blessing and their photo, if possible. Collect the pages and give them to the family in a scrapbook for them to treasure.

3. Give the children pots of bubbles to blow over the baby being dedicated or handfuls of flower petals to throw over the baby and the baby's family. Explain that, as they blow the bubbles or scatter the petals, they are to pray a silent prayer for the baby or think of a special blessing (give them an example of a blessing to spark their creativity) for the baby. You can do this outside after the service if it isn't appropriate to blow bubbles in your church. A sheet on the floor can catch drips from bubbles or the flower petals for easier cleanup.

4. Create a picture for the baby's bedroom. An adult can paint a design in the center of a blank canvas, including the child's name, a Bible verse, and a simple picture, such as a lamb in a field. Protect the picture with a piece of clear, sturdy plastic and let the children of the church write their names, prayers, blessings, and pictures around the edge of the canvas. Remove the protective plastic and give the picture to the family as a unique gift.

## Involving children in baptismal services

1. Make sure the children can safely see what is happening. As someone is being baptized, give each child a few red paper heart shapes (or rose petals) to scatter onto the water. Use this action as a reminder that baptism is our response to God's amazing love.

2. Give each child a piece of plastic cut into the shape of a person. Let them use a nonpermanent marker or pen and write down some of the things they have done wrong. Provide a large tank of water at a height that children can access easily (place a large piece of nonslip protective cover over the floor and the furniture under the tank in case of spillage). Then let the children "baptize" their plastic people in the water, and wipe them clean with a piece of paper towel.

3. Involve children in creating a promise box for every person baptized in your church. Give them unprinted business cards, and invite them to write their favorite text as neatly as possible on the card. Collect the cards, put them into an attractive business card holder or box, and give the promise box to the candidate. Adults can add promises to the box too. It can also be meaningful if every person writes their name on the back of their promise card, so that the recipient knows who has written the promises.

## Involving children in weddings

Some couples may wish to involve children in their wedding. Perhaps

they are actively involved in children's ministries themselves and want to find a meaningful way to involve the children. Or perhaps the marrying couple believes that marriage is a community celebration that needs to involve their friends, whatever their age. If you are marrying a couple that wishes to involve children in the wedding service, here are a few ideas.

1. Invite the children to hold hands in a circle around the bride and groom during the wedding prayer. The circle of children can represent the circle of God's love around the couple and the support the community promises to offer them.

2. Children can be asked to read Bible verses about love, and say what they think those verses might mean for a married couple. They can practice ahead of time with a responsible adult who will help them think about the verses and will write down their creative responses.

3. Children coming to the wedding could be given a small bag of quiet things to keep them amused during the service. Providing some Christian activity and sticker books, for example, can also be a witness to the children and families who wouldn't usually attend your church.

4. Provide each child with a sheet of card stock, printed with an attractive frame design, and some crayons. Ask the children to draw a picture of the couple in their wedding clothes, and then write some ideas on their picture about how they can stay happily married. Collect these in a scrapbook to give to the couple as a unique memento of their day.

5. Ask an artistic person in your congregation to design a work sheet about weddings and marriage for the children to complete during the service.

### Involving children in Communion services

As adults, we help create the reverence around the Communion table, and we need to

find ways to help the children participate just as the children in Jewish families are actively involved in the Passover experience. The way we do this must also fit with our beliefs and ideas about how Communion services should be organized.

Some families avoid coming to church when there is a Communion service because their church eliminates the children's story that week, the service goes on too long, or the event is very solemn and the children are not included in the activities. We need to be aware of this and find fresh ways to involve families in this important celebration.

Here are a few ideas for including children more actively in a Communion service.

1. Help children make a small booklet describing the meaning we give to the different parts of the Communion service. Fold a piece of paper in half and put a title on the front cover, and then make a page for footwashing, one for the bread, and one for the juice. Provide precut shapes that

children can stick on the pages with different texts and words that they can write into the book to help them understand.

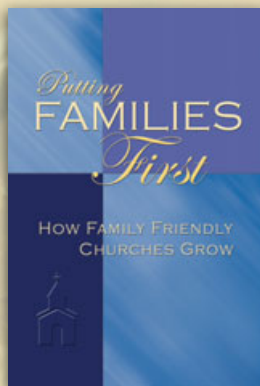
2. Invite Junior class children to research the symbols of bread and wine used in Passover and Communion. Help them make a presentation of their discoveries in a creative way during a Communion service.

3. Give each child a gray and black, smudgy cardboard heart before the Communion service, and explain that this represents their heart full of all the times they have broken God's laws. Then, during the service, let the children swap their gray, smudgy hearts for white heart-shaped Communion bread wafers, made especially for them, to illustrate that Jesus gives us complete forgiveness.

4. Show the children a child-friendly video about Jesus' death and resurrection or the Last Supper during the time when the adults are having their feet washed.

5. Let the children draw or write on their feet to illustrate the things

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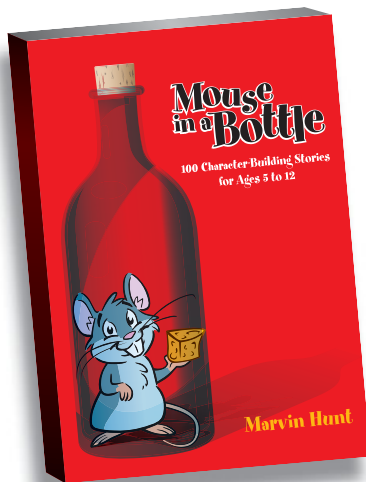
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they have done that they would like God to forgive. Use easily washable pens or water-dissolving pens from sewing shops, so that the marks come off easily during footwashing. Let them choose a fragrant body butter or lotion that can be rubbed into their feet afterwards to remind them of what Mary did for Jesus when she poured the perfume over His feet.

6. Prepare a room for family foot-washing where the children can help their parents wash each other's feet, and perhaps, the parents can wash their children's feet too. Make sure the children understand why we are doing this and why this should be a respected event. In one church, the pastor knelt and washed all the children's feet during the foot-washing service.

7. Purchase the book *Daniel Asks About Baptism and Communion*.<sup>\*</sup> Read it to the children while the adults are involved in footwashing. Scan the images into your computer to make larger pages for everyone to see, and use the pictures as a PowerPoint presentation or buy each child their own book.

### Involving children in Thanksgiving services

1. Ahead of time, invite the children to choose an object that they are

especially thankful for and bring it to the Thanksgiving service. Interview the children about their choices, or make a display of the items together with a card from each child saying why he or she chose his or her thankful object.

2. Invite the children to come to the front and then go through the alphabet, asking them to think of different things they want to thank God for that begin with the different letters in turn, such as apples, Auntie Jane, bread, bikes, chocolate, crayons, etc. Or preplan this and create a voice choir of thankfulness where children take turns to name different things for which they are especially grateful.

3. Give each of the children a child-friendly Thank-You card as they come into church. You may be able to find designs in stationery stores with simple outlines that children can color. Invite them to write a Thank-You letter to God during the service or draw things they are thankful for inside the card. Create a place where the children can display their Thank-You cards after the service, and encourage the adults to read what the children have written.

4. Bring a Thank-You tree into the church. A couple of weeks before the Thanksgiving service, give all


the children a few simple luggage or plain gift tags already threaded with string or yarn to take home. Encourage them to write a Thank-You note to God on each tag and draw or stick a picture of whatever they are thankful for on the reverse of the tag. During the service, help the children hang the tags on the Thank-You tree at an appropriate time.

5. Invite the children to dress up just before the service as something for which they are especially thankful or related to their thankful object (it may be easier to come as a baker than as a loaf of bread). Provide a few extra costumes for children who forgot, didn't know, are visiting, or whose families would find it too difficult to organize a costume. Have a minicostume parade as the adults or children sing a thankful song, or invite the children to say why they have chosen their outfit.

### Conclusion

It can be challenging to find ways to involve children in your services, but it is worth all the investment to help them feel that they are a special part of our community and their church willingly thinks about their needs, involves them, and values them.

If you are short of ideas, there are plenty more for you to explore on Web sites such as [www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk](http://www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk) and [www.lightlive.org](http://www.lightlive.org), where you can search for specific activities (prayers, stories, interactive ideas, etc.) or via Bible stories or themes.

And remember, whatever you do for one of these little ones, you are doing for Jesus. 

<sup>\*</sup> Heather Hanna, *Daniel Asks About Baptism and Communion* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2005).

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# Measuring ministry effectiveness objectively

Paul describes, in vital and strong language, a portrait of the church in 1 Timothy. He uses imagery of architecture and zealously impresses upon the reader the importance of the church as the citadel of truth absolute, the living testimony of the self-revealing God. “[Y]ou will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15).<sup>1</sup>

I would like to suggest that the church currently applies a flawed metric—an erroneous standard in determining ministry effectiveness. With its current focus primarily, if not exclusively, upon the numerical (a one-dimensional aspect of ministry), we find ourselves in a precipitous and deadly decline.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, with this assessment process flawed, the results contribute to a continuing decline in our effectiveness, evidenced by the growing segment of our culture that regards the church as irrelevant and unnecessary.<sup>3</sup>

## The standard

What standard does the church apply in evaluating ministry? Remember, at this juncture, we are not identifying what standard *should* be applied, but the standard that most frequently *is* applied.

This formula is sometimes referred to as the ABCs of ministry. Do you recognize it?

- A = Attendance
- B = Baptisms
- C = Cash

## Biblical mandate

The past 50 years provide evidence of an alarming distortion in the way the church determines effectiveness: numbers. More is always better. How many? How much? How often? Denominational reports focus on numbers. Military chaplain appointments are based on the number of members reported by the denomination. The size of a church assigns status to pastorates. Pastors often answer the call to a new assignment because the compensation package totals are higher at a larger assembly. But, if we pull back the curtain and view actual attendance and active growing and maturing disciples as compared to actual membership, the discrepancy is glaring.<sup>4</sup> Numbers represent people, therefore, numbers are important. However, if we apply only a numerical standard, we deceive ourselves with this worst form of deception, which dishonors the Lord of Glory (see 2 Cor. 10:12).<sup>5</sup> The biblical mandate for effectiveness is transformation: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19, 20); “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2).

Perhaps a recent statement by the pastors of a well-known and influential ministry has captured the most compelling evidence of the more-is-better syndrome for

determining effectiveness in the church. “We made a mistake. What we should have done when people crossed the line of faith and become Christians, we should have started telling people and teaching people that they have to take responsibility to become ‘self feeders.’ We should have gotten people, taught people, how to read their Bible between services, how to do the spiritual practices much more aggressively on their own.”<sup>6</sup>

Ed Stetzer, director of LifeWay Research, recently addressed the issue of measuring ministry effectiveness: “Most churches love their traditions more than they love the lost. We lock ourselves into a self-affirming subculture.”<sup>7</sup>

Is there a solution? Can the church be rescued from this self-imposed and deadly bondage? Yes. But this will require two absolutely critical elements: courageous leadership and a clearly defined organizational and personal transformation process.<sup>8</sup>

No such thing as a quick fix exists. Genuine transformation continues as a process, not an event, and is a journey that requires persistence and endurance. This dilemma does not yield to mere programs or fads. This is for the courageous leader who understands the principle given to Israel as it prepared to enter the land of Canaan—God is the One who gives us the victory! “Hear O Israel, today you are going into battle against your enemies. Do not be fainthearted or afraid; do not be terrified or give way to panic before them. For the LORD your God is the

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one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory' " (Deut. 20:3, 4).

### Journey to effectiveness

King Asa provides a profile of a courageous leader. I offer five simple observations concerning the circumstances Asa faced and the leadership he exercised.

1. Asa *faced* perilous and difficult circumstances (2 Chron. 15:4–6).
2. Asa *listened* to the prophet Azariah, an outside voice (vv. 2, 8).
3. Asa *took courage*, which equipped and moved him to act to create the "culture of obedience" necessary to bring reform and blessing to the nation (vv. 8–11).
4. Asa established a covenant that required *wholehearted participation* by the people. They embraced a common purpose and pursued that purpose with singleness of heart, unity, and passion with all halfheartedness excluded (v. 15).
5. Asa *removed opposition* to reformation and genuine God-honoring worship (v. 16).

Transforming a local church into a vibrant, healthy, and obedient body that brings consistent measureable change to God's people becomes a marathon, not a sprint. The process that follows is credible, has been proven in numerous ministry venues, is principles based, and may be applied in churches of various sizes and cultural settings.

### Process

To accomplish health and vitality in a local church is, in part, a theological pursuit—the fruit of sound exegesis. Those responsible for leading out in change should apply the Word of God with precision and compassion to every aspect of ministry. Every ministry venue must contribute to accomplishing the church's stated purpose. The church needs a sweeping movement of God that leads to the

removal of the " 'famine of hearing of the words of the LORD' " (Amos 8:11). That, in and of itself, brings transformation.

Leaders who apply this first principle with integrity and a determination to accurately assess effectiveness will be rewarded. They will be equipped to measure an effective ministry shaped by sound exegesis and designed to produce transformation in God's people, which secures God's blessing. God uses surrendered (Luke 9:23) leaders in His church to initiate and direct this process.

Assessment is the process of intentional, systematic, objective, and repeated evaluation of the current reality of your church. By completing a Readiness Inventory,<sup>9</sup> the leaders and the people began the transformation process with a reliable portrait of their current reality and can deal with the Stockdale Paradox,<sup>10</sup> which Jim Collins describes in his book *Good to Great*. An important formula is introduced at this juncture and applied throughout the process—*PIE*. Prayer. Information. Encouragement.

Character is the core of personhood and leadership, and becomes a crucial element for those leading the transformation process in the church. In this phase, the pastor and key leaders complete the Servant Shepherd Leadership Inventory.<sup>11</sup> The character profile this produces serves as a virtual strategic pathway for the pastor and other leaders to follow in becoming more effective transformational leaders.<sup>12</sup> They are equipped to improve their leadership based on objective data drawn from historical ministry activity.

Team building is the process of leading your church to minister in a collegial, transparent, and interdependent ministry structure. Tragically, many pastors conduct their ministry alone—in other words, they can do it alone. The New Testament model calls for a plurality of leaders in each local church. Don't do the work of 20 people. Recruit and train 20 people

to do the work (see Eph. 4:12–16). Those included on these ministry teams accept ministry opportunities based upon ministry skills and their desire to serve in a given area. Leadership selection and development is a key component of this process with this team responsible for adopting and applying the Effectiveness Criteria<sup>13</sup> designed to bring continuous renewal to a local church. The members of the congregation provide the data for this ongoing assessment.


Structure in ministry is the establishment, organization, integration, resourcing, and execution of ministry initiatives shaped by a common purpose. In the transformation process, change values before changing ministry structures and recognize the importance of this procedure. Values drive behavior. During this period, the people begin to engage an intentional Spiritual Formation Process.<sup>14</sup> This provides the metric for personal transformation just as the Effectiveness Criteria provides for corporate transformation. This process leads to changed values. The three previous components of this process are allotted one year. This phase usually requires 12 to 18 months. Leaders prepare the congregation for the changes ahead, providing both the *what* and *why* that make change necessary. The individual member and the body as a whole are evaluated using objective biblical definitions of obedience and health. The church begins to embrace their faith and ministry as life in community.<sup>15</sup>

Engagement is the continuous process of your church, as the body of Christ, being salt and light, confronting culture with compassion and resurrection power. This phase is ongoing. The principles of objective evaluation conducted on a quarterly basis produce a biblical ministry model that thrives. Progress, while not always constant, is consistent. This process provides a valid and

beneficial platform upon which those who desire an objective evaluation of ministry may stand. This requires continuous evaluation of what takes place in ministry and the culture in which it is conducted. Frequent assessment and incorporation of essential changes keep ministry fresh, vital, and effective with numerous resources available for those who find the courage to lead God's people on this journey.<sup>16</sup>

## Conclusion

Pastor, do you measure your ministry by the ABC formula mentioned earlier? Or do you base your ministry on biblical criteria drawn from the text of Scripture by prayerful, diligent exegesis? Are the evaluations you conduct based on credible, objective standards? The transformation of God's people and applying a reliable assessment of their growth is fundamental to orthodox biblical theism (Col. 1:28).<sup>17</sup> The good news is that God delights in blessing courageous leadership shaped by biblical purpose and measured by objective biblical standards. The challenge includes changing the church's DNA to reshape the values of the people you shepherd. The process described by design requires three, four, or even five years. There are very real risks involved. The process requires wisdom, courage, and endurance with tenacity.<sup>18</sup>

We must measure ministry by transformation, not mere activity. You can be a leader who measures ministry with objective and credible data. God provides the courage. You must provide the leadership. 

1. Unless otherwise noted, scriptures are quoted from the New International Version of the Bible.
2. Crosswalk editorial staff, "Britain 'No Longer Christian,' Says Influential Liberal Think Tank," Crosswalk.com, www.crosswalk.com/news/religiontoday/11558689/, accessed November 6, 2007. The authors of the report say that "the traditional pillars of British identity have now vanished or been greatly weakened." Emphasis added.
3. Albert Mohler, "America's Vanishing Protestant Majority—What Does It Mean?" www.albertmohler.com, www.albertmohler.com/?cat=Commentary&cdate=2004-08-09, August 9, 2004.

4. Joel Belz, "Locked From the Inside," *World*, October 29, 2005, www.worldmag.com/articles/11200.
5. Dan Gilgoff, quoted in Warren Cole Smith, "Numbers Racket," *World*, December 1, 2007, 26, 27. Dan Gilgoff, who covers the evangelical movement for *U.S. News & World Report*, stated, "[M]egachurch pastors 'notoriously inflate membership.'"
6. Pastor Bill Hybels, quoted in Bob Burney, "A Shocking 'Confession' From Willow Creek Community Church," Crosswalk.com, October 30, 2007, http://www.crosswalk.com/pastors/11558438/.
7. Ed Stetzer, quoted in Gary Myers, "Stetzer Highlights Keys to Church Revitalization," *Baptist Courier*, November 2, 2007, http://www.baptistcourier.com/2057.article.
8. Visit www.igniteus.net/tools/video-downloads to review a video series that includes an overview of the transformation process. The Web site also offers testimonies of pastors currently on the journey through this process.
9. An online instrument (www.igniteus.net/tools/readiness-inventory) consisting of two parts. Section I measures the church's readiness to embrace the change process. Section II measures the pastor's readiness to lead that church through the transformation process.
10. In the Stockdale Paradox, "you must retain faith that you will prevail in the end [regardless of the difficulties] and [at the same time] you must also confront the most brutal facts of your current reality," whatever they may be. Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . and Others Don't* (New York: HarperBusiness, 2001), 86.
11. An online 360 process that includes 12–14 people: pastor, superiors, peers, subordinates, staff, board members, and people from the congregation. Results are delivered in a 45-page report. Go to www.boothco.com to view a sample of this instrument.
12. Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem, and James H. Furr, *Leading Congregational Change: A Practical Guide for the Transformational Journey* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 96, 97. It provides a beneficial comparison of *transactional* and *transformational* leadership.
13. The fourteen Effectiveness Criteria: This is a guided metric. Each ministry area is assigned a "guided" objective Likert scale score of 0–5. The criteria include worship, leadership selection, leadership development, evangelism, church discipline, and so forth.
14. Titled *Measuring What Matters Most*, it places participants in one of four discipleship phases. It includes specific phase objectives and a curriculum to accomplish those objectives. Each participant evaluates themselves quarterly and has two accountability partners. All terms and concepts are clearly and biblically defined. This model is principle based and lends itself to modification for application in a variety of ministry cultures.
15. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (San Francisco: Harper, 1954).
16. Mark Dever, *9 Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004); Donald J. McNair and Esther L. Meek, *The Practices of a Healthy Church: Biblical Strategies for Vibrant Church Life and Ministry* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1999).
17. "Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ." Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: MacMillan, 1963), 62, 63.
18. Claire Markwardt is an Ohio high school runner who broke her leg 45 feet from the finish line. She crawled the remaining distance to finish (1 Cor. 9:24–27). Why? She did not want to let her team down. That is persistence and tenacity with a purpose greater than self. Wayne Drehs, "High School Runner Breaks Leg in Meet, Crawls to Finish Anyway," ESPN, http://sports.espn.go.com/ncaa/highschool/news/story?id=311847.

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# Experiencing the power of God

**Lift up your eyes on high,  
And see who has created  
these things,  
Who brings out their host by  
number;  
He calls them all by name,  
By the greatness of His might  
And the strength of His power;  
Not one is missing**

*(Isa. 40:26).<sup>1</sup>*

Indeed, lift up your eyes with Isaiah, and see the great wonders on high. Look at the moon. It is about 240,000 miles away. If you take a passenger jet that travels at the speed of 600 miles per hour, it will take some 17 days to get to the moon. Forty years ago, *Apollo* pioneers made it to the moon in less than four days. That's still a long way, and yet light takes only a little more than a second to cover that distance at 186,000 miles per second. Who placed the moon just right in space that it may be a light in the night for simple humans such as we are?

And where is the sun? Light from the sun takes only eight minutes to reach the earth. That means the sun is roughly 93 million miles away from the earth; a little nearer and we would scorch; a little farther and we would freeze. Just the right distance away, and who was responsible for this ruler of the day?

Think of the solar system. The farthest any man-made satellite has traveled is out to the edge of the system, several billion miles away. In 1977, scientists launched the *Voyager 2* spacecraft to explore outer space. Traveling at a speed of some 42,000 miles per hour, 12 years later *Voyager 2* took a peek at Neptune.

The spacecraft was so far away from earth that it took four hours for a radio signal (traveling at the speed of light) to reach the earth. And Neptune and planet Earth are neighbors within the same solar system.

Why stop at the solar system? Look at a clear, velvety night sky, and you see millions of stars, twinkling like little lanterns. Our nearest star (Alpha Centauri) is 10,000 times farther away than Neptune, or about 25 trillion miles. For these kinds of distances, it is easier to just say how long it would take for light to travel that far, which, in this case, totals about four years. For any of the stars we can see with the unaided eye, light has been traveling for up to several hundred years.

But these stars are only part of the Milky Way Galaxy that extends out far enough that it takes light 100,000 years to reach us from stars on its edge.

Beyond our own Milky Way Galaxy are myriads of other galaxies. The most distant object visible to the unaided eye is one of these galaxies, called Andromeda, which is more than two million light-years away. However, the Hubble Space Telescope currently looks at objects that are more than 1,000 times farther away than even the Andromeda Galaxy. That is a septillion miles away, and this is a baffling figure: 1 with 24 zeros after it.

No wonder Isaiah was lost for words, and cried out in awe and wonder: "See who has created these things." And the psalmist was driven more to penitence and praise: "The heavens declare the glory of God; / And the firmament

shows His handiwork. / Day unto day utters speech, / And night unto night reveals knowledge" (Ps. 19:1, 2).

## From the grandest to the minutest

If the grandest in the universe leaves us speechless, what about the minutest of which God made? He is not only the Lord who created the glorious galaxies, infinite stars, distant planets, towering mountains, and vast oceans that continue to baffle us, He is also the Lord who controls, reigns, and rules over the minutest details of our universe. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered," said Jesus (Matt. 10:30). Now, the human hair is not very thick, but even so, across its thickness 100 human cells can be lined up side by side. Each cell can easily accommodate hundreds of viruses, and each virus can stack up thousands of atoms. Even the atom is much larger than the protons inside it. If the protons inside an atom were scaled to the size of a basketball, the size of the atom would be about the size of Delhi, home of 12 million people.

## What is God's power?

We have seen a few simple examples of God's greatness in nature. These will catch our attention, but interestingly enough, the essence of God's power and greatness lies elsewhere.

Remember Elijah when he fled from Jezebel? He spent 40 days at Mount Horeb. He must have remembered the stories about God's great power manifested on that mountain when God gave the children of Israel the Ten Commandments. God came

and talked to Elijah there, and pretty awesome natural events occurred again: wind, an earthquake, and fire. But God was not in any of these. Finally, in a still, small Voice, Elijah sensed the presence of God (1 Kings 19:11, 12).

Elijah felt the power of God and a sense of His assurance. Paul defines that power as “the power of God to salvation,” the power of the gospel (Rom. 1:16). This power changes lives; it gives us assurance that we belong to God. People are looking for this power.

Science cannot understand or account for the reality of this power. Steven Weinberg, in his book *Dreams of a Final Theory: The Scientist’s Search for the Ultimate Laws of Nature*,<sup>2</sup> describes what a final theory in physics would be like, and what form it might take. His concluding essay argues that “the only way that any sort of science can proceed is to assume that there is no divine intervention.”<sup>3</sup> And since science has been so successful when using this assumption, the assumption is presumed to be correct. As such, “there is an incompatibility between the naturalistic theory of evolution and religion as generally understood.”<sup>4</sup> Religion arose “in the hearts of those who longed for the continual intervention of an interested God.”<sup>5</sup>

Weinberg would like to believe in a Designer, but that Designer would also have to be responsible for suffering and evil. He would like to find evidence in nature of a concerned Creator, but finds “sadness in doubting that we will.”<sup>6</sup> He does not think “that science will ever provide the consolations that have been offered by religion in facing death.”<sup>7</sup> Religion provides meaning and hope, but for those very reasons, it seems “indelibly marked with the stamp of wishful thinking.”<sup>8</sup>

The truth is that science has done well at mechanistically explaining the natural world with a steadily diminishing need to invoke a God-of-the-gaps until its use has fallen into disrepute. But it has left humanity with

a clockwork universe that provides nothing for the human spirit and too rarely leads to belief in a personal God. Woe is the church if it provides no more than science for the basic needs of the human soul, if it, too, provides only rules, creeds, doctrines, and rites, and if it doesn’t provide the concern of a friend or of a personal God who cares.

The evil in the world can be explained philosophically by a God who made creatures with free will so they could love, but when evil directly affects a person’s life, the only answer comes from a friend who can empathize or a personal God who understands. A purpose in life requires the personal touch, making a difference in someone else’s life.

Weinberg feels that personal need but unfortunately does not see the solution in religion. Perhaps, he has seen only the form of godliness but not the power. The wonders of nature inspire awe, and that is good and important, but more is needed to give the power of the gospel of Christ—of a Person.

### A visit to Russia

I visited Moscow several years ago to work on a nuclear physics experiment. In the process, I made friends with a scientist who, for many years, has worked as a theoretical nuclear physicist at Moscow State University. She has shown an interest in my faith on several occasions, has asked about the vegetable gardens that a professor at the Zaoksky Seminary was famous for, has attended the Adventist church in Moscow, and knows a little about our beliefs.

I happened to visit her again recently. This time she asked me about the problem of suffering. I was ready to tell her about the great controversy between good and evil, God wanting free will creatures to love Him, Lucifer choosing not to love, and the results. Before I could start, however, she said, “I already know about the fallen angel.” Obviously, that answer wouldn’t satisfy her.

Thinking about it since then, I have realized, *Why not?* Philosophy is fine for answering philosophical questions. That answer worked fine for me. What pain have I experienced? But for my scientist friend, who was struggling with taking care of her husband who had just had a heart attack, philosophy wasn’t good enough. A loving God would not allow her husband to have a heart attack, to have this senseless suffering.

What my host needed was not a recitation of doctrines; rather, she needed to know of a loving, personal God, of a Christ who suffered along with us here on the earth, who knows our sorrows as well as our joys. She needed the personal touch of another who was hurting as she was. Could I give her that? Have I experienced it myself?

That’s our challenge. God’s power in nature is there for us to see. But more importantly, we need to experience God’s power in the gospel, the power that changes our own lives and makes us His children. That we have the power to argue for a particular viewpoint, whether in science or theology, is not so crucial, but we must recognize the importance of experiencing the power of changed lives so we can reach out and touch others. Not a form of godliness, but the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. ☒

1. All scripture passages in this article are from the New King James Version (NKJV).
2. Steven Weinberg, *Dream of a Final Theory: The Scientist’s Search for the Ultimate Laws of Nature* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992).
3. *Ibid.*, 247.
4. *Ibid.*, 248.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, 256.
7. *Ibid.*, 260.
8. *Ibid.*, 255.



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# Welcoming and retaining your visitors

No matter how many visitors your church attracts during the year, you want them to return. You want to retain those visitors.

Studies indicate that of those who visit a church once, 10 percent eventually become members. If they visit three times, they are nearly as likely to become members as they are to move on to another church. That seems to indicate that you have a maximum of three opportunities to bond with them. So, you must prepare to have them return.

How do you and your congregation make such preparations? The suggestions outlined here are guidelines any congregation can follow. They will introduce your congregation—its members, programs, and ministries—positively to the unchurched seekers of your neighborhood and to those who have chosen to visit.

*1. Create an attractive introduction to your church.* Announcing the sermon title and time of worship services on a signboard in front of the church building does not constitute a sufficient introduction. Signboards were made for a time when people lived in the neighborhood and walked to church. Today, people often drive a long distance to attend a church, and listings on signboards are not made for people who drive past your facility at a moderate speed of 45 miles per hour.

A person's first contact with a congregation after moving to a new home would likely be the telephone directory's advertising section (Yellow Pages) or the church's Internet

Web site. It makes sense, then, to have your information properly and attractively displayed in an ad or through an eye-catching Web site. (For help in designing your church's Web site, see the sidebar.)

*2. Make the first impressions the best impressions.* Most members don't notice what visitors notice. The surroundings, style of worship, how people relate to each other, and the condition of the facility have all become too familiar for long-time members. But for first-time visitors, everything makes an impression. Sometimes, when first impressions and encounters are not inviting, guests decide to move on.

Guests don't arrive at your front door anticipating a negative reaction. They arrive expecting to experience something positive. When they arrive in the parking lot, they will notice whether or not the lawn has been mowed or if the paint is peeling from the building or if windows are broken. The guest may ask the question, "If they can't care for their physical property, can they care for my spiritual life?"

Visitors will notice if your congregation takes pride in its place of worship. A good first impression, even on such a superficial basis, invites the guest to take a closer

look. If the grounds communicate "we care," the visitor can assume that these people are proud of their congregation, and therefore, are enthusiastic about their shared spiritual life.

*3. Make sure that visitors are recognized and appreciated.* When guests enter the building (possibly even before they enter) the members of the church make the next and most important impression. At this point, people really decide whether or not to return again.

To arrive at a worship service as a visitor is difficult for some people. I remember the greeting I received one morning at a church I was visiting while vacationing. On that day no one spoke to me. I surmised that if I were looking for a church home I likely would not return. That incident was so similar to an earlier time in my life, a day when I was looking for a church home after moving to a new

## DESIGNING A CHURCH WEB SITE

Almost every congregation has at least one person who knows about computers and would enjoy the creativity of designing the church's Web site. Find that person, tap into his or her knowledge, and ask him or her to use this special ministry for his or her congregation.

Many resources are available online to help you design your church's Web site. Check out the following:

- [www.hirr.hartsem.edu](http://www.hirr.hartsem.edu) (Click on Leadership Resources, then Designing Church Web Sites)
- [www.tedpack.org/churchweb.html](http://www.tedpack.org/churchweb.html)
- [www.greatchurchwebsites.org](http://www.greatchurchwebsites.org)
- [www.ForMinistry.com](http://www.ForMinistry.com)

community to do graduate studies. I attended a church where I thought I would be recognized by professors and staff as one of the students of their institution of higher learning. What I received that morning was a complete lack of recognition or acknowledgment of my presence. The following week, I attended another congregation where I was warmly greeted. Which congregation do you think I chose to join?

As a pastor who has been accustomed to long pastorates of ten years or more, I found it easy to forget that lesson. My life, however, changed in more recent years as a full-time interim minister and, then, as a retiree who attends a variety of congregations regularly.

In some churches, I get a smile or a head nod but nothing more. In others, people say, "Hello," or "Nice to have you here today." Seldom does anyone ask my name or my reason for attending their church that morning. Rarely does anyone guide me to other people or through the order of worship.

So imagine my surprise when I encountered a church where I was showered with surprise after surprise. At the door, the deacon greeted me with a friendly "Hello. My name is George." He thanked me for choosing to come to their church that morning. George was forthright enough to say that he didn't recognize me, and he asked my name.

As we talked, a woman approached us. She introduced herself as Kelli. She also asked my name. The two of them stopped someone who was walking past and introduced me. I'd hardly entered the front door and already I knew three people.

George and Kelli handed me off to this last person, and he walked with me into the worship area and asked me to sit with him. I suspect

that George and Kelli returned to the church lobby, looking for another new face.

When we sat down, the man introduced me by name to the people in front and behind us. He helped me to move with ease through an unfamiliar worship service. After worship, he took me to the fellowship hall for a hot drink and introduced me to the

because George and Kelli didn't appear to have an obviously assigned job of greeting me. These "unofficial" folks made me realize that I was noticed. I was attracted by their thoughtfulness.


I've rediscovered what it means to be a visitor who arrives at a new congregation, a visitor with uncertainties. This may be a time of stress

because of the unfamiliar or a sense of being an outsider, unaware of the traditions, values, history of the congregation, and relationships that already exist there. Under these conditions, a visitor looks for a church where they will feel wanted and welcomed.

#### 5. *Be hospitable.*

Most congregations pride themselves as being a friendly church,

but Jesus calls us to be more than friendly. Jesus calls us to be hospitable. Hospitality means more than an invitation to a fellowship lunch. Hospitality means the quality or disposition of receiving and treating guests and strangers in a warm, friendly, and generous manner.

Jesus did not wait for people to come to Him. He made every effort to go out and meet them and their needs; He approached the people. The discussion with the woman at the Samaritan well, the encounter with Zacchaeus, the interview with Nicodemus, and many other instances teach us that Jesus was deeply interested in people. That's what made His ministry unique. Likewise, church members who want to share their faith and ministry with visitors must first provide an inviting atmosphere, recognize and appreciate the visitors, and treat them with a spirit of Christian love and grace. Christ's grace is sufficient to meet the needs of those searching for something deeper in life. 

STUDIES INDICATE THAT OF THOSE WHO VISIT A CHURCH ONCE, 10 PERCENT EVENTUALLY BECOME MEMBERS. IF THEY VISIT THREE TIMES, THEY ARE NEARLY AS LIKELY TO BECOME MEMBERS AS THEY ARE TO MOVE ON TO ANOTHER CHURCH.

minister. I feel confident that all of this didn't just happen. I suspect that the interplay was well planned and executed behind the scenes.

By the time I left, I felt wanted. Remember, Jesus intended evangelism to be by personal contact and inclusion.

4. *Make your visitors feel that they are wanted.* People may visit a church for the first time because of its location, attractive Web site, inviting and attractive facilities, lots of growth opportunities, or a vibrant worship service. But they will return only if they feel wanted.

With people moving so frequently, they often find themselves in the process of searching for that place where they can find a sense of belonging. Every visitor is searching. Every guest is looking for *his or her* place.

To have those official greeters at the doors is essential. More important, however, is the unofficial greeter, the worshiper who introduces himself to the visitor. I felt more at home and more comfortable

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# A new heaven and a new earth—then what?

All of us have thought now and then of what we will enjoy most about eternal life—and no two dreams are exactly alike. But one thing is sure: you won't spend eternity on a cloud playing a harp!

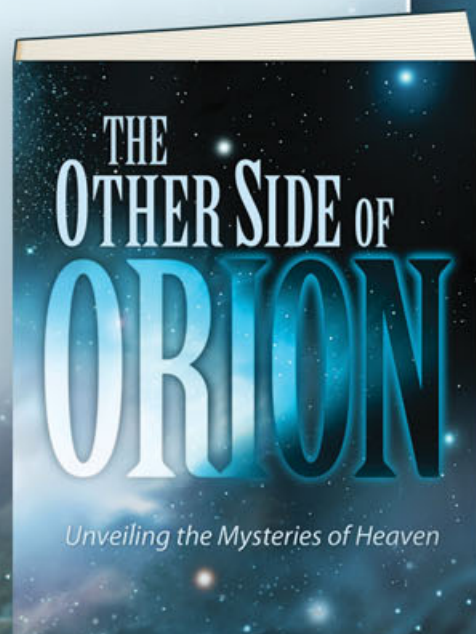
You will meet with people from every time period and culture. You'll meet angels and the citizens of other worlds. All of creation will be yours to explore. You will keep your talents, wisdom, unique personality, curiosity, and sense of humor. But one thing all of the saved will lose forever is selfishness. Can you imagine such a world? Take time to explore the future you've always wanted.

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# The pastor's guide to resource materials on church history

**S**tories from the history of Christianity contain a treasure trove of resources for the pastor. However, unlocking the variety of print and electronic resources can be a challenge because of the large volume of material. Where do you begin? Which resources are the most valuable? If you are like me, then you want to make sure you get the most value for the limited funds available, coupled with the ever-lacking space in your bookshelf or hard drive.

This article complements two previously published articles, the first by John McVay and Phillip Long on the pastor's guide to New Testament resources, and the second by Greg A. King on the pastor's guide to Old Testament resources.\* In addition to having adequate biblical resources, a well-rounded pastoral library should have some essential volumes on church history.

The pastor can utilize church history as a source for sermon illustrations, inspiration for a first-person narrative sermon, telling the story of a significant individual in church history, or even developing a heritage Sabbath that features the legacy of a particular tradition.

## Bibliographies and general surveys

With the limits of time and money, some of the best guidance can be found in up-to-date bibliographies, guides, and broad surveys. Here are some of the best:

1. Justo L. Gonzalez, *Church History: An Essential Guide*

(Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996). This book packs a decided punch in 96 pages. Gonzalez provides one-page overviews of the nine periods of church history, along with introductory bibliographies.

2. Mark A. Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000). Noll takes 15 decisive moments and uses them as seminal events that permanently altered the history of the Christian church.
3. Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1995). One of the best one-volume overviews, which is both simple and easy to use as a reference resource.
4. Roland H. Bainton, *Christianity* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1964). Although dated, perhaps one of the most readable overviews of the history of Christianity. My personal favorite.
5. Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought*, rev. ed., 3 vols. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1987). The strength of these three volumes is their detailed analysis on the development of doctrine from the early church through the twentieth century.
6. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, 5 vols. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1971–1989). One of the most definitive reference series of volumes tracing the development of Christian thought.

## Purchasing books online

One of my favorite memories from my Seminary years was getting together with a group of students to travel from Andrews University in southwestern Michigan to Grand Rapids, Michigan, about 90 minutes northeast. We always made sure we stopped by Eerdmans Bookstore to pick up discount copies of new books or the Kregel Bookstore. Fortunately, most bookstores now have online portals to purchase either new or used books. Here are some of my favorites:

1. [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com)—Helpful for finding used books. It is the largest collection of used books and bookstores online.
2. [www.christianbook.com](http://www.christianbook.com)—Christian Book Distributors is a discount distributor of new and used books. Their Web site and catalogue each have a section with church history resources.
3. [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)—The largest bookseller online with a wealth of selections and discount prices for church history resources. Amazon also allows the user to browse the front cover, table of contents, a few pages of content, and the back cover of most books, and offers used copies often at a discount price from affiliated sellers.

## Essential church history resources for the pastor's library

What essential books and other resources, focused on church history, should be in the pastor's library?

An adequate answer would need to take personal interests and skills into account. Of course, each author divides the history of Christianity in different ways, but loosely based on my reading, I've come up with the following categories of what I consider to be the essentials:

*The early and medieval church.*

One of the best resources to own is *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* and *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, available inexpensively both in print and electronically. A helpful overview is Henry Chadwick's *The Early Church*, rev. ed. (New York: Penguin, 1993), and, if you can afford it, *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2008) is a benchmark reference. Also helpful are some specialized, but useful studies that include G. R. Evans, *The Thought of Gregory the Great* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Rowan William, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001); R. W. Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and Brian E. Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991). Don't miss Eusebius's *The History of the Church* (numerous editions are available, although I prefer the Penguin Classics edition of 1990). For medieval studies, consult Joseph H. Lynch, *The Medieval Church: A Brief History* (New York: Longman, 1992) or Carl A. Volz, *The Medieval Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1997).

*Reformation and European church.* One of the best reference works related to the Reformation is Hans Hillerbrand's *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, 4 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 1996). Helpful biographical treatments of some of the major Reformers include those by Richard Marius and Martin Brecht (perhaps the most definitive biography, in my opinion) along with Timothy F. Lull's *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress

Press, 1989) or one of the recent CD-ROMs containing all of Luther's writings. Similar electronic compilations have been done for John Calvin, John Wesley, and other Reformers, although I personally prefer the print editions. Numerous biographies abound as well, but my personal favorites include Alister E. McGrath's *A Life of John Calvin* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1990) and Henry D. Rack's *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*, 3rd ed. (London: Epworth Press, 2002). Every pastor should have the definitive edition of John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* published as a part of the Library of Christian Classics (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox). The best one-volume overview of Methodism is David Hempton's *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005). For many of the lesser-known Reformers, including those of the Anabaptist tradition, consult bibliographies or the sections on further reading in Hillerbrand's *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*. For a broad survey of the history of Christianity in Europe, see G. R. Evans, *The History of Christian Europe* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2009).

*American religion.* A helpful overview is Leigh Schmidt's revision of Edwin S. Gaustad's classic *The Religious History of America: The Heart of the American Story From Colonial Times to Today* (New York: HarperOne, 2004). Another helpful title is *Theology in America: Christian Thought From the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* by E. Brooks Holifield (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003). Equally definitive, but with more sensitivity to Canada and transatlantic influences, is Mark A. Noll's *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992). For those interested in Puritan studies, the writings of Perry Miller are an essential starting point. See the recent edition by Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson, eds., *The Puritans: A Sourcebook of Their Writings* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2001); Francis J. Bremer's *The*

*Puritan Experiment: New England Society From Bradford to Edwards* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 1995); and George M. Marsden's *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004). While bibliographies can help to guide you to specific eras, some of the must-haves include Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991); George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); and Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers: 1815–1860*, rev. ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997). Not to be left out is the out-of-print three-volume *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience: Studies of Traditions and Movements* edited by Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988) that, although two decades old, still has readable yet scholarly articles with helpful bibliographies.

*Global Christianity.* Christianity is a worldwide movement with the most rapid growth in recent times occurring in Africa, Asia, and South America. Church historians are beginning to chronicle the history of the church in these areas. Two helpful surveys include a collection of essays edited by Adrian Hastings, *A World History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999) and Jonathan Hill's *The History of Christian Thought: The Fascinating Story of the Great Christian Thinkers and How They Helped Shape the World as We Know It Today* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2007). A book by Charles E. Bradford, *Sabbath Roots: The African Connection* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Ministerial Association, 1999) may challenge some of your traditional assumptions. With all of the interest in global Christian history, I anticipate that this is an area where I will need to make

room on my bookshelf in the next couple of years, although as one scholar pointed out at a recent scholarly conference, the largest challenge that historians face is a lack of access to primary sources (or possibly sources that have been destroyed). A preview of things to come are the first two volumes by Samuel Hugh Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992–2004); Justo L. Gonzalez and Odina E. Gonzalez, *Christianity in Latin America: A History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and a great introduction to primary sources by Klaus Koschorke, Frieder Ludwig, and Marian Delgado, eds., *A History of Christianity in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, 1450–1990: A Documentary Sourcebook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007).

*Adventist studies.* The definitive biography of Ellen White's life is Arthur White's six-volume *Ellen G.*

*White* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1985). Although written by a sympathetic grandson, White does a great job of exploring in detail the life of his grandmother. A much more critical biography by Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), questions the genuineness of Ellen White's prophetic calling. The best apologetic work that answers these questions is Herbert Douglass's *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1998). Also helpful are volumes in the new Adventist biography series (especially George Knight's biography on Joseph Bates) and the new series of volumes published by Andrews University Press as the Adventist Classics Library (these volumes with their scholarly introductions are a must-have for the student of Adventist history). For an out-dated but story-driven narrative,

check out Arthur W. Spalding's *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists*, 4 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1961) or Adventism's first historian J. N. Loughborough's *The Great Second Advent Movement: Its Rise and Progress*, rev. ed. (Loma Linda, CA: Adventist Pioneer Library, 1992). Adventist pastors will especially appreciate the development of Adventist evangelism detailed in Howard B. Week's *Adventist Evangelism in the Twentieth Century* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1969). Personally, I have found Paul A. Gordon's *My Dear Brother M . . . : Why Ellen White Wrote the Letters in Testimonies for the Church* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1997) a great tool for developing a prayer meeting series on the life and writings of Ellen White. ❏

\* John McVay and Phillip Long, "The Pastor's Guide to Resource Materials on the New Testament," *Ministry*, May 2006, 22–24; Greg A. King, "The Pastor's Guide to Resource Materials on the Old Testament," *Ministry*, July 2006, 21–24.

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## LETTERS

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### Creation Sabbath

The article "Creation, the Sabbath, and Worship" (July 2009) was beautifully written and theologically encouraging in view of what the Bible teaches. I much appreciate the good work of Dr. Baldwin.

However, one statement raises a serious question. "While Christians are not to seek to prove by science and reason the reality of God and divine attributes, they must, through faith, thank God for revealing His love, wisdom, and power in the visible things He has created." Some of us are concerned that our readers and students might think from such a statement from one of our scholars, that the scientific evidence for Creation is too weak to receive attention or study. If so, they would miss the powerful *scientific* Creation books, articles, magazines, tapes, and DVDs that have been pouring

off the presses in ever-increasing numbers since the 1960s.

There is no question about the primary place of faith in trusting God's Word; but I cannot believe that Dr. Baldwin intended for us to stop seeking the scientific truth about origins. Our people need to know how overwhelming the scientific evidences are. Sincere and strictly honest seekers for truth will demand all the evidences they can get that will be proof enough to take a stand for *eternity*. Evolution is a dying "fairy tale for grown-ups." How the evolutionists of all stripes would rejoice to find us making a contribution to their efforts to keep all the empirical evidences for Creation from the public.

Years ago, while a teenager, I accepted without question what the science teachers said about evolution. Later after reading some of the wealth of scientific Creation literature, I found

adequate proof for me that led to a strong belief in the trustworthiness of Scripture and a life-long ministry. I know of scores of scientists who were once ardent evolutionists but are now young-earth creationists. They found sufficient proof and reason to risk their university professional status to follow the real God.

For those who are earnestly seeking for scientific evidences as a basis to help believe the Bible and everything else it teaches, begin by reading some of the books written by these scientists: *Origins: Linking Science and Scripture*, by Dr. Ariel A. Roth; *Origin by Design*, by Dr. Harold G. Coffin, Dr. Robert H. Brown, and Dr. L. James Gibson; and *Science Discovers God: Seven Convincing Lines of Evidence for His Existence*, by Dr. Ariel A. Roth.

—O. R. Henderson, Avon Park, Florida, United States ❏

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# Appreciative inquiry: Lessons from a business model

How should we view human nature and spirituality? The history of theology provides different answers, each one affecting in its own way how we minister. After a brief review of this historical background, this article aims to draw some lessons from a current model of the world of business.

Let us begin with Augustine. This early theologian (A.D. 354–430) taught that humans were created good and upright, possessed a free will, and were endowed with the possibility of obeying God’s will. From this positive state, free of discord, Adam and Eve fell into sin. The consequent loss of good plunged them and the entire human race into a state of total and helpless ruin, with the proper ending being eternal death. Thus, everyone—even the youngest infant—Augustine noted, “is a ‘mass of perdition,’ and as such deserves the wrath of God. From this hopeless state of original sin ‘no one, no, not one, has been delivered, or is being delivered, or ever will be delivered, except by the grace of the Redeemer.’”<sup>1</sup> Augustine added that God, in His mercy, has determined the exact number of those whom He will save and those who will be lost and that the number of those receiving His grace remains certain and can neither increase nor diminish. Thus, convictions in Western Christianity arose regarding predestination, irresistible grace, the perseverance of the saints, and the decrees of God.

To this Augustinian negative spirituality (original sin spirituality), John Calvin (1509–1564) added a

further impetus by asserting that God had decreed who would be lost and who would be saved. Further complicating the picture were seventeenth century European theologians who asserted that God, before the creation of the world, had already decreed who would be saved and lost (supralapsarianism).

Against this strong Augustinian-Calvinist influence that often perceives human nature in negative terms, an obscure Dutch theologian, Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609), took a bold step to proclaim many truths now espoused by a large section of Protestant theologians. He declared that Christ died for all people; salvation comes by faith: those who believe are saved, those who resist God’s grace are lost; God does not select (elect) particular individuals for either outcome; and God wishes that all humans be saved.

Adventist theology, in no sense, denies the effects of sin on human nature. However, to counteract the remaining vestiges of a negative, and even fatal, perspective on humankind, it’s time for another way of seeing or another emphasis more aligned with God’s gifts to humans and God’s positive redeeming love—a move from *negative* to *creation spirituality*. To be sure, human nature is fallen, but there remains a noble, helpful, and redeemable part of human nature that, in many ways, retains the assets of our Maker. We can give credence to the assertion that “[n]ot only intellectual but spiritual power, a perception of right, a desire for goodness, exists in every heart.”<sup>2</sup> We are created in God’s image with the power to think, act,

and create, and this has implications for the creative side of human nature.

## Creation spirituality model

The contrast between *original sin spirituality* and *creation spirituality* in some ways can best be seen and controlled by the way we ask questions and conduct business in our families, churches, and institutions. I use the term *conduct business* purposefully because of insights provided in a business model created by David L. Cooperrider<sup>3</sup> who originated and applied the appreciative inquiry (AI) model in a business environment. Cooperrider perceived that all too often a business pursues a traditional approach by asking, *What problems are you or your business having?* The follow-up focuses on the problem: diagnosing it through surveys and interviews and suggesting a solution—usually a course of action designed to fix the problem. By paying attention to problems, we emphasize and magnify them. This approach fits the original sin model that says, “People are broken; they are problems.” Looking at any organization or system for problems will provide them. You find what you are looking for in abundance, be it in a church, school, family, or institution.

The *creation spirituality* model, like Cooperrider’s business model, starts from a different place, using a different set of assumptions and questions. The key question is, *What is working around here?* The question assumes that something is working.

To understand creative spirituality, it is crucial to understand and

accept its supporting assumptions, that is, the shared beliefs (sometimes unarticulated) that prompt a group's actions and thinking. Examining the assumptions supporting Cooper-rider's process, we can focus on the good rather than the problems and thereby achieve a creative spirituality orientation.

*Assumption 1.* In every system, be it society, an organization, family, or another group, something works. Instead of looking for what is broken, look rather for what works (what creates good) and grow it.

Imagine how many consultant funds could be saved and how much stress could be eliminated if institutions, churches, and families were honestly searching for what works in their corporate life. Finding what works is not easy; it takes discipline. Moreover, this process does not mandate simply ignoring problems but treats problems in a different way—they are not given center stage. Finding what works has a way of placing problems in the proper context. As the apostle advised, "Say only what is good and helpful to those you are talking to, and what will give them a blessing" (Eph. 4:29, TLB).

*Assumption 2.* What we focus on becomes our reality. Negative questions and statements produce a negative reality.

*Assumption 3.* Reality becomes created in the moment. Humans are capable of holding multiple realities at the same time. The most important reality to us is the socially constructed reality, that is, the reality that grows and is nurtured by personal relationships.

*Assumption 4.* The art of asking questions of an organization or group influences that group in some way.

*Assumption 5.* People have more confidence and comfort about journeying to the future (the unknown) when they can carry forward parts of the past (the known). "We have nothing to fear for the future except as we shall forget the way the Lord

has led us."<sup>4</sup> We should always carry the best of the past forward. Something works. Find it and grow it.

*Assumption 6.* To value differences of opinion, differences of interpretation, and differences that arise from many kinds of diversity is important. Sometimes, a discussion of difference can purify an idea, a concept, or the identity of what is working.

## Working the model

These key assumptions in appreciative inquiry (AI) lead to a summary of the operational parts of the model. Although these concepts are not difficult to understand, like all tools used in organizational work, they need to be experienced several times before they can be mastered. The following steps can help.


*1. Identify what works.* Through the use of well-designed questions, what is working in any organization can, in time, be identified. Most successful AI questioning arises when as many concerned people as possible are working in triads asking the right questions to identify what is working. In a church setting, the inquiry best includes every member who can be mustered to the task. Limiting the inquiry groups to triads ensures valuable input even from the more timid participants. Experience has shown that groups are greatly energized by this phase of the inquiry. It's just plain fun to ask, "What's working? Our Pathfinders? Our 12-Step program? Our liaison with the child-support agency? An avidly discussing Sabbath School class? Our landscaping? Our nursery supervision during church?"

*2. Create a challenging future.* The heart of the AI process is the creation of a desired and compelling image of the future based on the positive answers the group produces in step one—where imagination comes to the front. Crafting the future for a church group or institution requires the freedom to imagine. The future must be

challenging, exciting, and barely possible. Fear and doubt have no place here. For example, "We have excellent church school teachers. Suppose we were providing tuition for every eligible student in our congregation to be exposed to a Christian education." "At least half of our members are active and mobile; imagine their impact on the other half if they called or visited them."

*3. Build some bold positions.* The picture of the future can now be transformed into what AI calls "provocative propositions," describing an ideal state of what will be in the future. To write a provocative proposition, we apply "what if" to all the themes that emerge and provide a picture of the preferred future created in steps one and two. Some provocative propositions might be, "All of the members of the church are acquainted with and participate as individuals in accomplishing the mission of the church in the community"; "At our church there is a high tolerance for and welcoming of diversity"; "We have an attractive church facility as well as able members who can attract community residents to health-related workshops."

*4. Create an action plan.* The final step in AI includes taking the provocative statements of step three and creating an action plan: Who will do what? By what time? What steps must be taken to accomplish this identified and preferred future?

Once the goals of the provocative proposition are determined, the nuts and bolts of planning must define the near future. Planning grows to be grounded in hope. In every system, institution, and church, something works. Find it and grow it. 

1. Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918), 181, 182.
2. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1952), 29.
3. David L. Cooperrider, Peter F. Sorensen Jr., Diane Whitney, and Theresa F. Yaeger, eds., *Appreciative Inquiry: Rethinking Human Organization Toward a Positive Theory of Change* (Champaign, IL: Stipes Publishing, 2000).
4. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1962), 31.

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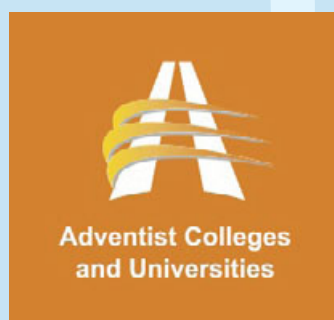
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# The pastoral counselor as prophet and priest

*Editor's note: A distinction must be made between pastoral counseling and clinical counseling. This article advocates that unless pastors have academic training in clinical counseling, they are to limit their counseling to assisting church members and others in a nonclinical fashion.*

One of the underlying themes throughout the biblical narrative, particularly in the Old Testament, consists of the dual role of prophet and priest. In the theocracy of ancient Israel, both prophet and priest had important roles to play in representing the people to their God and, in turn, speaking to the people on behalf of God.

Both of these roles come together in a pastoral counselor. While not necessarily acting in a mediatory way, pastoral counselors find themselves in a unique position where they can act in both priestly and prophetic roles with church members.

## The priestly role

Pastoral counselors certainly fulfill a priestly function. After all, a priest's duties include helping people to make sense of and to find meaning in their lives on both an individual and corporate level. In ancient Israel, they bestowed blessings upon others. This act included even Melchizedek (Gen. 14), who bestowed a blessing upon Abraham. The assumption here is that the lesser is blessed by the greater. As Abraham accedes to Melchizedek, so he infers his subservience to him.

In a similar way, the pastoral counselor acts as the professional, the one with the training and knowledge required to assist, to the best of his or her ability, those who seek help.

Clearly, then, pastoral counselors perform a priestly function and this can be performed in any number of ways. Below are three important examples.

**Affirmation.** Affirmation prevails as a major focus in pastoral counseling since those being counseled often lack self-worth. One way this perceived shortcoming can be addressed is by affirming them. I am always impressed and encouraged when I learn of the resilience of counselees. How they have kept going in the face of overwhelming adversity humbles me. One of the standard questions in solution focused therapy is, "How did you do that?" After an hour of this training, we hope the clients will leave in the knowledge that they themselves have actually done something positive in their lives.

**Encouragement.** Often it falls to the pastoral counselor to encourage those who see little reason *not* to give up. We need to assist those who seek our counsel to search for motivation—for reasons to keep going and push ahead. How often do we receive church members and others whose only "encouragement" has come from friends whose attempts at encouragement fall way short? "Stop complaining, and just get on with it." "Forget them. They're just not worth it."

And so it goes. Often such encouragement tends to have the

opposite effect. In contrast, the encouragement provided by the pastoral counselor should be of a different kind—the kind that actually *does* encourage.

**Rituals.** Rituals offer a tangible way to provide meaning. The life of the Israelite nation contained many rituals, both corporate and individual, by which the Israelites became more cohesive and were strengthened in their worldview.

Pastoral counselors find themselves in a position to encourage rituals among clients. These may be as simple as daily breathing exercises, relaxation techniques, or weekly responsibilities toward themselves or others. One former client was able to ritualize specific social activities with his children and, through this, improved the quality of time with his family.

## The prophetic role

Besides these priestly roles, the pastoral counselor also fulfills a prophetic function. Traditionally, this prophetic role was to confront and proclaim. Many people limit the prophetic role to *foretelling*, that is, predicting the future, which is wrong. A major part of biblical prophecy was *forth telling*, or in other words, proclaiming (telling forth) the Word of God and/or the messages received from God. "Thus saith the Lord" became a well-known saying of biblical prophets and often comprised the opening words of their pronouncements.

Pastoral counselors do not claim to be foretellers. While at times, a



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client's future may seem clear based on a determined course of action, we do not know the future. We can, however, be *forth tellers*. Though we may do this in any number of ways, I will focus here on two.

*Reflection/Reflected Listening.* Through reflecting back to a counselee, we not only show them that we have heard them, but we also allow them to hear afresh what they, themselves, are saying. At the same time, we show our clients that we are there for them and that they are, at this very moment, the most important person in the room. Therefore, use parroting and paraphrasing to basically tell them, "You have been heard."

*Confrontation/questioning.* Confrontation allows us to say some things to a client that they might not otherwise hear but which, in our opinion, they need to hear. For a biblical model, see Nathan's encounter with King David, which ended with the confrontational words, " 'You are the man!' " (2 Sam. 12:7, NIV).

While questioning can be seen as threatening, it may also be our most powerful tool because it allows us to probe, confront, and take the counselees out of their comfort zones. This skill is not limited to pastoral counselors; it can indeed be taught to and practiced by anyone who cares for another.<sup>1</sup>

## Conclusion

Pastoral counselors need to be both prophet and priest. Which is easier? In the Old Testament times, priests were often able to undertake their functions relatively unscathed. Prophets, on the other hand, frequently had it tough. Examples abound when they were forced to confront people with unpopular messages and in unorthodox ways. One needs to consider, for instance, Ezekiel being commanded by God to bake food using human excrement as fuel to punish the Israelites, causing him to reply, " 'Not so, Sovereign LORD! I have never defiled myself' " (Ezek. 4:14, NIV).


However, nothing seems to come close to the reaction of those

who opposed the prophet Jeremiah. They plotted against him, threatened him with death (Jer. 11; 26), burned his written message (chap. 36), imprisoned him (chap. 37), and even threw him into a cistern (chap. 38). Clearly, being a prophet can be risky business.

About 50 years ago, American sociologist Charles Glock conducted a major empirical study of Episcopalians. Glock and his fellow authors sought to account for the variation in the degree in which Episcopalians were involved in their local congregations. Among their findings was that the church did a fine job of comforting people who were feeling deprived. This study concluded that "the church at large serves more of a comforting role to its parishioners than a challenging role."<sup>2</sup> Further, they found that when the church body does challenge individuals, it risks losing members.

While not totally surprising, these findings proved significant and threatening. The church seemed to fulfill its mandate through these two foci: *comforting* and *challenging*. In other words, the church's mission was played out in both priestly and prophetic roles. However, to the surprise and indignation of many denominational leaders, the churches did a much better job of comforting than of challenging.

The challenge for pastoral counselors is comprised of finding, and then keeping, the balance of both comforting and, when need be, challenging those who come to us for assistance.

In short, we need to be faithful priests and prophets. 

1. Bill Jackson, "Theory of the Second Question," *Counseling Australia* 7, no. 3 (Spring 2007), [www.theaca.net.au/journals/ca\\_archive/ACA%20Mag%20Vol17%20No2%20Winter%2007.pdf](http://www.theaca.net.au/journals/ca_archive/ACA%20Mag%20Vol17%20No2%20Winter%2007.pdf).  
 2. Charles Y. Glock, Benjamin B. Ringer, and Earl R. Babbie, *To Comfort and To Challenge: A Dilemma of the Contemporary Church* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 110.

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**Armageddon at the Door**, by Jon Paulien, Hagerstown, MD: Autumn House, 2008.

Jon Paulien presents a study on the biblical view of Armageddon, beginning from a survey of the present “war on terror” to investigating the significance of the term, especially from the context of the book of Revelation.

In the first two chapters, the author begins with an overview of the war on terror and the factors central to it. Chapters 3 and 4 describe the author’s personal search for the meaning of Armageddon. Chapter 5 traces the Mount Carmel theme in Revelation 12–14 and identifies the key players involved in the conflict.

The sixth chapter analyzes the end-time role and context of the seven last plagues of Revelation 16 and creates the background for interpreting Armageddon (which is related to the sixth plague). The author tackles the exegetical challenge of interpreting certain prophetic specifics of Armageddon in Revelation 17 (especially verse 10) in chapter 7 and (in more detail) the appendix at the end of the book.

In chapters 8 and 9, the major confederacies involved in the war of Armageddon are identified based on the author’s exegesis of the Revelation 12–17 context. Chapters 10 and 11 enumerate the major events of Armageddon, while chapter 12 contains reflections on the implications of the study’s view of Armageddon for the present time—beginning with the war on terror and concluding with basic spiritual principles pertinent to the reader’s preparedness for what is coming.

First, the book contains a basic description and explanation of the war on terror as an introduction, stating the factors affecting the



two parties involved and also relating the nature of this war on terror to the real, soon-coming battle of Armageddon and end-time events. This is relevant and attractive to contemporary readers.

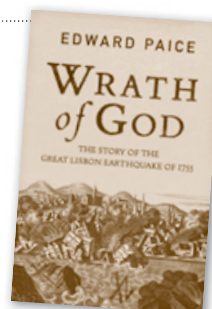
Second, the pastoral nature of the book can be seen as it stresses important spiritual points from prophecy by repeating them for emphasis. Third, the book simplifies the exegetical process for interpreting the apocalypse for lay members to understand and use for their own personal study. He does this by stating hermeneutical principles for interpretation. Fourth, the author clearly avoids and warns against the human tendency to make specific predictions, speculations, and date setting about the events to come. He based his work on general principles identifiable from the exegesis of the text of Revelation. He also supports these general events with quotes from the writings of Ellen G. White where necessary.

The book, logically organized and exegetically sound, is recommended not only for New Testament biblical students interested in the book of Revelation but for others who want to learn more about the topic and understand it from a biblical perspective.

—Reviewed by Ikechukwu Michael Oluikpe, PhD candidate in New Testament Studies, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines.

**Wrath of God: The Story of the Great Lisbon Earthquake of 1755**, by Edward Paice, London: Quercus, 2008.

In the mid-eighteenth century, Lisbon was the fourth largest city in Europe. Benefiting from gold coming



from the Portuguese colony of Brazil, the city was filled with churches (around 500) and home to colonies of English Protestant traders, Huguenots, and Irish. Its destruction on All Saints Day, November 1, 1755, by the largest earthquake ever recorded—8.75–9 on the Richter scale—was “and still remains the most notable earthquake in history.” It has been described in its effect as “comparable to the explosion of the Atomic Bomb at Hiroshima.” Yet despite its contemporary impact upon the world of the eighteenth century, it has largely been just a footnote in the history books. This fascinating volume corrects this omission, showing what a terrible and fearful event the earthquake was and the profound effect it had upon the philosophical and theological thinking of the period.

The extent of the quake was massive; its effects were well felt from Ireland to the West Indies, from England to Africa. It lasted ten minutes, followed by two large aftershocks. The Spanish port of Cadiz experienced a tidal wave that threw ten-ton rocks fifty feet into the air.

It was Lisbon itself that experienced the direct horror. A tidal wave 40 feet high, traveling at 400 miles per hour, virtually destroyed the city, killing approximately 40,000 people and starting a fire that burned for a week. The nature of the disaster led to an examination of its cause. The prevailing view of a God who punished evil by direct intervention in nature could not be sustained. A God who would act like this would be a monster.

Rational explanations were sought and the science of seismology was born. These were natural explanations for national disasters.

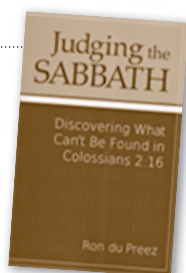
Perhaps more significant was the attack upon the philosophy of optimism and religion.

How could a good God allow or even cause such a terrible disaster? In France, Voltaire wrote his infamous book *Candide*. In England, Samuel Johnson produced *Rasselas*. Both books marked the end of a worldview dominated by a God who caused disasters as punishments for evil. The earthquake contributed to a new way of thinking about God and the world. Modernism was born.

The book is worth reading for the consequences of the actual earthquake, the aftershocks, the fire in the city, and how the disaster affected the consciences of men and women all over Europe. This absorbing story adds new meaning to the opening of the sixth seal and the seventh plague in the book of Revelation. The story also illustrates why Bible students saw it as a fulfillment of the earthquake of Revelation 6:12.

—Reviewed by Patrick J. Boyle, MA, retired pastor, Watford, England.

**Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can't Be Found in Colossians 2:16** by Ron du Preez, Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2008.



This document contains the most complete and detailed scholarly study of the biblical phrase “feasts, new moon or Sabbath” in Colossians 2:16. Most interpreters have argued that the sequence indicates yearly feasts, monthly celebrations, and the seventh-day Sabbath. Ron du Preez carefully argues that the term *sabbath* does not designate the seventh-day Sabbath in that passage, thus seriously undermining the prevailing view.

Divided into two main sections, part one (chapters 1–9) deals with matters of language and context, and the second provides more technical evidence to support the conclusions

reached. In the first chapter, du Preez surveys the literature and concludes that Colossians 2:11 has been used throughout Christian history to argue that the seventh-day Sabbath was abrogated. This establishes his exegetical agenda. Is it true that the Hebrew term for *sabbath* (*šabbāt*) never designates ceremonial sabbaths? The author addresses this in chapter 2. He studies the 111 occurrences of the term *šabbāt* in the Old Testament and observes that out of those, 94 designate the seventh-day Sabbath and 19 designate something else. He distinguishes these two groups of passages by paying particular attention to syntactical and linguistic markers, then he concludes that the term is used to refer to the week, the Day of Atonement, and the sabbatical years.

Du Preez also examines, in chapter 3, the use of sabbath terminology in the Septuagint, particularly the rendering of the Hebrew phrase *šabbat šabbātôn*, used to designate the Day of Atonement and the sabbatical years. The argument under consideration indicates that the Septuagint never uses the simple term *sabbath* to designate ceremonial sabbaths. Du Preez demonstrates that the phrase *šabbat šabbātôn* is only once translated *sabbata sabbatōn* in the Greek version. In all other cases, it uses the term *sabbata*. Hence *sabbata* is used for ceremonial sabbaths.

The discussion moves to the New Testament (chapter 4) and the way the author uses the singular *sabbaton* and the plural *sabbata* (used in Col. 2:16). He concludes that the terms *sabbaton* and *sabbata* are used to designate the seventh-day Sabbath, a single seventh-day Sabbath, a “week,” and seventh-day “Sabbaths.” Du Preez argues that this is not too different from the use of *sabbata* in the Septuagint,

where it designates the seventh-day Sabbath, seventh-day Sabbaths, and ceremonial sabbaths, such as the Day of Atonement and the sabbatical years. These conclusions are based on the use of specific markers in the New Testament that help him identify cases where *sabbata* refers to the seventh-day Sabbath or to something else (for example, seventh-day Sabbath is accompanied by the definite article, the verb *keep*, the word *day*, and so forth). Whenever *sabbata* designates the week, the word is always accompanied by a numerical indicator (for example, “first day of the week”). In Colossians 2:16, *sabbata* is not accompanied by any of those specific markers.

Du Preez goes back to the Hebrew Bible to examine the connection between *sabbata* and the ceremonial sabbaths. He confirms that in Leviticus 23:32c the Hebrew *šabbāt* refers to the Day of Atonement and is translated into Greek as *sabbata*. The same usage of the singular is found in the case of the sabbatical years. He also points out that the Day of Trumpets is referred to in the Septuagint with the singular *sabbaton*. The conclusion is reaffirmed that the term *sabbata* can designate ceremonial sabbaths.

In chapter 6, the author addresses the question of the calendar sequence: feast, new moon, and sabbath. He acknowledges that in some of the calendar sequences found in the Hebrew Bible the term *sabbath* designates the seventh-day Sabbath. But he observes that in those cases we have a four-part sequence, not a three-part sequence as in Colossians 2:16 and that in none of them the sequence is yearly, monthly, and weekly. Besides, in those passages, what is being discussed is not the observance of specific religious days but the sacrifices offered during those days. It is concluded that those passages should not be used to elucidate the



meaning of Colossians 2:16. Only in Hosea 2:11 do we find the same sequence.

Du Preez rejects the argument that the ceremonial sabbaths were included in the term *feasts* (chapter 7). He studies the use of the Hebrew term *chag* (“feast”) and concludes, with many other scholars, that it designates Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. The Septuagint uses the term *heortē* (“feast”), found in Colossians 2:16, to translate the Hebrew *chag*. It always designates the same three feasts and is never applied to the Day of Atonement or to the blowing of trumpets, which were ceremonial sabbaths. This usage, according to du Preez, continues in the New Testament where *heortē* designates the Passover festival, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Based on the biblical usage of that term, it is argued that in Colossians 2:16 *heortē* designates those three pilgrim festivals. Based on his previous linguistic studies, he argues that in that same passage the term *sabbata* refers to the Day of Atonement, the Day of Trumpets, and the sabbatical years. The previous conclusions are supported by the fact that the term *shadow* is used to refer to the feasts, new moons, and sabbaths (chapter 8). In the Hebrew Bible, the Sabbath was not a shadow of things to come but was instituted at Creation. The reference is to the Mosaic ceremonial services that foreshadowed the work of the Messiah.

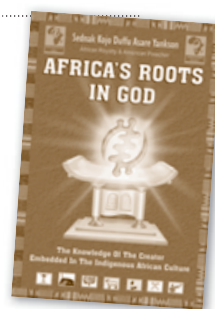
The second part of the book concentrates primarily on a detailed linguistic and contextual study of Hosea 2:11. He concludes that the term *feasts* designates the three pilgrim festivals, the new moons are monthly celebrations, and since the term *sabbath* does not have any of the linguistic markers that would identify it with the seventh-day Sabbath, it designates the ceremonial sabbaths. He particularly points to the personal

pronoun used in Hosea—“*her* Sabbaths” instead of “*my* Sabbath.” He finally argues that in both Hosea and Colossians 2:16 we probably have an intensified inverted parallelism: feasts—three *annual* feasts; new moon—*monthly* ceremony; and Sabbaths—three ritual Sabbaths connected with the *year*.

This important study on a debated passage deserves careful attention from anyone interested in the question of the Sabbath. Du Preez has demonstrated beyond a reasonable doubt that in Colossians 2:11 Paul was not dealing with the seventh-day Sabbath. Not all the arguments may appear to be persuasive, but the fact remains that the assumption that the phrase “feasts, new moons or Sabbaths” in Colossians designated all the annual feasts, the monthly celebrations, and the seventh-day Sabbath is in serious need of revision, or even better, dismissal.

—Reviewed by Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, ThD,  
director of the Biblical Research Institute, Silver  
Spring, Maryland, United States.

**Africa's Roots  
in God: The  
Knowledge of  
the Creator  
Embedded in  
the Indigenous  
African Culture,**  
by Sednak  
Kojo Duffu  
Asare Yankson,  
Hempstead, NY:  
Sankofa Heritage Books,  
2007.




I have always been fascinated by unexpected relationships between cultures that were temporally and geographically separated, such as when we hear echoes of Bible stories in the fables of pagan peoples long disconnected from Christian influence or biblical concepts preserved in Chinese characters. These

cultural echoes exist, we assume, because we all came from the same roots—people moved, and their ideas moved with them. Yet, over time, those truths dimmed.

Sednak Yankson, a Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventist pastor and scholar, has traced astonishing connections between the Old Testament and the indigenous religious practices of West Africa. Yankson shows how Hebrew names, words, concepts, and even entire ceremonies survived in some African cultures, including, interestingly, the Sabbath. The parallels are too clear to be accidental, such as a celebration by the Ga people that is surprisingly similar to the Passover (right down to painting the house doorposts red) or the Akans’ golden “mercy seat,” on which blood was sprinkled for atonement.

That Africa was a dark continent before the arrival of the missionaries is only a partial truth, insists Yankson; the truths of Scripture were wrapped in the ceremonies and the stories of the African people, awaiting only missionaries to restore to them the complete salvation story.

Those cultural anthropologists who would quibble about the soundness of one or another of Yankson’s tethers between indigenous Africa and the Hebrews would be missing the point. These connections are meaningful to us as believers because they prove that God’s truth cannot be snuffed out, no matter how languages, ethnicities, miles, and centuries may have obscured it. It is because of these roots that Africans responded so readily to the Bible’s stories—and why the once Dark Continent continues on its way to having the largest concentration of Christians in the entire world.

—Reviewed by Loren Seibold, DMin, senior pastor,  
Worthington Seventh-day Adventist Church,  
Worthington, Ohio, United States. 



## International Pathfinder Camporee

**Oshkosh, Wisconsin, United States**—The 2009 International Pathfinder Camporee, held every five years, met this year at Wittman Regional Airport, some 90 miles north of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, August 11–15, 2009. For one week, this was the home to 35,000 Seventh-day Adventist young people.



Photo: Mervyn Lee

“I don’t think there’s a larger Seventh-day Adventist five-day gathering than this one,” said **Ron Whitehead**, executive director of the event. He also stated that the bulk of the attendees have been preparing for this for years and were attending at their own expense.

Though using only a fraction of the land at Wittman, the camporee’s size is not inconsequential: participants would have to walk about one mile from the last tent to the farthest point in the event. Whitehead said it took 1,000 volunteers to run the “city,” not including the Pathfinder directors coming from all over the United States and many parts of the world. Among many other things, the event required 4,000 chairs and 1,500 folding tables for participants to use in learning 1 of 121 different

honors, similar to the merit badges of scouting programs.

Along with subjects such as sailing, hiking, and making scrapbooks, there were more serious topics such as medical honors and international aid. About a dozen youth at a time also participated in a class utilizing global positioning system (GPS) devices to engage in geocaching, a high-tech version of hide-and-seek and a relatively new North American Division Pathfinder honor.

Many of the teens took advantage of hot air balloon rides, climbing walls, sailing, and other activities. For the week, camporee organizers rented the local YMCA, giving the young people a chance to ice-skate, play indoor football, and swim. The activities were designed to provide

a memorable experience and to help the youth make new friends while strengthening their faith in Christ. *[Mark Kellner/ANN Staff]*

## Mothers of Peace TV series completed

**Beirut, Lebanon**—*Maa Umm Salaam (With the Mother of Peace)*, a television series in Arabic about women’s issues, has just wrapped after recording 54 half-hour shows, filmed July 14–30, 2009, at the newly renovated Al Waad Media Center (WMC) in Beirut, Lebanon.

“Having completed the inaugural series in our brand-new studio, our

team feels a great sense of accomplishment, and quite rightly so!” says **Amir Ghali**, WMC director and executive producer for the *Maa Umm Salaam* series. “We sensed a true blessing from God because we enjoyed a wonderful spirit for the duration of the shoot.”

**Kalthoum Qewar**, the Jordanian speaker for the series was exceptionally professional throughout, given some challenging working conditions.

Pausing between shows at the WMC studio, Qewar spoke passionately about how she wanted to empower the women of the Middle East so they can be confident in their spiritual walk and be positive examples in their homes and in their communities. “I want women to feel valued in Jesus,” she said.

The Al Waad (The Promise) Media Center was formed in January 2008, and is located on the campus of Middle East University in Beirut. After completing a US\$70,000 renovation, the studio has begun production, with the ultimate goal of providing culturally relevant Arabic programming for a new channel on behalf of the 330 million Arabic speakers around the world. The channel will be part of the Hope TV network, the official satellite television station of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The leader of the Adventist Church in the Middle East region, **Kjell Aune**, says that he is thrilled the long-time dream of a media center has finally become a reality and the first series of programs has actually been recorded. “We have a very dedicated group of media workers and volunteers and have great hope and faith in this new ministry. I believe God will bless this endeavor immensely and that, through Al Waad TV, millions will be reached by the good news of salvation in Jesus.” *[Alex Elmadjian/TED News]*



## A tribute to E. E. Cleveland

During the early 1950s in segregated North Carolina, for a black minister and a white minister to become friends was perhaps not unheard of, but certainly unusual.

As a child, I watched my father and his pastoral colleague, Edward Earl Cleveland (1921–2009), fellowship and interact together in such a way that the color of either one's skin was no issue. In fact, I remember many evenings when our family would trek the 15 or so miles from our home in High Point to Pastor Cleveland's evangelistic meetings in Greensboro just to hear my dad's favorite preacher!

Few Adventist leaders are so well known and loved that merely their initials identify their ministry and mission. Along with H. M. S. Richards Sr., E. E. Cleveland is one whose worldwide influence is recognized the moment you say, "E. E."

Born in Huntsville, Alabama, to William C. and Eunice Cleveland, Dr. Cleveland began preaching at the age of nine with no other ambition for his life than to proclaim the gospel message wherever even one person would listen. Thankfully, those audiences were large and spread over the entire globe, from which his evangelistic preaching personally led over 15,000 individuals to accept Jesus as their Savior and follow Him as Lord.

In 1954, at the age of 33, E. E. was elected as associate ministerial secretary of the General Conference, where he served the global church for 23 years (more than half the length of an ordinary career). As the first African-American minister elected to a General Conference department, E. E. brought keen insights to our team by demonstrating the power of racial inclusiveness and the deadly dangers of exclusion and discrimination.

One of my predecessors, Pastor Robert Spangler, stated, "Earl has done more than anyone to demonstrate the need for cooperative utilization of all individuals—especially those from different racial backgrounds." As an example, Spangler shared that during their travels together, E. E. was busy taking photos of the best sights and places he could find. Rather than illustrating extraordinarily primitive or backward conditions to shock those who would see his mission reports, E. E. strived to show the best side of any culture, regardless of how poor and different they may have been.



Photo: *Adventist Review*

Another former General Conference ministerial secretary, N. R. Dower, stated, "And when he instructed ministers, he knew from personal experience what he was teaching. At one point in his ministry Earl pastored as many as eight churches, preached a weekly radio broadcast in three of the cities, with as many as eight hundred correspondence students studying at one time, all while conducting public evangelistic meetings that lasted from twelve to twenty weeks, six nights per week."

In 1977, at the time of E. E.'s transition to Oakwood University to

serve as director of the department of Church Missions, Dower noted, "Wherever he goes, Earl inspires men with a vision of greater evangelism and helps them to see clearly how this can be accomplished. His wisdom and foresight, coupled with Christian courtesy and tact, have enabled him to divert many a crisis that otherwise might have brought great embarrassment and distress to the cause of God."

E. E. was a leader in various areas—including social justice—as he worked within the church to combat racism and discrimination and as he associated beyond the church with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and great civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr.

But his primary priority was always mass evangelism. Throughout his career, he coupled public proclamation with mentoring young preachers who would become the future leading evangelists for the church. My associate, Peter Prime, was influenced by E. E.'s Trinidad evangelistic series of 1966, in which more than 1,000 individuals were baptized—the largest single endeavor to that point in the church's history. Prime shares his experience in that massive series:

From his imperial height of what looked like seven feet to me, E. E. Cleveland's voice thundered with the accompanying banging of his huge fist on the poor podium and in the disquieted air caused by the sweeping gesticulations of his mighty arms. Sixty-three of us ministers and Bible instructors formed the support team for the revered teacher-evangelist.

I was just a ministerial strip-ling at the time. At least this is what Pastor E. E. must have

thought. However, I thought otherwise with the result that, on not a few occasions, heated debates erupted during the instructional classes. And when he felt that his masterly sayings did not receive the emotional response from us that they rightly deserved, he would cry out with all his wit, "You Britishers!"

Personally, E. E. met in me a doubting Thomas and converted me into one with resolute faith. Was it because of his unmistakable eloquence as a preacher, his masterly skills in presenting the doctrines of the church, or the compelling nature of his personal appeal? All of these must have played a part, but most significant, I witnessed a living, modern-day example of a preacher, a man like Enoch, walking with his God. And this was all I needed. How humble I feel to sit in the very seat in which he sat in the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists when he conducted this evangelistic series.

In 1972, E. E. was asked to spearhead the church's first massive evangelistic thrust, "Mission

'72—Reach Out for Life," which pushed the concept of every Adventist minister, pastor, and administrator presenting an evangelistic program. During that great effort, as Seminary students from Andrews University, Sharon and I preached our first public evangelistic meetings in Plymouth, Indiana.

In 1979, E. E. founded the annual Oakwood Evangelism Council, which continues to attract more than a thousand attendees each December, and he continued conducting public evangelistic meetings until his final series in 2006 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

If massive public evangelistic endeavors were his professional priority, team ministry with his wife, Celia, was his passion. From the very start of their marriage in 1943, Earl and Celia (Abney) Cleveland worked together as a team. Throughout their career, you would find Celia playing piano, directing choirs, and coordinating Bible instructors for their evangelistic programs. Celia was Earl's true love and ministering partner, and he publicly affirmed her ministry everywhere he preached.

In addition to his preaching and teaching, Cleveland was a prolific author of numerous articles, 16 books, and featured as the subject of a biography, *E. E. Cleveland: Evangelist Extraordinary*, by Harold L. Lee and Monte Sahlin.

In 1989, he was cited as Alabama's most distinguished black clergy by Governor Guy Hunt, and in 1993, he was inducted into the Martin Luther King Jr. Board of Preachers, Scholars and Collegium Scholars at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. In 2007, Oakwood University honored its own alumnus and faculty by naming Edward Earl Cleveland as one of the three honorees of its new training center for evangelists and ministers: the Bradford-Cleveland-Brooks Leadership Center.

In November 2007, he donated his vast collection of personal manuscripts, including over 2,000 sermons along with other papers,

to the Center for Adventist Research at Andrews University. This priceless collection forms a lasting legacy beyond his death. Anticipating the end of his life and desiring to make a further contribution to training evangelists, E. E. pitched one last evangelistic tent by establishing a virtual "canvas cathedral" where his sermons can continue to win souls until Christ's return ([www.eeclevelandministries.org](http://www.eeclevelandministries.org)). R. Steven Norman III, who worked diligently to establish this visionary Web site, says, "Pastor Cleveland has not laid his sword down. He has passed it on to us, his fellow soldiers, to help us fight to lift the banner of Prince Emmanuel."

In tribute to this remarkable life, Adventist world leader, Jan Paulsen, says,

E. E. Cleveland taught his students that to be an effective Seventh-day Adventist preacher you must first possess a "holy boldness." As I look back at the life of this extraordinary man of God, I see this very quality—a holy passion that acknowledged no boundaries—as the thread that connected every part of his life and ministry. He was a gifted preacher and teacher. His courage and moral leadership profoundly influenced the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America and around the world. But his most important legacy can't yet be measured. It's a legacy that still unfolds in the lives of many thousands of men and women who came to see their Savior through his faithful witness. It's a legacy whose breadth will only be revealed when our Lord returns. The loss of this steadfast servant of God will be felt deeply by his family, the Oakwood University community, and the church in North America. And it's a loss shared by the international Adventist community as well, for he belonged to the whole church. ✉



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# Cycle of Life

“Sometimes you have to face harsh realities before you do what’s right.”

*Pastor Minervino (Minner) and Evelyn Labrador  
Clearwater, Florida*



The first question our financial advisor asked us about retirement was: Do you have a will and other estate planning documents? We didn't. Within weeks, two tragedies in our church showed us how important estate planning can be. A beloved deacon suffered a serious stroke. Machines kept him alive, but he could no longer communicate. Loving relatives found themselves in a painful conflict that could have been avoided, if only our church member had signed an advance medical directive. Then, a young couple related to a church member died in a car accident,

leaving two small children. With no will or guardianship directions, the children's future was left to the courts. The custody

dispute, together with probate costs, significantly reduced the children's inheritance. When we thought about our own family, we knew we couldn't live with uncertainty. We had to fulfill our obligations as parents, as pastors of the flock and as responsible stewards of God's goods. Now that we have wills, we are so relieved. We know that if anything happens to us, our sons will be raised in an Adventist home.



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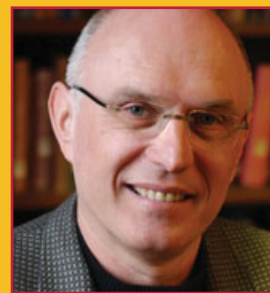
**Lawrence Geraty** is the President Emeritus of La Sierra University. He grew up as a citizen of the world in a Christian missionary family who ministered in China, Burma, Hong Kong, and Lebanon. Educated in seven different countries and various states across the USA set him on a lifelong course committed to the values of diversity. Lawrence Geraty earned a PhD with distinction from Harvard University in Hebrew Bible and biblical archaeology, taking examinations in 10 languages. In his notable scholarly career, Dr. Geraty has received numerous honors, including a Fulbright Fellowship and serving as advisor on archaeology to former Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan.



**Marguerite Shuster** is the Harold John Ockenga Professor of Preaching and Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary. She joined the School of Theology faculty in 1992 after serving as an adjunct assistant professor. Her courses include Homiletics, Systematic Theology, Making Doctrine Live, and various preaching practica. Marguerite Shuster's published books include *The Fall and Sin: What We Have Become as Sinners* (2004), *Perspectives on Christology: Essays in Honor of Paul K. Jewett* (1991), and *Power, Pathology, Paradox: the Dynamics of Evil and Good* (1987). She also edited and completed Jewett's *Who We Are: Our Dignity as Human* (1996) and has published many articles, sermons, chapters, and reviews.



**Roy Adams** is the Associate Editor of the *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World*, serving in this position since 1988. He was born in the Caribbean, and received his education at schools in Grenada, Trinidad, Canada, and the United States. The bulk of his pastoral work was in the Ontario and Quebec provinces of Canada. After obtaining a PhD in Theology from Andrews University, he lectured at what is now the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIIAS) in the Philippines. From that base, Roy Adams' teaching and speaking appointments took him to many other Asian countries, and he continues to be a highly sought after international speaker at major clergy professional development meetings.



**Miroslav Volf** is the Henry B. Wright Professor of Theology at Yale Divinity School, and Founder and Director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture. A native of Croatia, Dr. Volf has forged a theology of forgiveness and non-violence in the face of the horrendous violence experienced in Croatia and Serbia in the 1990s. Dr. Volf is a highly awarded author. *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace* was selected as the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lenten Book for 2006. *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation* received the 2002 Grawemeyer Award. He has also been featured on National Public Radio's "Speaking of Faith" and Public Television's "Religion and Ethics Newsweekly."

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