

Pastoral Interviews
Report for Week of: 3-18-98
Number of Calls: 10
Number of Conferences: 3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. In this new series of questions, pastors were asked if their church(es) sponsored a viable Adventist community service program(s). Six of ten pastors have some sort of community service program. Whether its "viable" (meaning eligible to join United Way) was undetermined. Most of the responses were tied to food (Cook for the homeless in church basement once a month; distribute food to homeless once a week on the streets; distribute food and clothing from a Better Living Center at the church; provide cooking classes for women; rent out church facilities to the Federation for the Homeless in town to run a soup kitchen). Another church works with the Greater New York Conference van ministry. And another church runs a tutorial program. This last pastor from South Central Conference said he helped start a Community Development Corporation out of which the tutorial program grew and now involves his church members.
2. This new question asks, "What do you believe is the key factor in helping mobilize members toward sharing their faith in Jesus with others?" Responses might be grouped into three categories that I will call "spiritual", "programmatically", and "methodological." In the first category, three pastors highlighted factors such as, "Holy Spirit in the members life" and "Inspired urgency" and "Regular prayer and Bible study as a foundation." The programmatic responses ranged from Discover Bible courses, Track Attack (Sabbath afternoon track distribution) to having a SALT witnessing team specially trained or providing programs members can invite friends to attend at the church (Easter, etc.). Closely related to the programmatic, but with a greater emphasis on the method than the program are pastors who seem to have a deeper sense to their approach to encouraging witnessing among members. For instance, one pastor spoke about Psychogenetic Witnessing (Friendship Evangelism from what I could gather). Another Hispanic pastor (with 95% of members from the Dominican) has a very active witnessing church. Lots of training. Of special interest is his "House Church" approach to evangelizing. Instead of inviting people to the church for public evangelism programs (which he does twice a year), he trains lay pastors to do public evangelism programs in homes. He believes community people are more inclined to visit a home than go to a church. Another pastor worked carefully with his church members to develop a mission statement, which he believes helped inspire members to share their faith and invite people to church.
3. Another new question: "Do you have an associate/assistant pastor?" All ten responded "no." And when asked, "If you could have a paid, full-time assistant, what would be that person's primary job?" It was a tie between having a Bible Worker and a Youth Minister (4 a piece). Other jobs listed include: Training members,

Administration, Public Relations (with other community service organizations), Minister of Music, and Church Planter. Only one pastor rattled off a list of tasks (visitation, workshops, prayer meeting, evangelistic meetings, etc.). The pastor who listed "training" as the highest job is himself a volunteer pastor of an ethnic congregation in New York City. The pastor passionate about church planting as the best thing to do told me he recently read Rick Warren's book (Purpose-Driven Church) and was interested in getting in touch with Ron Gladden.

4. "Who at the conference level (no names, just title/position) is most supportive of your local ministry work?" It was a toss up between the Youth Director (included AY and Pathfinders here) and the Secretary (included ministerial secretary here). There were four mentions of each of these. Two pastors mentioned the Ethnic Coordinator (both Hispanic) and two mentioned the Conference President. One mention was made of the Stewardship Director and one mention was made of the Sabbath School Director. The two reasons most frequently mentioned focused on help pastors received when doing programs (evangelistic series, training, special events at the church) and personal interest (calls me at will, assessable, wants me to succeed, etc.). Also mentioned were newsletters from presidents to keep pastors informed of current happenings and information giving about resources, conducting pastor's retreats, etc.

Pastor: DZ

Conference: Greater New York

Church(es)/Position: 2 churches and a company

1. Does your church sponsor (or co-sponsor) any "viable" Adventist community service programs(s) such as a soup kitchen, remedial reading program, etc. (Viable meaning eligible to join United Way.)

We rent out to the Federation for the Homeless, for a soup a kitchen. So, they use our facilities.

2. What do you believe is the key factor in helping mobilize members toward sharing their faith in Jesus with others?

Spiritually, they need to have the Holy Spirit in their lives. Some of them seem to be indifferent. I think they also need training and encouragement. Someone beside them to teach them.

3. Do you have an associate/assistant pastor? If you could have a paid, full-time assistant, what would be that person's primary job?

No. Bible worker.

4. Who at the conference level (no names, just title/position) is most supportive of your local ministry work? What are key factors that make them supportive?

Stewardship department. Personally participated and facilitated at my church.

Pastor: JW

Conference: Greater New York

Church(es)/Position: 1 church, bi-lingual (Filipino), Volunteer pastor of church plant

1. Does your church sponsor (or co-sponsor) any "viable" Adventist community service programs(s) such as a soup kitchen, remedial reading program, etc. (Viable meaning eligible to join United Way.)

We have a "health check" outreach. We work with the "van center" of New York.

2. What do you believe is the key factor in helping mobilize members toward sharing their faith in Jesus with others?

I think they need a sense of inspired urgency. Especially here in New York, many Adventists are busy making a livelihood. They come just for the hour of worship, feel satisfied, and go back to life as normal. Life in the cities is very stressful.

3. Do you have an associate/assistant pastor? If you could have a paid, full-time assistant, what would be that person's primary job?

I'm volunteering for this small company. So, I'm not on the payroll. Training church members. On-hand training. Going out with members to teach them to give Bible studies, to visit, etc. I believe if ministers do the work alone, as soon as they leave, the work falters.

4. Who at the conference level (no names, just title/position) is most supportive of your local ministry work? What are key factors that make them supportive?

Everyone is supportive. One person initiates being involved with me without asking. He's an interim department director, multi-ethnic director.

Pastor: JS

Conference: Greater New York

Church(es)/Position: 1 church, Hispanic (95% Dominican)

1. Does your church sponsor (or co-sponsor) any "viable" Adventist community service programs(s) such as a soup kitchen, remedial reading program, etc. (Viable meaning eligible to join United Way.)

Homeless. Cook food for the homeless. We use the basement kitchen. Every Sabbath in the afternoon, my church goes out to the homeless area to give food to the poor people. Once a month (Monday) mornings we serve at the church.

2. What do you believe is the key factor in helping mobilize members toward sharing their faith in Jesus with others?

We give seminars to the members on how to share Jesus with others. We have different programs, Bible studies, and we are now preaching in homes. We have 15 houses that are open for members to go preach at the house... and they invite people from the neighborhood. Our lay pastors preach one time a week. Many people in New York do not like to go to churches directly, but are more open to going to a house. Neighbors are more open to doing. Also, distances can be a problem. Especially if you are doing a "series" of evangelistic meetings. Also, people connect with members better.

Secondly, my members visit "sick people" as a way to encourage and connect with others. People will go and sing to these people. They also go to nursing homes. Of course my members also give Bible studies, visit people in the homeless shelter and then public evangelistic meetings twice a year at the church (April and October). We are also using Net '97 and '98 (Spanish translation).

3. Do you have an associate/assistant pastor? If you could have a paid, full-time assistant, what would be that person's primary job?

No. I would put him to work with me, especially with youth. We have many youth in New York City. I have 275 members, plus lots of visitors (25 a week or so). I need someone to help me in working with teenagers and giving Bible studies. Its easy in the Spanish communities to get Bible studies. And when you give them to a person, you often reach the whole family.

4. Who at the conference level (no names, just title/position) is most supportive of your local ministry work? What are key factors that make them supportive?

In the Spanish community, it's the Spanish coordinator. That's very important man in that position. He brings to me materials, training, and seminars. Sometimes he's a good preacher and do preaching at evangelistic meetings. Also, he usually has the worker's meetings. He's more important than any other department.

Pastor: PO

Conference: Greater New York

Church(es)/Position: 1 church, Hispanic (He used a translator on the phone for this interview)

1. Does your church sponsor (or co-sponsor) any "viable" Adventist community service programs(s) such as a soup kitchen, remedial reading program, etc. (Viable meaning eligible to join United Way.)

Provide cooking classes for women.

2. What do you believe is the key factor in helping mobilize members toward sharing their faith in Jesus with others?

He draws attention to programs people can attend, like 5-Day stop smoking programs. Also, conducting special services like at Easter time.

3. Do you have an associate/assistant pastor? If you could have a paid, full-time assistant, what would be that person's primary job?

No. Bible worker.

4. Who at the conference level (no names, just title/position) is most supportive of your local ministry work? What are key factors that make them supportive?

Youth department. Help coordinate large group gatherings.

Pastor: AB

Conference: Southwest Region

Church(es)/Position: 2 churches

1. Does your church sponsor (or co-sponsor) any "viable" Adventist community service programs(s) such as a soup kitchen, remedial reading program, etc. (Viable meaning eligible to join United Way.)

No.

2. What do you believe is the key factor in helping mobilize members toward sharing their faith in Jesus with others?

Invite them to go to their neighbors and just try to witness. In groups and one-on-one. I share from my personal experience.

3. Do you have an associate/assistant pastor? If you could have a paid, full-time assistant, what would be that person's primary job?

No. Youth and administration.

4. Who at the conference level (no names, just title/position) is most supportive of your local ministry work? What are key factors that make them supportive?

President. Accessibility.

[On the side, this pastor was very reticent to share with me and asked all sorts of questions about whether his conference president knew I was making these calls, and who Monte Sahlin is, and what this information is used for... Tried to answer his questions best I could. Also gave him Monte's work phone number.]

Pastor: JE

Conference: Southwest Region

Church(es)/Position: 1 church

1. Does your church sponsor (or co-sponsor) any "viable" Adventist community service programs(s) such as a soup kitchen, remedial reading program, etc. (Viable meaning eligible to join United Way.)

We have a community services (Better Living Center). Food and clothing.

2. What do you believe is the key factor in helping mobilize members toward sharing their faith in Jesus with others?

I led this conference in baptisms this year. Fifty baptisms without a budget. I did that having been a laymen at one time – strength is in the laity, in the pew. So what I do, I share something called Psychogenetic Witnessing. Appealing with them to reach the minds and hearts of others. Not to beat the people doctrinally, but build a relationship with them, giving a reason for the hope that is within them. Adventism is a lifestyle, not a doctrine. Say for instance, their diet ... “I do this because I’m an Adventist” is not is good as “I’m healthier when I go with a more natural diet.” Give training and teaching.

3. Do you have an associate/assistant pastor? If you could have a paid, full-time assistant, what would be that person's primary job?

All of my elders are assistant pastors. Then my head elder happens to be an OB doctor. Elders are an extension of my ministry. Each one is in their niche, they are assistant pastors to me. I give them elder credentials. I’m in a city. And these

credentials mean something to them. If we separate laymen from ministers, its not good.

I would assign them as a Bible worker ... I'm very leery about youth pastors. But, if he had what I think he has, it would be Bible worker and youth pastor.

4. Who at the conference level (no names, just title/position) is most supportive of your local ministry work? What are key factors that make them supportive?

They are there for me. That's the most important thing in my ministry. Conflict management is very helpful. But sometimes I don't want them there to help with conflict, especially if they tend to be biased. Youth director and the ministerial secretary.

Pastor: XB

Conference: South Central

Church(es)/Position: 1 churches

1. Does your church sponsor (or co-sponsor) any "viable" Adventist community service programs(s) such as a soup kitchen, remedial reading program, etc. (Viable meaning eligible to join United Way.)

Not on an ongoing basis.

2. What do you believe is the key factor in helping mobilize members toward sharing their faith in Jesus with others?

We've used the Discover Bible Course. We have a member in our church who does drug awareness activities. We have a Track Attack, going out sharing in the neighborhood.

3. Do you have an associate/assistant pastor? If you could have a paid, full-time assistant, what would be that person's primary job?

No. I would suppose it would be making the church known to various community organizations. Discovering what areas the church could assist in, in these organizations. We had every community organization visiting our church at one time or another ... so we are aware of what they do ... but to follow that takes time.

4. Who at the conference level (no names, just title/position) is most supportive of your local ministry work? What are key factors that make them supportive?

The AY and Pathfinder Director. They have a viable ongoing program and they keep you well informed.

Pastor: TB

Conference: South Central

Church(es)/Position: 1 church (just transferred)

1. Does your church sponsor (or co-sponsor) any "viable" Adventist community service programs(s) such as a soup kitchen, remedial reading program, etc. (Viable meaning eligible to join United Way.)

No.

2. What do you believe is the key factor in helping mobilize members toward sharing their faith in Jesus with others?

Haven't found any particular resource or strategy ... I find that those who do that are committed to regular and personal prayer and Bible study.

3. Do you have an associate/assistant pastor? If you could have a paid, full-time assistant, what would be that person's primary job?

No. Youth minister. My second choice would be a minister of music.

4. Who at the conference level (no names, just title/position) is most supportive of your local ministry work? What are key factors that make them supportive?

I would say the President and Secretary. Their desire to see each of us succeed. He sends out a pastors newsletter each month that I find helpful. He also has a newsletter for the members.

I have been here 5 years and 6 months. I have been asked to move a couple other times, but declined ... felt like it was a little too early with what I was trying to do here... So, I'm going to a larger church ... I'm happy here but willing to go. Just my wife and I, kids at college so things are more flexible.

Pastor: WB

Conference: South Central

Church(es)/Position: 1 church (but in transition)

1. Does your church sponsor (or co-sponsor) any "viable" Adventist community service programs(s) such as a soup kitchen, remedial reading program, etc. (Viable meaning eligible to join United Way.)

We have a tutorial program. Doing it about a year. I started a Community Development Corporation... and out of that this program started.

2. What do you believe is the key factor in helping mobilize members toward sharing their faith in Jesus with others?

Two things: I started with basics. Had church helped me to write a mission statement. That generated strength for members to share. Once people found out their mission, I had them work with their relatives and kinfolk. Co-workers. We had a workshop for building bridges. Materials I've gathered. Using community surveys, finding common ground.

3. Do you have an associate/assistant pastor? If you could have a paid, full-time assistant, what would be that person's primary job?

No. They would probably replace the elders. Probably not practical in this small of a church. If I had one, I would put him in charge of church planting... that's where its at. The cutting edge of growth is church planting. We start new members off with low expectations. We don't start them off good. Come in and have a good time.

4. Who at the conference level (no names, just title/position) is most supportive of your local ministry work? What are key factors that make them supportive?

Secretary. There are three people who call me to see how I'm doing from the conference office. Youth Director, Secretary, and the Sabbath Director.

Pastor: GB
Conference: South Central
Church(es)/Position: 1 church

1. Does your church sponsor (or co-sponsor) any "viable" Adventist community service programs(s) such as a soup kitchen, remedial reading program, etc. (Viable meaning eligible to join United Way.)

No. We have a church school.

2. What do you believe is the key factor in helping mobilize members toward sharing their faith in Jesus with others?

The best thing I've found is a SALT team (like a SWAT) team. I.e. about 10-15 members that really do well. There is no secrets to getting people to share their faith. People are too busy doing their thing and not taking time to share. Making money is a bigger priority.

3. Do you have an associate/assistant pastor? If you could have a paid, full-time assistant, what would be that person's primary job?

No. Visitation. Planning workshops. Prayer meeting. Evangelistic meetings.

4. Who at the conference level (no names, just title/position) is most supportive of your local ministry work? What are key factors that make them supportive?

Ministerial secretary. The information provided and sent out, pastor's retreats.