

Pastoral Interviews
Report for Week of: 3-20-98
Number of Calls: 10
Number of Conferences: 4

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. How many of these pastors say their churches are involved in viable community service programs? Five. Once more, the definitions are a bit blurry. The five mentioned here are all connected with the homeless, food and clothing distribution, and shelters. One church helps with a community soup kitchen in Bermuda. Another church houses homeless people in the church basement five weeks a year (in cooperation with an interfaith group in town), another is involved in a tutoring program. The other five churches that said “no” to this question are either involved in doing health seminars, fair booths, health screening, cooking classes, etc. or are doing nothing at all.
2. How to mobilize members to share their faith. It’s a problem. Many pastors asked me to share the results! Interestingly, two areas surfaced among these ten pastors. Besides the “do what Jesus did” comments, three pastors said that they believed small groups is a primary answer. People are more inclined to share their faith comfortably in a home setting. It’s easier to invite people to your home than to the church. Another two pastors said that teaching people about their spiritual gifts is a key. When people learn what they are good at, it takes a lot of guilt off them. “You mean I don’t have to go door to door to be a good Christian?” Some of the other responses include an emphasis on health evangelism being a natural way to share (less “spiritual” in the sense of opening people up in conversations), working with a nucleus, focus on the basics, develop an atmosphere and attitude in the church, etc. One pastor has fine-tuned a “Kindness Call” program that sounds like is working well. Might be an article lead for Adventist Witness magazine.
3. Four of ten pastors have a paid assistant. One of them is a Hispanic Bible worker on a stipend. If all these pastors had either another full-time assistant or a new one (the small church pastors all laughed at the slim chances...) the most common job description would be a Bible worker. Six pastors mentioned this under titles like Bible worker, Interest coordinator, Personal evangelism, Soul winning, and Discipleship coordinator. Two pastors said they’d want a Youth Minister. One would love a Secular Campus Minister for two nearby universities. And one said (a pastor’s wife I interviewed... which I do on occasion...), “I think my husband is looking for an associate who would be a jack-of-all-trades.” Of special interest is a pastor who tells of his neighboring pastor who pays two professionals a stipend to take time off work to help him for several weeks (or months) out of every year. High baptismal numbers from this strategy. He asked the conference for the same and was told this was still “experimental.”

4. Three votes for the President. He is most frequently mentioned as the most supportive to the local pastors ministry. And interestingly, two pastors (from different conferences) say that they especially appreciate that their president takes an interest in their personal, spiritual life. The rest were a smattering: Assistant Communications Director (who provides regular email contact from the office to all pastors), Treasurer (helping fund a Bible worker), Ministerial Director, Secretary (sends helpful information and asks pastors their opinions on conference projects), Asian Coordinator (willing to help confront problem people in the church), Church Ministries Director (helps provide matching funds for our special projects), and the Vice-President for Church Growth.

Pastor: EV

Conference: Bermuda

Church(es)/Position: 1 church

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

We are running a soup kitchen. We just organized a community project ... we want to go into another area ... got permission from a elementary school ... want to begin a ministry to children. This Sabbath we will be sending out members to conduct a survey asking about family issues, etc. Lay a foundation for evangelism for next year.

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

I have that problem as well. I have 800 members on the books. Its hard to get people going. There is always a nucleus that are motivated. The mass tend to not be active, though I have quiet people who witness. I tend to concentrate on the few that are interested. We hope the project mentioned above will really motivate more members.

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?

Yes. Youth ministry would be a priority. I had a pastor who was youth oriented. He was the conference youth director but also my associate. But then the conference gave him his own church. My current associate is not a youth pastor. So, I'm currently attempting to define his role. But the youth area is important.

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?

We only have 2 officers at the conference office. All the pastors carry additional loads. The President is particularly helpful. We talk a lot. We meet every Wednesday, mostly to pray together. Though we do more talking than we early did. The President is very much interested in evangelism.

Pastor: RH

Conference: Michigan

Church(es)/Position: 2 churches

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

Not at the moment. On occasion do stand alone projects. May do a cooking school once a year through Women's Ministries. We'll be bringing in a nurse practitioner in a month to talk about women's issues.

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

We're working right now on training people to be small group leaders. We're pretty confident that it will work well if we do it right.

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. We do have a colporteur. Depending on their skill package, but what I'd like to have done is full time recruiting of interests and following up interests. Generating interests. One church near me, hires people to be full time Bible workers during and previous to evangelistic meetings. They tend to baptized 75 or so a year. His name is Mike Connelly(?)... The people he trains are professionals, so they can get away for a few months and really go for it... Fantastic idea.

I'm really convinced the wave of the future is not sending out cards, but friendship evangelism and trust.

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 assistant communications director. The reason, he sends us email four or five times a week, keeping us up to date, forwarding message from the division, etc. Keeps us on the pastors net.

Pastor: DH
Conference: Michigan
Church(es)/Position: 1 church

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

We have two different programs. One is, we do about 5 weeks out of the year where we house homeless people. Part of the Interfaith Ministry in our area. We've had 7 to 17 people we've housed, feed them, provide a phone. Make it home for them for a week at time.

We also do about 10 Sundays a year where we go into the Detroit area to feed the homeless a meal. Its about an hour one way. Prepare food on site. About 110 people go through. We work with the other Adventist churches in the area that cares for Sundays.

We also have a health screening van that we use in our area. Not many facilities will let us do it.

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

One of the things ... my new people tend to be more ready to share their faith. Some pass out cards in different locations for Bible studies. They are also ... one fellow does a little program for the VA Hospital. It's an opportunity for him to share and talk to the people. We have a group that goes to a nursing home. A third group does a worship talk when we feed the homeless in Detroit. Put on a little witnessing program there. Seeing results from all these things ... not translating into people coming in. It's doing something for them, though there may not be immediate results. We have a couple small groups going on. One of the challenges is getting the groups to grow.

I just visited a former Adventist in the hospital who is running a small group out of his home. He leans toward once-saved always-saved. But anyway, his group is just taking off. It was interesting dialoguing with him. I'm hearing all about small groups. His interdenominational church is really into small groups.

Talked about 70,000 Romanians in Detroit area with no Adventist Church. The charismatic Romanian churches are thriving. Talked about the "one generation" problem. Kids learn English and those church plants change.

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?

Yes and no. I have a Spanish Bible worker. He's like my associate. He gets a \$600 stipend. If I had a full-time associate ... I have two colleges in my area (University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan University). I'd love to get a presence on these campuses. We have kids on these campuses (200) that are going to these secular campuses. We see about 20 at the most. A lot of kids will come, but try and hide. Some are not interested in Adventism. They come from all over the country. In our territory, but what do we do with those kids. I haven't been trained in that area. [Referred him to Ron Pickell, Jerry Connell and Gary Russell, along with a resource we sell at AdventSource called "Adventist Ministry on the Public University Campus" put together by Humberto Rasi.

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?

Person that has given me the most help is the retiring conference treasurer. He's been interested and brainstorming with me how to pay for what I'm thinking of doing... including a Romanian Bible worker. My President has a vision for what could happen here, but this treasurer has been helpful. The President

Pastor: BE

Conference: Michigan

Church(es)/Position: 2 churches (work ½ with Trust Services also)

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

Not at this point. Little churches. We've done VBS.

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

I have two little churches. Have been neglected. I'm using as a strategy ... instead of dwelling on "argumentative" angles, I'd spend my sermons on what Jesus did. My members, I think, are interested in the basics.

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. If I had lots of interests and in a big church, I'd assign them to follow-up interests.

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?

My situation is just a little bit different, I've spent most of my life in the conference office. I'm finishing my 40th year this July. So, most of my life has been as a youth director. At this point, who supports my ministry? I don't know. I would guess that the ministerial department is the most concerned, and the trust department.

Pastor: DL

Conference: Michigan

Church(es)/Position: 1 church, senior pastor

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

We do a lot of health programs for the community, but don't run our own at the present time. Our community is almost over run with social programs. So much so, we didn't feel it was useful. So we joined the community.

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

I think the only thing I might add to that ... is in the area of Adventist lifestyle and healthful living. We have found that many members are hesitant to share anything "spiritual" are more than ready to share something on health. An improvement or positive experience or an invitation to a health program. That opens more doors. We have emphasized that area. We provide choices, have a newsletter, etc.

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?

Yes. Our specific need is in discipleship. That's their first job description. Nurturing members and training in witnessing.

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?

We have a very pro-active and involved leadership in this conference. All of our officers and secretarial department leaders really try to be supportive. I think they

really try ... from stewardship to Pathfinders, Personal Ministries, etc. I would say the most effective support we get is from the Conference President, he makes it clear to our churches that he's interested in their success. Personally makes whatever efforts he can to provide the leadership, programs, financing. Some Presidents are more "administrators" and are holed up in the office. The style we see here is very "church" oriented and "pastor" oriented. Concerned about the health of the churches.
Accessible.

Pastor: DM
Conference: Manitoba-Saskatchewan
Church(es)/Position: 3 churches

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

Not really, no. Just involved a little bit in the community.

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

Nothing comes to mind. It is a problem.

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. Door to door contacts. Raise up interests. We have to go to people, people don't come to us. That's an important key. Perhaps using surveys or offering a course by video tapes, etc.

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?

Probably the secretary. He sends the most material. He calls sometimes to discuss topics, ask for opinions, etc. I talk with him the most.

Pastor: AP
Conference: Central California
Church(es)/Position: 2 churches

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

We have feeding the homeless. We have a community service that gives food and clothing. We provide health screening. We provide helping refugees, teaching English as a second language. We have some Laotians and Mongs.

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

One of the things we do is develop a small group ministry. Small group members are encouraged to share their faith with others. We encourage each family to adopt one family, in preparation for Net '98. They pray and visit this family. See what ever they can do to help that family in terms of physical and spiritual needs.

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. He would be my youth minister.

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 terms of being communicative and supportive, it's the Asian Coordinator ... he's the one who touches base with me a lot. Also, the Secretary of the conference is too. Calls me from his office (Asian Coordinator). Asks me if there are any problems he can help with. If I have a problem with a certain member, he helps to write to the member and explain or help this member. He upholds the ministry of his workers. I appreciate that very much.

Pastor: RL
Conference: Central California
Church(es)/Position: 1 church

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

Yes, we have a community service center. We are going to be doing a tutoring program. We've been partners with another church, but going to be launching out on our own.

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

It's more of an attitude and atmosphere than anything else. There's no magic wand. A lot of it has to be dealt with individually. They need to see examples. There are simple things people can do. That helps create an atmosphere. I find when individual members tug at other individual members to join them, that works better than anything else. Getting up and hounding them from the pulpit doesn't work. On the surface it may not look like a lot is going on. It's not rocket science. It's hard work. There is mixed results. Sometimes friendships are built that are amazing, and sometimes it doesn't. Look at Jesus' strategy. Learned from working with others.

There's a place for programs.

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?

Yes. Evangelism and soul winning training.

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. He encourages spiritual life. And making that an issue for the membership in our conference. He makes it an issue in all he says. That's the best way someone can support me. If I have spiritual people, it makes it easier to do my job.

Pastor: CM

Conference: Central California

Church(es)/Position: 2 churches

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

No. We've hired a health instructor and Bible worker ... and she's conducted a number of successful cooking classes. The first one we conducted, we had a 117 from the Los Gatos community. Since they wouldn't fit in the fellowship hall, we had to have two sessions. We have a lot of highly skilled, "engineering" type people, including an engineer who helped design a platform for one of the space programs... Anyway, we're really getting on the map when it comes to health ministry in our community. We've also had a successful faith booth... And I'll be baptizing someone who came to our booth. She sampled some vegetarian burgers and then came to a

health program. We've also sponsored an American Bible Society booth. One of our members (retired school teacher) has run this and just received a special award.

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

We had Bill Liversidge here. He has a program to help members find their spiritual gifts. Many people have a particular focus in witnessing (Bible studies, etc.). But we're starting a "Kindness Call" program. (Article in Ministry Magazine, 1977 – using the net...). We encourage and train members to do one kindness call a week. There's a survey sheet for members to fill out explaining what they can do. Its based on EGW statement of there would be 100 people where there's only 1 if people would be kind. It's a teamwork approach maximizing a variety of talents and interests of our members. Everyone is asked to make some type of project.

Wrote a booklet on this: "Coded for Caring" (Chapter in a book). The idea is that people offer their unique services and skills. The book is called "Taking Dreams Off Hold." These books are used in Doctor's book racks. Pacific Press has published 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. I can see the value of a Bible worker. Years ago we used to have more. If I had an associate who could be involved in personal evangelism ... this would be my main interest.

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?

Because of the outreach focus of my two churches, probably the person that has helped us the most in practical ways would be the church ministries director (used to be Personal Ministries). I think they have been most involved with us is because of the special programs we've had and asked for matching funds. He's had a vested interest in what we're doing.

Pastor: GJ (wife answered the questions)

Conference: Central California

Church(es)/Position:

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

The second Wednesday of every month we go to the homeless shelter and cook hay stacks. We do much of the preparation at our church, but then carry it over to the shelter. We usually have about 200 homeless people. Then we feed people off the street (50 people). Our 14 year old son helps out. We pay for it once a month. It involves 7-10 volunteers. My husband talks to the men. I pass out literature.

Last year we conducted a health fair and actually had the mayor involved. We sold vegetarian foods. We also did health screening. We also had someone from the community come in and talk about AIDS at our booth. We also had a chiropractor, dentist, orthodontist, police department, American Cancer Society came.

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

He has done spiritual gifts seminars. Some people love to talk to others. Giving Bible studies. It's not my forte. But I like to buy literature. So I put it on benches, in bathrooms, etc. I'm not into giving it face to face, except Roger Morneau's book. I feel comfortable. Also, we give out Happiness Digest. Its doesn't look as prejudice. Some people also like to go door to door. So if that's their gift, great, we plug them into Ingathering. Some people wear shirts for witnessing. My husband uses a variety of resources to teach. But I'm pretty sure he uses Connections.

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?

We're in the process of getting one. This person will be a "jack of all trades" type.

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?

Vice President for Church Growth. Also the Asian/Pacific Ministries Director. Also our President. He supports us, but it takes awhile for him to get in touch with us.