

Pastoral Interviews
Report for Week of: 4-21-98
Number of Calls: 10
Number of Conferences: 3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Two of ten pastors answered “no” to the question, “Do you have a community service program in your church?” (I’ve found that most pastors don’t understand the concept of a “viable” program.) Of the other eight pastors, six have a food and clothing bank. Two spoke of personal kits to give out during disasters. Two have a program for feeding the homeless once a week. One pastor opens the church for housing the homeless once a week. And one pastor spoke of a community service van that distributes food, clothing and does blood pressure checks once a week.
2. How to mobilize members to share their faith? Three pastors spoke of books that have helped them (two referred to Russell Burrill’s books, and another spoke of Philip Samaan’s book on Christ’s Way of Sharing...). General strategies mentioned include: emphasizing one on one contacts; visitation in homes; properly indoctrinating new members that “witnessing” is a way of life for the Christian; use of small groups; emphasis on friendship evangelism; and creating opportunities for members to share their faith. One pastor noticed members shared their faith more after a “high” at the church (like a Week of Prayer or Revival Meetings). Another pastor shared a favorite EGW quote that when Christ is in the heart, it is easier to stop the waters of Niagara Falls than to keep people from sharing Jesus. Of special interest was a pastor who is certified with the state of New York as a drug/alcohol counselor. He wants to put the church on the map in his area by reaching out through social service programs that will then open doors for witnessing.
3. Two of the ten pastors say they have an assistant. In both cases it is a Bible worker (one full time, the other part time). When asked about having a full time paid assistant, three pastors indicated they would want a Bible worker. Three would like a General Associate (defined by the numerous tasks indicated). Two of these three especially want an Associate to do visitation. One would like an Administrative Associate. Another would like an Administrative Assistant. Another indicated they needed a Youth Pastor. And another wants an Interest Coordinator. One pastor wants to be an Associate Pastor, so if he had a full-time assistant, he’d want a Senior Pastor. Of special interest is a comment made by a pastor who worked in Inter America. He reflected on the cultural differences with North America. He said that his members in Inter America are almost all self-employed so they are very flexible with their jobs and going out to witness. In North America, members’ time is far more consumed with their jobs leaving less time for sharing their faith. He made his comment in the context of wanting a Bible worker.

4. Four of ten pastors indicated that the Ministerial Secretary is the most supportive person from the conference of their local ministry. Two indicated the President. One spoke of the Sabbath School Director, another of the Health/Temperance Director and the Personal Ministries Director. Two pastors indicated no person from the conference. Most pastors spoke of issues related to a personal interest on the part of a conference in them (making phone calls on their cell phone when passing through the area, being treated as an equal, sitting and chatting, accessible, open, good listener, affirmation, etc.). The other responses focused on issues of management (uses a Shared Vision approach to setting goals, provides quick and accurate information to my questions, communicates regularly, provides evangelistic funding, willing to incorporate changes, etc.).
5. On a side note, one pastor in this interview was recently moved by his conference president from a 400 member church to a 2 district setting with members totaling less than 100. He feels his treatment was unfair. He suggests that Monte Sahlin do research on pastoral moves and especially focuses on the changing needs of pastors over the last 50 years, giving special attention to the financial challenges of pastors whose wives work outside the home. He feels that far more dialogue should be provided between the pastor and conference before making a move.

Pastor: GB

Conference: Dakota

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.)

Not formally. We do one time projects. We're an academy church. We've worked with Salvation Army, the Women's Center, etc.

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

Creating opportunities is key. Probably Philip Samaan's principle (in Ministry Healing, Christ's Method Alone...). We go through those steps. And I create opportunities for that to happen. We go out and visit people, mostly in homes. Find lonely people, stick 30 students in their living room. Gives them and the students a positive experience. Starting with felt needs first is key.

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. Ministry coordinator. Maybe some nurturing, but mostly focusing on outreach, making contacts, getting in the community (public). We're not in an institutional town.

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 most supportive. Has to do with "Shared Vision". I've worked for about 7 different conference presidents. I would say you could split them down the middle. Half have been supportive of me as an individual (share with, pray with, tackle any challenges together...). The other half were very "departmental" in their focus (interested in reports, numbers, programs, etc.).

Pastor: RK

Conference: Dakota

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 a food distribution program that functions mainly at Thanksgiving and Christmas. Also, we work with disasters (flood). Then we have a program for fire victims (homes). Mostly toiletries (towel, washcloth, toothpaste, etc.). Zipper bags.

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

I'm still looking. I find most of my people. They are sincere and dedicated but afraid... Don't want to do it. Not assertive. Deliberate outreach.

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 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?

Ministerial secretary. I think the thing that makes Dennis' work is that he calls me on his cell phone. Every time he comes through town he does this. Often stops by. Concerned I'm doing O.K. Gives me the feeling that I'm "not alone" out here. When I first entered the ministry, I went right to a "dark county". The president told me he would come by in 4 or 5 weeks. I've pastoring for over 25 years and it's never happened.

Pastor: DL
Conference: Pennsylvania
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.)

Two do. One church has a disaster relief group that help in the community. Including personal kits ready to pass out. Plus tons of clothing. The other church, not as active, has a clothing distribution center.

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. Russell Burrill's book *Revolution in The Church* is fantastic. I read a quote from Ellen White that says that it would be easier to stop the waters of Niagra than to keep people from sharing Jesus when Christ is in the heart.

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. Facilitating people into ministry. Bible worker. I'm a new pastor. Just graduated from Weimar. What I'd really like to be is an associate pastor ... so I guess I'd like a senior pastor if I could pick that person's job description.

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 director/secretary. Sometimes I feel like I'm a loner out here. Maybe that's expected. I'm working with rural churches. He's an encouraging person. Sometimes I'm not sure I'm always cutting it. And he's affirming.

Pastor: PS
Conference: Pennsylvania
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 a small food bank. We distribute clothes. We have a community service van operated by the church. We go to the down town area of Lancaster and distribute food, clothes, do blood pressure readings ... about every other week.

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

I have not. Basically we are ... I find the most effective way is in small groups. Not overtly giving Bible studies, but encouragement and support given to each other.

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. Administrative assistant.

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'm thinking primarily of their ability to respond quickly and accurately with resources to my questions. What went through my mind in coming up with that answer is asking what is "least" supportive ... and that is getting incorrect answers or incomplete answers. If I was a new ministerial secretary ... and didn't know the answer, I'd be reluctant to guess.

On another note, I'm excited about a new assessment tool that Ryan Bell (pastor in our conference) has been trained in to be a consultant. It assesses church health. Created by a German. Uses computer analysis.

Pastor: GR
Conference: Pennsylvania
Church(es)/Position: Lay Pastor, 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.)

Ladies meet every Tuesday (food and clothing). Generally we don't have that many come in locally. But we send lots of stuff out. We do help out when people get burned out. We also help with a local place called the "Christmas House" helping poor kids.

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

The biggest thing ... we've been in Net '95, '96, Doug Batchelor ... etc. The biggest thing we've found is a one-to-one thing. We're working with a new couple coming to church. One lady has a real problem with smoking. Struggling. We've been trying to help her. One of our members is an R.N. and she's been counseling her. We've sent out fliers, gone door to door. Whole county is 10,000. It's a well-churched area. Catholic. Very rare that individuals are affiliated with a church. We just got the Net '98 video talking about unchurched young people. We don't have that many. Nothing beats one-to-one. Different part of the country. Rural. Don't use locks much.

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?

Ministerial secretary. Any communication or information I need, I go to him. Extra information is helpful to me.

Pastor: HA
Conference: Northeastern
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.)

It does a food pantry and a clothing booth.

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

In my present ministry, I've done general encouragement from the pulpit. But, I believe that the indoctrinated of believers hasn't happened. Jehovah's Witnesses teach it is the way of life as a member of their church. In North America it is perceived as an option. See 2 Timothy 2:2.

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. A Bible worker would always be better than an assistant pastor. He would be highlighting evangelism and soul winning ... which is the key purpose of the church. I

have 1,100 members and pastor alone and it pinches my work in evangelism. One of the great problems I see around Bible workers ... if you have a strong pulpit, people will be there. But you need follow up. We have gone backwards in our usage of Bible workers. When I pastored in Inter America, it was different. The lay members did 10 times more than North America. Here, people are so busy with their jobs. In Inter America, they are self-employed.

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 calling. This is crucial. The goal of life is to move toward a given goal, like ministry. At my point in time, the person who supports my program the best is the Sabbath school director. In his case, its not his job, but he is the man who does it. He was a former pastor in my congregation. So he comes by and sees me.

[This pastor asked me to explain why I was calling, so I did.] Tell Monte Sahlin that what he is doing is very commendable. I get the feeling that interest in the local field by administrators focuses solely on baptisms and tithe money. I really appreciate knowing that there is an interest in what happens out here. It is easy to sometimes feel that nobody cares what happens on the front lines.

Pastor: MB
Conference: Northeastern
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 soup kitchen we run on Sundays. Its part of our church. We do it on a weekly basis. We have about 30 people come out. During certain holidays like Thanksgiving we'll do breakfast and lunch. We'll be doing a stress management seminar.

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

My experience seems to be that churches are like people. They have their spiritual ups and downs. When churches are up spiritually after a revival or week of prayer, its easier to motivate them. So, when we have a family life weekend or a guest speaker, members tend to be more fired up about sharing their faith.

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've been an associate and I've been a chauffeur type associate (shuffling people around for the pastor...). I guess it depends on the needs of the local church. Having been associate before being on my own took away some of my need to feel like I should preach every week, etc. Probably a youth pastor. Otherwise, a general associate.

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 ministerial secretary. Probably because I was once his associate and we're good friends! [Laughter]. He was very good to work with because he treated me as an equal. Gave me responsibilities and didn't get in the way. When I need help, they are there to give nonjudgmental assistance. In other words, if I need help from the conference president, they don't think I'm deficient, but simply need help.

Pastor: CC
Conference: Northeastern
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.)

Aside note: One of the things that Monte Sahlin should do is prepare an article that talks about the change in the way pastors are being transferred now a days as opposed to 20-30 years ago. The paradigm has changed. A pastor used to be able to support his family, but today, the economic situation affecting everyone, when a conference moves a pastor without taking into consideration his wife's work, and acceptable moonlighting by the pastor to survive, all this can be very traumatic to his financial stability. I notice a lot of pastors complaining and under a lot of stress. I'd like to suggest that Monte do research on this topic. I think administration should not move a pastor until they can sit down and talk with a pastor, and ask him about his circumstances. We're not saying a pastor should just be able to say no, but a cooperative effort. A group discussion. Church should be brought into the dialogue, etc. [Talked about a new resource called Transitions, and other conferences that take time to talk to pastors.] But in our conference, they don't dialogue with us at all. And it can be extremely stressful. Monte Sahlin or someone else up the ladder is in a more neutral position to deal with it. If I talked about it I'd be perceived as a troublemaker.

Not as yet.

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

At this particular point in time, I'm not impressed that big tent meetings and those type of things are as effective as they used to be. So, I'm encouraging my members to get involved in social services type programs. I'm a state certified alcohol and drug counselor in New York. I think I'm the only one certified by the government in this area. So, what I'd like to do is help put the church on the map by having outreach programs with referral services with alcohol and drugs. Light counseling. Groups. Along with traditional things like a soup kitchen. Tutoring, parenting classes, cooking classes, etc. Social services is the direction we want to go. I think that is the effective route to take. Then, when we are better known, we will be able to more naturally share our faith.

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 think I would utilize that persons services in doing visitation ... two types, routine and crisis visitation. I think the pastor should be available for the crisis (death, birth, injuries, and operations). But an associate or the deacons, elders, etc. can do routine visits. This person would also do some of the mundane, basic stuff. I'd focus on larger issues that require more expertise. I think pastors get too involved in little things and should delegate those to members. My uncle gave me this adage when I was a kid... A boss, supervisor, and leader is paid to do their job, to coordinate people, not to do the work.

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?

That's a hard question for me to answer right now, because we just had a constituency meeting in this conference last June. The president suspected I was not supportive of him, and moved me from a 400-member church to a little church district of 2 churches. Probably the Health and Temperance Director and Personal Ministries Director are most supportive. At this particular time, I'd say my conference is in a morale decline. High dissatisfaction.

Pastor: DG
Conference: Northeastern
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 traditional program (food and clothing). We also feed the homeless every Sunday. Out of the church building. We also have a similar program where we house them on Wednesday nights.

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

Of course, you try to personally encourage them by letting them know its simply a part of their responsibility. I notice that people tend to ... either they tend to be prepared to do it, or not do it.

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 do have a Bible worker. I think if I had to have someone, I would probably want that person to visit with sick and shut-in members.

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 don't know that anyone on the conference level ever communicated with us what we are doing. None are more supportive than the other. No communication about what my church is busy doing. Funding for evangelism is very important to me. On further reflection, I want to say that I feel that what a pastor needs, even though I'm a little hesitant ... I guess I would say someone to sit and chat with. Our president is always there... anyway, that's all I'd like to say.

Pastor: RL

Conference: Pennsylvania

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.)

One church has a food and clothing bank.

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. Personally I've appreciated Russell's Burrill's three books. I've given them to my church board.

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?

Not full-time, I do have a Bible worker. Personally what I would do is to try to turn over the day to day leadership/administrative tasks. That way I could focus on evangelism and church planting.

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. Accessible. Open. Good listener. Willing to incorporate changes. Could say the same thing for the secretary. Right now, with my vision for church planting, I thought of the president first.