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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A total of 120 randomly-selected Seventh-day Adventist pastors were interviewed between July 28 and August 18, 2011 across North America. Pastors were randomly selected from every conference. Broad representation was made a priority based on several factors as the following profile shows.

- **ASSIGNMENT:** Single church 27%, Multi-church district 54%, Multi-pastor team 18%
- **LANGUAGE:** English 77%, Spanish 14%, Others 9%
- **AGE BY GENERATION:** Seniors (born before 1946) 10%, Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964) 66%, Gen X (born 1965-1976) 18%, Millennial (born 1977-1994) 7%
- **GEOGRAPHY:** Atlantic 12%, Canada 11%, Columbia 13%, Lake 7%, Mid-America 8%, North Pacific 10%, Pacific 16%, Southern 16%, Southwest 8%

Because the pastors interviewed were free to express anything in response to each question, there is a subjective element to the results. The percentages in this report have modifiers like “about” or “around.” The percentage of comments may add up to more than 100% on some items because some pastors occasionally voiced more than one idea.

QUESTION 1: What do you see as the most pressing need in your congregation(s) these days?

By far the most common response focused on spiritual renewal among their members. Over 75% of pastors made reference to a need for revival. The most common words used to describe this need included: a deeper walk with Jesus/God, revival and reformation, outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Laodicean condition, the need to strengthen the devotional life/Bible study, prayer, and a true conversion experience. Other less common words used include: aroused, need to practice beliefs, low standards, more faith/hope, clearer ideas about salvation, and revitalization. Many pastors stated that there is no greater need than strengthening the spiritual health of church members. They expressed the belief that if this need is met many other needs will take care of themselves.

The second most commonly mentioned need was evangelism. About 29% of pastors felt their congregations needed to focus on spreading the gospel in their communities. The repeated emphasis was on friendship evangelism or sharing faith through informal, personal contacts with family, friends and co-workers. Pastors especially felt a lack of passion for the lost among church members and low involvement in outreach activities. One pastor expressed it this way: “I wish my members believed that personal witnessing works!” Some of the other words used to express this need were: reaching our community, baptisms, church growth, tools for witnessing, sensing the urgency of the Second Coming, a Bible worker, more Bible studies, an evangelistic series, and the need to plant a congregation. It is important to know that “reaching our community” without specific reference to evangelism was spoken of by half of these pastors (14%).

Member involved was the need spoken of third most frequently. While involvement in evangelism was often spoken of, there were those who made a more general reference to this need. About one in four pastors (25%) stated a wish that more of their church members were mobilized to help with church work. Many expressed the need for more leaders in various roles. Other words used in these responses include: training, spiritual gift awareness, understanding the roles of members and pastors, resources, and “members are too busy” in other aspects of their lives.

Smaller numbers of pastors mentioned these needs (ranked by frequency):

- Unity among members, need for members to socialize more with each other, unity between different generations, multi-cultural issues, love and kindness, and reaching diverse needs is difficult (18%)
- Facilities: Need a new building, need finances for building, paying off a mortgage, in the middle of a building project, need to renovate the physical plant, need to make church facilities accessible for the handicapped (14%)
- Stewardship: More funds for local ministry, need to increase Tithe and offerings, more resources, the Recession is affecting members, help with cost of Adventist education, unemployment and lack of fully employment among members (13%)
- Family life: Marriage problems among members, parenting needs, discipline issues, teen issues, need for stronger families, family breaking down (12%)

A few pastors made reference to the involvement of youth and young adults (mentoring them, providing programs for them, focusing on them), discipleship (mentoring members, starting small groups, discipleship training during Sabbath school), church organization and administration, immigration issues, and conflict resolution among members.

QUESTION 2: How do you define pastoral success in ministry? Please give examples.

The majority (58%) defined success as members are growing spiritually. These pastors mentioned something about spiritual strength as a mark of pastoral success. Some of the more common phrases used were: members growing in their personal relationship with Christ, seeing members' lives transformed, seeing a vibrant Christian life, converted, deeper religious experience, hunger for the Word, mature faith and victorious living. Pastors described spiritual strength as church involvement, attendance at meetings, the topic of conversations they have with members, seeing members stand for truth, and seeing them serving the church or sharing their faith.

Moving members into ministry is a marker of success mentioned by 43% of pastors. This was the second highest response to this question. Though it is related to the previous response, these comments focused more specifically on members getting involved in service. Terms often used include members doing ministry on their own, not being dependent on the pastor, feeding themselves, using their gifts, lay-driven, catching a vision, engaging in the mission of the church, a partnership with the pastor, being equipped and trained for service, and not needing to be pushed. One pastor said success is when "I am not a babysitter." Several feel successful when members learn to depend on God, not on the pastor.

Four responses about measures of success were mentioned by smaller numbers:

- Evangelism is happening: Baptisms, numerical growth, members giving Bible studies, a focus on outreach, commitment to evangelism, the pastor giving Bible studies to set an example (27%)
- The pastor is shepherding: The pastor is nurturing members, the pastor has meaningful relationships with members, doing visitation, listening to members, knowing their needs, helping them in their devotional life, counseling, having significant conversations with members, involved in their daily lives (22%)
- Leadership is growing: Mentoring members, building new leaders, teamwork, coaching members, making disciples, members accept your leadership, a lay pastor program, never doing ministry alone, sharing ministry (22%)
- The pastor is spiritually strong: The pastor has a meaningful relationship with Christ, is trustworthy, has a meaningful prayer life, is having personal devotions, recognizes success comes from above, is sharing his faith, seeks God's will, is living a balanced life, is humble, is loving his family (17%)

Small numbers of pastors mentioned other markers of success: Faithful to the call of God, moves the church forward, people are giving financially, faithfully preaches the Word, a vibrant church, church is clearly mission-focused. One said, "It is two things" (successful in-reach and outreach). Another said, "It is three things" (visiting well, preaching well, and administrating well). Others said, "You can't

easily measure success” or “It depends.” Others said, “It’s more than numbers” (more than nickels and noses or souls and goals). Some felt the question was too broad or would be different depending on the congregation and community needs. Others felt “metrics” are important and should be used.

QUESTION 3: What would an ideal Ministerial Department at the conference office look like?

There was an even split in the top two responses to this question, each mentioned by 87% of the pastors interviewed. Professional growth activities was one of the top-ranked responses. Three things were at the top of this cluster: provide helpful resources (17%), provide relevant training (15%), and provide coaching/mentoring (12%). *Training resources* mentioned include programs for elders, Sabbath school, small churches, how to care for members, how to delegate, soul-winning, conflict resolution, technical media skills, church administration and leadership. At least a dozen pastors emphasized how important the ministerial secretary role is in assisting interns and new pastors.

The pastor's pastor is the key function for the Ministerial Department mentioned by an equal number of pastors. (87%) The terminology most often used: come and visit me, listen to me, encourage me, visit/care/pray for my family, encourage me in my devotional/spiritual life, provide counseling, support systems and accountability.

The qualities valued in Ministerial Department directors were described by 62% of the pastors interviewed. Some were related to the "pastor's pastor" role. Most often mentioned: trustworthy, a safe place, confidential, someone I can talk with, a friend, keep in touch/tuned in with pastors, compassionate/caring, and discerning. Less frequently mentioned qualities: has been a pastor, has a pastor's heart, a good people person, affirming, non-judgmental, someone who gives good advice, a senior minister with a good track record, training in psychology, and approachable. One pastor said, "Psalm 23 should be his job description." Other qualities are more related to the professional growth function and the ones most often mentioned here: being a mentor in ministry, seeks input of pastors on pastoral issues, credible with older ministers, empowers the pastor, solid in Adventist doctrine, familiar with church policy and politics, available for guidance, prompt in responsiveness, inspires me, assists in weaknesses, and corrects the pastor privately not in front of members.

The relationship of the Ministerial Director to conference administration was mentioned by nearly half the pastors (48%). Significant numbers stated that this role should not be a part of administration, that the Ministerial Director's first loyalty must be to the pastors, and that ideally this should be a person with "one hat," no other departments or offices. Some thought a team approach would work best in their conference. A few thought a female on the team would be helpful in ministering to pastor's wives. Other comments included: don't just pass along conference agendas/programs, be a voice in pastor placement and hiring, be the pastor's "go to guy" at the conference, keep the pastors in touch with conference/union/division issues of interest, support church plants, give him authority to make some decisions with pastors, give him a bigger budget, have him focus on discipleship, and have him be the evangelism coordinator.

About 28% of the pastors interviewed made comments about the Ministerial Director's relationship to the local church. They said the Ministerial Director should be an advocate for the pastor (cover his backside, stand up for him, help in the face of conflict, support him when the pastor is trying to lead change). And they suggested come visit my local church, seek to be in touch with local church

issues, spend one-on-one time with pastors in the field, help with pastor-church board evaluations, help with multi-cultural issues, help churches focus on growth, focus on outreach, focus on being healthy, help with strategic planning, work with both liberals and conservatives, support local church's vision, and help build the pastor-elder team.

Finally, 13% of the pastors interviewed made comments about what the Ministerial Director should *not* be. Most often mentioned were: don't micromanage and don't be a conduit to conference administrators. Other comments: don't be Mr. Evangelism, don't expect pastors to be like Dwight Nelson, don't label me a "trouble maker" if I share my burdens, don't be an advocate for administration, don't be an advocate for the local church, don't wear many hats (wear one hat).

QUESTION 4: What can the North American Division Ministerial Department do to help you most in your assignment?

Almost every pastor interviewed (98%) said the NAD Ministerial Department should provide resources. These can be divided between those who mentioned specific topics (52%) and those who mentioned specific types of resources (47%). Topics more frequently mentioned include evangelism and outreach, pastoral skills, and preaching. Specific language associated with each of the categories includes the following: For evangelism and outreach, new Bible study guides, church growth, soul-winning methods, how to reach cities, how to reach Muslims and Hindus, how to reach missing members, how to reach the secular mind, how to reach the inner city, how to reach communities, how to give Bible studies, mobilizing youth, and dealing with abuse. For pastoral skills, leadership, administration, conflict resolution, church politics, counseling, suicide prevention, equipping and training members, using new technology, using social technology, creating web pages, time management, board meetings, and for elders. For preaching, sermon outlines, how to preach, illustrations, online resources, and telling stories. Also mentioned were the creation of evaluation tools, help with discipleship plans, and holding an Adventist leadership summit.

The most frequently mentioned type of resource was for the NAD to hold more regular large events for pastors. Many mentioned Union-wide meetings as being valuable places to learn new ideas and fellowship with other pastors. Others said, "Be more visible, show up at conference pastors meetings, etc." Several also felt the Ministerial Pre-Session at the GC Session should be reinstated. Other more frequently mentioned types of resources included Web resources (a NAD website full of resources for the pastor, a web page for interaction and sharing, webinars), DVDs, resources from authors who are not Adventists, and the use of short video clips for sermon illustrations and for training. On this last item, some pastors thought that 5 or 10 minute training videos for their members on a wide range of topics (church offices mostly) would be valuable. They should not be long and have simple handouts.

More than a dozen of the pastors interviewed mentioned the need for the NAD to communicate more clearly and regularly what resources are available. In view of the fact that most of the specific topics mentioned above are those for which materials are currently available, this is a clear area of need.

Funding was spoken of by a number of pastors in to the this question. Most frequently mentioned was a desire for help in outreach projects (such as urban outreach). There were also those who stated that the staffing of the local church needs to be studied again. Some said that it is difficult to explain how funds flow out of the local church and come back. Others spoke of streamlining the organizational layers, cutting back the union conferences, removing any duplication of departments, and having more funds come back to the local church.

One in four pastors said that the primary role of the NAD Ministerial Department should be to focus on equipping the conference Ministerial Directors. Some went so far as to say that should be its

only work. A smattering of ideas that fell into this area: Give oversight to ministerial directors, train them, encourage them to help pastors focus on evangelism, encourage them to help pastors learn about new resources, encourage conferences to staff this position full-time, train them in team-building, train them to be the pastor's pastor, provide evaluation instruments for them to use, discourage favoritism toward certain pastors among conference Ministerial Directors, and encourage them to have pastors focus on our basic Adventist message.

About one in five of the pastors interviewed (18%) made general positive comments about the NAD Ministerial Department. The top two focused on *Ministry* magazine and the Pastor's DVD. Other comments expressed appreciation for the new NAD newsletter, said, "keep doing what you're doing," appreciated the GC president's focus, affirmed Ron Clouzet's book on the Holy Spirit, and made positive mention of ShareHim and the Biblical Research Institute.

About 17% of the pastors interviewed said something like "I don't know" in response to this question. Specific statements included: I can't think of anything they can do for me, they are too far removed from my local church, I don't feel connected to them in any way, I don't have a clue, I don't know who works at the NAD in Ministerial, and I don't think anything they do would impact me.

About the same number mentioned personal support for pastors. The three areas most often mentioned here include help for the pastor's family, the spiritual life of the pastor, and providing opportunities for fellowship among pastors. Other comments include: pray for us, listen, encourage balance between family and work, provide support systems, and send us a note on occasion to let us know you are thinking about us.

A large number of responses (from 75% of pastors) do not easily fall into any category. These are ideas and suggestions for the NAD that go "all over the board." There are some clusters that rank higher, such as:

- Listen to pastors: seek their input, increase their voice on NAD committees, keep doing surveys, stay in touch with what is happening in the local church, provide a forum for their input perhaps on the web.
- Encourage pastors: affirm them, recognize them, hold their role as front line workers in high regard, give them incentives for reaching goals like sending them on a cruise or providing a free trip for their family to the GC headquarters, or a banquet, etc.
- Keep pastor's abreast of issues happening in the church (GC, NAD, etc.) that impacts them, keep them aware of ministerial issues, controversial issues, issues in other denominations, trends, and help the pastor "sense" that he/she is part of a global church family.

The following are other comments from a few pastors in each case: provide a clear job description for pastors, encourage coaching/mentoring programs, take a stance on issues (organized sports, etc.), focus on resources for young/new pastors, encourage high standards in the ministry (conduct, true to the message), provide/encourage/develop a sharper Professional Development

program for pastors (funding for advanced education, bringing more advanced education to the conference, encouraging pastors to complete a second major at the college level as a back-up if they leave/quit/are terminated from ministry, don't micromanage us, experiment with new faces in the big NAD evangelism events, work on improving the pastor's compensation package, empower us, focus on revival, don't forget Canadian pastors when holding big events, be available for council if I find it difficult to go to the conference or union, foster strategic planning systems for all levels of the organization, learn from other denominations, send us the *Adventist Review* (weekly), help fallen pastors, create a catchy vision for the NAD, focus on "one thing" in a vision, encourage balance with the GC president (it's o.k. to think outside the box), discourage liberal trends in the NAD with the 'emergent church' movement, concerned about Ohio conference direction. And the last comment made by the last pastor in the last phone call might be the most important: Help me help my members have a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ.