

DYNAMIC Steward

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July-September, 2014

Stewards of Community

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All my neighbors...

DYNAMIC Steward



My all in response to God's all!

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The articles in this publication have been revised slightly or updated to conform to the intended audience and nature of the *Dynamic Steward*. Unless otherwise stated, the New International Version of the Bible is used.

inside ds

The New Community



Larry R. Evans
Associate Director,
GC Stewardship Ministries

It was Jesus who said, “Come, follow me.” Those who do follow Him into rural areas and into the cities, offer the kind of healing that brings hope and wholeness even to a broken world.

Isolation has never been God’s plan for His people. Within three months from their exodus from slavery, God introduced His “new” plan to His people. Being filled with love and gratitude to God and with confidence in His power to help them, they were ready to listen. They learned that they were not only to be God’s “treasured possession” but also His “kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:5,6). Isaiah explained that this special relationship with God was for the purpose of them becoming “a light for the Gentiles” (Isa. 42:6). The same God was inviting captor and captive alike to be His, and rejoice together in this life of true fulfillment. Ethnicity, social class or any other human standard must not stand in the way of the “new community.” Such a plan, however, is contrary to our natural way of thinking.

It becomes clear that since the Fall, God has always been about creating a new community—a place where the poor would gain respect, a place where enemies are loved, where condemning judgments would give way to forgiveness, and where being a neighbor would be changed into an action statement—being neighborly. Our front cover shows a neighborhood of high-rise apartment buildings. I would imagine that stories behind many of the windows shown in this vast complex are heart-breaking. Some who live there are destitute of family or friends who care, or struggle to make ends meet, and live with a rapidly vanishing hope. Others may have more than enough, but find that health or happiness eludes them.

Right now, the Adventist church is focusing on mission to the cities. Most people on the planet now dwell within large urban areas. Ironically, the sense of community is often less than it should be, even though we may live near to one another. This edition of the *Dynamic Steward* is all about the need for a community of stewards who are not only compassionate themselves, but who are willing to link arms and hearts with others and become a “community of priests” or conduits of God’s grace. We aren’t talking about some kind of action-group making demands on government, although at times that might be appropriate. This community would no doubt address social needs, but its roots would go much deeper. While we do need to look at ourselves, for indeed we often fall short, we must not dwell there very long. Criticism does very little healing of itself.

The secret behind God’s new community is a new base of values yielding a radically different kind of relationship with others—even with those who think differently, look differently and even worship differently. The authors in this issue come from different backgrounds—church leaders, former drug-addicts, a young adult, mission strategists—but if we listen carefully, common threads begin to emerge about how we can be more neighborly with “all our neighbors.” The light we share is not ours but God’s shining through us into every country, culture and crevice where hope can find a foothold. We can indeed be ambassadors of hope in a world darkened by pain, agony and despair. We and they can become the “new community.” No one said it would be easy. This edition of the *Dynamic Steward* is an invitation for all of us to become part of that new caring community.

Larry R. Evans
Editor

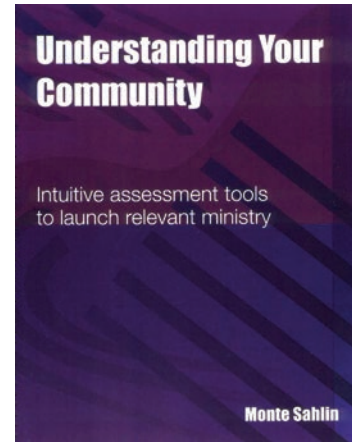
resources

This volume is more than a helpful analysis. It includes a complete kit of tools and easy-to-follow instructions on how to use them in your community to benefit your local ministry. It also explains what the resulting information means and how to use it to improve your local strategy. It Includes:

- Increasing the visibility and impact of your ministry
- How to know the needs of the people in your community
- What it is that makes community involvement effective
- How to use demographics to improve your outcomes
- The religious profile of your community
- Conducting a community survey
- Deciphering the dynamics and power structure of the community

Use this powerful tool to help identify, understand and address the felt needs in your community.

***Understanding Your Community* by Monte Sahlin: www.adventsource.org. Catalogue #420455.**



Whether you are a stewardship leader, church elder or another church leader, this book is written for those who want to help church members realize the importance of stewardship.

A Guide for Local Church Stewardship Leaders is a how-to book written by practiced veterans of stewardship ministry. This guide is intended specifically for busy people, who have chosen to volunteer valuable time to direct this vital ministry.

The book is full of concrete examples of what has worked for qualified experts in stewardship. Look for proven strategies, fresh innovations, programming ideas and new resources that can be implemented immediately. Learn about the biblical foundation of stewardship, working with local church and conference leaders, partnering with local church ministries, capital campaigns, estate planning and more.

A vibrant stewardship ministry is fundamental for growing healthy, vigorous and purposeful congregations. This guide will assist stewardship leaders with ideas and experienced approaches to make your planning most efficient.

***A Guide for Local Church Stewardship Leaders* by John Matthews and Nikolaus Satelmajer: www.adventsource.org. Catalogue #318965.**



Abused and unwanted, Cheri found a life of violence and addiction from which she knew there was no escape—until she was shown the power of God's unconditional love.

"To hear Cheri Peters's story is to be forever changed. To meet Cheri in person is to encounter a flesh-and-blood, bona fide miracle."

What would it take to rescue an abused, illiterate, unloved bar-room dancer from the streets and turn her into a leader who would inspire others to help "throw-away" kids find meaning and purpose in their lives? What Cheri needed was love. Unconditional love. But how could she find it?

Read the incredible story of one woman's encounter with the power of true love, and how that love is changing lives today. It will change your life."

***Miracle from the Streets*, by Cherie Peters: www.adventistbookcenter.com.**



The content or opinions expressed, implied or included in or with these resources are solely those of the authors and not those of the publishers of the Dynamic Steward. The publishers do however, advocate these resources on the basis of their rich contributions to the area of stewardship ministry, and assume that readers will apply their own critical evaluations as they make use of them.

Engaging Stewards



Erika F. Puni
*Director,
GC Stewardship Ministries*

I grew up in a part of the South Pacific region of the world Adventist church at a time when the church's theological understanding of the "remnant" of Bible prophecy (Revelation 12-14) was often understood to mean separation from all who were not Adventist. Whether this was the correct understanding and application of this biblical concept or not, is not the point. The fact is, at that time Seventh-day Adventists in Samoa often lived out this non-association with the community as a hallmark of their end-time identity. In some extreme cases, this misunderstanding of what Adventism is about led to the Church being barred from entering certain villages and districts in Samoa. Many Samoans perceived Seventh-day Adventists as being anti-community and anti-culture. Unfortunately this perception is not limited to only Samoa and the South Pacific.

The Mandate to Engage Community

The call and invitation to be God's stewards in the world is quite the opposite of that perception. We are, in fact, mandated by God to be involved and to be engaged with all people—including with those who live "in the world."

"Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground'" (Genesis 1:26, 28). As members of the human family, and created after the likeness of the Maker Himself, we are to extend His rule—His creativity, His mercy, and His care—to all people with whom we may come in contact. We are called to make a difference within the community and ultimately God's spiritual kingdom, by leading and initiating activities ("be fruitful and increase in number," v.28) and processes ("fill the earth and subdue it," v.28). Stewardship is a spiritual responsibility and we have a duty to care for each other. This was God's plan right from the beginning (Genesis 2, 4).

The Purpose for Community Engagement

When Abraham was called to leave his home and people to go to a foreign place known only to God, it was a call to be involved with other communities. Abraham was to have an outward focus in life, and no longer live for himself. He was to become a steward of God's grace by being a "blessing" to others. "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12:2,3).

When God called Jonah to go to Nineveh and to proclaim a message of His wrath and ultimate destruction, it was a command to become involved in the lives of people. By God's grace, this engagement would bring about a better outcome. The larger purpose of God for the Ninevites then, and for the people of the world today, was their salvation. "And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?" (Jonah 4:11). Jesus expressed this concern for all people of the world in this manner, "In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish" (Matthew 18:14). Stewardship is about giving people everywhere an opportunity to know about Jesus so that all might be saved. You and I are the link He uses to connect them with Jesus and His Kingdom.

In the World but Not of this World

Just prior to His death on the cross, Jesus made it very plain in His prayer what His desire for His disciples was, "I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it" (John 17:14-16). It is not a decision to lead a life of isolation from people and the world when we make the commitment to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord. Rather it is a pledge to move forward in faith together with Jesus. This partnership with Him can make a difference in the lives of people wherever we may live as stewards of His Kingdom.

And in 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, ...! This was the phrase that marked the moment the *Dynamic Stewards World Stewardship Online Conference* went "live" from the GC Communication studio in Silver Spring, Maryland, USA. It was September 19, and this phrase would be heard many times as 15 presenters yielded 24 half-hour presentations streamed in 4 languages from Friday till Sunday. It was a busy weekend for GC and IAD Stewardship Ministries teams and all their partners. Planning for the event began a whole year before. It was a first from the GC, and we praise the Lord that he blessed answered prayers and blessed the event so that many could be reached. GC and IAD Stewardship Ministries are grateful for vital roles played by the GC and IAD Communication Departments, Hope Channel and SIDmedia for the expertise, resources and support they shared. Also to the team of volunteer translators, social media facilitators and logistics organisers for their self-sacrificial service. The statistics were encouraging. **By wrap-time on Sunday, there had been 5000 views averaging 29 minutes, from 83 countries!** While numbers varied from site to site, we do know that some participants were watching in groups of up to 200 people. Gratitude is also due to our world-wide team of Stewardship leaders for their assistance in advertising and supporting the event in their regions! The videos will be available online by the end of October, 2014 on:

www.adventiststewardship.com



PARTICIPANT COMMENTS:

Annette Foster, Stewardship Director, Toronto, Canada: "I must say that the conference was a source of blessings."

Beverly Orr, Lusaka, Zambia via Trust Services Website: "I was really blessed by the weekend Conference!"

Vic Bonetti, CFO, Fiji Mission, SPD: "Top value, even if two of the presentations were 2.30 to 5.50 in the morning here."

Richard de Lisser, South England Conf. Stewardship Director: "It was a blessing to see and listen to the quality of presentations and to feel connected to the event through the medium of online questions and answers."

Jason Whitson, Idaho, USA, (Facebook Comment): "It brings joy to my heart in seeing the Seventh-day Adventist Church moving beyond simple finances when it comes to being faithful stewards for God and His work...."

interview

Keeping It Real!



Cheri Peters interviewed by Larry R. Evans, Editor of Dynamic Steward

Cheri Peters is the founder of True Step Ministries (truestep.org), a non-profit organization helping people break free from the damage of their past. She hosts Celebrating Life in Recovery on 3ABN TV. Cheri's book, Miracle From the Streets, tells the story of how God rescued her from abuse and addiction.



LRE: Cheri, share with us a little about how God found you and brought you to Himself.

CP: I love this church. We have so much to offer, but we need to learn how to talk with the lost.

I came to the church right off the streets. I had been homeless for ten years. I was on the streets in LA when I was 13 years old, picked up immediately by people that use kids. I was a drug addict. I came from a family of addicts. My dad died in a crack house, one sister works as a stripper, and my aunt is a methamphetamine addict, and both my grandparents died in their addictions. I came with serious issues: ten years of working in clubs and struggling on heroin. More could be said, but you get the idea.

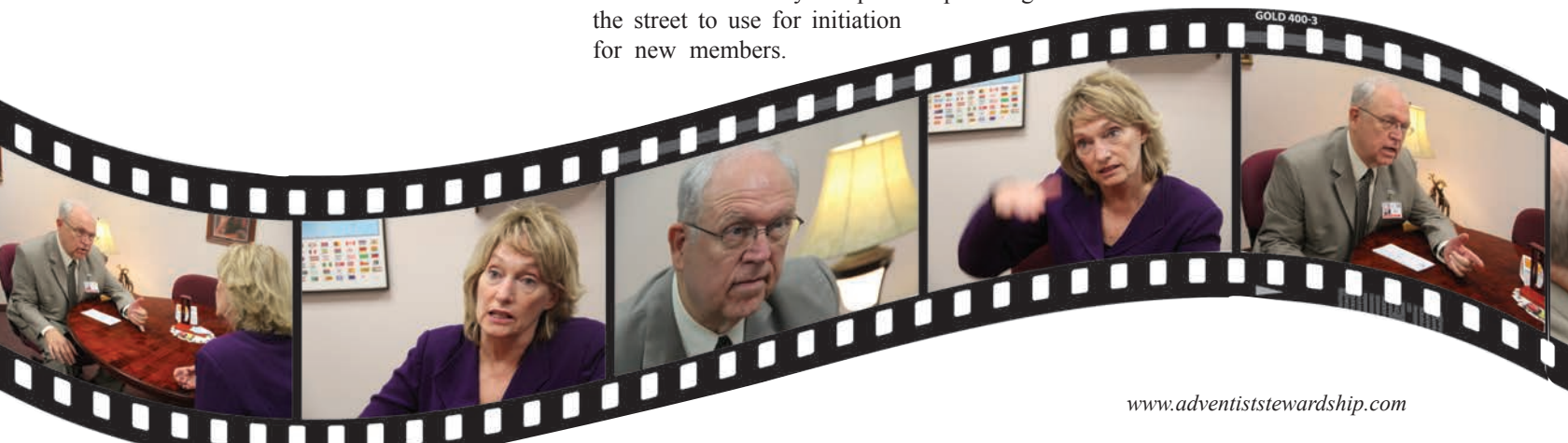
When God Himself led me into an Adventist church at age 23, He said, "This is your family. This is where you'll do your recovery." But when I looked around, I wanted to throw myself on the ground and cry, "Are you kidding me? They're not even dealing with their own issues!" I was amazed at how much Bible-knowledge people had, but I also saw a lot of dysfunction in the church.

LRE: How did you get interested in the Adventist church in the first place?

CP: I met Christ soon after a drug deal that went wrong. I had been freebasing drugs for five or six days and had crashed. I woke up with a gun in my face and this guy screaming that he was going to blow my head off. When I realized what was happening, I can't tell you what peace came over me. I told him, "You know what? I've wanted to die my whole life. Please! Pull the trigger!" His reaction was, "Are you crazy?" But I had seen such ugly stuff, it would make you want to vomit. I thought, "I don't want to do this anymore. I don't want to stand up one more day and try to figure out how I'm going to survive, where I'm going to sleep, where I can be safe."

The turning point came a few days later in the midst of a suicide attempt. I suddenly saw a paper my mother had given me. She wrote it for a class she was taking. It was about how she was molested by her father as a kid. Her mom was an alcoholic. She wasn't really loved by anybody. She was given up when she was five. She had no stable relationships. So my mom had this really disjointed kind of childhood, too. When she met my father she was 13 years old. At 14 she was pregnant. She had three kids in as many years. In this paper she said, "The only reason I survived is that I took out all my hatred and anger on my second child, and I ruined her life." I was that child!

All of a sudden I felt like God said, "This was never about you, and if you trust Me I can change your life." I just started sobbing. A motorcycle gang had kidnapped me when I was 14. They had picked up three girls from the street to use for initiation for new members.



interview

The treatment we endured was horrible. I remember saying to God, “Look at me! I’m struggling on heroin. I have teeth missing from being beaten up. I’m almost illiterate. I’ve never done anything in my life that was of any value. I have nothing to offer!”

Then I felt like God showed me a little glimpse of what I would be the day after resurrection—a beautiful, innocent child. There was no needle in my arm! I just cried and said, “God, I’ve never been beautiful or innocent or had any value to anybody.” And I felt like God said, “I’ve never seen you any other way. You are My child, and if you trust Me, that’s where I’m taking you.” I had a hope that I’d never had before! I didn’t know how I was going to get there but God said, “Stand up and follow Me into recovery.”

I thought, “How crazy is this? How can I stand up?” But I literally stood up and walked out of the drug house. I called around and asked, “Is there any place I can go and just do recovery?” A guy referred me to his sister. When I got to her house, I found them waiting for the Sabbath to come. I walked in and the peace was unbelievable. My whole life I had longed for a normal family doing normal things. This place was like a dream. But I was a mess, coming off drugs. I asked her, “Do you have coffee?” She said, “No.” “Do you have tea?” “No.” “Dr. Pepper, Pepsi, chocolate, sugar? Anything?” She said, “I have water.” And I said, “I can’t stomach water!” She smiled, “Did it take you a while to get used to tequila?” I said, “Yes.” She said, “Water’s like that. You’ll get used to it.” When she told me she was vegan I almost laughed out loud. I thought, “Is this hell? When you’re really bad in this life, you have to spend the rest of your days with a vegan?” But she was delightful. She just loved me. She began by giving me water and healthy food. She listened to every tragic story I told. I wanted to shock her and catch her judging me, but she didn’t do that. She gave me a safe place to process. She loved me. And I “fell in love” with her. She told me about the woman caught in adultery. I learned how Jesus wrote her accusers’ sins in the sand and yet He didn’t call anybody out in front of anyone. He didn’t shame them. I just wanted to weep, “Is it true? There’s a God who looks at all my junk and all the ugliness in my life and says ‘I am covering you with my robe of righteousness? You’re forgiven because of what I’ve done. You’re covered?’” I knew the stuff I’d done. I knew how ugly and dark it was. I thought, “If there’s a God who not only wants to save us but also wants to protect us from being shamed and is willing to ‘cover’ all that for us, then I’m sold! I’m sold!”

LRE: *How can the church become a friend like that?*

CP: We normally pull away when we don’t know what to say. For example, I may not know what to say if you lose a loved one, so I’ll avoid you. But, if I learn what to say, I’ll be right there! Often those in the church don’t know how to do friendship ministry—how to talk with people about these issues. Our organization, True Step Ministries (trueStep.org), has developed a program called "Celebrating Life in Recovery" that teaches

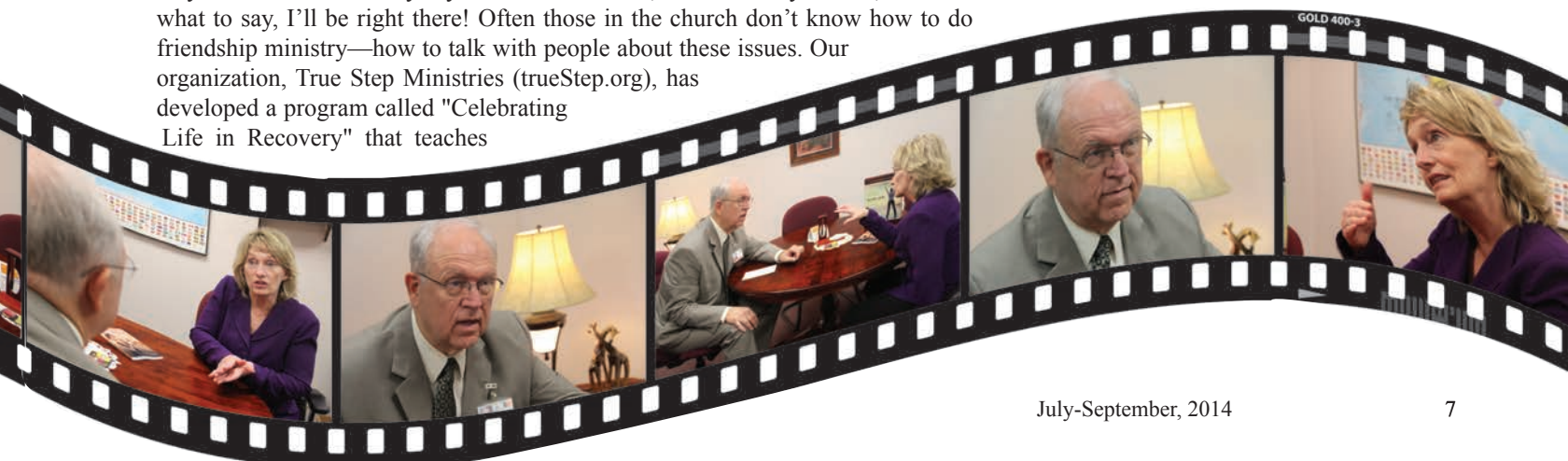
how to establish a friendship group where these kinds of things can be discussed and brought to God for healing.

LRE: *Is this where the church should begin?*

CP: I think first of all, it’s important that we in the church experience our own healing. Sometimes we act like we’re afraid to process this with each other. We keep it to ourselves, and we’re dying inside. People need a place where it’s safe to say out loud: “I’m wounded. I’ve been through a lot. I’m stressed. I’m working too much. I get lost in porn.” Or whatever. We need to hear what God can do with that, who Jesus is, what repentance, confession, prayer and forgiveness are, and how He gives us victory through Christ’s death. When we’ve been healed, we can tell others what He’s done for us.

LRE: *This has been helpful. What message would you like to leave for our readers to consider?*

CP: We do need to reach out to others, but we need to learn to dialogue with each other as well. If we don’t, we’re hindering our mission to the world. So my wish is that we heal. We are the church—each of us. We need to honestly surrender to God the pain and hurt in our lives—the anger, the resentment, and the addictions. We need to allow Him to bring healing and then ‘brag on Him’ about how it was done!



If you would like to help start new Life Hope Centers in unreached urban areas of the world, you can give your secure online donation at Giving.AdventistMission.org and choose Centers of Influence. Or visit Urbancenters.org to learn more about how to start a Center of Influence.

Stewarding the Community



Rick McEdwards

Dr. McEdwards has been a church planter, pastor and missionary, and is currently the director of the Global Mission Centers at the General Conference.

Cold air swirled in the November night as the evangelistic meeting ended. As the evangelist made his final call, a man stumbled forward from the back of the sanctuary. Kneeling as he fell in front of the altar, he bowed and began crying out to God; tears of repentance flowed down his cheeks. Jimmy, though sincere in his prayer, was stone drunk.

Jimmy told me he had been under a bush on the church property for the last several nights. He had stayed there undetected, despite some nights reaching below freezing. Greg, one of the church members, also heard Jimmy's story. Jimmy was an army veteran, who had served his country in time of war. Jimmy struggled, not only financially, but with real emotional scars from his time in the army. Now Jimmy was an alcoholic, and he knew it.

As the weather got colder, Greg bought a tent for Jimmy to use, and a good sleeping bag, and even a few nights in a hotel during the worst nights. Greg made contact with the veteran's office to get Jimmy into a

special in-patient program for alcoholics. Greg told Jimmy that if he completed the six-month program he would take him to the top of Seattle's Space Needle as a celebration, something Jimmy had wanted to do since childhood.

I will never forget the day that Greg and I looked out over Seattle with Jimmy. He was 'on top of the world.' A few months later Greg and I visited Jimmy in his own apartment. He had been free from alcohol for more than 8 months, and was looking forward to working for the first time in almost ten years.

Greg demonstrated God's love to Jimmy in very practical ways. He spent time with him. He listened to his needs. He showed an interest in Jimmy's challenges, and won his confidence. Greg ministered to Jimmy's needs.

Jimmy accepted Christ, and with the help of a loving friend, his life was changed.

This is the way that Jesus did it too. Ellen White says that, "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'

"There is need of coming close to the people by personal effort. If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen. The poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and the bereaved comforted, the ignorant instructed, the inexperienced counseled. We are to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice. Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit" (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 143).

Christ's Mission

Christ calls each believer to be a person of influence—the right kind of influence! Having church members who serve the community is one very dynamic type of stewardship. When a person, family, or group of believers shares their time and their spiritual gifts in the community, this is a way of stewarding the community, because it aids in transforming a community one life at a time.

Sometimes this kind of influence is one-on-one, like it was in the case of Greg and Jimmy, but even more can be accomplished when a group of believers works together to serve the community. The body of Christ, the church, is always



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rooted in a local context where mission matters the most. When members work together, using their God-appointed gifts, there is amazing potential for community transformation.

More than one hundred years ago, Ellen White shared the concept of having Adventists involved in their communities through urban centers of influence. She encouraged multiple types of community action to impact a community. One example Mrs. White used is what she termed the “beehive” in San Francisco:

“During the past few years the ‘beehive’ in San Francisco has been indeed a busy one. Many lines of Christian effort have been carried forward by our brethren and sisters there. These included visiting the sick and destitute, finding homes for orphans and work for the unemployed, nursing the sick, and teaching the truth from house to house, distributing literature, and conducting classes on healthful living and the care of the sick. A school for the children has been conducted in the basement of the Laguna Street meetinghouse. For a time a workingmen’s home and medical mission was maintained. On Market Street, near the city hall, there were treatment rooms, operated as a branch of the St. Helena Sanitarium. In the same locality was a health-food store. Nearer the center of the city, not far from the Call building, a vegetarian cafe was conducted on six days of the week and entirely closed on the Sabbath. Along the water front, ship mission work was carried on. At various times our ministers conducted meetings in large halls in the city. Thus the warning message was given by many” (*Review and Herald*, July 5, 1906).

In San Francisco this small group of church members evidently served the community in many different ways. The ministry of the church was not always given in the same way, and so, it was able to meet the needs of many more people. In the process of serving people in such a variety of ways, many more individuals and families were reached, and this inclined them to open their hearts to hear more.

So often we use the same approach time and time again—an approach which typically relies on professionals, and reduces the energy of the average church member to that of a mere supportive role, rather than one of engagement or even leadership. The beauty of urban centers of influence is that they can provide an opportunity for wide involvement on the part of church members who have different talents and skills.

Today, there is a growing group of churches that are serving as centers of influence. These churches are active in service-evangelism. Service-evangelism is an operational principle which holds that every church ought to serve the community in big and small ways. Churches might hand out water on jogging paths, remodel a public park, or sponsor a free medical clinic; in each case, the church and its members are serving and loving the community.

With all the challenges in society today there is a tremendous need to have more individuals of influence, and churches of influence. Even with these, there are many people who may never step inside the four walls of a church, due to some personal or religious bias that has built up in their lives. In order to meet these people it may be necessary to establish urban centers of influence that

share Christ’s love and His message in cities—the best way of serving a community.

Through individuals, lives are touched, through churches, neighborhoods are served, and through urban centers, communities can be transformed.

Getting practical

Here are a few ideas on how to begin serving and loving your neighborhood for Christ.

Becoming a person of influence:

Listen to your neighbors and see the needs of those near you. Ask, “What can I do? What time do I have? What talents do I have to bless my neighbors?” It does not take much to bake someone cookies, mow a lawn, invite someone for supper, or watch their kids for an evening.

Being a church of influence:

What groups of people in your community are underserved? To what places could groups go to serve others in approachable ways? Are there small physical projects your church could get involved with like beautifying a public space or painting a graffiti covered wall?

Establishing a center of influence:

A great place to start is by conducting an informal community assessment about the needs of your community, or find available information through a government census or demographic agency, or organizations like Percept Group that sell ministry-related community profiles. Good questions to ask are “What area has no church? What resources do we have in these areas, what churches that could bless our community? What skills do the members of our churches have that may be a blessing to the community?”

Today more people are living in cities than ever before. Many of them have never accepted Jesus. Unfortunately many of these people have little or no contact with Christians, or the message of hope that Jesus brings. Please pray as new Life Hope Centers are established and as they begin touching lives for Jesus as centers of influence in the cities.



Stewards of Community



Jonathan Duffy
President, ADRA International

Jonathan Duffy came to ADRA International in October 2012 from his previous post as CEO of ADRA Australia. Before joining ADRA Australia in 2008, Duffy served as Director of Adventist Health for the South Pacific Division, where he had extensive experience in health promotion and community health development.

There's an old proverb which says, "Live simply so that others may simply live." It speaks to the heart of what being a steward of community is all about. It means that I will sacrifice from my abundance so that the needs of others will be met without unnecessary suffering.

Shane Claiborne, founding member of The Simple Way, says in his book *The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical*, "When we talk of materialism and simplicity, we must always begin with love for God and neighbor, otherwise we're operating out of little more than legalistic, guilt-ridden self-righteousness."

Becoming stewards of our global community begins by loving Christ as He loves us, and others as we love ourselves. True community is built only through love for one another. When love enters the equation between people, there is no shortage of giving and self-sacrificing for the betterment of the other.

Ellen White, in her book *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings*, p.127, speaks profoundly on the roll of a Christian in society: "A religion that leads men to place a low estimate upon human beings, who Christ has esteemed of such value as to give Himself for them; a religion that would lead us to be careless of human needs, sufferings or rights, is a spurious religion. In slighting the claims of the poor, the suffering and the sinful, we are proving ourselves traitors to Christ. It is because men take upon themselves the name of Christ, while in life they deny His character, that Christianity has so little power in the world."

Good stewards of their community make sure that everyone within their reach is doing well. They look after and care for the needs of each other, building on what Jesus said in Luke 6:31: "Do to others as you would have them do to you." The principle of good stewardship also goes hand-in-hand with the second greatest commandment Christ ever gave His followers: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39).

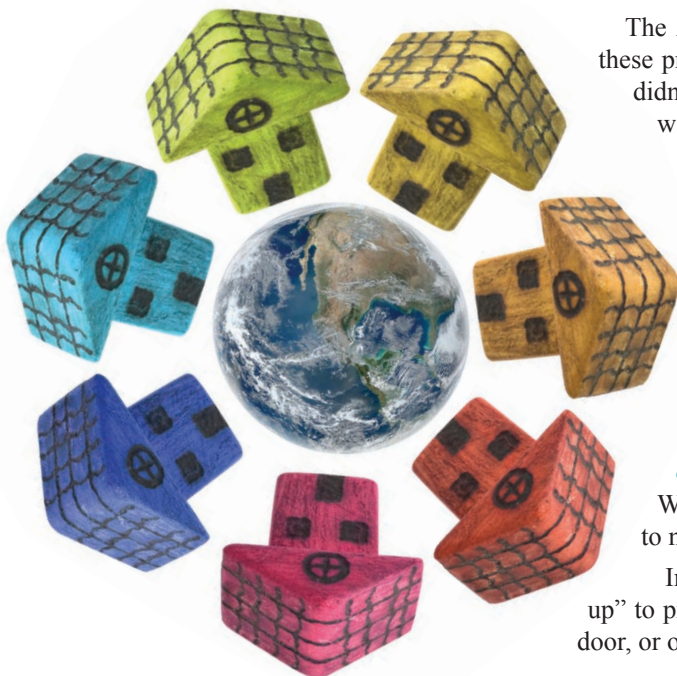
The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), seeks to live by these principles of godly stewardship in our community. We believe that Jesus didn't mean to limit our caring to just our immediate community, but that He was referencing our global community of neighbors as well.

In South Sudan, ADRA is seeking to be a good steward of resources by providing food, education, and other necessities, to as many of the internally displaced people affected by the fighting and famine there as they can.

ADRA Nigeria has begun working with 744 internally displaced peoples who have been affected by violence the Boko Haram fundamentalist group has unleashed across North-Eastern Nigeria.

What will you do today, to "live simply by choice, so that others can simply live?" Are you willing to sacrifice for your global community out of love for your fellow humankind? Let us not be the Christians that A. W. Tozer talks about, who would rather pray for someone than do anything to meet their needs.

Instead, let's fulfill God's call to be good stewards of community and "step up" to provide for the needs of those around us, whether it is our neighbor next door, or our neighbor in South Sudan.



Joining God in the Neighborhood

A question that is asked all too infrequently by a congregation is, "What is our responsibility to our community?" Many congregations do not even recognize that they are part of a community. This 'community' can be discovered by stepping out the door of the church, and asking people where that church is. When someone responds, "I don't know," you are at the boundary. Too often that is a matter of yards or feet from the church door. Who knows about your church? Who cares?

Jeremiah's letter to the exiled Jews in Mesopotamia can be applied here: "Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper" (Jer. 29:7). Remember, these people didn't want to be there. They were unhappy because of their exile. God reminds them, through Jeremiah, that He sent them there. There was a purpose in all of this.

Many of the saints in my local church in the Pacific Northwest of the United States, didn't like their location. The neighborhood was infested with gangs, drugs and prostitution. Drive-by shootings were common. The church had circled its wagons in a protective mode, picking up the debris from frequently broken windows. During one evening meeting, one of the "enemy" let the air out of all the tires in the parking lot. Arson was attempted, but it failed.

During the next six months we determined that God did indeed have a redemptive reason for that congregation's existence and location. How could we discover and fulfill that purpose? What was our responsibility as stewards of God to the neighborhood?

First we stood back and attempted to look at the neighborhood from God's perspective. **We realized that God was alive and well in the neighborhood, perhaps more than in the church. What was God already doing, and how could we join Him?** We asked the neighborhood people about their perceived needs. Poor schools and unstructured summers topped the list. In response, we orchestrated a wonderful six-week urban day-camp. We added remedial-reading and math to the normal mix of Bible stories and crafts. We even arranged a free lunch program, courtesy of the school district. At summer's end we opened the church to a huge celebration with student displays and a light buffet.

We reevaluated our pathfinder program and grew from six church kids to 26 children. We dispensed with uniform requirements in this disadvantaged neighborhood, and required only tee shirts and berets. We even joked about adding an honor in breakdancing.

We worked at changing the atmosphere of the church's Community Services department. We wanted to be more loving and inclusive. **We stopped being a church to the community and worked at being a church with the community.**

Before long we began to see amazing changes in our neighborhood. Not that it had changed, the economic reality was still a challenge, the gangs were just as prevalent, but our perspective had changed. We were learning to see the 'hood' through the eyes of Jesus. But there were other changes as well. Instead of broken windows and arson, we now had 50 pint-sized guards protecting the property. **Neighborhood folk began talking about 'our' church.**

And then a small miracle happened. God, in his mercy broke down the old church sign. We decided it was a good time, to change the name of the church. Instead of "University Park Seventh-day Adventist Church" the new sign reads: **"University Park COMMUNITY Seventh-day Adventist Church."**

We were beginning to learn lessons in community stewardship!



Bruce Moyer

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commitment

Stewards in the Community



Monte Sahlin

Dr. Sahlin served for three decades in church administration before retiring in early 2014. He has directed more than 100 research projects for the Adventist Church, including several about stewardship and more on community relations. Most of his 22 books and 117 research monographs can be obtained at www.creativeministry.org or (800) 272-4664 (within the USA).

Seventh-day Adventists generally have a strong church-life. In fact, in many places Adventists are perceived as a kind of subculture because our internal life is so strong, and we reach out beyond our church mostly for the purpose of recruiting new members. It could appear to some that we don't do much that is beyond the self interests of our own faith community; or that we don't care about the welfare of the larger community.

Of course, this attitude would

be directly the opposite of that which God expects of us. "Seek the peace and prosperity of the city," God said to His people in Babylonian captivity, a situation often recognized as parallel to that of the remnant church. "Pray to the Lord for it because if it prospers, you too will prosper" (Jer. 29:7).

This direction would be controversial, God understood, so He specifically warned against voices among God's people that advised against community involvement. "Do not let [them] deceive you. Do not listen to [them]. They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them" (Jer. 29:8,9). Those voices are still with us despite the clear word of Jeremiah, the example set by Jesus in His ministry on Earth, a strong Adventist heritage of building community and the official position of the Adventist faith as stated in the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* chapter entitled, "Standards of Christian Living."

As believers looking forward to the return of Jesus, "... we are yet in the world as an integral part of human society and must share with our fellow citizens certain responsibilities in the common problems of life. Wherever we live, as children of God we should be recognized as outstanding citizens in our Christian integrity and in working for the common good. While our highest responsibility is to the Church and the gospel commission, we should support by our service and our means, as far as possible and consistent with our beliefs, efforts for social order and betterment.

"Even though we must stand apart from political and social strife, we should always, quietly and firmly, maintain an uncompromising stand for justice and right in civic affairs along with full adherence to our religious convictions" (*Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 18th Edition, pp. 137-138).

As good stewards of the community relationships that God has led us to, and responsible managers of our relations with neighbors and community institutions, we are asked by God to accurately convey the truth about His character and purposes. Ellen White affirms that, "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching people. He mingled with men as one who desired their good, showed sympathy for them and ministered to their needs. He won their confidence. Then, He bade them, 'Follow me'" (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143).

"What contribution does the Adventist Church make to this community?" I have over the past four decades asked this question in hundreds of interviews with mayors, city managers, high school principals, police chiefs and other civic leaders. My graduate students and research assistants have increased the total interviews into the thousands as we have done community assessments for Adventist churches and institutions. Almost all of the leaders we've interviewed have said something like, "Well, I am sure they do something for the community, but I don't know what it is." It appears this question hasn't had as much priority as it should have.

The bottom line is that all too often we do not make any measurable contribution to the local community beyond its religious activities. Can God bless a witness in



which there is no evidence of His generosity or unconditional love? When we do not take the time or spend the money to “mingle with men as one who desired their good,” can we realistically expect a different outcome? It is not by accident that in some of the countries where the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) has its largest programs, the denomination has its highest growth rates.

It is a fundamental stewardship principle, “freely you received, freely give.” And Jesus connects this to practical acts of compassion; “Heal [the] sick, raise [the] dead, cleanse [the] lepers, cast out demons” (Matt. 10:8). Does the giving of your congregation—in what it gives freely in practical compassion to the community where it is located—demonstrate that it believes that it has received great gifts from God? Or is your church aloof, exemplifying a picture of God that is not generous or good. It might be helpful to ask, “How is my congregation perceived by nonbelievers among the general public?”

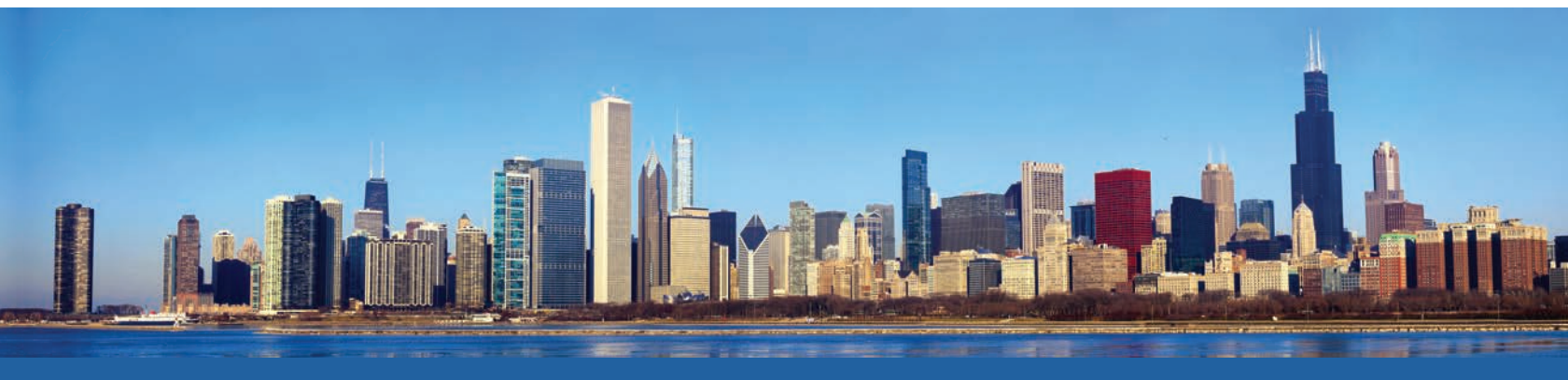
For the sake of illustration, our involvement in the community as a church might be described in terms of institutional body language. We all know enough about “body language” to be able to recognize a person who says, “I am OK” when they clearly are suffering, in despair, or burdened with some cares. We may also read the “body language” of the organizations we encounter in life. We know when government agencies require unnecessary bureaucratic procedures and when a big business puts profit ahead of customer service. Do we take the time to read the body language of our church? How is my church perceived by nonbelievers, or among the general public?

Does my church behave like a caring church? Does it get involved in meeting needs in the community outside of its usual religious activities? Are there visible expressions of practical compassion for the hurting and the poor? If the only thing your congregation does in terms of community service is to distribute used clothing and give out food once a year around the holiday season, how does that appear to the community? I have been told thousands of times by social work professionals, “Providing food once a year may be an interesting activity for your church at Christmas, but people are hungry 365 days a year.” And, almost as often, I have had municipal staff tell me, “Feeding the homeless once a month may be something your church likes to do, but where are you the rest of the time? Many other churches do it once a week and they participate in a coordinating committee that assigns the days of the week so each day is covered.”

Effective community involvement that clearly conveys the spirit of Jesus is rooted in a good community assessment. The programs and services offered to the community are directly related to clearly-identified needs among the population outside of the church membership. This is simply good stewardship of the relationship the church has with the community. If we really care about the community, we will look for information about the needs of the community. This is much the same as when a relative or friend comes to your home. You asked them if they wish to hang up their coat. Do they need something to drink? Have they eaten at the most recent mealtime or are they hungry? Is the temperature comfortable? Asking questions of this sort is simply good manners. It shows that we are kind and considerate people who care about our acquaintances. **When we conduct a community needs assessment we are simply demonstrating that we care about our neighbors and that our congregation is made up of compassionate and caring people.** (See the resources page and back cover for helpful resources for doing such an assessment, as well as www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org.)

The question could be asked if an emphasis on community service and works of compassion are really representative of a prophetic church. Does it take away from the resources that should be concentrated on communicating an important message at this time in Earth’s history? Jesus dealt with this very theme in Matthew 24 and 25. He was asked a question dear to the hearts of Adventists; “when will this happen and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” (Matt. 24:3). In the next verse He begins to answer these questions and continues without break until the end of the following chapter. He describes things that his disciples must experience, difficult things, and declares that “no one knows that day or hour” (24:36) **and then tells a series of parables around the theme of what to focus on while waiting for our Lord’s second coming.** These parables describe precisely the kind of outreach we need to do as a church that cares for the community, a church that is living out the message and hope of the soon return of Jesus. **And a church that thinks this kind of activity has nothing to do with Jesus at this time in history is mistaken, perhaps profoundly and tragically mistaken.**

A congregation that really displays the values of Jesus is one that has taken the time and trouble to listen to the community, that demonstrates a deep understanding of the community and invests in providing significant ministries that meet the needs of the community. This is a congregation that clearly shows that it is a good steward of the spiritual gifts and human resources, as well as the money and things that God has provided for it. The witness of this congregation is meaningful to the thoughtful, educated and powerful citizens of the community.



young adult

Random thought...

...Are my outreach efforts as efficient as they are spontaneous?

Intentionality and Community



Ana Jean Armstrong

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For info. on Global Youth Day, 2015, visit: gcyouthministries.org

I'm always fascinated when God seems to pick a theme for a phase of my life. You know what I'm talking about—those weeks when it seems like every sermon, personal prayer, and Facebook newsfeed quote is all centered on one subject, as if God has a divine lesson plan, and He is preparing you for the exam. In my life, over the past two months, that lesson has been about what it means to be a servant. Now, more than ever before, my friends are drawing on me for support. Both churches I attend have had “ministry fairs”, where the different needs of the church were advertised, and signup sheets were available next to bowls of shiny, alluring candy. I've also been blessed to be a part of even larger movements such as The Gospel Coalition Women's Conference, and the Adventist Global Youth Day. As commonplace as events like these may seem in the church, they all have an extraordinary detail in common: in order for them to come into existence, someone had to go out of their way to make themselves aware of the needs around them. My friends could not ask for help unless they knew help was needed. My churches' signup sheets would mean nothing without a header explaining why everyone was signing. Events such as Global Youth Day would be useless if all we had done was gather the youth in a place without any goals in mind.

Let's talk about Global Youth Day for a moment. If any of you were watching the all-day broadcast made possible by an incredible team of volunteers all across the globe, you might have caught my friend Eden and me reporting for the Florida division. We were blown-away by the range of service projects going on around the world by the youth of the church. Something we highlighted was how well each group catered to the needs around them. For instance, in Miami, a team was passing out water at a marathon. In Canada, a team was passing out hot chocolate. I'm pretty sure that if the Miami team had been passing out hot chocolate at the marathon, they wouldn't have been nearly as successful in meeting the needs of the people around them.

Another great example of catering to specific needs is the group that surprised me the most—they spent the day collecting batteries. I still don't know what they were doing with them. However, someone had obviously taken the time to look at their community needs and had somehow found that battery recycling was something worth doing.

The key here is intentionality. As servants of the kingdom, we are called to live our lives with intentionality. As children of a Sovereign Father, we realize that we were made with a purpose. When Jesus Christ walked the earth, He met the specific needs of the people with whom He came into contact. Preparation and expectancy are key. We cannot intentionally meet needs that we do not know exist.

Intentionality must be sought out by keeping in constant communion and conversation with the Lord. Stewardship and service are good callings, but still not anything we are called to do in our own strength. In John 5:30, Jesus himself says, “By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but Him who sent me.”

Global Youth Day was an incredible show of the Lord's ability to use His children at any age. However, every endeavor undertaken by the Church to serve, must be a continuous process of paying attention to the Lord, and reacting to His Word. We are here for a purpose, and only by fulfilling that purpose will the world look at us and see something different. I don't know about you, but I cannot wait for Global Youth Day 2015!

Until then, let's intentionally look at the world around us and ask, “Father, how would you have me serve You today?”



Financial Freedom through Budgeting

On the surface, budgeting sounds easy. What are the sources of your income? Where is your money going? Is your income greater than your “out-go”? If so—HURRAH! If not, what adjustments can you make?

Easy? Perhaps, but unfortunately, like most plans in life, the words may be easy but the actions are difficult.

Let’s start at the beginning. Jane Bryant Quinn recommends avoiding the word “budget” with its depressing connotations, and instead use the term “spending plans” as a way to think positively about the process of managing one’s money.¹ So let’s think about spending plans instead of budgets and begin with spending, not income.

First step: Where does my money go? Write down all your expenditures for a month, even the little ones! Separate these expenditures into three categories.

1. Expenditures that stay the same from month to month and cannot easily be changed, such as rent or mortgage payments, taxes, car payments, tithe and offerings;
2. Expenditures that are necessary but may vary from month to month, such as food, utility usage (which may depend on the season), medical visits, gasoline;
3. Expenditures that are wants but not essential expenses, such as eating out, electronics gadgets, books (except for students), and recreational activities.

Now you have an idea of how you are presently spending your money.

Second step: What are my goals? Do you have debts you need to pay off? Do you want to save money for future expenses, such as a car, an education for your children, or your own retirement? Write down your goal as a monetary figure, such as: “Goal: Put \$100 in savings for retirement.” Include this amount in your spending plan.

Third step: Where does my income come from? The most common source of income for most people is the monthly paycheck. You may, however, have additional sources of income such as interest from savings, rents, money from odd jobs, or gifts. If your income comes at irregular intervals, budget on your total annual income, which may be more certain than the timing of your monthly income.

Fourth step: Compare income and expense. Do you have a monthly surplus? If so, count yourself among the fortunate! Do you have a deficit? Go back to the first step and consider what can be changed. Perhaps you are spending too much eating out? Consider taking a lunch to eat at work to cut that expenditure. Perhaps you may have to consider living in a place with lower rent or take the bus instead of the car when going to work.

At this point, you will:

- Know where your money is going.
- Have defined a goal that you wish to reach.
- Have a spending plan to gain control over your finances.

The next choices belong to you and you have the knowledge to make them wisely.



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She has published in the Journal of Business Ethics, Issues in Accounting Education, Journal of Adventist Education, and the Journal of Applied Christian Leadership.

She frequently makes presentations in various venues at the request of the General Conference Treasury and the General Conference Auditing Service.

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Ministry to the Cities

By Ellen G. White

"There are many who ask, as did the lawyer, 'Who is my neighbor?' The answer comes down to us in the circumstances that happened near Jericho . . . Everyone who is in suffering need is our neighbor. Every straying son and daughter of Adam, who has been ensnared by the enemy of souls and bound in the slavery of wrong habits that blight the God-given manhood or womanhood, is my neighbor" (*Ministry to the Cities*, p. 99).

"Close around us are cities and towns in which no efforts are made to save souls. Why should no families who know the present truth settle in these cities and villages, to set up there the standard of Christ, working in humility, not in their own way, but in God's way, to bring the light before those who have no knowledge of it" (*Ministry to the Cities*, p. 113).

"It is the privilege and the duty of every youth, as an angel of mercy, to minister to the wants and woes of mankind. There is no class that can achieve greater results for god and humanity than the young" (*Ministry to the Cities*, p. 78).

"Though He [Jesus] was a Jew, He mingled freely with the Samaritans, setting at nought the Pharisaic customs of the Jews with regard to this people. He slept under their roofs, ate at their tables, and taught in their streets" (*Ministry to the Cities*, pp. 15,16).

"There is no change in the messages that God has sent in the past. The work in the cities is the essential work for this time. When the cities are worked as God would have them, the result will be the setting in operation of a mighty movement such as we have not yet witnessed . . ." (*Ministry to the Cities*, p.28).

"Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me' . . . There is need of coming close to the people by personal effort. If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen. The poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and the bereaved comforted, the ignorant instructed, the inexperienced counseled. We are to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice. Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit" (*Ministry to the Cities*, p. 59).

"If our leaders realized the time of night, they could not leave our cities unwarned and be willing to do so little to change the present condition of things in the world. God requires that every soul who believes in Christ shall go forth and bear much fruit." (*Ministry to the Cities*, p. 51).

