ADVENTIST EDUCATION
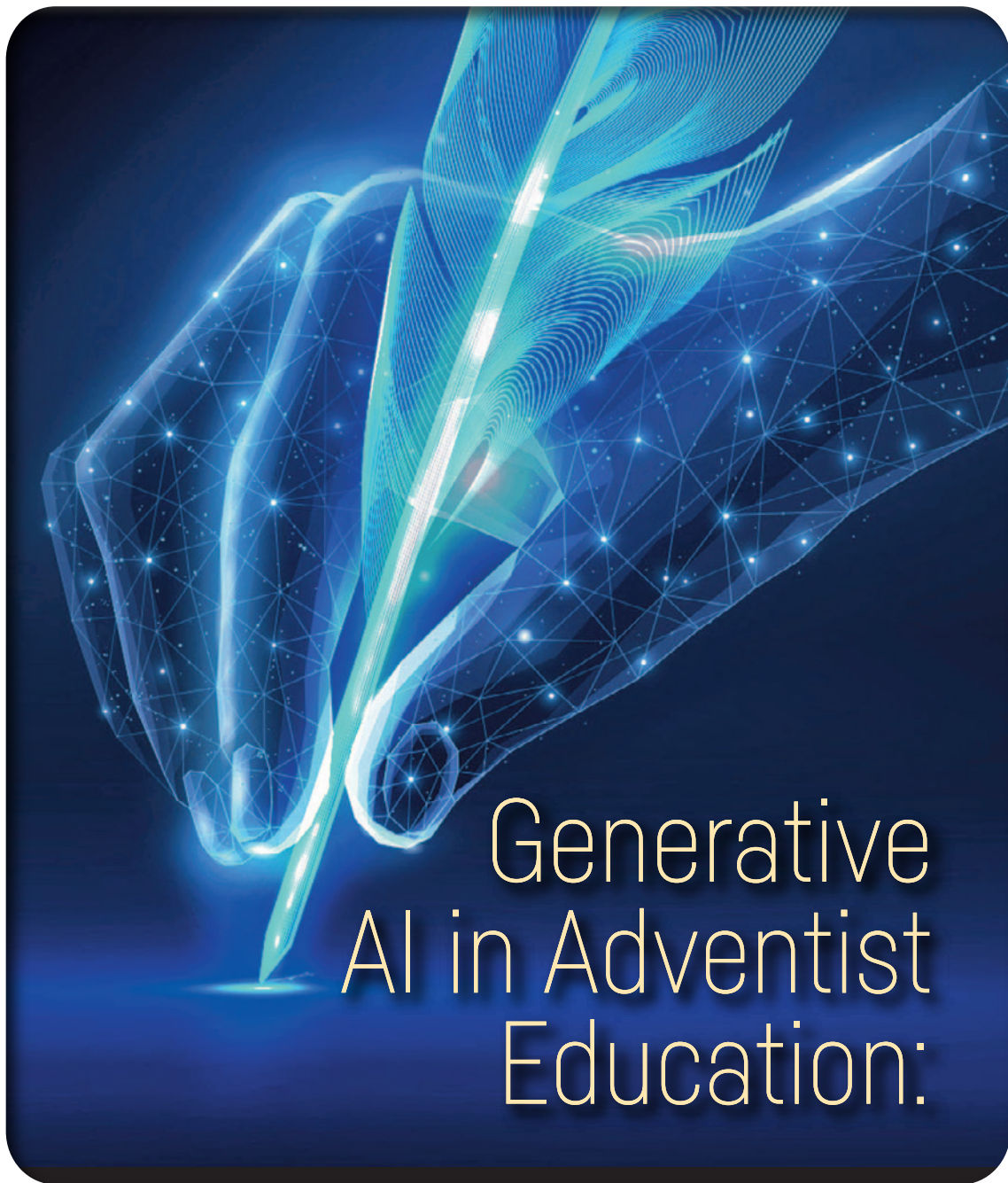
Generative AI in Adventist Education:

Opportunities and Ethical Considerations

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Faith-Ann A. McGarrell

"'Come, Follow Me'"

I remember playing games such as "Follow the Leader!" and "Simon Says!" and "In the River! On the Bank!" as a child in school. In these playground games, my friends and I learned to listen and follow instructions. These skills acquired during childhood play proved beneficial in adulthood when life's path seemed uncertain, or situations seemed unfamiliar. Yet, I also remember hearing warnings such as "Just because your friends are doing it doesn't mean you have to do so!" In other words, be careful who you follow. And this is true in all areas of life.

These thoughts come to mind every time I read the story of Jesus' call in the Gospels. In Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 1:16-20, and Luke 5:1-11, we have a record of Jesus' interaction with those who would become His first disciples: Andrew, Simon Peter, James, and John. "'Come, follow me,'" Jesus said, "'and I will send you out to fish for people'" (Matthew 4:19, NIV).[1] On first reading, it seems straightforward: Jesus called. They followed. Yet, I believe there was more to it than that. Several points resonate upon reflection on this story, and as I consider the articles included in this issue. In this passage of Scripture and the context surrounding it, Jesus invites the disciples to follow Him; in this invitation, they find their purpose, and in doing so, they gain confidence in the One they choose to follow. And we can find the same.

In Jesus' invitation, there is certainty. The word *follow*, as used in this passage, is defined as the call to "come away" or "to know, recognize, or perceive." In essence, to put aside all else and to know with certainty.[2] Most people have a response to the word *follow*, a word, which, like many words in the English language, has both positive and negative connotations. When called a "follower," some perceive the trait as a weakness, and they consider anyone demonstrating it to be indecisive or passive. There is even a popular saying in English, "Be a leader, not a follower." Thankfully, in the current literature on leadership, researchers embrace the term "followership"[3] and recognize that to move forward in any situation, followers and leaders must work together.

Each month, TikTok records one billion users. Of this number, the largest percentage is aged 10 to 19. Across all social media platforms, the most active users, which account for 88 percent of all users, are the 18-to-29 demographic.[4] There may be no personal relationship between the users and any of the individuals they follow, and the connection may be superficial. Yet, the pull is there. Why?

One reason is that humans have an innate desire to be known and seen. In this issue of JAE, the authors of the article, **"Discipling the Whole Student"** (Scott R. Ward et al.), refer to research conducted by The Springtide Research Institute. A 2022 report from this longitudinal study on "Belonging" indicates that one in three young people experience persistent loneliness; 40 per-

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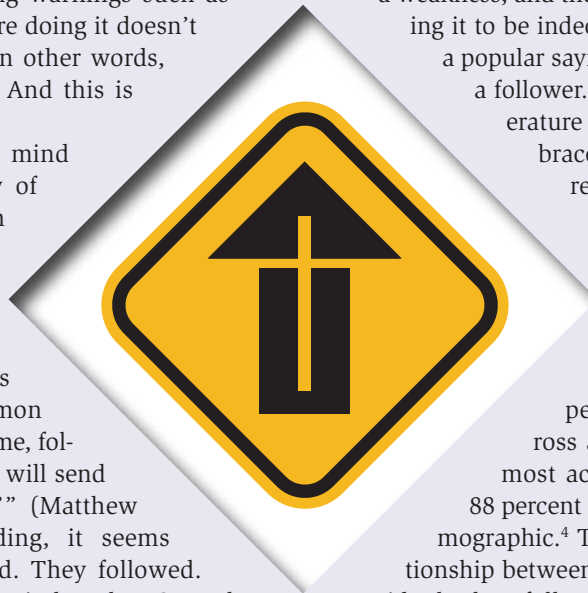
ChatGPT burst into the public consciousness in November 2022, catching most of us off-guard. This emerging technology can generate essays on many different topics or solve a variety of problems with just minor prompting. For instance, the following prompts to ChatGPT4 generated useful responses in less than 60 seconds:

• Write a 500-word essay on the fall of the Roman Empire. https://chat.openai.com/share/5f37237b-2cb2-493-0-9af1-319212948aec.

• Summarize the history of God's people as revealed in the Bible. https://https://chat.openai.com/share/2313 6939-3f08-4fc8-b8f2-90e74d148abd.

• Pretend that you're the Mississippi River. Simulate a dialogue between yourself and your cousin, the Nile River. https://chat.openai.com/share/48cceb5e-1e94-441e-ae01-dba37d65ea39.

• Write a sample test for a biology module on photosynthesis. Use 15 multiple-choice questions, three fill-in-the-blank, and two essay questions. (Elementary, high school, and graduate level) https://chat.openai.com/share/388ea851-2acc-4579-8ab9-06739dc4e9f0.

• Provide instructions for wiring and programming an Arduino to simulate a traffic light. https://chat.open ai.com/share/c7c23983-252f-4c92914e3b1f2be5c721.

Other related generative AI technologies (such as those listed on page 5) can generate images, presentations, and videos. These emerging resources excite educational technology enthusiasts, as they see the potential of these new tools. They have been tracking artificial intelligence for years, and these thrill seekers are all too eager to exploit the possibilities and the advantages of these emerging technologies. At the same time, these emerging technologies set off alarms in the minds of other educators who see the potential for cheating, plagiarism, or other abuses.

As we begin a new academic year, education faces yet another seismic shift. After navigating the initial years of the COVID pandemic, we anticipated a return to classroom normalcy.

BY DAVID P. HARRIS and FRED ARMSTRONG

However, much like how the virus forced us into Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT), these new, transformative technological advancements now loom, catching educators off-guard just when a return to normalcy seemed possible. The uncertainty surrounding their use may seem threatening at first; however, the more we learn how to use these tools, the more we can maximize their benefit.

ChatGPT is the most well-known of a family of artificial intelligence tools, which are collectively known as "Generative Artificial Intelligence." "Generative" because its main purpose is to generate creative products from existing data, and "Artificial" because the intelligence it displays is only a simulation of the human creativity that we must continue to foster and grow within the minds of our students and ourselves.

Here are a few examples of generative AI tools that educators and learners alike might want to use:

• ChatGPT (chat.openai.com)— Great for generating text on a variety of subjects. The tool is optimized to be human-like and conversational in tone. However, it is not optimized for accuracy and reliable conclusions. Those who use this tool for information-gathering purposes should validate all findings against their own knowledge or primary sources.

• Perplexity (perplexity.ai)—Similar to ChatGPT; however, this program is great for research and delving deeply into a variety of topics. Highly recommended for academic purposes. Perplexity functions somewhat like a search engine. It suggests answers to your query, provides the primary source for its answer, and provides tips for further investigation.

• SlidesAI.io (slidesai.io)—This is an add-on to Google slides that allows you to generate slide presentations along with graphical backgrounds based on an outline that you provide. It can be a real timesaver.

• Speechify (speechify.com)— This tool allows you to turn written text into speech with a natural and diverse selection of voices.

• Otter (otter.ai)—This meeting assistant can attend Zoom meetings with you. It will listen to the meeting, take notes, and capture slides. Using the information gathered, Otter can provide a summary of the meeting for your review and to distribute to other meeting attendees.

• Grammarly (Grammarly.com)— Yes, that's right. You've been using AI for years and you didn't even know it.

> At its core, generative AI functions like an artist who, after studying countless masterpieces, gains the ability to produce original artworks. Similarly, generative AI immerses itself in diverse data, assimilating patterns, nuances, and intricate connections.

It not only checks spelling on Microsoft Word and Google Docs, but it will also scan for grammar, punctuation, tone, and conciseness.

See https://ditchthattextbook.com/ai-tools/ for a more comprehensive list.

For the sake of clarity and generalization, we will use the generic term "generative AI" for the duration of this article. Before we dive headfirst into the world of AI and examine its potential, we need to explain what generative AI is, what it can do, how it can help, and how it can harm.

Understanding Generative AI

At its core, generative AI functions like an artist who, after studying countless masterpieces, gains the ability to produce original artworks. Similarly, generative AI immerses itself in diverse data, assimilating patterns, nuances, and intricate connections. This knowledge becomes the bedrock for its creative process, allowing it to craft fresh outputs that resonate with human-like quality. This holds immense potential for academia, promising the automation of routine tasks, enhancing research capabilities, and personalizing learning experiences through the intervention of AI tools.

Each member of the academic community must understand that the main purpose of generative AI tools is to be creative and simulate human creativity. Most are not knowledge systems, search engines, or expert systems. Each individual is personally and professionally responsible for all content produced and presented throughout his or her educational and professional endeavors. Additionally, the increasing power and sophistication of generative AI also raise significant ethical concerns and practical challenges, such as the potential for misuse, biased outputs, and privacy violations.

As educators, we understand that generative AI has the potential to transform the world into which our students are emerging. AI tools will become an intrinsic part of the industries and careers for which we are preparing our students. Therefore, we must understand its impact and benefits and strive to incorporate generative AI into our students' learning experiences. Generative AI can be a powerful tool for personalization, engagement, and feedback. Given the rapid growth and potential impact of generative AI on academic institutions, it is essential to establish guidelines and guardrails that ensure the responsible and ethical use of these technologies.

Implications for Adventist Education: General Assumptions

The following statements reflect the current world in which we find ourselves and are mostly outside of the direct control of our conferences, schools, or educators.

• AI technologies will continue to advance, with transformative effects on various aspects of education, many of which we cannot yet imagine.

• Ensuring access to generative AI tools and resources will be essential in fostering innovation.

• Addressing ethical concerns and establishing guidelines for responsible use will help to uphold the academic institution's mission and values.

Guiding Principles

• Humans should ALWAYS be at the center of technological advances. AI tools should not be used to replace human knowledge, expertise, or judgment.

• AI tools should be used to support and enhance learning, not replace it.

• Educational administrators must prioritize open dialogue and collaboration about the implications, benefits, and potential risks of generative AI. This effort serves to ensure that these tools are used in a way that is consistent with the philosophy of Adventist education,[1] and the mission, vision, and values promoted by each school or university.

• Strict data protection and privacy standards should be maintained to safeguard individuals' rights and interests.

The Promise of Generative AI

AI tools can be a valuable tool for enhancing student learning in a number of different ways:

• Exploring or brainstorming topics related to course assignments;

• Enhancing students' understanding of the curriculum;

• Providing students with opportunities to practice skills;

Sidebar 1. Guidelines for Responsibly Integrating AI Into Educational Context

General Guidelines

• **Keep individuals at the center**: Shift the focus to the learner and educator roles in AI-enhanced education. AI can personalize the learning experience, adapting to individual needs and strengths. Creative use of these tools can allow educators to embody new roles as guides and facilitators.

• **Promote transparency**: It is important that teachers and students alike be transparent about how and where they use generative AI tools. This is especially true where the content is substantially generated by external tools. Since students are often innovative and imaginative in their use of these tools (including masking or denying the use of AI assistance), this transparency will help educators become familiar with a larger variety of tools as they see how the students are using them. Transparency on the part of the teacher models this value for the students.

• **Uphold academic integrity and ethics**: Everyone must realize that generally accepted rules for academic integrity still apply here. Everyone must do his or her own work. Everyone must seek and cite reliable sources. Assignments must be done as the teacher assigned them. While new technologies have emerged, the rules of academic integrity have not changed.

Guidelines for Administrators

• **Set the tone**. Each school, college, and university should create a statement addressing "Guidelines and Guardrails" in the use of generative AI. This document should encourage the appropriate use of AI, and promote the general guidelines listed above.

• **Encourage dialogue.** Administrators should encourage conversations regarding how and where different tools have been and can be useful in streamlining efforts (e.g., strategic and marketing plans by educational administrators or curriculum and instruction plans by educators), improving student outcomes, and preparing students for the next steps in their educational journey.

• **Ensure equitable educational access**. Develop an in-depth understanding of the diverse needs of your community, in order to ensure that generative AI and other educational technology tools are deployed in a way that ensures fair and equitable access for everyone.

Guidelines for Educators

• Become aware of the various emerging generative AI programs. Educators should become familiar with emerging AI tools like the ones listed above. Try some on a casual basis and in the classroom. Embrace what works, and discard the rest. Be prepared to use a tool that was discarded in the past after it's updated, when it might offer a better solution. The more you use AI tools, the more you will notice where they can be useful.

• Provide guidance to students on when and for which assignments generative AI tools can be used.

• Remember to focus on the objectives of the course/program.

• Ensure that assessments are appropriate to the objectives, considering the availability of generative AI.

• Consider contributing future articles to THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION® or other professional forums describing your experience. Visit the Calls for Manuscripts: https://www.journalofadventisteducation.org/calls-for-manuscripts.

Guidelines Teachers Can Provide for Students

• Follow your teacher's guidance on when and where generative AI tools can be used.

• Explore the emerging AI tools and share your findings with your teacher. Explore with your teacher the appropriate and inappropriate use for each assignment.

- Helping students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills;
- Critiquing writing and expanding ideas;
- Providing a personalized tutoring environment.

However, it is important to use these tools responsibly and ethically (see Sidebar 1). Teachers and students must educate themselves about the limitations of AI tools and to use them in ways that do not compromise the integrity of the learning experience.

Limitations of Generative AI Tools

The following is a list of current limitations on generative AI tools. These limitations must be understood and acknowledged by learners and educators alike.

- **They don't think or reason.** It is important to realize that ChatGPT and its related tools do not possess real intelligence. That's why it is called *artificial* intelligence. It uses the Large Language Model (LLM)[2] to identify patterns and establish links between multiple concepts. This pattern linking allows it to generate text that mirrors human-like writing or conversations. However, this isn't the product of any personal understanding or creative thought process. Rather, it is a result of complex calculations and probability-based decisions.

- **They are dependent on trained content.** ChatGPT generative ability, for instance, is drawn from a Large Language Model (LLM) derived from the text it was trained on before September 2021.[3] This means it doesn't have any context for events that have occurred since this date.

- **They cannot learn in real time**. Because of the current complexity of generating these large language models, substantial time is necessary to process new information. Given the rapid rate at which new data is being produced, these AI tools struggle to stay current.

- **They lack contextual understanding.** In attempting to answer

Sidebar 2. Additional Reading

- James Spencer, "How Should Christians Respond to AI? Bias, Decision-Making, and Data Processing" (July 28, 2023): https://www.christianity.com/wiki/christian-life/how-should-christians-respond-to-ai-bias-decision-making-and-data-processing.html.

- Department of Education, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "Statement of Seventh-day Adventist Educational Philosophy" (2001): https://www.adventist.education/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/A_Statement_of_Seventh-day_Adventist_Educational_Philosophy_2001.pdf.

- Office of Educational Technology, *Artificial Intelligence and Future of Teaching and Learning: Insights and Recommendations* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 2023). This report is available at https://tech.ed.gov and downloadable at https://tech.ed.gov/ai-future-of-teaching-and-learning/.

- World Health Organization, *Ethics and Governance of Artificial Intelligence for Health: WHO Guidance* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2021). License: CC BY_NC-SA 3.0 IGO: https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240029200.

- European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *Ethical Guidelines on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Data in Teaching and Learning for Educators* (Publication Office of the European Union, 2022): https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/153756.

any question, it is important to understand the context behind it. Unless specifically prompted with contextual understanding, AI tools will generate content based on the context that they have inferred from related content in their data model. This is likely to be only superficially related to the context of a specific query. This is notably problematic when addressing specialized or complex topics, as the content generated might seem relevant superficially but fail to truly engage with the depth of the context. For instance, a generative AI may produce plausible-sounding explanations on medical matters, but without true comprehension, the accuracy and appropriateness of these responses remain questionable.

- **They have no opinions, beliefs, or emotions.** Especially within the context of Adventism and Adventist education, much of what we promote and teach is based on a specific set of beliefs and a specific understanding of Jesus and the Scriptures.[4] ChatGPT and other generative AI engines have access to all of the words of the Bible, and all of the writings of Ellen G. White; however, they don't "believe" these writings. They merely reflect what other people have written about their beliefs. This can be a powerful resource for study and biblical exploration, but not a replacement for true education. "It is the work of true education . . . to train young people to be thinkers and not mere reflectors of other people's thought. Let students be directed to the sources of truth, to the vast fields opened for research in nature and revelation. Let them contemplate the great facts of duty and destiny, and the mind will expand and strengthen."[5]

- **They have no social, ethical, or moral compass.** Although AI responses may reflect certain ethical guidelines, these are determined by design principles and biases of the software designer, not any inherent AI values or consciousness. Generative AI's seeming creativity and compre-

hension stem purely from its pattern-recognition capabilities, and not from any true consciousness or intent. None of the current generative AI tools was designed within the context of Seventh-day Adventist beliefs or the values of Adventist education. Consequently, the responsibility falls on both educators and learners to infuse the content produced with our specific belief system. This underscores the vital role humans play in shaping the ethical and moral fabric of the generated material. (See Sidebar 2.)

Conclusion

Generative AI has ushered in a transformative era in Adventist education, presenting a unique blend of opportunities and ethical considerations. While these AI tools contain the potential to revolutionize learning experiences, personalization, and accessibility, their application requires careful navigation. Educators must remember that generative AI serves as a creative augmentation, not a replacement for human knowledge and judgment. By fostering open dialogues, adhering to established guidelines, and prioritizing ethical usage, the educational community can harness the power of generative AI to empower students while upholding the values and integrity of Adventist education. As we navigate this uncharted territory, the responsible integration of AI tools is paramount in shaping a future where technology enhances, rather than supplants, the rich and diverse tapestry of learning.

What's Next

Let's share. As Adventist educators, we become stronger by sharing. We plan to have future articles in THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION® (JAE) where different educators will discuss which tools they have used in the classroom. We would like to share what has worked well, and what issues you have found that are left to be addressed.

Sidebar 3. Additional Reading on Ethical and Moral Considerations of AI

A growing body of commentary and research points to several ethical and moral concepts that deserve reflection when creating policy and informing practice. Below are several resources that directly address these issues.

Alicia de Manuel Lozano, Stefano Masneri, and Adil Moujahid, *Ethical Considerations for Generative AI* **NTT Data Group Corporation, 2023 (see specifically chapter 2, pages 10-33).** Summarizes the work of the European Commission in outlining aspects of accountability, oversight, safety, privacy, bias, and societal and environmental considerations of generative AI. Available at https://www.nttdata.com/global/en/-/media/nttdata global/1_files/services/data-and intelligence/ethical_considerations_of_generative_ai.pdf?rev=c9b 22c2626664710a1f0382d962fc3b7#:~:text=Generative%20AI%20presents%20numerous% 20ethical,and%20environmental%20impact%2C%20am ong%20others.

Miguel A. Cardona, Roberto J. Rodríguez, and Kristina Ishmael, *Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Teaching and Learning: Insights and Recommendations* (specifically chapter 2, pages 6-10). United States Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology, May 2023. This document from the U. S. Department of Education provides questions to consider when building ethical and equitable policies; it addresses opportunities and risks and how policies should elicit trust, safeguard students, and promote use of quality AI products. Available at https://tech.ed.gov/files/2023/05/ai-future-of-teaching-and-learn ing-report.pdf.

Rebecca Tan and Regine Cabato, "Behind the AI Boom, an Army of Overseas Workers in 'Digital Sweatshops,'" *Washington Post* **(August 28, 2023): https://www. washington post.com/world/2023/08/28/scale-ai-remotasks-philippines-artificial-intelligence/.** This article is one of many that explores the underside of generative AI, the working conditions of the human labor force that powers it, and the economic, environmental, social, and psychological effects on countries such as India, Kenya, the Philippines, and Venezuela to which much of this work is outsourced. Labor conditions are often unregulated, human rights are violated, and workers are often exploited. Considerations about how we engage and utilize resources that are created in environments that harm are essential as part of our ethical and moral responsibilities. Additional articles on this topic can be found online; here are a few: Nanjala Nyabola, "ChatGPT and the Sweatshops Powering the Digital Age," *Al Jazeera* (January 23, 2023): https://www.al jazeera.com/opinions/2023/1/23/sweatshops-are-making-our-digital-age-work; Niamh Rowe, "'It's Destroyed Me Completely': Kenyan Moderators Decry Toll of Training of AI Models," *The Guardian* (August 2, 2023): https://www.theguardian.com/technology/20 23/aug/02/ai-chatbot-training-human-toll-content-moderator-meta-openai.

Scott Clark, "Generative AI: Exploring Ethics, Copyright, and Regulation," *CMS Wire* **(April 10, 2023): https://www.cmswire.com/digital-experience/generative-ai-exploring-ethics-copyright-and-regulation/; Atoosa Kasirzadeh, "The Socio-ethical Challenges of Generative AI,"** *ReSource Newsletter of The Royal Society of Edinburgh* **71 (Winter 2022): https://rse.org.uk/resources/resource/blog/the-socio-ethical-chal lenges-of-generative-ai/.** These blog posts address critical issues such as bias, copyright, intellectual property, data privacy, and others that must be considered when shaping policy and practice.

Selin Akgun and Christine Greenhow, "AI in Education: Addressing Ethical Challenges in K-12 Settings," *AI and Ethics* **2 (September 2021): 431-440: https://doi. org/10.1007/s43681-021-00096-7.** The authors describe ethical challenges faced by educators when integrating AI in K-12 educational environments and how these problems can be leveraged to enhance learning. The authors point readers to more resources from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Media Lab (https://www.media.mit.edu/groups/ethics-and-governance/overview/) and Code.org (https://www.youtube.com/@codeorg).

Acknowledgment by Authors of AI Assistance

• Perused the many articles listed in the reference section of the ChatGPT prompt thread.

• Consulted with colleagues on topics.

• Requested ChatGPT to write the outline and article. (Content produced rejected by authors and not used in this article.) https://chat.openai.com/share/4e77f431-ab3b-4c93-90fb-fdf77e953dec.

Many of the references included in this thread were either non-existent or unreachable.

• Prompted ChatGPT4 to reflect on the statement: "ChatGPT is an excellent research tool for experts in a given field, but a dangerous tool for the uninformed." https://chat.openai.com/share/81e5e910-79dd-4bec-9d31-5dc5d3810d8b.

• Prompted ChatGPT4: "AI's limited understanding." https://chat.openai.com/share/ebb003f9-46af-435c-9031-d7f171230aaa.

• Prompted ChatGPT3.5: "What are appropriate uses for ChatGPT in higher education?" https://chat.openai.com/share/826d92dd-6a5c-43c2-a04f-3f7c7818f314.

• Finally, I (D.P.H.) wrote the article myself, based on my reading and understanding.

• I submitted it to ChatGPT for critique.

• I asked ChatGPT to help me organize my thoughts better.

• I asked ChatGPT 4 to use my existing words to rewrite each section.

• Here is the thread: https://chat.openai.com/share/9c434c82-4f7d-4673-842f-8ba93c7f2ad7.

• We (D.P.H. and F.A.) made liberal use of Microsoft Word's spell-check "AI" and Grammarly's style-checking AI.

• So, consider the following: Who wrote this article? David P. Harris, Fred Armstrong, ChatGPT, or all of the above? ✎

This article has been peer reviewed.

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Fred Armstrong, MA, *is Director of Learning Innovation at Loma Linda University (Loma Linda, California, U.S.A.). He is currently completing his EdD in Educational Neuroscience from La Sierra University (Riverside, California), holds a Master of Arts degree in Educational Administration and Supervision from Andrews University (Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A.), and a Bachelor of Music/Elementary Education from Southern Adventist University (Collegedale, Tennessee, U.S.A.). Mr. Armstrong has several years of experience with educational innovation and providing technology support to faculty and administrators. He formerly served as an administrator in the Carolina Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, as principal of the Adventist Christian Academy of Charlotte (Charlotte, North Carolina, U.S.A.), and as the Chair of the Music Department at Forest Lake Academy (Apopka, Florida, U.S.A.).*

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Adventist education prepares people for useful and joy-filled lives, fostering friendship with God, whole-person development, Bible-based values, and selfless service in accordance with the Seventh-day Adventist mission to the world. For more, see "A Statement of Seventh-day Adventist Educational Philosophy" (2001): https://www.adventist.education/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/A_Statement_of_Seventh_day_Adventist_Educational_Philosophy_2001.pdf; and John Wesley Taylor V, "Philosophy of Adventist Education" (December 15, 2022): https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=HJKE.

2. For more, see Sean Michael Kerner, "Large Learning Model Definition" (April 2023): https://www.techtarget.com/whatis/definition/large-language-model-LLM.

3. See David Nield, "How ChatGPT and Other LLMs Work—and Where They Could Go Next," *Wired* (April 30, 2023): https://www.wired.com/story/how-chatgpt-works-large-language-model/; OpenAI, "Introducing ChatGPT" (2023): https://openai.com/blog/chatgpt; See also the Research Index for more articles: https://openai.com/research.

4. See General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "Official Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church" (2023): https://www.adventist.org/beliefs/.

5. Ellen G. White, *True Education* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2000), 12.

DISCIPLING

the Whole Student

The concept of discipleship is often misunderstood solely as something Christians *do.* We study the Scripture, get baptized, and tell others about Jesus. We must do these things, but we must understand that who we *are* as disciples is as important as what we *do.* At the core of disciple-ship is relationship, and who we are in a relationship with Jesus creates a solid framework for what we do for Him (John 13:34, 35).

Discipleship is teamwork, and so this article is co-written by the faculty of the Department of Discipleship and Lifespan Education (DSLE) at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, with each sharing a brief overview of his or her area of specialty or framework in discipleship. As part of a departmental-wide emphasis on clarifying and bringing attention to the concept of discipleship, the authors have begun collecting short one-page responses from seminary students around the world with an assignment titled, "Who Discipled You?" The following testimony was written by a seminary student who was discipled by several of his teachers in Adventist church schools and illustrates this point:

More Than Words, Discipleship Is Care in Action — A Personal Testimony

"My discipleship was never any-thing formal. No one specifically chose to walk alongside me to teach me how to form a spiritual life. I grew up in the church and was familiar with the importance of prayer, Scrip-ture reading, and daily devotion. While I understood the importance of these things, I didn't have a decent framework of how to put them into practice. My parents wanted me to adopt these spiritual habits, but I rarely saw them spend much time de-veloping their spiritual lives outside of church on Sabbath.

"Where I did experience what I might consider discipleship was in the examples of teachers I had in acad-emy. Many of my teachers would have devotional thoughts and prayers be-fore class. I could tell that spirituality and connection to God were important to them. I would also see how they handled difficult situations with Christ-like attitudes. When my teach-ers were struggling with troubled stu-dents or enforcing rules, they did so with an air of mercy. Even in my own mistakes, my teachers showed me much grace. I wasn't sure how they developed their spiritual life, but I knew I wanted my spiritual life to look like theirs.

BY SCOTT R. WARD, DAVID SEDLACEK, ROGELIO PAQUINI, AND JASMINE J. FRASER

"The most noteworthy discipleship I received was in college. As a theology major, I got to talk with professors who were deeply rooted in the Word of God, some of whom were previously pastors, which was what I wanted to become. During my time in college, I was able to ask questions like, 'How does God speak to you?' and 'How do you deal with unanswered prayer?' Getting to ask these deeper questions and receiving thoughtful answers was helpful for the foundation of my spiritual life. On top of that, my professors took an interest in my well-being. They would genuinely ask how I was doing or how they could pray for me. Their care impacted me deeply."[1]

Teachers first must see themselves as disciples who need to be nurtured closer to the heart of God so that they can then share what they have personally experienced with others.[2] I (S.W.) always tell my seminary students that if they have a good relationship with Jesus and meaningful devotional times with Him, they will always have something ready to share from their experience with Jesus that morning, the previous day, or week, or whenever the most recent meaningful devotional moment happened. Educators all know, and it is obvious from the story above, that students see us for who we really are, and when Jesus shines out of us, they can't help but notice. And then, if we go on to actually talk about it, it can inspire them in their own search for meaning in their lives.

And then we also need to consider other influences that can hinder disciples from fully experiencing Jesus and living for Him. Human beings were created to be in a relationship with God (Genesis 2:24-28; 3:8, 9). Being in a relationship with God is fundamental for our existence now and throughout eternity (John 15:5). It is possible to do many things for Jesus without being in a daily, devoted, covenantal relationship with Him. But it is impossible to be in a committed relationship with Jesus without sharing our experience with Him with others, engaging them in ways that breathe hope and alleviate humanity's suffering.

Discipleship Overview (Scott R. Ward)

It is important to note that a relationship with Jesus and devotional time with Him is not a one-size-fits-all type of engagement for students or educators. Disciples of Jesus come in all shapes, sizes, and colors, and speak hundreds of different languages representing cultures and relationship dynamics covering a vast spectrum of diversity. Numerous scientifically defined learning styles, love languages, and temperaments impact how we engage with the world around us. Differences in how we love and learn impact how we engage in relationships. The way our parents and grandparents practiced their faith may look much different from the ways we have found to nurture our spirituality, and that will most likely be somewhat different from some of the ways that help our students connect with Jesus. I (S.W.) believe that as educators, we all need to find our own personal connection that feeds our spirituality so that our teaching ministries flow from the heart rather than mere religious obligations.[3]

Additionally, every generation reacts to and adapts from the generation before it. Each generation makes changes resulting in new ways of thinking and interacting, adapting and creating a new culture. These changes are not always positive or in alignment with biblical principles and may promote suppressive and destructive ideologies. The reality that we all live in a sinful world where we are all victims of various afflictions and abuses also impacts our ability to have healthy relationships with Jesus and other humans.

Though we are diverse in culture, language, and temperament, collectively, we have similarities in devotional practices and the way we interact with Jesus. Sometimes these similarities become ritualistic encounters that are divisive and hinder growth in our relationship with Jesus. Hence, our differences and similarities challenge us as educators and ministry leaders to assess the individual and collective needs for discipleship and develop approaches to meet the needs in each context.

We must recognize the diversity and struggles amongst the incredible variety of people and circumstances around us as we engage in discipleship. A wholistic approach to discipling students demands that we seek to understand their spiritual as well as their emotional needs.

One of the challenges to wholistic discipleship is the tendency to compartmentalize our lives and the issues we face. I (S.W.) believe compartmentalizing our lives contributes to idealistic methods of discipleship that fail to adequately meet many people's spiritual and emotional needs. Everything that affects our relational dynamics (positively or negatively) with Jesus or others must be included in our discipleship journey. When all our experiences are counted as opportunities for healing and nurturing, we are more likely to grow into healthy disciples displaying the fruits of the Spirit.

I (S.W.) have been invested in discipling young people, leading them into a growing relationship with Jesus that naturally bears the fruit of the Spirit. Throughout my career as a youth pastor and teacher (volunteer art teacher in the academy, adjunct Bible teacher, and currently seminary professor), I have focused on teaching young people devotional life practices and service through lunchtime campus-based devotional groups and outreach projects at my local Adventist academy and in the elementary junior high grades. These outreach projects have involved community services, mission trips, and other methods of evangelism. Many of these young people continue to grow in their devotional habits and are committed to Jesus as they serve humanity.

Discipleship is also a community endeavor. Through collaborative efforts, I was also able to build/foster community, engaging in church and school discipling ministry by facilitating an on-campus Christian club at one of the local public high schools. These are just some of the practical outworkings of my focus on discipleship and biblical spirituality during my doctoral studies. Over the years, my passion for discipling through the lens of relationships and community has deepened. I endeavor to equip teachers and pastors with tools for church and school collaboration in their approach to discipleship.

Discipleship and Trauma (David Sedlacek)

We live in a fallen world. As a result, hurt, pain, and trauma exist, which interfere with a people's ability to trust God. I (D.S.) believe that since discipleship, by definition, is assisting people in developing a loving, intimate relationship with God, Satan's goal is to interfere as much as possible in the discipling process. He does this in several ways. He knows that the iniquity of parents is visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation (Deuteronomy 5:9). Modern science confirms this biblical reality.[4] Both genetics and parental modeling make children vulnerable to household trauma, such as having a parent who is divorced, mentally ill, an addict, or in prison. Even more directly, physical, emotional, and sexual abuse in the home, domestic violence, or the emotional and physical neglect of a child's basic needs can be traumatic.[5] Additional types of traumas include community trauma such as living in an unsafe neighborhood, bullying, or being exposed to a mass shooting. Environmental trauma, such as damage from a flood, fire, earthquake, tornado, or hurricane, extreme heat, and more, can create anxiety and hypervigilance in those exposed to them.[6]

In God's design, parents are to be in His place to disciple their children into loving relationships with Jesus. However, when parents, due to their own brokenness, are not present for their children emotionally or physically or are active in their children's abuse, the children's capacity to see God as unconditionally loving is diminished. If the parents whom children see and experience cannot be trusted, can a heavenly Father who cannot be seen be trusted? Even if the children go through Sabbath school, church services, Adventurers and Pathfinders, they may have a cognitive relationship with God and be very dutiful in the way they practice their faith, but they may not believe that God loves them or that He can be fully trusted.[7] Further, since some students enrolled in Adventist schools also come from homes that are secular, agnostic, or a variety of religious traditions and may not have had exposure to discipleship, Adventist educators will need to be especially attentive to their needs.

The goal of discipling broken, traumatized persons is to give them such an experience of unconditional love (either through safe communities or through a therapeutic counseling process) so that rather than their being severely affected by anxiety or hypervigilance, they will be empowered to open their hearts to God's love (1 John 4:18). Safe communities might include Christ-centered 12-step programs such as Journey to Wholeness (https://www.adventistrecoveryglobal.org/resources/journey-to-wholeness/) or men's or women's groups that focus on emotional healing. Professional interventions should be trauma-focused and include an experiential element. The wounding occurred in a relationship with someone else, and the healing is best done in a way that includes both cognitive and experiential components. It is important to note that these interventions and healing opportunities are important not just for the students we work with, but also for educators, pastors, and parents as well.

We (the authors) have seen the importance of taking a person's pain and trauma into account in the discipling relationship. It is important to understand a person's journey so we can better understand the next steps in discipleship for that individual and how we can best surround and support him or her. This includes understanding our fellow teachers' journeys as well as the journeys of our students. The more that everyone can understand that we (pastors, teachers, parents, and students) are all victims of trauma, the more we can try to work together to support one another

in our spiritual journeys and in forming a true spiritual community.

Discipleship and Culture (Rogelio Paquini)

Youth discipleship is an essential aspect of spiritual development for young people. It is a space where young people can come together, grow in their faith, and build community. In this context, culture and spirituality intersect in a significant way. In my (R.P.) experience, and supported by the literature and research on discipleship, I have found that culture informs how young people understand and engage with spirituality, an essential factor in shaping their culture. James Emery White defines culture as "the comprehensive, penetrating context that encompasses life and thought, art and speech, entertainment and sensibility, values and faith."[8]

Society's dynamics and social structures shape the culture of young people. In many groups, a desire for independence, belonging, and a search for meaning and purpose define youth culture.[9] The way young people approach spirituality and faith seems to be an expression of their youth culture. They want to understand their beliefs and practices in a way that makes sense to them, and they want to express their spirituality in ways that are meaningful and relevant to their experiences.

One of the primary challenges of youth ministry is providing young people with space to explore their faith and spirituality in a safe and supportive environment. Good discipleship practices require an open and inclusive environment where young people are encouraged to ask questions and share their thoughts and feelings. In the fall of 2019, prior to COVID-19, the Springtide Institute surveyed a representative sample of 1,000 youth, ages 13 to 25, in the United States. In addition to surveys, researchers conducted 35 in-depth interviews. Responses indicated that 36 percent of this population "don't have anyone to talk to."[10] Post-pandemic research is ongoing, but what this study continues to reveal is that one in three young adults in the U.S. feels completely alone, 40 percent believe they have no one they can talk with, and 45 percent believe they are misunderstood.[11] Educators and other leaders engaged in ministry to young people must demonstrate a willingness to listen and engage in open and honest conversations with the young people in their care.

Relating to other cultures is essential in discipling young people because it helps them broaden their perspectives and develop empathy for those who are different from them. Jennifer Guerra Aldana says it best: "Diversity is a gift."[12] Exposure to diversity can lead to increased understanding and acceptance of various cultural practices, beliefs, and values. When young people connect with others from different backgrounds, they are more likely to be open-minded and accepting of diversity; it is imperative in today's world, where we are more connected than ever. Young people must understand and respect the cultural differences of those around them. As educators, we are also responsible for teaching them how to use their knowledge of biblical principles to understand what helps humanity to thrive and then provide opportunities for them to apply this to their lives. Relating to other cultures can promote spiritual growth and a deeper understanding of God's love for all people, regardless of their background.

However, while young people are growing progressively diverse, many ministries still have not yet contextualized their practices to welcome and engage with this population. A clear and straightforward example of a lack of contextualization is the absence of integration of young people in participation and involvement in the decision-making process in most churches, even when such organizations proclaim to care for them. In such cases, programs and styles display more interest in pleasing previous generations' tastes and interests than in what is relevant for young people.

University and academy settings have an advantage over local churches since they have a higher population of young people and operate within the

context of young people. Their chapel volunteers and worship leaders are students; however, as I (R.P.) have heard from many students on both levels, that they do not feel that the Bible class lectures relate to their needs. Therefore, professors and Bible teachers must become aware of the characteristics of this generation and create learning environments that support students within their context.

Every culture worldwide engages in relationships differently and in accordance with its various cultural traditions and practices. Spirituality and discipleship are, as stated earlier, not one-size-fits-all activities. It is critically important to meet people where they are within their culture—whether it be ethnic or generational—to give them the best opportunity to understand the gospel message and be drawn into the new discipleship culture of the local church context.

A Biblical-Theological Framework for Understanding and Practicing Discipleship (Jasmine J. Fraser)

A biblical-theological framework for understanding and practicing discipleship centers on the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19, 20) to preach, teach, and baptize. Jesus gave the mandate in His parting words before ascending to heaven. Central to fulfilling this commission are the practical, wholistic, and emotional attributes that define human relationships. However, I (J.F.) believe that we must not miss the practicality of discipleship expressed throughout Jesus' life in His relationships with people, particularly the 12 men in His inner circle. Jesus is the ultimate model of discipleship. He modeled what He taught; He showed His disciples what devotional life with the Father looked like (Mark 1:35; Matthew 11:25-30; John 17). Jesus also modeled what was involved in meeting His disciples' emotional needs; He expressed empathy and compassion in addressing those needs (Matthew 9:36; 14:14; 20:34; Mark 1:41; John 11:32-38).

In several instances, we see Jesus embracing a wholistic approach to discipleship, meeting the physical, physio-logical, psychological, and ultimately the spiritual needs of those He served. Matthew 9:36 tells us that when Jesus saw the crowds, "He had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (NIV).[13] As Jesus witnessed the suffering of the people He served, He felt their anguish and was moved with compassion. His compassion led Him to care for their physical and physiological needs by healing the sick, opening the eyes of the blind, and feeding the multitudes (Matthew 14:14-21; 20:34). Jesus' tearful response (John 11:35) to Martha and Mary on the death of their brother Lazarus indicated that psychologically He was sensitized to the emotional anguish that accompanies grief and loss. He enters the experience of His disciples, empathizing with them, sharing in their affliction, and bringing comfort to the suffering ones. The author of the Book of Hebrews also tells us that Jesus was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (chap. 4:15, KJV), confirming His compassionate and empathetic approach to discipleship.

It is also necessary to understand the pivotal role of the Holy Spirit in the discipleship process. Paul discusses various gifts the Holy Spirit gives disciples as tools for building healthy relationships and communities (Ephesians 4:1-12). Then in verses 14 to 16, he emphasizes the *reason for* and *benefits of* the discipleship gifts. While the gifts are multifaceted, the common objective is the formation of Jesus in each disciple (vs. 13). This formation leads to maturity: "The object of the bestowal of gifts is that God's children might grow into spiritual manhood."[14] The outworking of gifts of the Spirit is the fruit of the Spirit. As we grow in faith, we are empowered to live and speak the truth in love, becoming more like Jesus, who is Love and Truth. As each disciple experiences transformation through devotional encounters and relationships with Jesus and in community, collectively, we grow in unity, building up the body of Christ. (See Sidebar for Attributes of the Relational-Communal Model of Discipleship.)

A Basic Definition of Discipleship

Before making a few final suggestions for engaging in wholistic discipleship in the classroom, let's look at a short definition and then a breakdown of wholistic discipleship.

Discipleship: leading people into a growing relationship with Jesus
Leading: All leaders lead by exam-

Faculty in the Department of Discipleship in Lifespan Education at Andrews University engaged in conversation about developing the whole student.

ple whether they know it or not—actions are more powerful than words. You cannot lead others into what you do not have—especially regarding a personal relationship with Jesus.

Growing: Healthy growth, according to principles of Adventist education described by Ellen White, is nurtured by addressing body, mind, and spirit.[15]

Body is physical and emotional and is impacted by trauma;

Mind is both cognitive and affective and involves various learning styles, love languages, and temperaments.[16] All are all impacted by culture and generational location.

Spirit is our experience with **Jesus** via the Holy Spirit. It may also involve spiritual warfare and battling demonic influences and oppression/depression not only within the individual but also affecting all of God's creation from beginning to end—the Great Controversy.

Sidebar: Attributes of the Relational-Communal Model of Discipleship by Jasmine J. Fraser

As we seek to understand and practice discipleship as modeled by Jesus, there is no doubt that the process is relational and communal. A relational-communal model approach to discipleship helps us understand the interwoven cords of journeying, obedience, transformation, and serving. We journey with Jesus and others in community and respond daily in obedience to the directive of the Holy Spirit. The relational-communal approach to discipleship modeled by Jesus in the nonformal learning context can also serve as a guide in the formal learning setting.

In the formal learning context, relational-communal discipleship begins at the intersection of faith and learning and is further cultivated by creating inclusive and supportive learning environments where students and educators build meaningful relationships. The table below suggests an outline of how to create such an environment. Through the working of the Holy Spirit in relational-communal discipleship, lives are transformed in both formal and informal learning contexts, and individuals become conduits of God's love to others in society.

Some Attributes of the Relational-Communal Model of Discipleship in the Formal Context of Learning	Modeling/Practicing Relational-Communal Discipleship in the Formal Context of Learning
Foster Authentic Relationships	**Cultivate:** Foster authentic relationships based on trust and mutual respect (between educators and administrators, between educators/administrators and students, and among students). **Connect:** Prioritize connection over content dissemination in the teaching and learning process. **Stories Matter:** Emphasize the value of individual stories and experiences.
Transparent Communication	**Dialogue:** Foster a safe space for open and honest dialogue. **Active Listening:** Practice and encourage active listening and empathy. **Feedback:** Create opportunities for questions and discussions.
Shared Meaning	**Collaborate:** Emphasize collaborative learning experiences. **Exchange:** Encourage the exchange of knowledge and insights among participants. **Value:** Respect and value diverse perspectives.
Intentional Mentoring	**Engage**: Participate in intentional one-on-one relationships. **Accountability:** Provide guidance, support, and accountability. **Growth:** Set realistic personal growth goals, and commend, and affirm progress.
Care Project	**Contribute to felt needs:** Create a system to pool resources to temporarily alleviate hardships and difficulties.
Community Service Initiatives	**Provide opportunities** and **foster engagements** for service in the academic setting or the local community.

All three areas (body, mind, and spirit) work together for optimal health and growth, and all need to be nurtured by effective discipleship practices that ultimately lead to equipping and sending (Acts 2). As we address these areas of body, mind, and spirit, we must keep in mind that all are affected by various traumas that individuals experience in life. A healthy discipling community will lift one another up and help in all these areas of life to produce well-balanced followers of Jesus.

Relationship: The relationship is between "people" and "Jesus." And the relationship with Jesus is greatly impacted by the community of "people" with "people." There is also a difference between knowing about Jesus and entering a personal relationship with Him to truly "knowing" Him intimately so that His life transforms a person—re-forming him or her back into His image.

Taking Action

Based on the discussion and definition above, here are some basic steps we believe will help educators as they prioritize wholistic discipleship with students. Many educators already use at least some of these steps, so the goal here is to simply give us all a friendly reminder of their potential spiritual impact:

1. *Spirituality flows from the leader's own devotional life.* If you are struggling with knowing how to engage devotionally or with prioritizing devotional time, you are not alone.

Devotional engagement is a discipline, and it will not happen without effort. The key is to recognize the positive impact of an active, regular devotional life on daily experiences. As noted earlier in this article, devotional time is not a one-size-fits-all endeavor. A good resource for better understanding how to enhance one's relationship with Jesus and build an effective devotional life is *Authentic: Where True, Lifechanging Christianity Begins* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2012). Just as TAG Time (Time Alone with God) has shown great benefits for chil-

dren, it is important for teachers and other educational leaders to remember the importance of it for themselves as well. TAG time is also one of the greatest opportunities for children to experiment with and discover their own spiritual love languages and learning styles.

2. *Other than their parents, there are few people who know students better than their teacher(s).* In helping children to grow in body, mind, and spirit, taking time to check in with students who seem to be struggling is vitally important. Praying with students who are facing challenges at home or bullying at school (and actively implementing policies to prevent these occurrences) can be a great boost for them spiritually as well. The importance of the care and concern that teachers offer their students should never be underestimated. This is critically important for forming community—which is the foundation of Christ's church on earth. It is also important to know when to refer students for professional counseling and other forms of support that may be needed.

3. *Outreach is an essential aspect of spirituality* and is referenced in the definition above as, "equipping and sending." Giving students the opportunity to engage in community service, in addition to being helpful in the classroom, is important for their spiritual growth. In my (S.W.) experience, community service and the basic concept of learning to help others can be a great catalyst for greater spiritual interest and growth. If your school doesn't already have a robust community-service program, visit http://collaborativeministry.org for more community service ideas and to learn how community engagement fits into the overall spirituality of your school. Serving the community is a natural outcome of deeper spirituality, and just as the leader's devotional life is foundational to spirituality, so is active engagement in serving others, side-by-side, working together with students, pastors, and parents.

Conclusion

Discipleship requires that we know who we are as disciples and what we are called to do. As Adventist edu-

cators, we must lead by example, and this means nurturing our own relationship with Christ and being ready and willing to share it. We must demonstrate care for our students, and this requires that we understand their lives, their traumas, and intentionally seek ways to encourage and support them as they grow physically, mentally, and spiritually. We must not only create environments that encourage and support them but also engage them in outreach and service to others. These principles serve as the foundation of discipleship and can help to build a framework to lead people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ, which is the true purpose of Adventist education.[17] ✐

This article has been peer reviewed.

This article was co-written by the faculty of the Department of Discipleship and Lifespan Education (DSLE) at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, with each sharing from his or her particular specialty in the department. A companion article was published in *Ministry Magazine.* See Scott R. Ward et al., "Discipling the Whole Person," *Ministry Magazine* 95:8 (August 2023): 11-13. Available at: https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2023/08/Discipling-the-whole-person.

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13. Scripture quotations in this article credited to NIV are quoted from the New International Version of the Bible. Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Scripture quotations credited to KJV are quoted from the *King James Version* of the Bible.

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The Challenge of Maintaining Impartiality on Adventist K-12 School Boards

Promoting and maintaining impartiality is one of the most essential functions of an effective school board. Board leaders and members must be able to represent different groups in the church and community. and ensure that diverse voices are represented when making educational and administrative decisions. Church and educational leaders who work with school boards must provide members with training to ensure that members understand their responsibility to ensure impartiality as a decision and policy-making entity. These training sessions should help school board members understand that in their roles, they are either exacerbating, perpetuating, mitigating, or eliminating inequities. Leaders should also help school boards work together to create and adopt clear statements to show their commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. These princi-

ples are essential to the effective functioning of a school board.

School board membership is made relatively easy for church members who, in most cases, are elected by their school constituencies, and this is commendable; however, while membership requires minimal qualifications,[1] the process of becoming an effective board member takes time and a willingness to learn. Every year, the school board member should become better and better at asking questions about policy and assessing whether the board and all affiliated with the school are fulfilling their mission and vision for the school.

With training and experience, effective school board members learn to distinguish between appropriate oversight and micro-management. They learn to identify the difference between partiality and impartiality in school board relationships with the school and community. This article examines some of the threats to im-

partiality that undermine effective decision-making by school boards and suggests ways to identify and, if possible, prevent or mitigate them.

A Call to Impartial Service

Board membership should never be viewed with a sense of entitlement or special privilege. When a school board member (or the entire board) regards church office as an entitlement or position of power rather than a mission, this can lead to problems of partiality and favoritism based on friendships and connections with individuals (including relatives) who have a high profile and influence in the Seventh-day Adventist Church community. Whatever their backgrounds, all Adventist families deserve access to Adventist education and its benefits based on the principles of equality and impartiality.

Peter Drucker, a well-known educator and management consultant, un-

BY ROBERT CRUX

derscored the purpose of board membership when he observed that "over the door to the nonprofit's boardroom should be an inscription in big letters that says, 'Membership on this board is not power; it is responsibility.'"[2] Board members must be highly conscious of what they are saying, how much they are talking, and to whom, to avoid the accusation that they are not being impartial. Every school board member deserves (and needs) a good orientation that emphasizes ethical behaviors and servant-leadership qualities as his or her first responsibility to the school community.

The challenge of maintaining impartiality on Adventist school boards can be exacerbated by a church school system that depends primarily on unpaid volunteers to serve as board members. Karl W. Kime, in his article "Streaming the Adventist School Board" writes, "Because service is voluntary and unpaid, [board] members may view the position as requiring little work or commitment."[3] Compared to public school boards, Adventist school boards may not receive the same scrutiny or accountability from the constituency as elected officials of public school districts. However, on the positive side, the dependence on voluntary members underscores the intrinsic motivation and commitment to Christian service by board members who help make Adventist schools successful year after year.

To be successful, school boards have a primary duty to develop and maintain the trust of their constituents and stakeholders. Confidentiality plays a vital role and acts in concert with impartiality in ensuring that members make fair and evenhanded decisions. In a world where technology is rocketing us into the future, the school board cannot afford to lose its ethical underpinnings.

Some questions to ask about your school board: Do the members maintain confidentiality when expected to do so? Should the members sign a Confidentiality and Impartiality Agreement as part of their Code of Ethics Statement? Understanding that confidentiality extends to information about students and teachers, staff employees, their families, and affiliations with organizations or education offices (including state and national education agencies) means that the importance of confidentiality should be emphasized.

The Need for Board Training Relating to Impartiality

Even though all trustees, officers, executive committee/board members, exempt employees, and volunteers at Seventh-day Adventist organizations in the North American Division are required

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to sign a Statement of Acceptance of the church's Conflict of Interest/Ethical Foundations policy/ guidelines annually,[4] there remain certain "gray areas" that are rarely discussed or reviewed. These gray areas include issues related to the integrity of the school board and whether it is acting in the best interest of the school, its students and employees, and its constituents. Such gray areas can be eliminated or minimized when the organization/school uses its mission statement (a brief description of an organization's reason for existence) as a filter for all its planning and decision-making. A well-stated, purposeful school mission statement filter tends to provide clarity and strengthen core values like impartiality, confidentiality, and integrity.

Sharland discusses the challenge of impartiality and believes that as human beings, "we are all constantly making assumptions about people, and often we do not consider which ones are accurate and which are not."[5] This means people can choose to justify or defend their assumptions, and sometimes can jump to wrong conclusions and make mistakes that reveal a bias or prejudice that may never have been intended. As a result, board decisions can have good intentions but lead to bad outcomes.

Sometimes the motives and rationale behind school board decisions can be highly questionable and seemingly at odds with the board's adopted ethics policy/statement and moral work of governance. This is one reason why professional development for the school board members must include impartiality training and awareness, to increase the possibility that fairness and evenhandedness are consistently applied in the process of decision and policy making.

When board decisions have nothing to do with God's leading, but everything to do with who's-on-whose side, it gives the appearance of school members being willing to trade grace and ethical behavior for power. No matter how aware board members are of their school board's code of ethics and conflict-of-interest policy, their knowledge will remain abstract and theoretical until they care about the individuals who face the negative consequences of partiality and favoritism.

Impartiality Defined

While many Adventist school boards are composed of sincere, honest, dedicated members who serve with integrity and donate their expertise and time to serving their school communities year after school year, it is important to realize that everyone carries attitudes (biases) and stereotypes that can affect their understandings, actions, and decisions. Sometimes biases and stereotypes get in the

way of sound judgment when critical thinking and more information are needed to arrive at a well-reasoned decision.

Impartiality should be the governing principle of how a school board provides service to the school community. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* explains the difference between "impartial" and partial" by stating, "to be 'partial to' or 'partial toward' someone or something is to be somewhat biased or prejudiced, which means that a person who is partial really only sees part of the whole picture. To be impartial is the opposite."[6] It turns out that impartiality (or being impartial) is important for policy making and the proper interpretation or translation of school board decisions. Further, demonstrating consistency of impartiality helps boards to develop a reputation as being trustworthy and professional.

Threats to Impartiality

Since there are times when school boards must mediate conflict, it is important that threats to impartiality and fairness be eliminated before they escalate into more damaging circumstances. The following list is not intended to be exhaustive but may represent some of the more common threats to impartiality in K-12 Adventist schools:

1. School boards members fail to identify and present all the facts but instead choose to highlight only those facts that support their preferences. People are prone to believe what they want to believe. Confirmation bias, a predisposition often seen in current global culture wars, "is the tendency to search for, interpret, favor, and recall information in a way that confirms or supports one's prior beliefs or values."[7] This type of bias can spill over into school board meetings and can lead to wrong decisions and policies. When board members are exposed to new and challenging information, confirmation bias can cause them to reject it and become even more certain that their own beliefs are correct. The adage of "a person/group is entitled to their own opinions but not their own facts" would seem in-

structive for this scenario.

2. Inappropriate actions of school board members during financial activities involving procurement or bidding processes and contracts. Adventist school boards, like all public entities, enter into public contracts. A public contract happens whenever the board buys goods and services, regardless of whether there is a formal contract. Purchasing goods such as computers and paper products, paying for services such as construction, or hiring individuals to write grant applications are all examples of public contracts. These expenditures are routine and necessary for the continuing operation of an educational program. However, conflict-of-interest and ethics guidelines prohibit school officials and employees from selling goods or providing services to their school district or church-operated school. Therefore, school board members should never use their position for personal gain.

Annetta Gibson's article "A Board's Duty of Care in Financial Oversight: How to Avoid the Question: 'Where Was the Board?'" reminds us that "when people agree to serve on a board, they also assume responsibility for the institution's finances as part of

fulfilling their fiduciary responsibility for duty of care. The board has a responsibility to ensure that policies are in place to not only prevent the abuse and misuse of financial resources but also to address such irregularities when they occur."[8]

Further, Ellen White cautions us that: "The accounts of every business, the details of every transaction, pass the scrutiny of unseen auditors, agents of Him who never compromise with injustice, never overlook evil, never palliates wrong."[9]

3. Excessive and unreasonable discipline decisions. The North American Division (NAD) *Manual for School Boards of Seventh-day Adventist Schools* states that "It is essential that people be treated fairly and given due process, even when rules obviously have been violated and the resultant discipline is predetermined by policy. Legally and ethically, the board should protect employees and students from excessive, unreasonable discipline."[10] Failing to follow these guidelines can create divisions within the school constituencies and undermine the financial and moral support for the school. The "margin for error" is very small for boards that do not take their legal and ethical responsibilities seriously.

An example of this is when the socio-economic status of the student/-family to whom the student is related or connected can make all the difference in who stays in school and who must leave (or who is suspended and who is not).

In his article entitled "Some Legal Considerations for Operating Boards in Adventist Schools (K-12)," Lyndon Furst wrote, "every Adventist school should have a student handbook or school bulletin that identifies the rules of behavior that are to guide student life as well as the procedures to be followed when students step outside those rules."[11] To avoid accusations of excessive or unreasonable discipline, school administrators and school boards must consider the legal implications and consult with the school's legal counsel. Following the school's established process published in the school handbook helps to guide and maintain impartial discipline decisions by the board.

4. *Nepotism and favoritism to families of influence or position.* The *Collins Dictionary* says that "nepotism is the unfair use of power in order to get jobs or benefits to your family or friends."[12] A typical school-based example of this is when the issue of partiality "heats up" involving a board member's child or relative. Board members of smaller K-8 Adventist schools often include parents of students who are well acquainted with the offending student's family and may have difficulty remaining impartial in determining the appropriate discipline due to personal biases.

When school boards desire to hire the most qualified candidate or best candidate for the job, and that candidate is a relative of a school board member, this can lead to accusations of nepotism. Sometimes a husband and wife, or two other close relatives may be nominated to serve on the same K-8 school board since the pool of candidates from a small church may be limited, or other church members have declined to serve. This scenario can also generate claims of nepotism.

At times, perceptions can become more important than reality, and even

in church culture, people in positions of power may not go out of their way to correct a false assumption if it plays to their advantage or personal beliefs. This scenario illustrates how favoritism can helps a person remain in a position of power or influence.

The complexities of nepotism and favoritism demand that each school board have a written policy that is part of its school board manual/code of ethics statement. *The School Board Manual for the Southern Union Conference Office of Education* has a voted

> At times, perceptions can become more important than reality, and even in church culture, people in positions of power may not go out of their way to correct a false assumption if it plays to their advantage or personal beliefs.

policy that "only one family member shall serve concurrently on the school board. (Any exception to this policy must be approved by the local Conference Office of Education)."[13] Each K-12 school is encouraged to adopt the same language in its school constitution and/or local school board manual.

5. *Implicit Biases.* Implicit or unconscious biases are the automatic reactions we have toward other people based on our past learning, experience, and expectations. Adriana Vazquez, in her article *How to Mitigate Your Unconscious Bias,* writes that "unconscious bias relies on instinct instead of analysis. So unsurprisingly, the judgments

and conclusions people come to are often incorrect, but more importantly, they can be discriminatory."[14] She continues, "While we all have biases, many unconscious biases tend to be geared toward non-dominant groups based on factors such as class, gender, sexual orientation, race, religious beliefs, age, and ability."[15]

Although implicit biases often occur unintentionally, they can affect judgments, decisions, and behaviors. Research by the National Institution of Health has revealed that implicit bias can pose a barrier to recruiting and retaining diversity in the workplace.[16] Implicit biases can happen when the ability or skills of a person are questioned because of his or her social identity. This can happen at employment interviews or during performance reviews when school boards present recommendations for rehiring/non-hiring of teachers to their conference education office.

Project Implicit is a nonprofit organization and international collaborative of researchers who are interested in helping people become more aware of their implicit bias. The organization offers tests and instructions on how to use that awareness to align actions with a group's intentions, make better decisions, and build organizations where everyone can thrive.[17] Other implicit bias tests can be found online that are particularly helpful to educators and leaders of organizations in developing an awareness of their implicit bias.

The Impartial School Board Chair

The school board chair plays a key role in creating and maintaining the perception and reality of impartiality. It is important that the chair refrain from expressing his or her views/opinions regarding agenda items and from participating in other board meeting discussions and debates. This may not always be the practice of board chairs of Adventist K-12 schools, since it is not a specific guideline outlined in the NAD *Manual for School Boards of Seventh-day Adventist Schools* (or similar documents produced by other divisions). The manual does indicate that the primary role of the chair is to fol-

low parliamentary procedure and encourage discussion relevant to agenda items.[18] However, there is no statement in that document that indicates how much influence a chair should have on the selection of and decisions regarding agenda items under discussion.

Hamlet Canosa affirms in his article "Governing Boards: A Practical Guide to Best Practices and Policies" that "care should be exercised by the chair to avoid filtering discussion through his/her opinions. The chair facilitates, and not controls, discussion, allowing for consensus to emerge."[19] This statement provides clarity, but there continues to be some confusion over how much restraint (if any) the board chair should maintain when discussing or opining on particular agenda items.

Should the board chair lobby other board members for their support of particular agenda items outside of board meetings? Is it appropriate for the board chair to present his or her views on agenda items during board meetings? Should the chair engage in *quid pro quo* deals to garner support and votes for special projects or proposals? What should be the best practice for the leadership of Adventist school boards? According to Shekshnia, a good board chair should listen carefully to determine the consensus of the board, avoid the use of "I," and never take up more than 10 percent of the airtime during any board meeting.[20] With more specificity, Shekshnia adds, "though many newly minted chairs are eager to put their knowledge and experience to full use, the harsh reality is that collective productivity suffers when the person at the head of the table has strong views on a particular issue."[21]

When there are conflicts of interest, it should be the responsibility of the board chair to ensure that they are dealt with and documented in the school board minutes. This provides a record of how these issues (including partiality) were processed and brought to resolution.

Nick Price writing for *BoardEffect* believes "documenting disclosure of a conflict of interest in the meeting min-

utes serves multiple purposes. Primarily, documenting conflicts and potential conflicts will help nonprofit organizations avoid undue penalties or other sanctions. Recording conflicts also serves to clarify that the board takes conflicts of interest seriously to any member, third parties, observers or regulators, which is also a reflection of the organization's reputation for having strong ethics."[22]

Moving from the role of manager to that of facilitator should be the *modus operandi* of a good board chair to increase the effectiveness of group discussions and maintain impartiality. A leadership style that incorporates collaboration and builds consensus to arrive at a solution helps ensure that problems get solved. While there may be times when the full board wishes to know the position or opinion of their chair on a particular matter, the chair must always include the caveat that he or she may only have limited information and thus cannot make a conclusive statement. The board chair should not be caught in a position of discussing his or her opinions or decisions prematurely or showing partiality to one solution over another. Perhaps a good rule of thumb for board chairs to remember is the only time

they should not be expected to be impartial is when describing their new son, daughter, or grandchild!

The board chair sets the tone for the entire school program and its constituents. There are students, parents, staff, and the community carefully watching to observe how the board leadership functions and governs. Board chairs set a positive example when they establish a culture of impartiality, integrity, collegiality, and collaboration, which helps to build confidence throughout the school community. Without such an example, confidence in the school program suffers, and those parents who may be considering an Adventist education for their children will look elsewhere for what they perceive as a better investment and environment.

Impartiality Training

Impartiality training, then, is essential to the effective functioning of school boards. Adventist school boards are rooted in strong spirituality as a primary resource to guide their decision-making process, which includes sessions of prayer where they commit themselves to submission to the will of God, who asks board members (and all believers) to "'act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God'" (Micah 6:8, NIV)[23] in all their deliberations. From a biblical perspective, we see that God shows no partiality (Acts 10:34, 35; Deuteronomy 1:16, 17) in His dealings with human beings. School boards are compelled to act when injustice is evident and remain faithful to their core values of impartiality and integrity as followers of Christ and as Christian servant leaders.

Ellen White referred to Scripture (James 3:17) when she wrote in 1890 that "[t]here should be no giving of special favors, or attentions to a few, no preferring of one above another. This . . . is displeasing to God. . . . Let all who are connected with the institution . . . bear in mind the words of inspiration: 'The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of

> The board chair sets the tone for the entire school program and its constituents. There are students, parents, staff, and the community carefully watching to observe how the board leadership functions and governs.

mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.'"[24]

With these principles in mind, the church has created several resources that offer training to Adventist school board leaders and members (see "Training Resources for Adventist School Boards"). These materials and others can facilitate stronger school board member relationships, inclusivity, and a sense of community, which in turn increase productivity, creativity, and innovation.

Adventist school boards have been gifted with Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy for instruction and guidance for promoting and maintaining impartiality and integrity in our church schools. Through corporate/individual prayers and devotional time that are part of each board meeting, the members of the school board can be led by God's Spirit to effectively shape the experiences of students and employees so that they are consistently treated as individuals of equal dignity and worth.

Conclusion

Impartiality includes many qualities and actions that affect human relation-

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Sidebar: Training Resources for Adventist School Boards

The Adventist Learning Community (ALC)

ALC, sponsored by the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, is an educational platform designed to strengthen professionals through continuing-education courses. Specific to school board leadership and board members are three mini-courses that include important understandings and guiding principles of impartiality awareness.* These digital courses are free and can be completed at the student's own pace and convenience: Adventist K-12 School Board Leadership Training (0.10 CEU); Adventist K-12 School Board Legal and Financial Issues Training (0.10 CEU); and Adventist K-12 School Board Legal and Financial Issues Training (0.10 CEU). More about these course offerings can be found on the ALC website: https://www.adventistlearningcommunity.com/?keyword=School%20Board.

Incentivizing volunteer school board members to complete a minimum number of continuing- education units (CEU) for each year of service should be a consideration that is discussed and recommended by all conference and union education offices of education. This could be as simple as recognizing the professional development of individual board members at the end-of-year school business meeting that is open to the church members and the public. This also conveys an important message to the school community that the church is active in supporting the professional development of all servant leaders, whether they be employees or volunteers.

As the ALC continues to expand its free digital courses providing continuing education to church employees and volunteers, a course offering entitled "Christian Ethics and Leadership for Board Members" would provide a greater focus on impartiality training for all K-12 school boards.

Theme Issues on Boards in *The Journal of Adventist Education*® (JAE)

Over the past several decades, JAE has provided several theme issues on the topic of boards. The most recent issue was published in 2019 as Volume 81, Number 1. This is available online at https://www.journalofadventisteducation.org/ 2019.81.1 and as a PDF at https://www.journalofadventisteducation.org/assets/public/issues/en/2019/81/2019-81-1.pdf. Prior theme issues on the topic can be found online in Volume 62, Number 2 (1999); Volume 66, Number 5 (2004); and Volume 70, Number 5 (2008).

Other Training on Bias and Impartiality

Other training is available that gives information and skills needed to reduce and manage biases. Impartiality training, or Unconscious Bias Training as some refer to it, teaches people to manage their biases, change their behavior, and track their progress. The training provides them with information that contradicts stereotypes and allows them to connect with people whose experiences are different from theirs. Carmen Acton, writing for the *Harvard Business Review*† offers three strategies to help leaders to be aware of those biases that can impact their decision-making process:

1. *"Acknowledge that you have biases. Then, educate yourself to do better."* Acton lists several questions that will help stimulate reflection on personal beliefs, the people and experiences that have shaped these beliefs, and how these influence our actions, intentions, and levels of empathy.

2. *"Let others challenge your assumptions."* Our experiences and the life lessons that come from them influence how we see ourselves. These experiences help shape our conscious and unconscious thoughts about ourselves and others. Interactions at home, school, with peers, and with various media should challenge the way see ourselves for the better.

3. *"Be open to feedback."* As individuals, we thrive on approval and like to know that we're doing a good job; however, it is not only about us but about the people God has called us to serve. To serve effectively, we must continually and intentionally assess how our actions, policies, and words impact others.

4. *"Embrace diverse perspectives."* Encourage and welcome feedback from diverse voices—people who have different experiences. Seek it out, build relationships, and expand networks. This stimulates growth and makes for a more inclusive atmosphere.

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* Adventist Learning Community, North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, School Board Mini-Courses: https://www.adventistlearningcommunity.com/?keyword=School%20Board.

† Carmen Acton, "Are You Aware of Your Biases?" *Harvard Business Review* (February 4, 2022): https://hbr.org/2022/02/are-you-aware-of-your-biases% 2018.

ships and effective school board leadership. Among these are ethical behavior, integrity, empathy, commitment to mission, fairness, and being able to handle conflict. Paramount among these is empathy, which requires thinking about the person on the receiving end of one's comment or action. In short, being a school board member is based on human relations. It means working as a team with clear roles toward a common goal.

The job description for school board membership includes a commitment to be fair, just, and impartial in all decisions and actions. All decisions must be based on the philosophy and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its education system. Our theology must underpin all our relationships with the constituents and stakeholders of the school. Political ideologies should never interfere with school boards and decisions.

Because their words and actions can damage the public's opinion of Adventist education—and have serious legal implications—board members must comport themselves in ways that honor their professional impartiality. Whenever a school board intentionally reflects and evaluates its principles of ethics, impartiality is often a determining factor on whether its decision-making process represents integrity and, at times, courageous Christianity. It is good board policy to remember that justice and mercy are for all (Zechariah 7:9), without distinction. ✎

This article has been peer reviewed.

Robert D. Crux, EdS, *worked as a teacher, principal, and superintendent of schools over a period of 35 years in Adventist education before retiring from active service. He completed his MEd in School Administration at Walla Walla College (College Place, Washington, U.S.A.) and earned an EdS degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Loma Linda University (Loma Linda, California, U.S.A.). Prior to retiring in 2016, he served as Superintendent of Education and Human Resources Director at the Carolina Conference (Charlotte, North Carolina, U.S.A.). Mr. Crux believes that school board behaviors have a substantial impact on the culture and success of schools.*

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Desmond Hartwell Murray

Environmental Fridays:

## From Awareness to Action—Addressing the Lamentations of Nature

t is late June 2023. The air quality index (AQI) in southwest Michigan's Berrien County is dangerously unhealthy, as it is in many other places across the United States.[1] On my way to O'Hare International Airport, haze obstructed the view of downtown Chicago as it did in other major American cities. The skies in some places appeared flaming red-orange as the Canadian wildfire smoke pervaded the air. Health advisories encouraged residents to stay inside—especially asthmatics—or to wear N95 masks when going outside.[2] Millions of people were affected one way or another by this border-crossing smoke.[3]

Unsurprisingly, studies have consistently shown direct connections and correlations between air pollution and respiratory diseases, including Long COVID.[4] For some, breathing is hard and labored; for others, it is deadly. According to a 2021 report, air pollution contributes to almost 11,000 deaths in the U.S. annually.[5] Another report indicates that it contributed to at least 1.8 million excess deaths globally in 2019.[6] Air pollution is at once unapologetically local, regional, and personal. It needs no passport; there is no hiding place. Indeed, the influences and impacts of nature and the environment are uniquely un-

bothered by immigration laws and international treaties. Borders cannot protect us, for we live entangled on earth and under the heavens.

Air pollution, along with record-breaking global high temperatures,[7] are subjects of interest and relevance, among many other wide-ranging topics, featured in a free online extracurricular guest-speaker lecture series I designed and organized called Environmental Fridays (https://www.theenvironmentalfridays.com/). This article not only describes the program but also focuses on the broader value of this series for environmental education, particularly within the Seventh-day Adventist setting.

At the beginning of human time in the Eden School, after God created the heavens and the earth, humans were given the responsibility to "dress it and to keep it" (Genesis 2:15, KJV). Herein lies the genesis of the core and immutable ethics of environmental stewardship and conservation. This mandate remains binding upon us all even now, as witnesses to and participants in both the glories and the lamentations of nature. This should be imminently true for those who profess belief in the divine creatorship of everything in heaven and on earth. Therefore, it lies within our
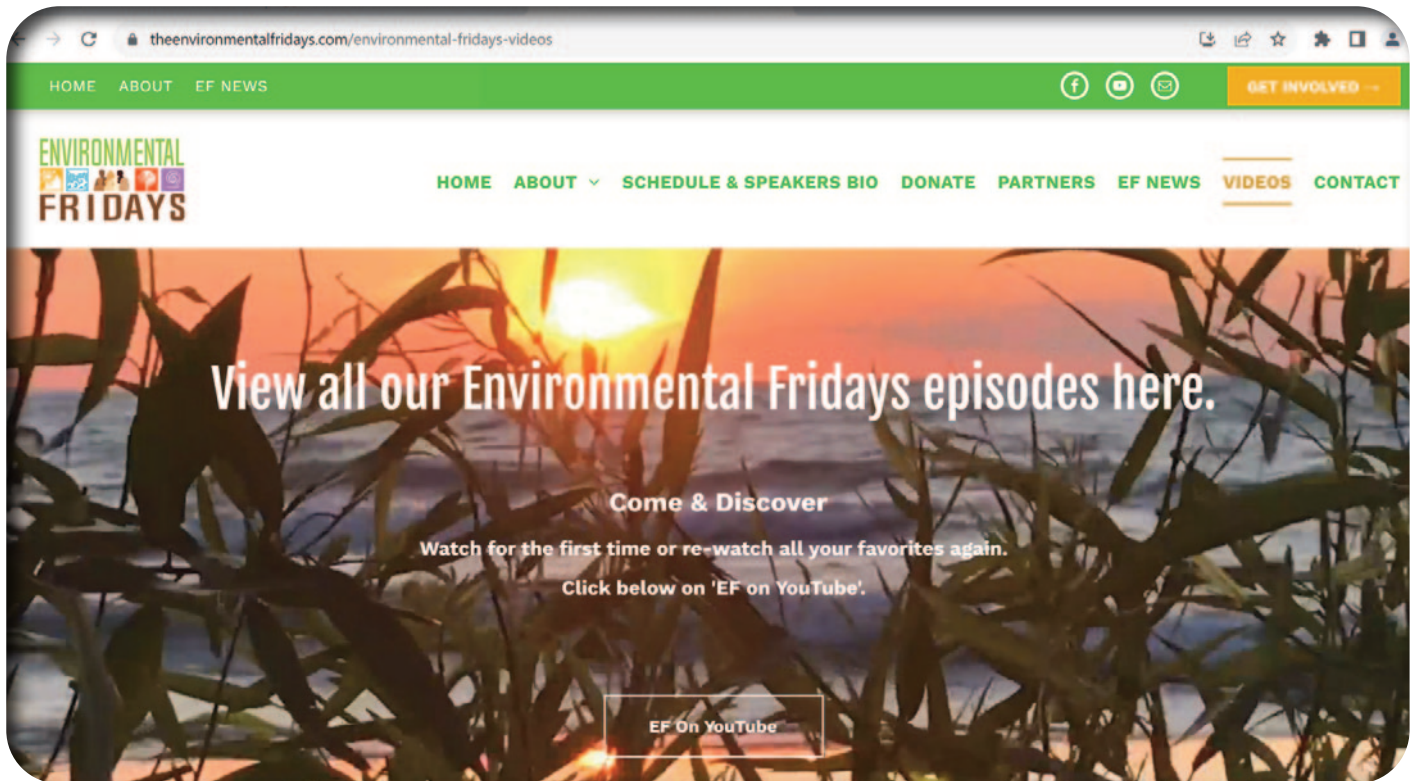
responsibility to future generations to preserve the glories of creation and to remedy the lamentations of nature: pollution, loss of biodiversity, the climate crisis, and other crises.[8] We must resolve to change the fact that we are the only life form, of the 1.2 million that have been identified so far, that routinely and deliberately destroys our environment. The recovery of nature around the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and during COVID speaks volumes about our impact and nature's resilience.[9] We must now come to fully realize creation care,[10] stewardship, and redemption as urgent values in our relationship with the environment.

I have undertaken a way of integrating into our education system this faith—our faith—with the responsibility of environmental stewardship and conservation. I call the initiative *Environmental Fridays. . . . It Is Personal*. It is a free Zoom-based weekly lecture series that fosters environmental awareness and encourages action, restoration, and stewardship. It offers free supplemental multidisciplinary subject content covering physical, social, health, and life sciences related to numerous environmental concerns, including pollution, biodiversity, and climate change.

Over the past two academic years, there have been 58 episodes hosted by 70 speakers from 12 different countries. All episodes are recorded, uploaded, and accessible on YouTube.

However, Environmental Fridays goes beyond faith and information by seeking to translate both into interventions, improvements, actions, and solutions. It is both a vehicle for awareness and action and a call for our restoration and stewardship of the environment. But it is even more. It seeks more: to reconnect us spiritually with nature and create meaning for our lives that transcends our secular culture, and goes beyond our science and technology.

William Wordsworth, romantic English poet (1770–1850), reminisced in his ode, "Intimations of Immortality," about the past glory of nature: "The things which I have seen I now can see no more.". . . "That there hath past away a glory from the earth." . . . "Where is it now, the glory and the dream?"[11] But, is it that nature has lost her glory or that we do not behold her as we ought to; that we are more disconnected from her than past generations were? Is it also that we view her mostly by what she can do for us, what we can get from her, rather than what we can give to her? That we now see her mostly for function and utility rather than for inspiration and beauty? Environmental Fridays seeks

Environmental Fridays Guest Lecture Series Season V

CONTACT - HOST: Dr. Desmond Hartwell Murray, Associate Professor of Chemistry, murrayd@andrews.edu (269) 757-1641 website: https://www.theenvironmentalfridays.com/; Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/groups/environmentalfridays

DATE	TOPIC	SPEAKER
9.15.23	Environmental Education and Environmental Justice in Michigan	Eileen Boekestein & Regina Strong Michigan EGLE, USA
9.22.23	Conservation and Sustainability in the Grenadines	Orisha Joseph The Grenadines, Caribbean
9.29.23	Marine Biology of Reefs in Toco, Trinidad	Stanton G. Belford Tennessee, USA
10.06.23	Castara, Tobago: A Model Eco-Friendly Community	Natasha Legall-Roberts Tobago, Caribbean
10.13.23	World Food Day – October 16, 2023	Daphne Ewing-Chow Cayman Islands, Caribbean
10.20.23	Ocean Literacy and Edutainment	Katrina Khan-Roberts Trinidad, Caribbean
10.27.23	Break the Cycle Student Projects	Leslie Rubin Atlanta, Georgia, USA
11.03.23	Environmental Science, Policy, and Management	Jessica Penrose Davis, California, USA
11.10.23	Green the Church	Ambrose F. Carroll Oakland, California, USA
11.17.23	Sustainable Development in the Americas	Mark Lambrides Washington, DC, USA
11.24.23	Colorado River Drought	Eric Balken Colorado, USA
12.01.23	Impact of Literature on Environmental Movements	Jessica J. Lee Cambridge, United Kingdom
12.08.23	Marine Biodiversity of the Caribbean	Shivonne M. Peters Trinidad, Caribbean
12.15.23	Chemical Composition of the Canadian Wildfires	Motria Caudill Chicago, Illinois, USA

Environmental Fridays Guest Lecture Series Season VI

CONTACT - HOST: Dr. Desmond Hartwell Murray, Associate Professor of Chemistry, murrayd@andrews.edu (269) 757-1641 website: https://www.theenvironmentalfridays.com/; Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/groups/environmentalfridays

DATE	TOPIC	SPEAKER
1.12.24	Environment in Native America-Themed Movies	Kimberly Guerrero Riverside, California, USA
1.19.24	Environmental and Economic Implications of Declining Honeybee Populations	Seth Borenstein Washington, DC, USA
1.26.24	Environmental Innovation and Adaptation in the Caribbean	Leah Fouchong Trinidad, Caribbean
2.02.24	Environmental Action Based on Local and Indigenous Knowledge	Joseph Karanja Tempe, Arizona
2.09.24	Emerging Contaminants in Caribbean Waters	Quincy Edwards St. Kitts, Caribbean
2.16.24	Effect of Air Pollution on Child Brain Development	Megan M. Herting Los Angeles, California
2.23.24	Impact of the Environment on Human Health	Sonya Gupta Cambridge, Massachusetts
3.01.24	Stories from an Environmental Journalist	Alexis Young New Orleans, Louisiana, USA
3.08.24	Environmental Solutions Through Biomimicry Chemical Principles	Mark Dorfman New York, New York, USA
3.15.24	Increasing Greenhouse Gases: Causes and Consequences	Ralph Keeling San Diego, California, USA
3.22.24	Environmental Innovation and Entrepreneurship in the Caribbean	Sharda Mahabir Trinidad, Caribbean
3.29.24	Chemical Contaminant Exposure Among Children in Westside Atlanta	Eri Saikawa Atlanta, Georgia, USA
4.05.24	Water Policy, Regulations and Public Health	Adrienne L. Katner New Orleans, Louisiana, USA
4.12.24	Pollinators of the Caribbean	Lena Dempewolf Trinidad, Caribbean
4.19.24	Communicating Climate Change and Sustainability	Andrew C. Revkin New York, New York, USA
4.26.24	National Asthma and Allergy Month	Monica Paguia Chicago, Illinois, USA

to repair this breach in our relationship with nature, the environment, and ultimately with ourselves.

Over the past two academic years, there have been 58 episodes hosted by 70 speakers from 12 different countries. All episodes are recorded, uploaded, and accessible on YouTube. The episodes of Environmental Fridays can be found by searching on YouTube using the phrase, "Environmental Fridays."

Season V is scheduled Fall 2023 (September 2023 to December 2023) with 14 episodes lined up and will subsequently be followed by Season VI (January 2024 to April 2024), with 16 episodes. (See the schedules on pages 27 and 28.) Details and updates can be found at the Environmental Fridays website: https://www.the environmental-fridays.com/, and in its Facebook group, https://www.facebook.com/groups/environmentalfridays.

So far, Environmental Fridays has led to the formation of two derivative organizations that are actively translating awareness and knowledge into action and solutions: A 4 Asthma (https://www.facebook.com/gto groups/a4asthma) is committed to alleviating the suffering of asthmatics in Benton Harbor and beyond in southwest Michigan, and in Tobago (https://www.facebook.com/com/groups/intobago) focuses on increasing awareness of the rich biodiversity on the Caribbean island of Tobago, which may contribute to building its ecotourism sector. Both organizations are community focused and engage students and youth. For example, InTobago was co-founded and is led by Kerrisanne Adams, a Tobago national, pursuing a premed biology degree at the University of the Southern Caribbean, located in the Maracas Valley, on the island of Trinidad.

Environmental Fridays is also listed and referenced on the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy website as a Michigan Partner in Environmental Education (https://www.michigan.gov/egle/public/egle-classroom). Selected testimonials from students, teachers, and others regarding Environmental Fridays can be found here: https://www.theenvironmentalfridays.com/environmental-fridays-testimonials.

> As a public science program, Environmental Fridays provides multi-disciplinary science and humanities content about the environment or related to it. Part of the growing field of environmental communication, this online lecture series provides a platform for the public to interact with and learn directly from experts, scientists, activists, and others about the environment.

Getting Involved

There are at least six different ways you can get involved with Environmental Fridays. First, visit the Environmental Friday website and view past episodes. (See https://www.theenvironmentalfridays.com/environmental-fridays-videos.) Second, suggest a guest speaker and or topic, including presentations by students. Third, volunteer to co-host with me to introduce guest speakers and facilitate the Q&A session. Co-hosts can be teachers, staff, students, and others. Fourth, attend the live-streamed scheduled episodes at 9:30 a.m. EST on Fridays. Fifth, use the videos posted on YouTube as supplemental classroom and course materials. Sixth, attendees and patrons of Environmental Fridays can translate the knowledge learned into action and solutions.

Topics and Speakers

A variety of topics are presented in Environmental Fridays, such as biodiversity, pollution, and climate change to environmental health, environmental justice, and environmental poetry. These multidisciplinary topics include content from the physical, social, earth, and life sciences, as well as history, geography, and culture. The topics are dealt with at education levels ranging from high school to college and are also designed to target a lay public audience. The episodes are organized around a semester-based academic year (fall and spring), with planning and scheduling done during the summer.

Environmental Fridays' guest speakers come from a wide variety of backgrounds, subject expertise, and life experiences across the United States, the Caribbean, and other places. They represent government and non-governmental agencies, businesses, volunteer organizations, environmental entities, and educational institutions. They have come from national and international agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency, Centers for Disease Control, and the United Nations Environment Programme. For example, there have been guest speakers from Ukraine who talked about the impact of the war on

1. *Life as we know it exists only in relation to the environment.* Life and the environment are intricately and inextricably co-emergent and co-existent. Out of this deep connection emerges meaning and spirituality. We are in the universe and of the universe; the universe is in us. This is a source of awe, wonder, and joy.

2. *We are a part of the environment, and it is a part of us.* We are part of both life and the environment. The environment is not "other" to life or to us. Nature is more than a tool or instrument for our utility.

3. *Life exchanges matter and energy with the environment.* Life is built on exchange, transaction, and relationship with the environment.

4. *All biogeochemical cycles are evidence of the relatedness and interdependence of life* and the environment.

5. *All fundamental particles of nature exist in relationship to one another* either through interaction, origination, or as medium.

6. *As conscious or sentient beings made from the materials of the universe, we are, in a way, the universe curious about, observing, and experiencing itself.** We are also aware of the consequences of not being aware, observant, and curious.

7. *As conscious or sentient beings, we have the capacity to protect life and the environment.* We recognize and reference this as self-preservation, self-interest, and conservation.

8. *Concern for the environment is not just theory or vague philosophy; it is real, it is health,[†] it is economic, and it is unmistakably personal.* Concern for the environment requires both education and engagement. We are all affected by the environment and should all be proactively learning and doing more about it.

9. *The environment is inspiration, beauty, and poetry.* It is not merely material, functional, or utilitarian, nor is it just a repository of useful things. Indeed, nature is sacred.[‡]

10. *We seek to intentionally translate awareness into action.* We are animated by the hope and faith of earth's renewal by human imagination and intervention. This is our work of environmental redemption.

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* The idea that we are the universe observing and experiencing itself has been attributed first to Allan Wilson Watts (https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/226051-through-our-eyes-the-universe-is-perceiving-itself-through-our) and repeated by scientists of note, such as Carl Sagan (https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/484665-the-cos mos-is-within-us-we-are-made-of-star-stuff), and Neil deGrasse Tyson (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oOphd1UcluQ).

† A subdiscipline called environmental health explores the impact of the environment on human health. See Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/) for research and resources on the environmental impact on air quality, food safety, radiation, and much more. Additional resources can be found at the American Public Health Association (https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/environ mental-health) and the World Health Organization (https://www.who.int/ health-topics/environmental-health#tab=tab_1).

‡ See Karen Armstrong, *Sacred Nature: Restoring our Ancient Bond With the Natural World* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Books, 2022). ISBN 9780593313404.

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the environment; and there was an episode on the impact of Sargassum seaweed on Caribbean islands. Other speakers have discussed forest wildfires, biodiversity restoration, environmental justice, the impact of air pollution on children's health and development, ecopoetry, the triple planetary crisis (e.g., pollution, climate change, and loss of biodiversity), and more.

As a public science program, Environmental Fridays provides multidisciplinary science and humanities content about the environment or related to it. Part of the growing field of environmental communication,[12] this online lecture series provides a platform for the public to interact with and learn directly from experts, scientists, activists, and others about the environment. Likewise, the series provides scientists with a means of communicating directly with the public rather than through traditional media, social media, or via inaccessible specialty journal articles. The program helps to contextualize physical, social, and life science concepts in relevant real-world and consequential circumstances, challenges, and examples.

Environmental Fridays also addresses a deficiency in American education reported in a 2018 study, which indicated only two states require environmental science for high school graduation.[13] In addition, while most high school chemistry books have a chapter on water, they do not have chapters on the chemistry of air or soil.[14] It is reasonable then to assume that this lack of exposure to fundamental environmental education leads to misunderstandings of many vital concerns such as pollution, loss of biodiversity, climate change, and our role in them. Furthermore, there is often much left to be desired in the communication of environmental facts and issues that can also account for public misunderstanding, attitudes, and interest. For our future, a greater emphasis should be placed on the intentional integration of environmental science, sustainability, and awareness across the curriculum.[15]

"Altar Call"

I believe that every Sabbath keeper should also be an Earth-keeper, environmentally active and proactive. These characteristics should arise from our deep beholding of the awe, wonder, and mystery of God's works. The God of the Sabbath is the God of our environment—all of it, including us. Exodus 20:11 connects for all time God's act of creation with the general principle of rest and restoration. Washington Adventist University Professor Olive J. Hemmings makes this observation: "Creation requires Sabbath—rest and restoration as a general principle."[16] This idea of Sabbath rest is also explicitly invoked and expressed by God for the land in Leviticus 25:4 to 7 and 2 Chronicles 36:21.[17]

Every Sabbath we should celebrate the blessings and pleasures of nature, intentionally and explicitly. We should have an active environmental ministry, in both words and deeds.[18] We should ask, each Sabbath, the simple question, "What have I done this week to improve the environment?" We must go beyond awareness to action, and from statements and sermons to sustainable solutions.[19] This should be our commitment, beyond pulpit, pew, and pedagogy to the actual practice of restoration and stewardship of God's creation.

Furthermore, our denominational eschatology should never be used to rationalize reluctant engagement in or even abstinence from the work of restoration and stewardship of God's creation. Environmental negligence is internally inconsistent with the fact that we do all manner of planning and stewardship for the future, individually and corporately: there's educational and career planning, family planning, financial planning, and institutional planning throughout our schools, hospitals, conferences, and other organizational entities. We do not wait in these areas for Jesus' return for final or complete fixes. Thus, any reluctance or inertia to engage in environmental ministry, creation care, and stewardship based on our belief in the Second Coming contradicts what we do in multiple areas of our lives and in our church's institutions.

I encourage us—our church, individually and corporately, to take up this mission and become global leaders, in word and deed, for the restoration, stewardship, and compassionate care of all God's creation. We cannot afford to be Laodicean toward the environment. Rather, we must proactively affirm our faith in the sacredness of the Word of God and the Works of God. May this faith compel us to change the world, to redeem the world, and restore the meaning of nature to our very souls.[20] ✍

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20. Acknowledgments of and gratitude to colleagues, friends, family, and THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION personnel who served as manuscript reviewers.

Ramona L. Hyman

The Prayer Project:

Prayer as Theory and Practice in a Literature Class

The African American poet Langston Hughes signals the importance of language to the discipline of prayer in the poem "Feet o' Jesus." In the pungent expression concerning the need for Jesus, the persona of the poem petitions Jesus, saying:
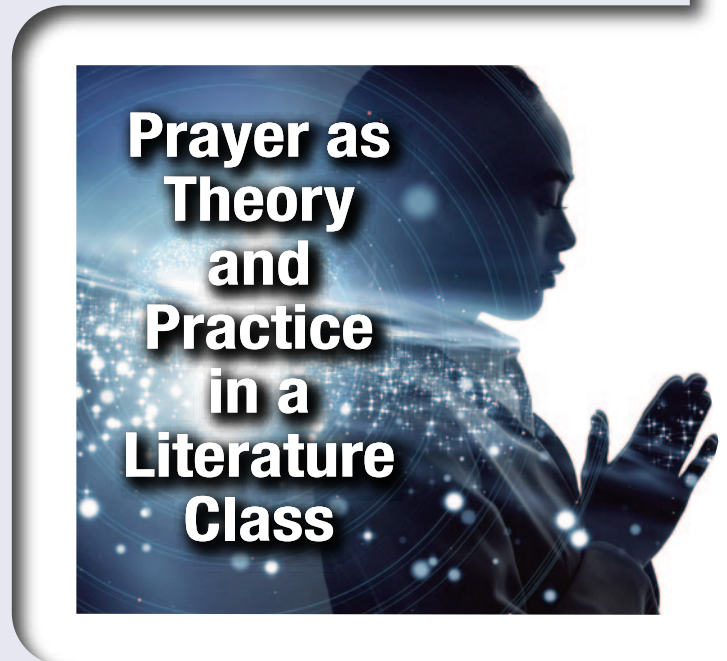
At the feet o' Jesus,
. . . Lordy, let yo' mercy
Come driftin' down on me.

At the feet o' Jesus
At yo' feet I stand.
O, ma little Jesus,
Please reach out yo' hand.[1]

Veiled in Hughes' folksy petition is the presence of language as a vehicle in which prayers can be ushered forth to, as Ellen G. White says, ". . . open . . . the heart to God as to a friend . . . Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him."[2]

Prayer as a celestial communication tool in the life of the human being seeking to live with a heavenly conscience is also explored in the movie *War Room*. The movie examines the challenges in human relationships related to marriage and business and offers a practical examination of prayer's transformative and restorative power in a person's life. The essentiality of prayer is expressed by a central character, Miss Clara, who represents the church mother in the film. Miss Clara has a "war [prayer] room." She begs the Lord (in prayer) to "raise up a generation of believers who are not ashamed of the Gospel."[3] That generation of believers must be encouraged to establish a systematic prayer life.

Conceptually, the relation of prayer (broadly) to positive brain activity is supported by researchers such as Andrew Newberg and Mark Robert Waldman, who suggest that the brain needs prayer. According to Newberg and Waldman, "Faith is embedded in our neurons and in our genes, and it is one of the most important principles to honor in our lives,"[4] This principle, I believe, can be integrated into the educational setting and, more specifically, in literature classes in Adventist schools be-

cause language and the human beings' need for God (and all that is related to God) is the theme of many literary works. The Prayer Project, therefore, is offered as one pedagogical model that can be used to encourage students to engage in an intellectual and spiritual discussion centered around the subject of prayer.

A Biblical Foundation

The Prayer Project is grounded in a familiar biblical text: 1 Thessalonians 5:17, where Christians are explicitly called to "pray continually" (NIV)[5] or without ceasing. Therefore, if one is to live an eternally prayerful life, prayer must be conceived as a Christian duty, and every aspect of the being is called to an active life of prayer. This suggests that language, as a modality for prayer, is essential to a productive prayer life. Because this is true, the Christian English professor must include prayer as theory *and* practice in the literature and composition class to encourage students to critically create a system of prayer and to practice a systematic prayer life.

The Prayer Project

The Prayer Project utilizes research on prayer, the prayer journal, and a conceptual "war room" of prayer to engage an interdisciplinary dialogue around the subject of prayer. The goal of the project is to encourage prayer strategies as a means of communicating and further developing a creative, critically engaged relationship with God. This is a critical aspect of the integration of faith with learning.

Students are provided with a physical space and a supportive environment to create a prayer lab in the literature classroom. They work collectively to stock the prayer lab with literature, film, music, and academic articles on prayer to help them develop their projects and stimulate class discussions. Additionally, using these resources, students then create their own individual prayer projects. Examples of individual projects include the following:

1. A semester-long prayer journal comprised of reflections, observations, original poetry, and responses to experiences with prayer.

2. A research-based memoir essay (a first-person essay based on the author's life and experience) in which students develop a theoretical position on prayer (see Malya Prather's essay on page 36). Students may use the movie *War Room* as the foundational text to ground their point of view. In addition to the movie *War Room*, teachers may want to add other texts for the students to explore, such as poetry with prayer as the theme, hymns, gospel music, Ellen G. White's writings on prayer (see *Prayer* [Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2002] or similar compilations), and music from contemporary culture.

3. A PowerPoint presentation or movie trailer about their memoirs. This assignment allows students to use technical skills and experience an interdisciplinary component of the writing process.

4. A personal, physical "war room." Teachers may design this as a student-centered assignment. Students can decide how they will set up the room and how many times during the semester they will visit the room. Students may also have the opportunity to co-

Prayer Room Rubric®
Course: Theory and Practice in Literary Criticism

Criteria	Level 1: Excellent 20 points	Level 2: Good 16 points	Level 3: Fair 14 points	Level 4: Needs Improvement 12 points	Level 5: Below Expectation 5 points	Criterion Score / 20
20 Logged Sessions (10 minimum)	20 sessions logged	15 sessions logged	10 sessions logged	5 sessions logged	No essay submitted	/ 20
20 Scriptures	20 sessions logged	15 sessions logged	10 sessions logged	5 sessions logged		/ 20
20 Testimonies	20 sessions logged	15 sessions logged	10 sessions logged	5 sessions logged		/ 20
20 Prayer Requests	20 prayer requests logged	15 prayer requests logged	10 prayer requests logged	5 prayer requests logged		/ 20
Prayer Room Essay A written piece about the 22-session prayer journey/experience.	Appropriate to the assignment. The written piece is well thought-out and clearly describes the prayer journey. Error-free document.	The written piece was vague about the author's journey, but the page requirement was met. Errors in development and grammar.	The written piece gave a minimum view of the author's journey, but the page requirement was met. Various sentence structure and grammar errors.	The written piece does not meet the assignment requirement. Provides no substantial insight into the prayer journey. The essay is inadequate in length and needs development.		
Total						/100

design the rubric for this assignment. A copy of the rubric I co-created with my students that semester is included in the sidebar (see Prayer Room Rubric).

5. A prayer blog. Using one of the many free blog platforms available, students can develop a prayer blog. This blog will help them to build ideas for the memoir, as it will feature their thoughts on prayer, prayer-poems, or their own prayers. This assignment also supports the idea that writing is a process. These blog entries can also be used to help students generate ideas for the research-based memoir. Some free blog platforms include WordPress, Blogspot, Blogger, Weebly, and Wix.

These examples work well for in-person classes that meet in physical space. However, they can be adapted to the online environment with careful attention to how students will engage online and what types of assessment alternatives can be used.[6] Also, attention should be given to finding ways to differentiate how students demonstrate engagement. A visually impaired student, for example, might have challenges maintaining a prayer blog or systematically maintaining a written prayer journal. Adaptations could include utilizing different forms of media (e.g., audio recordings) or utilizing a small-group model, which will allow group members to assist one another.

Conclusion

The Prayer Project is designed to give students a physical space where they can reflect on prayer as theory and practice. This example shows how it was implemented in a literary criticism course and provides suggestions for how this can be done in a literature class where language, thought, and expression are essential to the writing process. During this course, students studied and practiced their writing and composition skills. They engaged with research, writing as a process, and critical thinking. Also, the project provided an opportunity to integrate schoolwide themes as expressed by the institution's spiritual master plan. For example, at the university where I teach, the biblical concepts of restoration and transformation, as outlined by the Office of Spiritual Life, are integrated throughout the semester as students work on their Prayer Projects. This pedagogical approach offers teachers and students an opportunity to journey together not only with the intended content but also through an intentional process of integrating faith with learning. ✐

The article that follows is an example of the memoir essay completed by one of the students in the course. It shares her engagement in reflecting on and discussing her spiritual journey through experience, poetry, and journaling. (See essay by Malya Prather.)

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Malya Prather

A Student's Journey

With the Prayer Project

Early one semester, one Friday night at AY[1] (Adventist Youth vespers), instead of my usual participation in the execution of the service, I decided to sit in the congregation. Sitting in the pew was something I had not done in a while, considering the previous semester, I was on the AY team leading the weekly service. That evening, I was surprised by how switching from leader to worshiper would significantly change my perspective. No longer was I the one who moved to move the congregation, but as the service began and picked up speed in the delivery of its theme and message, I was moved by the moving. So much so that I was unprepared for what I was about to witness and had to write down my experience.

As the Holy Spirit danced around me, I wrote the following words in my prayer journal: "As the music plays on, as the service opens in song, as the testimonials are cried out, all I can see is God's hand reaching down, and touching all the ears that could hear and all the eyes that could see. Just as the wind moves unseen, so does He. But what is undeniable is the reaction of the things that are moved. Like leaves rustling in the wind, caressed by its touch, so are His people. One by one, they stood, all of them, until this 'tree' was swaying, dancing, wrapped up in the love of God, that wonderful thing unseen yet undeniably felt. It is made real in recognition and manifested in song and prayer."

That night at AY was the first time I had witnessed and recognized prayer as more than just a person speaking eloquently in the direction of heaven. I saw it as an awareness of the self and an awareness of what moves the self. At the time, I believed this realization to be all I needed to produce my theory on prayer and practice. Still, time revealed that the AY experience was only the beginning of my journey because as time passed and as I continued to study throughout the semester, questions that I didn't even know were necessary to be asked started to rise to the surface of my mind. During AY, I stated that

prayer is simply recognition, but what does it mean to recognize? PsychologyDictionary.org defines *recognition* as "a sense of familiarity when encountering people, events, or objects that have been previously encountered."[2] It also stated that recognition pertains to material learned in the past. The next question that came to mind concerning prayer was if it is, in fact, recognition, then who is it that is being recognized?

In its simplest form, prayer is a conversation between the person praying and the person to whom he or she is praying. In this case, that would be any individual and God. So, naturally, one would conclude that in prayer, the individual recognizes God and himself or herself. To have a conversation with someone, an individual must recognize the other person and acknowledge who they are as an individual and who they are to that other person.

John Koethe defends this idea in his poem, "Theories of Prayer," where he says:

The stance is one of supplication, but to whom?
Time pours into the present, while a greater,
Vaguer presence menaces the borders of that country
Whose geography lies entirely within.
Half-hidden trees, half-articulated sounds
And the sympathetic murmur of the heightened mind—
These are the symptoms of an inwardness made visible
In deferential gestures and repeated words.
Come seek me, let the expiation start
The genie said, and for a while the air was
Sweeter with the promise of another life,
An afterlife, all eager to begin.[3]

He is bringing to light the push and pull of the spiritual realm with that of the self, how the movement of one's soul, and "the sympathetic murmur of the heightened mind"[4] are all reactions to oneself. They are "the symptoms of an inwardness made visible."[5] This was the next stage in defining my prayer theory and practice. At this point in my prayer journey, I had concluded that prayer was self-awareness in congruence with spiritual awareness.

However, the next part of Koethe's poem left me with more questions:

Yet things are temporary, and the beautiful design
That seemed to lurk behind a fragrant veil
Dissolved, leaving the houses, streets,
The trees, the canyons, even the distant hills,
As they were before.[6]

Does this mean that the murmur of God is temporary? After being touched by the Creator, can one completely reverse the effects of His power? Can an individual's recognition of Him be erased? Before this, I thought I reached a conclusion. After, I realized that I was only halfway there.

Philippians 4:6 and 7 states, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (NKJV),[7] Psalm 138:3 states, "In the day when I cried out, You answered me, and made me bold with strength in my soul." Psalm 118:5 states, "I called on the Lord in distress; the Lord answered me and set me in a broad place." Based on these three scriptures, it can be stated that prayer expresses our inner spiritual needs to God. Through prayer, we can find everything we need to get through this life we're living here on earth. But, in order to know what to ask for, in alignment with God, we have to know what we need. And in order to know what we need, we have to know who we are. This leads us back to the notion that self-awareness is necessary for prayer. So, how does one become self-aware? More specifically, how does one not only become self-aware but also tie self-awareness to spiritual awareness? These questions led me to the third and final stage of my journey in search of a definition of my theory on prayer.

The same semester I took a class called Fundamentals of Christian Education. For this class, we studied the book *Education* by Ellen G. White. In the book's first chapter, she explains the source and aim of true education. In the beginning, she states:

"True education means more than the pursual of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come."[8]

Later in the book, she states that Colossians 2:3 brings the source of such an education into view. It says in Him, "are hid all the treasures of wisdom."[9] God, being the Creator that He is, knows all that there is to know about everything. He is omniscient. He made everything and placed Himself in all the things that He made. The world that He molded us out of is filled with things that represent Him and who He is as the Creator. At creation, one of the things that He established for us to do for eternity was to learn about Him. Since the beginning of time, our duty has been to use the resources He created for us to gain a better understanding of who He is. These resources can be

> **God, being the Creator that He is, knows all that there is to know about everything. He is omniscient. He made everything and placed Himself in all the things that He made.**

found in nature, a gift many of us take for granted. And this is unfortunate because often what we are looking for can be found in incandescent sun rays and dandelion wishes. Often what we need can be heard in the whistling of the birds and the gentle touch of the wind. What we need is not artificial or made by human beings. That is why God did not leave it up to us to invent nature. He birthed us from nature into nature. And even after the fall of human beings, God implemented the practice of education to promote the development of the body, the mind, and the soul so that the divine purpose might be realized. This divine purpose is the work of redemption. "This is the object of education, the great object of life."[10] Also, because we are a part of His creation, we can learn about who God is by diving into the complexities of self. In learning about Him, God allows us to learn about ourselves and how we, as the creation, tie into Him as the Creator.

In finding this, I realized that I needed to go deeper in developing my theory of prayer and practice. Prayer is not just recognition; it is recognition through self-awareness in tandem with spiritual awareness. And prayer is not just awareness; it is awareness through the practice of education, a process of continual seeking after God and learning more about Him with each encounter. Education allows us to recognize the needs of self and the power of the only One who can ever fill those needs in the most beneficial way. Education allows us to communicate with our Creator as effectively and intimately as possible. We are all different; therefore, we all have different ways of communicating. It is a beautiful, never-ending cycle. This realization was the third point of awareness in my search for the definition of my theory of prayer and practice, and I highly doubt it will be my last. ✑

> **What we need is not artificial or made by human beings. That is why God did not leave it up to us to invent nature.**

> **He birthed us from nature into nature. And even after the fall of human beings, God implemented the practice of education to promote the development of the body, the mind, and the soul so that the divine purpose might be realized.**

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Carol Linda Kingston
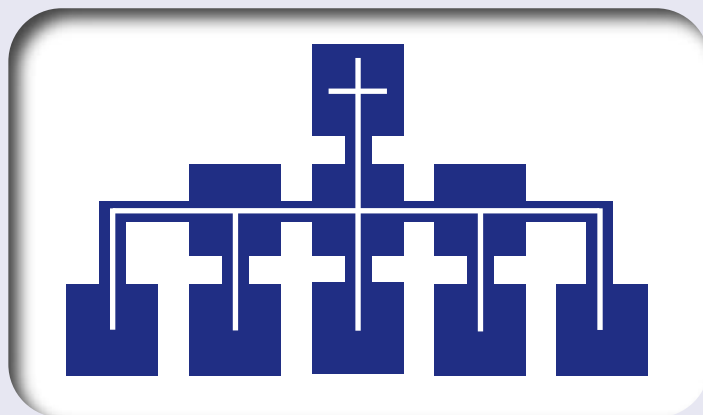
Growing Professionally in Christ

Educators often view professional development as attaining outstanding credentials, advanced academic degrees, excellent research, etc. While academic achievement and training are essential, so is attention to our spiritual growth. We must intentionally seek to connect our professional development with our walk with Jesus Christ. This is the most vital part of the Adventist educator's professional life.

Growing professionally in Christ means developing a deep and intimate relationship with Him. Becoming closer to Christ will naturally help us grow a Christlike character, temperance in all things (and wisdom to know what to avoid), a positive attitude, wisdom, and the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:26; 2 Corinthians 5:17). The more we connect with Christ, the more we desire specific qualities and attributes. Let us see how these specific qualities help us as working professionals:

Ethics

The term "Christian ethics" refers to the moral principles and values that Jesus taught and are given in the Bible. Ethics guide Adventist professionals in making decisions and living a righteous life in accordance with Christ and their faith. Emphasis on love, compassion, forgiveness, and service to others should be part of the daily life of the Adventist educator, in addition to hon-

"May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us—yes, establish the work of our hands" (Psalms 90:17, NIV).[1]

"Do you see someone skilled in their work? They will serve before kings; they will not serve before officials of low rank" (Proverbs 22:29, NIV).

esty, integrity, and respect for human dignity. Ethics inform the quality of life and are essential for the well being of all individuals.[2] Philippians 4:8 reminds us, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (KJV). For followers of Christ, good practice includes living by principles that uplift others, promote social justice, reduction of poverty, care for the environment, and, as Christlike professionals, work that promotes the common good and a just society.

Perseverance

For Adventist professionals, perseverance means to continue to trust in and follow God, even during trying times or when faced with obstacles. Perseverance basically means commitment and engagement in the workplace as professionals.[3] However, for the Adventist educator, perseverance means having faith that God is with us every step of the way and that He will see us through whatever challenges we face. Believing this is easier said than done, especially during difficult times when we may feel hopeless. In 2 Peter 1:5 and 6, we are advised that "For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to good-

ness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love" (NIV). Prayer, the study of God's Word, and support from fellow believers and colleagues can strengthen our perseverance and give us the guidance and courage we need to stay on the right path.

Industriousness

Words of wisdom from the Book of Ecclesiastes encourage us: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, device, knowledge, or wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest" (9:10, KJV). An industrious worker will do his or her best to produce the best work.[4] There are several ways to be diligent as Adventist professionals. First, we can use our skills and talents to serve others and spread the love of God. Second, we can work diligently in our jobs or professions, treating and valuing them as opportunities to glorify God and positively impact the world. In addition, volunteering our time and resources to help those in need, supporting our church community, and continuously growing in our faith through reading the Bible and prayer will empower us to be effective workers for Christ.

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Excellence

For Adventist professionals, excellence means doing everything to the best of our ability as unto the Lord. Distinction shows diligence in work, service to others, and living a life that honors God. We strive for excellence in all aspects of life, including our relationships, personal growth and development, and service to God and others. We aim to be a light in the world by living lives of integrity, kindness, and above all, love: "And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ" (Philippians 1:9, 10, NIV). As we seek to best use our gifts and talents to serve God and humanity, we must also strive to exceed expectations and bring glory to God in all that we do.

Love

1 Corinthians 16:14 sums up all that Christ asks of those who choose to follow Him: "Let all that you do be done in love" (ESV).[5] Adventist educators can show Christ's love to others in many ways. First, practicing kindness and compassion among ourselves. Second, treating fellow Christians, our students, and those who come within our sphere of influence with kindness and compassion, even when this is difficult or uncomfortable. When we are kind to others, we show them God's love. Third, looking for ways to serve others in the community. Fourth, sharing our faith, respectfully and lovingly, with those around us. We must be willing to listen to others and share our own experiences with them. Fifth, accepting and extending forgiveness: Forgiveness is a powerful way to show Christ's love. When someone wrongs us, choose to forgive him or her, and let go of any anger or bitterness. Remember, everyone is different and may receive love in different ways. The key is to be intentional and mindful of showing Christ's love to those around us.

Humility

Adventist professionals must show Christ's humility when interacting with their colleagues and fellow workers. According to James: "But He gives more grace. That is why Scripture says: 'God opposes the proud but gives favor to the humble'" (4:6, NIV). True humility is a gift from God. As we grow in relationship with Christ, we begin to see our true selves. We learn to recognize our limitations and how to serve others with genuine hearts. When we serve others, we put their needs before our own; we take time to listen to others without interrupting or judging, and we learn how to admit mistakes. When we make mistakes, it's essential to acknowledge them and apologize. This shows humility and a willingness to learn from our mistakes.[6] When others wrong us, it can be difficult to forgive them. Remember, humility is not about putting ourselves down or being passive. It is about recognizing our limitations and valuing our colleagues and fellow workers above ourselves. We can build stronger relationships and create a more loving and caring community by modeling Christ's humility.

Trust

Trust in God is essential for the Christian walk. Well-known guidance from the Book of Proverbs encourages us to "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your understanding; in all your ways, submit to him, and he will make your paths straight" (3:5, 6, NIV). Trust in God distinguishes us as children of God and not children of the evil one. As our relationship with God is strengthened, we are drawn to God and His Son. The result is that we learn that trust is fragile and must be carefully nurtured, even as we learn to trust others and extend grace to our colleagues, students, and other human beings. Trust is a preservative that every Christian or child of God must embrace. As David said in Psalm 4:5, "Offer sacrifices in the right spirit, and trust the Lord" (NLT).[7]

Time Management

As we grow professionally in Christ, we learn the value of time management. Each day is a gift from God, and we begin each day by spending time in prayer, Bible study, and worship. As professionals, how we order our days is essential to optimal productivity and performance.[8] And, the Scriptures advise, "Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty" (Proverbs 21:5, NLT). We cannot presume that time will never run out; our time on earth will eventually come to an end. In the psalmist's words, "My times are in your hands" (Psalm 31:15, NIV).

So, we must daily commit our time to God. We received the time from God for a reason—not to mismanage or waste it, but to use it for His glory. It can never be recovered once a minute has passed, and we are responsible to Him for how we use our time. With the psalmist we should ask God to "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom" (Psalm 90:12, NIV). We must make time for God and others.

As busy professionals, we must learn to carve out time for ourselves and our needs to renew and replenish our reserves. God designed human beings to require rest and recreation. Take that vacation; take a few hours away from work to walk in nature or find a peaceful, quiet place to recharge. Jesus instructed His followers to "'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest'" (Mark 6:31, NIV) amid an extraordinarily hectic schedule.

Approaches to Growing in Christ

Growing professionally in Christ involves lifelong learning, growth, and development in our faith. Adventist professionals must grow more in faith, knowing God is there for us. Here are some practical approaches to growing professionally in Christ:

1. *Engage in regular prayer and reflection*: Set aside time for prayer and meditation each day. These can help you deepen your relationship with Christ and better understand your faith. This can be through reading the Bible, meditating on Scripture, or reflecting quietly.

2. *Participate in church services and community activities regularly*: Attending church and community activities can help you connect with others who share your faith and provide opportunities for learning and growth.

3. *Look for opportunities for education and growth*: There are many opportunities and pathways for Christian education and growth, including workshops, conferences, and online resources. Such opportunities provide learning and development in specific areas of interest, ministry, and spiritual formation.

4. *Seek out mentorship*: Mentors can provide guidance and support as you grow in your faith. This can involve meeting regularly with a spiritual mentor, participating in a small group, or connecting with

a trusted friend who shares your values.

5. *Be accountable*: As Adventist professionals, we are accountable for that which is within our control. We are stewards of God, and each task demands excellence and accountability.

6. *Engage in service to others*: Serving others is essential to Christian growth and development. Service can mean volunteering in your local community or participating in mission work. Serving others helps us develop a deeper understanding of Jesus' teachings and grows our faith as we implement our beliefs.

Although these qualities can be learned, we can develop them further with Christ's help. Here are a few basic principles that can guide our growth as professionals in Christ:

• Remember that developing skills requires time and patience. As the Bible reminds us in Ecclesiastes 3:1 to 8, there is a time for everything. We can only grow by setting aside time for the important things and by continuing to work on them patiently, even when it takes longer than we would like.

• Nourish your mind by reading the Bible and quality Christian literature. 2 Peter 3:18 notes that we must "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (NIV).

• Focus on showing love and care to others above all else. Strive to show the characteristics of love to all around you (1 Corinthians 13).

• Have a genuine desire to grow in Jesus. 1 Peter 2:2 urges that readers, "like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation" (NIV).

Christian professionals are chosen by God to grow in Him and to serve the dying world. Ideally, we grow in Him in all aspects of our lives: spiritually, academically, and psychologically throughout our lives. We should strive to continually gaze upon the life of Christ and keep following His precepts and growing in His grace until He comes again and takes us to His heavenly university.

Indeed, growing professionally in Christ involves a commitment to lifelong learning, growth, and development in our faith. By seeking out opportunities for education and growth, connecting with others who share our values, and serving others, we can deepen our relationship with God and people and grow in our faith. ✏

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Humberto Mario Rasi

March 23, 1935 - June 28, 2023

I t is with great sadness that we share news of the passing of Dr. Humberto Mario Rasi, 88. Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1935, the trajectory of his life and service impacted the global Seventh-day Adventist Church, evidenced by the many roles he held in his lifetime: editor, translator, educator, educational administrator, author, and ordained minister of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

A skilled, experienced educational administrator, Dr. Rasi served at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists as an associate director of education (1986-1990) and director of education (1990-2002). With these roles came membership on THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION® Advisory Board, and in this capacity, Dr. Rasi was instrumental in shaping the tone and direction of professional development for Adventist educators, pre-K-higher education. Between 1987 and

> "Then I heard a voice from heaven say, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them'" (Revelation 14:12, 13, NIV).*

2005, he wrote 20 articles and editorials for the JOURNAL on topics ranging from helping educators to train students to think critically to assessing trends in education to what makes a school Adventist (see Sidebar 1 on page 45).

In addition to his contributions to the JOURNAL, Dr. Rasi launched *College and University Dialogue* (https://dialogue.adventist.org/home) in 1989. Known informally as *Dialogue,* this magazine was the first publication to publish content targeted directly to Adventist college and university students and faculty studying and working in public institutions. Dr. Rasi also initiated the Institute for Christian Teaching and, from 1987 to 2014, organized international seminars on the Integration of Faith and Learning (IFL) for Adventist educators. Through these seminars, Adventist educators in higher education received professional training on the "how" of IFL and conducted and presented

The General Conference Department of Education team, world division education directors, and invited retirees at the October 2011 Education Advisory.

their own research on integrating faith in the classroom. Their work, a collection of approximately 1,500 monographs, is currently available in the 40-volume *Christ in the Classroom* collection, which can be accessed through the Institute of Christian Teaching website (https://christintheclassroom.org/search_volume.html). *The Handbook of Integration of Faith and Learning* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, in press), a forthcoming publication sponsored by the General Conference Education Department, will be dedicated to Dr. Rasi.

More than just an outstanding leader, Dr. Humberto Rasi was a valued colleague, trusted friend, and dynamic mentor to many (see Sidebar 2 on page 46). We will miss him. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20, KJV).

By The Journal of Adventist Education® Staff

Sidebar 1: JAE Articles and Editorials Authored or Coauthored by Humberto M. Rasi

Articles

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• "Dr. Rasi was a mighty oak. The thick limbs of his intellect stretched out in leafy green, providing dappled sunlight in which seedlings could flourish. Over many decades, untold numbers worldwide grew intellectually and spiritually through his teaching, speaking, writing, editing, translating, and mentoring. He took people, their ideas, their questions, and the mission of Adventist education seriously. Dr. Rasi placed Scripture as the cornerstone of the academic enterprise. By teaching them how to build on this cornerstone, he challenged academics in various disciplines and educators at all levels to engage in deep analysis and application to integrate biblical faith and values with learning."—Dr. Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, Director of Education, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

• "My beloved doctor . . . [even] at his age, it was difficult to keep up with him! He always had something going on. Restless, bright, committed, an example difficult to imitate. His broad smile, bright eyes, sharp thoughts, and gentle firmness will always be with me. Please, come, Jesus."—Dr. Efraín Velázquez II, President, Inter-American Adventist Theological Seminary, Puerto Rico.

• "We met 24 years ago in Abidjan [Côte d'Ivoire) for an integrating faith in teaching seminar, as indicated by the below picture. We will meet again in the morning of resurrection. . . Psalm 90:12, 13."—Dr. Adrián Vyambwara, Democratic Republic of Congo,

• "He took us through a Faith and Science seminar at the Geoscience Research Institute in Loma Linda in 2007, and he mentored us to publish our articles in *Christ in the Classroom* in 2007. He was so strong and agile, we kept running after him as we visited sites in California. May the Lord comfort his family. Thank God for a life of impact."—Dr. Grace Tayo, past Dean of Sciences and Professor, Babcock University, Nigeria.

• "A cherished mentor, Dr. Humberto Rasi left an indelible mark on our lives and Seventh-day Adventist education. His journey was a symphony of devotion to faith, education, and literature. He was a dedicated educator, scholar, and supporter of Adventist ideals, and his impact is immeasurable. Dr. Rasi combined vision with action. He pioneered the integration of faith and learning, guiding countless students and professionals to embrace biblical beliefs in their chosen fields. His contributions are far-reaching through founding the Institute for Christian Teaching and launching the *College and University Dialogue* journal, among other initiatives. His wisdom, wit, and unwavering commitment to Adventist education will ever inspire us to seek knowledge, uphold Bible-based faith, and embrace the higher ideals of redemptive Christian education. His legacy will continue to shape and uplift generations to come."—Dr. John Wesley Taylor, President, Andrews University.

• "Humberto Rasi was a gracious Christian gentleman, an excellent administrator and writer, and a strong supporter of the church's professional publication for educators, *The Journal of Adventist Education*. Among his many significant achievements were the founding of *College and University Dialogue* and his commitment to the integration of faith and learning, which went far beyond lip service—his decades of well-organized seminars (Institute for Christian Teaching) were a blessing to thousands of people and produced a wealth of resource materials that will continue to have an enormous impact on Adventist education."—Beverly J. Robinson-Rumble, Editor Emeritus, *The Journal of Adventist Education*® (JAE).

Faith and Learning Conference, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 1999.

Rasi Scholarship

In honor of Humberto Rasi's life and legacy, the Rasi family has established the Rasi Scholarship to support theology students at River Plate Adventist University (UAP) (Entre Rios, Argentina) who are in their final year of studies but lack funds to finish their degrees.

Those wishing to make a tax-deductible donation (U.S.) can send a check made out to the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, writing in the memo line: "Rasi Scholarship UAP – Argentina." The check should be sent to: Attention: Eugene Korff, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, U.S.A. To confirm the donation has been received, please take a photo of the check before sending it, then contact Gisela Sicalo (gisela.sicalo@uap.edu.ar/alumni@uap.edu.ar) to confirm that a donation has been made to the scholarship.

A comprehensive obituary of his life's work and contributions to the Adventist Church, globally, can be found online at the following links:

Adventist Review
https://adventistreview.org/obituary/trailblazing-educator-humberto-mario-rasi-dies-at-88/

Adventist News Network
https://adventist.news/news/trail-blazing-educator-humberto-mario-rasi-dies-at-88

Inter-American Division
https://interamerica.org/es/2023/07/fallece-a-los-88-anos-el-destacado-educador-humberto-mario-rasi/.

cent feel isolated and unnoticed; and 45 percent feel misunderstood.[5] Those involved in the study are within the 13-to-25 demographic, the same population that comprises the followers of many social media gurus and influencers.

The study found if young persons have at least one trusted individual in their lives, they experience reduced feelings of loneliness, isolation, and stress. This benefit increases the more connections a young person experiences. Springtide calls this the "Belongingness Process," which refers to three specific types of experiences found in the stories of those who felt they belonged"[6]

When Andrew and Peter, and later James, John, and the others, heard Jesus' call, I believe there was more to their response than following a personality or a brand. I believe that when Jesus said, "'Follow me,'" there was in His voice the promise of certainty, of realized potential. It was the voice of the GREAT I AM—the voice of the One who knew them, who saw them, who understood their deepest, unspoken desires. The one who said: "'Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born I set you apart'" (Jeremiah 1:5).

Adventist education is where we introduce students to the One who created them, died for them, and who knows them intimately—their joys, sorrows, hopes, and aspirations. But Adventist education is not just for children of Adventists, it is for ALL God's children. A place where ALL children, regardless of circumstance or experience, can know and cry out like Hagar—and all those like her—such as Abraham, Isaac, and Hannah—that "'You are the God who sees me'" (Genesis 16:13). In Jesus' call is the certainty that we are noticed, named, and known by the One in whom our full potential can be realized.

In this invitation, the disciples find their purpose. The invitation is not about comfort, but courage to fulfill our purpose. Two additional definitions of *follow* are used—"to accompany" and "to assist." Jesus called the disciples to accompany Him, to assist Him on His

mission of making disciples for the kingdom: "'and I will help you fish for people.'"[7] And He invites us to do the same! Fishermen during the time of Jesus lived difficult lives. The arduous, demanding occupation called for skill, patience, and tenacity. They endured extreme heat and cold; they used nets, baskets, spears, hook and line, and sometimes, even their bare hands to catch fish. They learned early how to sort the various types of fish and determine how each could be used; they learned how to make, mend, and maintain their nets so that they could keep up with the industry.[8] It took courage to live as a fisherman.

So, what might it have meant for them to hear Jesus say, "'I will send you out to fish for people'"? People? Like the fish of the sea? All types of people in all types of circumstances? People who would require patience, skill, and care? People who would need more from them than they could give in their own strength?

In Luke 5:1-11, we read the same story from another perspective, and in this version, Jesus works a miracle after a difficult situation. After fishing all night and catching nothing, Simon Peter responds to Jesus' request to use his boat. In return, Jesus instructs him to cast his net into the deep. Peter is skeptical—they had fished all night with no success. However, when Peter sees the nets bursting with fish, and the boats sinking with the weight of the catch, we're told: "he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!'" (Luke 5:8). Like Isaiah, who declared, "'Woe is me! I am ruined . . . my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty'" (Isaiah 6:5), and like us, when we feel the weight of what is required of us during this period of time in which we are living—the demands, the crises, and the challenges to longstanding principles of faith—Peter caught a glimpse of his own frail, fallible humanity, and felt in his soul the need for a Savior. I believe, too, that at that moment was born confidence and certainty that in Jesus, ALL things were possible. For us today, it re-

mains the same. Only when we acknowledge our dependence on the divine[9] can we truly, humbly, respond to the call: "Come, Follow Me."

Jesus responded to Peter's cry with words of comfort and a declaration of promise: "'Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.'" WILL is affirmative! It shouts, "certainty in the future." That same I AM that was with Moses (Exodus 3:14) promises to equip us in His mission to be "fishers of people" even in challenging times. As Adventist educators, we encounter all kinds of students and families, and we will need to know how best to reach them, nurture them, and keep them.

From inception, Seventh-day Adventist schools have been "nets"—capturing all, teaching all, nurturing all. And we must continue our commitment to become skilled at doing so against changing social, political, economic, and religious tides. From learning how to use new technology like Generative AI (David P. Harris and Fred Armstrong), to learning how to navigate and maintain impartiality on Adventist school boards (Robert Crux); from stewardship of the environment (Desmond Hartwell Murray), to stewardship of our professional growth in Christ (Carol Linda Kingston), to caring for their prayer lives in college and university (Ramona L. Hyman and Malya Prather). As Adventist educators, educational administrators, and educational personnel and staff on the frontline of mission, we have a mandate: to make our schools places where all who enter will hear the call of Jesus, "Come, follow Me!" Places where all who enter feel the impress of the Savior on their hearts, and "by the cords of His love"[10] are drawn to Him.

The call of Jesus on the Sea of Galilee echoes through time to each one of us today. In a world with so many voices clamoring for our attention, may we hear clearly the One who calls, find confidence in His promise, and be about His mission.

Faith-Ann A. McGarrell, PhD, *is the Editor of* The Journal of Adventist Education®. *She can be reached at mcgarrellf@gc.adventist.org.*

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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