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Lake Union HERALD

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See inside the Oct. 2023 issue

This month's issue features inspiring testimonials from our pastors on why they choose to preach.

October is Pastor Appreciation Month. Don't forget to thank your pastor for all they do!

As you might expect, I spoke with many pastors in preparation for this Herald which focuses on the call to pastoral ministry. What you might not expect is how so many bemoaned a disturbing problem. More than a few signaled an alarming decline in the number of young people who felt called to ministry. The pastors' concerns spilled over into statements such as, "I became a pastor because someone encouraged me." "We have to mentor the next generation."

This is Amen territory.

The call to pastoral ministry can, at times, be the voice of God calling Samuel out of his slumber. Or that same Voice calling Elisha to support and then carry on the work of Isaiah. But what happens when the modern-day Timothy responds to Paul with a polite "No, thank you"?

As I listened to these pastors, I was reminded of Neal Veldman. Neal, a retired realtor, is in his 80s and resides in Battle Creek, Michigan. [You may recall [his story in last year's Herald](#) where he wrote of his cherished time in a one-room schoolhouse.] He cares deeply for our youth and wants nothing more than for them to experience what he felt growing up in Rockford, Illinois.

“When I came home from Broadview Academy on weekends or for the summer,” he wrote, “at church I was met with open arms, and lots of hugs and affirmation, because these people were my family and they loved me. I never wanted to disappoint them in any way. When I sold books as a student literature evangelist in the summers, they were interested in hearing stories of my sales and contacts and successes.”

If you distill Neal’s story, it boils down to a simple formula for keeping our youth engaged in the mission of the church. Affirm them. Heap lots of love on them. And one more thing.

The church is Christ’s body. Perhaps we can do what Paul did in Acts 20 when a youth named Eutychus lost interest in church affairs, and eventually fell out of the church and lost his life. Paul stopped the program, and as a representative of Christ’s body, he covered the youth with his body and, beloved, prayed until Eutychus came back to life.

Debbie Michel
Lake Union Communication Director
Lake Union Herald Editor

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FEATURED STORIES



Why I Preach

Jeff Veldman, Thorly James, Jennifer Daley, Ovi Radulescu, and Lamont Taylor are five pastors who traded pews for pulpits. They represent a fairly large group of Adventists who abandoned careers to pursue ministry.

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In Tune With God's Voice

Early in life Stephanie Peterson felt a call to help others. Little did she know that calling would lead her to a life of service as a hospital chaplain and lay pastor in her home church. Along the way, God has brought her to each new place in life, providing just what she needed at every step, preparing her for what was next.

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Eight Years Old and Spreading the Word

Eight-year-old Ezra Jean-Baptiste gave his first sermon when he was 6 at an Adventurers function in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Since then, he has given multiple sermons across the United States, including at the Master Guide convention in Colorado last summer.

“God gave me the talent to preach,” said the third grader at Ruth Murdoch Elementary School when asked about his call to ministry.

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Caring for Those Who Care

The weight of pastoral responsibilities often goes unnoticed, hidden beneath the facade of strength that ministers project. However, acknowledging and addressing pastors' mental health is essential for sustaining their well-being and effectiveness.

Several years ago, I read a book by Lucille Lavender titled: "They Cry, Too: What You Always Wanted to Know About Your Minister but Didn't Know Whom to Ask," shedding light on pastors' emotional challenges. It revealed that ministers, like anyone else, grapple with feelings of inadequacy, loneliness, stress and even depression. These struggles arise from the immense pressure of offering spiritual guidance while maintaining balance in their own lives. Pastors, the book emphasized, are human, susceptible to the same emotional turmoil as those they serve. Consider how ministers, entrusted with shepherding souls, often share messages of hope even when they carry silent anguish. It's clear that pastors worldwide, at times, journey through what I term "The Valleys of the Prophets." This highlights that spiritual leaders also experience emotional challenges in times of hardship.

- Elden Ramirez is executive secretary and ministerial director for the Lake Union Conference.

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