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Pastoral ministry: a framework for mission service that flows from the heart

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My reflections emerge from the experience of growing up in a pastor's home, being personally involved in ministry and working in an administrative-leadership role as a ministerial secretary. In the past 15 years, my responsibility as the director of the Ellen G White/ SDA Research Centre at Avondale University College (now Avondale University) provided an opportunity to reflectively evaluate the history of pastoral ministry and its relationship to the spiritual journey and to mission in this changing world.

In my youthful eagerness to make sense of life and its purpose, I observed my father's ministry, the passion of his commitment to God, his moments of emotional strain and discouragement, and the joy of his "a-ha" moments. His stories sprang from the dangers of World War II, followed by life under the communist regime in Poland, creating a picture in my mind of the undeniable need for trust and confidence in God's presence. My father was not an educated man, but his faith matured by trusting God's promises in the trenches of life's journey.

Images of his morning prayer-time helped me in my struggle to understand my place in the complexity of life.

My journey has had similar ups and downs—moments of desperation stemming from ongoing workload challenges, contrasted with the exuberance, joy and delight of sensing God's leadership and guidance. At times, I experienced anger and frustration, when my empty soul called to God, "Where are you?" I listened to my colleagues, who were stressed from the pressures of local congregations, organisational expectations and sometimes personal ambitions. This plethora of life experiences painted in my mind a giant canvas of shapes and colours representing pastoral ministry. And yet, when I tried to see the full picture, signifying the essence of pastoral ministry, it seemed distant, unclear and undefined.

It made me wonder: What is pastoral ministry? What is its crux in the scope of God's mission to the world? What guidelines did God provide through the inspired voice, life and ministry of Ellen White? What lessons can be drawn from history of the Seventh-day Adventist movement's journey towards the Second Coming?

Reflections on Ellen White's pastoral heart

These questions challenged me to examine Ellen White's contribution to our understanding of pastoral ministry—not by compiling the flood of statements from the pen of the inspired writer, but by recapturing the nurturing voice that guided the growth of the Adventist Church with a visionary depth emerging from her personal struggles to know God.

Ellen White did not encourage the church from afar, as a distant observer, but from the trenches of her spiritual battlefield. The trials she encountered inspired her to reflect on the significance of pastoral service—spiritually nurturing service fostered by divine guidance. Her role as God's messenger did not exempt her from day-to-day trials and heartaches. Submerged in the challenges of her time and culture, she sought to "discern the characteristic ways of God's history in the past and so also in the future."[1] The ensuing cross-interaction between divine actions and the human search for meaning placed her pastoral heart at a spiritual nexus of motivational and missional objectives. These aimed to arouse views of new realities freed from a taxing reliance on human efforts and accomplishments.[2] In this sense, the main thrust

of her inspired role was pastoral, but more to the point, pastorally and experientially inspirational.

Around 1862, she wrote, "We cannot be accepted or honoured of God in rendering the same service, or doing the same works, that our fathers did. In order to be accepted and blessed of God as they were, we must imitate their faithfulness and zeal—improve our light as they improved theirs—and do as they would have done had they lived in our day."[3] It seems that her understanding of service moved beyond the realm of activities shaped by pressures and demands, be they personal, congregational or organisational. In her mind, service in God's mission to the world included faithfulness, commitment, passion and improvement of skills, embedded in a deeply seated living faith: "There is no help for us but in God; in this state of earth's confusion, we can be composed, strong, or safe, only in the strength of living faith."[4] The depth of such spiritual experience translates into a meaningful contextualisation of God's presence in the fabric of human life. In other words, such a process enhances a space for new negotiations, meditation, motivation and nurturing that, in turn, builds the drive to know and understand God and the passion of His heart.

Most importantly, the depth and sensitivity of Ellen White's pastoral heart emerged from her encounters with Jesus, the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist movement, and the ordinary challenges related to life and ministry in a changing world. These interactive and integrated relationships helped me re-envision the contours of my previously described canvas with greater clarity. The broad-brushed strokes of pastoral activities, shaped by organisational demands and training programs, began to merge into a new focus. In Ellen White's mind, the lifeblood and spiritual depth of pastoral ministry sprang from "daily experience in the things of God and daily practice of self-denial, cheerfully bearing the cross and following Christ."[5] On this journey, her faith was anchored deeply in God's promises, flowing from the pages of the Bible. Her implicit trust and confidence in His presence role-modelled the main goal of pastoral work—to connect people with God and Jesus. The words she expressed in the final days of her life testify to the intimacy of her relationship with Jesus: "The Lord is our Helper."[6] "I know in whom I have believed."[7]

Ellen White's letter written to a discouraged sister, dated June 14, 1914, provides an all-inclusive view of her nurturing pastoral heart: "The Lord has given me a message for you, and not you only but also for other faithful souls who are troubled by doubts and fears regarding their acceptance by the Lord Jesus Christ."[8] The letter's content is saturated with faith-building assurances: "Put away your distrust of our heavenly Father. Instead of talking of your doubts, break away from them in the strength of Jesus, and let light shine into your soul by letting you express confidence and trust in God." Furthermore, she wrote, "It is your privilege to trust in Jesus for salvation, in the fullest, surest, noblest manner; to say He loves me, He receives me; I will trust Him, for He gave His love to save me."[9]

This chapter examines the main thrust of Ellen White's understanding of pastoral ministry through the lenses of her spiritual journey and her divinely guided messages to ministers during the movement's crucial formative years from 1868 to 1900 and beyond. More specifically, it intends to draw lessons from the visions received on June 5, 1863, and June 12, 1868, and her address written to ministers on October 25, 1868. The challenges associated with the prevailing circumstances shaped in Ellen White's mind the foundational character of pastoral ministry and provided visionary inspiration for its role in God's mission to the world. Through all the ordeals she encountered, Ellen White maintained a determined experiential focus on the spiritual components of pastoral service, which matured with her growing knowledge of God's unconditional love. At the same time, it ignited a fire of passion for innovative experimentation and devotion to service relevant to its time and place.

Shaping the heart of pastoral ministry

After the Great Disappointment, there was a pathway of turbulent challenges for the growing Sabbatarian movement. Haloviak asserts that due to the "shut door" period, the church's "initial perception of ministry centred exclusively upon a 'pastoral' rather than an evangelistic focus."[10] However, the formative stages of the post-Millerite Sabbatarian movement included a diversity of factors injurious to spirituality. The lack of a precisely defined focus generated a need for spiritual reorientation. While theological clarity was essential, the movement

required step-by-step guidance in matters crucial to human wellbeing—whether they be spiritual, social or physical. The growing community also needed a deeper comprehension of God's unconditional love, stemming from the sensitivity of a pastorally oriented heart.

As early as 1855, Ellen White called for spiritual renewal among pastors and believers, and her appeals were sharp and clear:

> The servants of the Lord have trusted too much to the strength of the argument and have not had the firm reliance upon God which they should have. I saw that the mere argument of truth will not move souls to stand.... The servants of God must have the truth in the soul.[11]

The lack of spiritual vibrancy diminished trust and confidence in God's caring presence and increased interest in material gains. The believers focused on "adding farm to farm, and land to land, and house to house."[12] The deficiency of trust in God evoked discouragement. As a result, many believed that "God had forsaken them."[13] In this context, Ellen White called for a "deep and living experience" with God, rather than reliance on forms of godliness.[14]

The described conditions, lack of financial support and preoccupation with a work-oriented lifestyle negatively impacted the sustainability of pastoral responsibilities. In 1856, two of the committed pastoral leaders, John Andrews and John Loughborough, left the ministry to settle and work on a farm. Braving the dangers of extreme weather conditions, Ellen and James White travelled to Waukon, Iowa, to offer pastoral encouragement to Loughborough and Andrews. She challenged Loughborough three times with the question, "What doest thou here, Elijah?"[15] Reporting on the success of this visit, James White noted:

> The tender spirit of confession and forgiveness was mutually cherished by all.... God's Holy Spirit touched all our hearts, and how strong was the union felt between hearts broken and subdued by the grace of God.[16]

The success of this ministry of encouragement compensated for the challenge of "facing the prairies, winds and storms on our long and tedious journey to Iowa."

In 1871, John Andrews described the taxing nature of his early pastoral ministry in the following reflection:

> My anxiety of mind was constant and often extreme. Associated with a few others, or rather in the attempt to advance an unpopular truth, there fell to my lot a heavy burden of anxious care, and the necessity of much overtaxing labour, oftentimes requiring not the day merely, but much, or even all, of the night.[17]

The growing Seventh-day Adventist movement required much more than the coercive voice of an inspired prescriptive authoritarian "telling people off."[18] The journey of faith calls for a voice that inspires, comforts, encourages, strengthens and drives human vision towards hope embedded in God's solutions. It yearns to hear counsel from someone drenched in a real experience with God—someone who has known God at the height and depth of spiritual frustrations—not at a distance detached from human struggles.[19] According to Marjorie Thompson, such a voice is grounded in a dynamic relational and spiritual attachment to God:

> Scripturally speaking, the spiritual life is simply the increasing vitality and sway of God's spirit in us. It is a magnificent choreography of the Holy Spirit in the human spirit, moving us toward communion with both Creator and Creation. The spiritual life is, thus, grounded in a relationship. It has to do with God's way of relating to us, and our way of responding to God.[20]

It also embodies "a deep hunger for direct experience with God, rather than second-hand faith," a yearning for personal faith to "catch fire."[21] Pastoral ministry calls for much more than an informative dose of instructions based on theological assertions, as ministry is grounded in "something outside of ourselves."[22] As suggested by Sterling, Christian theology and its applications to the meaning of life "will take serious account of the hiddenness of God's hand in the world that we see, and the desperately unsatisfactory conditions of the world."[23]

Ellen White's vision of pastoral service developed and matured in the crucible of just such a dynamic relationship, namely the struggle to know God and His communicative, purpose-oriented revelation. In 1876, while in California, she recollected memories from the days of her early struggles. In the *Signs of the Times*, February 3, 1876, she shared a

unique insight: "I can now look back upon my youthful experiences and see how near I came to making a fatal mistake."[24] She then proceeded to explain the cause of what she viewed as a fatal mistake:

> I had read many of the religious biographies of children who had possessed numberless virtues and lived faultless lives. I had conceived a great admiration for the paragons of perfection there represented. But far from encouraging me in my efforts to become a Christian, these books were like stumbling blocks to my feet. I despaired of ever attaining the perfection of the youthful characters in those stories who lived the lives of saints and were free from all doubts, and sins, and weaknesses under which I staggered.[25]

She concluded: "Later experiences convinced me that these biographies of immaculate [perfect] children mislead the young."[26] The view of perfection created in her mind a state of confusion: "Feelings of discouragement would come over me, and this caused me great anxiety of mind. I heard much in regard to sanctification, but had no idea in regard to it."[27] This emotional turmoil arose from her "constant dissatisfaction with Christian attainments" and the lack of conviction in "God's mercy and love."[28] It seemed like the ideals of "perfection" and a "faultless life"—in the way this view was taught—"made it appear a human impossibility." She exclaimed: "These blessings seemed way beyond my reach, a state of purity my heart could never know." She realised that she could never "be like those [perfect] children."[29]

In the context of an injury that turned her life upside-down, she expressed the intensity of her spiritual battles as follows: "When I pondered over my disappointed hopes and the thought that I was to be an invalid for life, despair seized me."[30] She continued: "I was unreconciled to my lot, and at times, I murmured against the providence of God in thus afflicting me."[31] Ellen White unveiled the depth of her faith-shaping spiritual experience by expressing the trauma of her struggles. Such moments created an emotional barrier between the sacred places of her personal world and the external world, times in which faith became weak and fragile. In moments of intense struggle, her faith was weak and hope was small.[32] She struggled with the question of how to be saved: "I longed to have someone tell me what

I should do to be saved, what steps to take to meet my Saviour and give myself entirely up to the Lord."[33] At the same time, she expressed a longing for "Christian hope and peace that come from believing."[34]

In the January 27, 1876, edition of *Signs of the Times*, she referred to her conversion experience: "All that was required of the sinner, trembling in the presence of his Lord, was to put forth the hand of faith and touch the sceptre of His grace. That touch ensured pardon and peace."[35] She followed this statement with the central point of her reflections: "Those who were waiting to make themselves more worthy of divine favour, before they dared venture to claim the promises, were making a fatal mistake. Jesus alone cleanses from sin; He only can forgive our transgressions."[36] In these words, she found comfort and a new understanding of what one must do to be saved. Furthermore, a faith response to God's promises assured her that "Jesus was very near" to her. She felt that she could approach Him with all her grief, misfortunes and trials, "even as the needy one came to Him for relief when He was on earth."[37]

Ellen White's spiritual struggles commenced her journey of attachment to the "significant other"—God. The emotional intensity of these struggles cultivated a quality of faith that carried her through the Great Disappointment. She wrote, "We were perplexed and disappointed, yet did not renounce our faith."[38] Her first vision of the "Narrow Way" focused on Jesus and His reassuring presence on the journey towards His promised return. It shaped the framework and purpose of her entire ministry, aiming to provide comfort and encouragement by "helping people to fix their eyes on Jesus and His promised return.[39] Otis Nichols' letter from April 20, 1846, described the impact of her pastoral voice: "It broke down and melted their [the believers'] hearts like little children, fed, comforted, strengthened the weak, and encouraged them to hold on to the faith."[40]

The recollections of Ellen White's early struggles disclose another pastoral quality—persistent searching for meaning and genuine openness to discover new levels of spiritual understanding. Christian author M Robert Mulholland Jr describes such growth in understanding as "being conformed to the image of Christ, a journey into becoming persons of compassion, persons who forgive, persons who care deeply

for others in the world, persons who offer themselves to God to become agents of divine grace in the lives of others and their world—in brief, persons who love and serve as Jesus did."[41]

The formative stages that moulded Ellen White's pastoral heart contrast with the attempts of some modern pastors to "search for the right techniques, the proper method that can immediately deliver the results of spiritual maturity and wholeness."[42] Instead, the pastoral heart grows out of the metamorphosis that takes place in the trenches of human struggles—with God as an active source of transformation.[43] The next sections intend to demonstrate how Ellen White transferred her experience to a motivational and missional revitalisation of pastoral service.

The 1868 call for spiritual renewal

In the milieu of its progressive growth,[44] the church's initial drive towards success swerved attention to a destabilising mode of growth-oriented activities. At the same time, as argued by Haloviak, "The church paid a heavy price due to the entrance of a debating, argumentative style of ministry that focused almost entirely upon the theoretical, rather than the practical aspects of Christianity."[45] The movement focused on the preservation of distinctive beliefs. However, the passionate desire and conviction of preachers and teachers to provide persuasive doctrinal clarity left many seekers of truth with the same argumentative, defensive mindsets that embodied the protectors of truth. This resulted in a gradual loss of a vibrant, spiritually transformational journey with God. These experiences were woven into the fabric of the growing church's physical and missional wellbeing.[46]

The evolving demarcation between organisational activity and the need for deep Christ-centred spirituality was made plain in the vision Ellen White experienced as she opened Sabbath on June 5, 1863, with a small group of believers in Otsego, Michigan. It challenged Ellen and James White to focus on the spiritual component of ministry rather than frantic pastoral activity. At that time, James struggled with depression resulting from overwork. Instead of resting on the Sabbath day in Battle Creek, they travelled to Otsego to support the evangelistic tent meetings by R J Lawrence and M E Cornell scheduled to commence on June 6. The contents of the vision drew attention to the elements crucial for

spiritual wellbeing, namely time and relationships, which contribute to "a cheerful, hopeful, peaceful frame of mind."[47] It's no wonder that Ellen White was advised to devote time to a balanced lifestyle to "recover from the effects of overdoing and overtaxing the mind."[48] Through the Otsego vision, God drew attention to the value of spiritual nourishment flowing from a relational life-changing experience with God.[49]

The vision helped to prepare the movement for mission. Ellen White's prophetic pastoral guidance gave the community of believers an awareness of God's responses to human needs. Commenting on the purpose of prophetic voices, Brueggemann asserted, "The prophet in Israel or today is not called to invent a new message. We are not called to say something never said before or do something never done before. To be sure, we are called to be imaginative and creative, but we do not have to create something out of whole cloth."[50] So, God challenged the existing spirit of haste with a pastoral call to return to the basic life-transforming pathway. This would not only empower missional consciousness from the inside-out but would also engage the community in creative, innovative and culturally relevant (in time and place) ways to reach the brokenness of human life.[51] Finally, a relational experience with God, built on trust, faith and confidence in His presence, adds a sparkle of motivational and inspirational energy to pastoral ministry. Much later, Ellen White wrote: "With the power and light that God imparts, you can comprehend more and accomplish more than you ever before deemed possible."[52] More importantly, the ensuing investment of human lives in God's mission acts as a sign of "God's investment in the history of His people."[53]

On June 12, 1868, Ellen White received a vision with specific messages for churches, individual members and ministers. In the opening message to the ministers titled "Caution to Ministers," she penned the following: "I was deeply impressed with the great work to be accomplished to prepare a people for the coming of the Son of Man. I saw that the harvest is great, but the labourers are few." A cursory reading of the text suggests that it addressed practical aspects of pastoral ministry, such as the length of prayers and sermons. She advised that more could be accomplished if pastors avoided "long talking, praying and singing," which tend to be "wearisome and exhausting."[54]

However, she also outlined the primary purpose of pastoral work in relation to church membership by referring to ministering church members: "[A pastor] can be a channel through which God will impart light to His people, but after the light is given, it is left with the people to appropriate that light, and, in their turn, let it shine forth to others."[55] For this purpose, both pastors and members derived spiritual empowerment from God and the Bible.[56]

On October 25, 1868, Ellen White wrote a more comprehensive counsel to the pastors titled "Addressed to Ministers," based on the June 12 vision. It focused on pastoral ministry as a channel for defusing the power of God's life-transforming grace. It should be noted that Ellen White received the vision during moments of weariness from her pastorally nurturing responsibilities.[57] The vision provided motivation and encouragement for faithful steadiness and patience in her assigned responsibilities, encouraging her to leave the impact of her ministry in God's hands.[58] Due to the prevailing conditions, it was expedient—both for Ellen White, pastors and the church at large—to receive a new awareness of the significance of the pastoral commission. Furthermore, it came at a time of growing awareness of mission consciousness.

The context of the message formed a spiritual hub on which Ellen White built an expanding understanding of pastoral ministry and its role in God's mission. First, it drew attention to the significance of "daily conversion" and the need for an entire transformation of the heart.[59] Second, it called for an attentive focus on Christ's example as an inspirational model for pastoral ministry and mission, by a connection with God through prayer.[60] Third, it stressed the value of Bible study, which leads to the "cultivation of intellect and refinement without affectation" and revitalised passion and energy for the work.[61] This daily conversion attracts attention to the primary purpose of pastoral ministry: understanding "the worth of souls and the matchless depth of a Saviour's love."[62]

Ellen White supported the value and development of professional skills, commenting: "Some neglect to obtain knowledge of the simple branches of education."[63] However, the emphasis of the 1868 message to ministers was the necessity of spiritual transformation radiating from the depth of one's daily conversion experience. The hub in the

previous paragraph became Ellen White's primary motivational formula for pastoral, evangelistic, theological, organisational, institutional and, ultimately, missional objectives. The spiritually oriented pastoral life, moulded by one's attachment to Jesus, became her motivational focus, which aimed to enhance the gospel's triumph.

Several theological and organisational disputes subsequently destabilised the spiritual wellbeing of the Seventh-day Adventist community and, at times, derailed the mission's progress. During this period, Ellen White's messages to ministers continued to focus on spiritually motivational themes that directed attention to a dynamic relationship with Jesus.[64] The practical directives of her counsel relating to pastoral duties were immersed in her firm conviction of the pastoral calling's high value. She believed that pastors were meant to "use their influence to the very best advantage" to share encouragement.[65] Skill development was necessary and important, but in her experience, it was daily learning in Christ's school that empowered pastoral service:

> Christ came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. . . . Those who do all they can on their part with what God has entrusted to them, and bear their whole weight upon Him, He will strengthen just when the strength is required. In thus doing, we give God room to work for us.[66]

In her mind, time devoted to overtaxing activity was detrimental to personal wellbeing and the efficacy of pastoral work. She wrote that Christians should "cultivate a love for meditation, and cherish a spirit of devotion."[67]

Ellen White offered the same spiritual guidance during times of theological conflict and organisational disputes. The message written to the General Conference delegates in 1888 encapsulated the need for deep spiritual renewal among the church's pastoral leadership. To the "brethren who shall assemble in General Conference," she wrote:

> Let every soul now be divested of envy, of jealousy, of evil surmising, and bring their hearts into close connection with God. If all do this, they will have that love burning upon the altar of their hearts which Christ evinced for them. All parties will have Christian kindness and Christian tenderness. There will be no strife; for the servants of God must not

> strive.... The correct interpretation of the Scriptures is not all that God requires. He enjoins upon us that we should not only know the truth.... We are to bring into our practice, in our association with our fellowmen, the spirit of Him who gave us the truth."[68]

A year later, in her address to ministers, Ellen White highlighted the need for "dwelling upon Christ's efficiency, until, by a living faith, they [the people ministers serve] see Jesus as He is—see Him in His fullness, a sin-pardoning Saviour." She emphasised: "Here is the work of the minister of Christ."[69]

In *Gospel Workers*, one of Ellen White's major publications addressing pastoral work, several chapters highlight the value of spiritual experience as part of missionary work. The final section, extracted from her 1883 devotionals to ministers at the General Conference, emphasises the empowering impact of the relational walk with Jesus:

> We must learn in the school of Christ. Nothing but His righteousness can entitle us to one of the blessings of the covenant of grace.... There is need of constant watchfulness and of earnest, loving devotion; but these will come naturally when the soul is kept by the power of God through faith.[70]

A call to missional leadership

Space limits do not permit a thorough analysis of Ellen White's contribution to the formation of pastoral work's spiritually motivational dimension. My studies suggest that her contributions came at a significant transitional time for the Adventist Church, which required an injection of new spiritual motivation and visionary reorientation of missional consciousness as seen from God's perspective.[71] The proclamation of the doctrines was essential in defining the movement's self-understanding. However, there was also a growing need in the life experience of members for an internalisation of God's love.

Along with her emphasis on spiritually motivational leadership, Ellen White expanded on the purpose of the church in the context of the Great Controversy theme, developed between 1858 and 1888. This theme explains the complexity of life's journey and the struggle between good and evil. It also underscores freedom of choice and the intrinsic

value and potential of human life. For Ellen White, the spiritual life was not an end in itself or a means of self-glorification; rather, it was a way to develop God-given talents and abilities to be used in the conflict between the forces of good and evil.[72]

Between 1888 and 1911, Ellen White's writings explored these themes as empowering elements of missional consciousness. She linked freedom of choice and human value and potential with the wholistic development of spiritual life. This journey of faith resulted in spiritual authenticity, genuine relationships, personal identity and professional development. In her understanding, these stemmed from the source of all wisdom—God—and shaped an inspirational framework of His vision for a purpose-oriented life—and, more specifically, for pastoral leadership.

Spiritual authenticity emerges from a personal and intimate relationship with God. Ellen White wrote, "Everyone needs to have a personal experience in obtaining a knowledge of the will of God. We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart."[73] Genuine relationships enhance the quality of spiritual authenticity and revitalise responses to the "strain of life's activities."[74] Personal identity is a recognition of one's value and potential that motivates leaders to engage in the ongoing professional development of pastoral skills and God-given talents.[75]

While emphasising spiritually motivational themes, Ellen White extended their application to missional leadership. Rather than shaping a rigid, prescriptive and authoritarian formula for religiosity, she re-energised pastoral leadership and the church with a new spiritual purpose for missional engagement. Her writings and personal example promoted a relational life anchored in the teachings of Jesus; a transformational and wholistic view of life; and a missional purpose in life.

Ellen White called for the injection of God's love into a spiritually oriented approach to mission. "Marvellous will be the transformation wrought in him who by faith opens the door of the heart to the Saviour."[76] Brueggemann defines this as hope in action. It calls Christians to "listen, to wait and to serve." It also challenges Christians to offer a "stewardship of life through the pursuit of justice, peace and the well-being of creation," which "will win the gospel of Jesus Christ a hearing seldom achieved by sheer proclamation."[77] It may be

argued that Ellen White's missional approach prepared the stage for the visionary expansion of mission as hope in action.

Between 1860 and 1900, the gradual development of missional activity corresponded with the proclamation of distinctive Seventh-day Adventist doctrines. In the movement's early stages, pastoral work rested on setting up new churches through the clear and intensive proclamation of the present truth.[78] The prevailing approach to mission contributed to setting up church spaces filled with spiritual lethargy and a lack of pastoral care. In response, Ellen White challenged pastors: "Bring life into the church. Plan and devise methods which will bring a deep and living interest into the new churches."[79] She was convinced that God's missional heart moves beyond geographically located church spaces and instead visualises His presence in every landscape of life.

Starting around 1880, the increasing growth of cities provided a new challenge—the expansion of mission from rural areas into cities.[80] In 1885, Ellen White wrote, "My spirit is stirred that the work in Chicago has been delayed so long."[81] The changing circumstances demanded a philosophical and practical shift in the church's approach to pastoral involvement in mission. In the early 1900s, Ellen White called for all-inclusive engagement in mission. She summoned pastors, medical doctors, nurses, teachers, students—people from all walks of life—to engage in the mission, "not merely by preaching the Word, but by deeds of loving ministry."[82] This emphasis moved the focus of pastoral ministry away from the accepted roles of itinerant preachers, travelling church planters or professional caretakes. The new focus positioned pastors in the hub of the missional community as spiritual leaders who aimed to inspire the community of faith with spiritual life and passion for sharing Jesus. Ellen White's understanding of mission converged from the inspirational vision of "service to God" through every life occupation, that is, engagement in sharing the saving knowledge of Jesus with people wherever they are.[83]

Ellen White's visionary call to mission-oriented pastoral leadership challenged the church to transform the "church space" into a place that exemplified the presence of God's kingdom of grace in the world. This elicited the need for motivational and missional pastoral leadership based on Christ's model of incarnational ministry:

> The work Christ came to do in our world was not to create barriers and constantly thrust upon the people the fact that they were wrong. Though He was a Jew, He mingled freely with the Samaritans, setting at naught the Pharisaic customs of His nation. In face of their prejudices He accepted the hospitality of this despised people. He slept with them under their roofs, ate with them at their tables—partaking of the food prepared and served by their hands—taught in their streets, and treated them with the utmost kindness and courtesy.[84]

As argued by Frost, visionary pastoral leadership does not hinge on creative new programs. Instead, it engages the community of believers in discovering "their grand sense of purpose" and motivates them to pursue it.[85] In this context, he quotes Mennonite missiologist James R Krabill, who points out that "being missional might actually mean doing fewer things."[86] Alan Hirsch extends the meaning of the missionally oriented grand purpose, observing that such a community is infused with a purpose that

> calls them onto a dangerous journey to unknown places—mission that calls the church to shake off its collective securities and to plunge into the world of action, where its members will experience disorientation and marginalization but also where they encounter God and one another in a new way.[87]

Such vision penetrates the barriers of established traditions, institutional policies and organisational control. It transforms the "church space" into God's space—an attractive environment transmitting the presence of God's kingdom of grace in the brokenness of life.[88]

Placed in the domain of God's kingdom of grace, pastoral leadership dismisses the trap of a caretaking mentality. In God's space, pastoral leaders experience a metamorphosis defined by Ellen White as "transformation wrought in him who by faith opens the door of the heart to the Saviour."[89] The spirit of such a missional heart is woven into the fabric of every aspect of leadership, for it is inspirational, contagious and invitingly attractive. It builds a space through which the church becomes a carrier of God's love and grace, serving as Christ's extended hands in the world.

In God's space, pastoral leadership recaptures the spiritual DNA of motivational leadership—a relational life anchored in the teachings of Jesus; a transformational and wholistic view of life; and a missional purpose in life. It empowers the community by inspiring implicit trust and confidence in God's involvement in human life and history. Pastoral leaders with spiritual and sensitive hearts provide space for life-transforming experiences of God's love that, in turn, generate a passion for sharing Christ-like attitudes with the world. Moreover, they encourage church members to rediscover their uniqueness, value and potential, and use personal talents to communicate Jesus wherever they are. Such leadership imparts the boldness to relinquish old status-quo methodologies and to experience contextualised, refreshed and biblically grounded faith in Jesus. It is not prescriptively authoritarian and informative; rather, it is inspirational, calling people to visualise the incredible benefits of God's kingdom of grace.[90]

Ellen White shaped the heart of pastoral service through her visionary, inspired and inspirational service, and her prophetic conveyance of God's love. Her spiritual emphasis is woven through every facet of the Adventist movement's journey, and it has touched the hearts of lay members, pastors and organisational leaders. Ellen White's voice and ministry ignited a passion for a dynamic contextualisation of the gospel and its application to life in the changing world.[91] Her life exemplified the transformational power of God's love and modelled a motivational and missional mode of pastoral service. She was an inspirational voice driving the movement's vision for the establishment of educational, medical and missionary work. However, her passion was in the basic pastoral response to human needs. Reflecting on the nature of her calling to be God's messenger, she wrote, "I was instructed that I must show a special interest in motherless and fatherless children, taking some under my own charge for a time, and then finding homes for them. Thus, I would be giving others an example of what they could do."[92] It included a call for justice and equity for those who were treated unfairly. Ellen White's relationship with Jesus enabled her to walk the talk in demonstrating the motivational and missional contours of the pastoral heart and its relevance to life in the changing world.

Discussion questions

1. Reflecting on your pastoral experiences, both positive and negative, how would you define the heart of pastoral ministry?
2. How deep is your daily dependence on God's presence in your life and ministry? Describe how His presence impacts your vision of mission and service.
3. Considering Ellen White's spiritual journey with God, reflect on her reference to the need for "daily conversion." How may such an experience impact the effectiveness of your pastoral ministry?
4. Examine the principles of motivational and missional pastoral leadership, and discuss their application to the approach to mission in your church.
5. How can you inspire your church to become "God's space"—an attractive environment transmitting the presence of God's kingdom of grace in the brokenness of life?

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1 Walter Brueggemann, *Tradition for Crisis* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1968), page 125. Brueggemann argues that the wedges or distinctions between the prophetic, priestly or pastoral roles are "both false to the biblical faith and an impossible burden." He qualifies his assertion by referring to Jeremiah's priestly function and in fact the pastoral functions of the biblical prophets. ibid, page 124.

2 ibid.

3 Ellen G White, *Testimonies for the Church, Vol 1* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), page 262.

4 ibid.

5 Ellen G White, *Testimonies for the Church, Vol 2* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), page 505.

6 William Clarence White to C H Jones, Letter, May 6, 1915.

7 Arthur White, *The Later Elmshaven Years* (Vol 6) (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), page 431.

8 Ellen G White, Letter 2, June 14, 1914. Sanatorium, California.

9 ibid.

10 Bert Haloviak, "A Brief Sketch of Ministerial Training," <https://www.adventistarchives.org/brief-sketch-of-sda-ministerial-training.pdf>.

11 White, *Testimonies for the Church, Vol 1*, page 113.

12 ibid, page 114.

13 ibid, page 120.

14 ibid, page 125.

15 Arthur White, *The Early Years 1827–1862* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1895), pages 348, 349.
16 James White, "Western Tour," *Review and Herald*, 10, January 15, 1857, page 84.
17 Arthur Whitefield Spalding, *Origins and History of the Seventh-day Adventist* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1961), page 339.
18 Brueggemann, *Tradition for Crisis*, page 124.
19 ibid, page 125.
20 Marjorie J Thompson, *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), page 6.
21 ibid, page 4.
22 Bruegemann, *Tradition for Crisis*, page 125.
23 David Sterling, "Not a Wisdom of This Age: Theology and the Future of the Post-Christendom Church," in *Theology of the Future: Evangelical Assertions and Explorations*, editors Trevor Cairney and David Starling (Broadway, NY: Bloomsbury, 2014), page 95.
24 Ellen G White, *Signs of the Times*, February 3, 1876.
25 ibid.
26 ibid.
27 ibid.
28 ibid.
29 ibid. Also see White, *The Early Years*, page 26.
30 Ellen G White, *Signs of the Times*, January 13, 1876.
31 ibid.
32 Ellen G White, *Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1876.
33 ibid.
34 ibid.
35 Ellen G White, *Signs of the Times*, January 27, 1876.
36 ibid.
37 ibid.
38 White, *Testimonies for the Church, Vol 1*, page 52.
39 Ellen G White, *Early Writings* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1882), page 14.
40 White, *The Early Years*, page 75.
41 M Robert Mulholland Jr, *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), page 25.
42 ibid, page 20.
43 ibid, page 30.
44 By 1868, "the publishing work was solidified, the church was organised, its system of finance was established and it had launched into health programs.... Literature was pouring into a steady stream from its presses at (the) Review and Herald publishing plant in Battle Creek, Michigan, and nearby, the newly established sanitorium was in full operation." Editorial, "The Times of Volume Two," *Testimonies for the Church, Vol 2* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), page 5.
45 Haloviak, "A Brief Sketch of Ministerial Training," page 1.
46 On the spiritual state of the church during the discussed period, note the editor's introduction to *Testimonies for the Church, Vol 2*, pages 6, 7.
47 Ellen G White, Manuscript 2, June 6, 1863.
48 ibid.
49 For a comprehensive analysis of the Otsego vision, see John Skrzypaszek, "The heart of the Seventh-day Adventist health message," *Ministry: International Journal for Pastors*, 86(12), 2014, pages 6–8.
50 Brueggemann, *Tradition for Crisis*, page 124.

51 Walter Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1986), page 2.
52 Ellen White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1905), page 296.
53 Bruggemann, *Tradition for Crisis*, page 125.
54 White, *Testimonies for the Church, Vol 2*, page 118.
55 ibid, page 121.
56 ibid, page 119.
57 White, "Sketch of Experience: from February 7, 1868, to May 20, 1868," *Testimonies for the Church, Vol 2*, page 10.
58 White, *Testimonies for the Church, Vol 2*, pages 11, 12.
59 ibid, page 516.
60 ibid, page 508.
61 ibid, pages 499, 503, 504.
62 ibid, page 504.
63 ibid, page 503.
64 Ellen G White, *Review and Herald,* 33, January 5, 1869; Ellen G White, Manuscript 37, 1885; Manuscript 37, 1889.
65 White, *Review and Herald*, January 5, 1869.
66 ibid.
67 Ellen G White, *Review and Herald*, March 29, 1870.
68 Ellen G White, Letter 20, 1888.
69 Ellen G White, Manuscript 27, 1889.
70 Ellen G White, *Gospel Workers* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Publishing Co., 1892/1893), pages 412, 415.
71 For a more detailed study, read the following resource: John Skrzypaszek, "The time of crisis and prophetic visioning," *Ministry: International Journal for Pastors, 90*(10), 2018, pages 23–26.
72 Ellen G White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), page 363.
73 ibid.
74 ibid.
75 ibid.
76 White, *The Ministry of Healing*, page 93.
77 Walter Brueggemann, *Hope for the World: Mission in Global Context* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2001), page 15.
78 Russell Burrill, *Rekindling a Lost Passion: Recreating a Church Planting Movement* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Centre, 1999), page 52.
79 Ellen White, Letter 157, October 11, 1899, Sunnyside, Cooranbong, NSW. Ellen White to Brother Irwin.
80 J O Corliss, *General Conference Bulletin*, April 16, 1901, page 258. "As in every other enterprise with which men are connected, so in the city mission work, the mind gradually opens up to present possibilities. Thirty years ago, we hardly dared to enter a large city to do evangelistic work because we feared we would not be able to accomplish as much as we could in rural district(s), and so the rural districts were worked to the neglect of the cities, though in the most primitive manner.... I am glad that all this has changed because our minds have been enlarged" (page 258).
81 Ellen G White, *Testimonies for the Church, Vol 5* (Mountain View: CA: Pacific Press, 1948), page 369.
82 Ellen G White, Manuscript 7, 1908 and Manuscript 97, 1907.
83 Ellen G White, Manuscript 79, 1898.

84 Ellen G White, "Christ's Second Coming," Manuscript 79, July 29, 1897.
85 Michael Frost, *Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture* (Peabody, MA: Fine Print Books, 2006), page 125.
86 ibid.
87 Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), pages 221, 222.
88 Ellen White, "Consecrated Efforts to Reach Unbelievers," Letter 3, June 5, 1914: in one of her last messages Ellen White wrote, "In all the relationships of life, whether in the intimacy of the home circle or in the business and social world, there are many ways in which Seventh-day Adventists may acknowledge their Lord and win souls for His kingdom. . . . Those who claim to be looking for the return of the Saviour should bring into active service all the powers of their being. The church on earth is to be the light of the world. God designs that through the individual members of His church, life-giving beams shall shine forth into the dark places of earth and into the heart of every benighted soul. Thus, the whole earth is to be lightened with His glory."
89 White, *The Ministry of Healing*, page 93.
90 Skrzypaszek, "The time of crisis and prophetic visioning," pages 23–26.
91 John Skrzypaszek, "Ellen G. White's Ministry in the South Pacific," in *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, editor D Trim (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, 2020), <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org>.
92 Ellen White, *Selected Messages, Book 1* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), page 34.