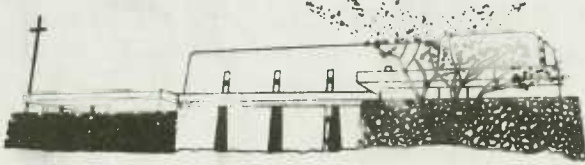


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PRESENTATION FOR THE COMMISSION ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Little did I realize as a little girl that the inclination, the drawing and the love that I had for church and God would evolve to where I am today. I didn't go because of the building or the programs, but because of the interaction between the people - the people and me. I am people oriented and my ministry revolves around that fact. My early childhood experiences of love and acceptance in church have helped to shape my ministry today. I don't meet a child, teenager or adult, but what the way I interact with them reflects my experience growing up.

My understanding and basic philosophy of ministry is taken from Ephesians 4: 11 and 12. For we are told that, "It was God who made it possible for some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

I see equipping the saints as my responsibility as a pastor. To facilitate and promote lay responsibility is to prepare God's people for works of service. A person's gift is not what they do, but what they are. And this is where I believe that what I have been for years and what I do, "fit" in being a pastor.

I have been asked to share my responsibilities as a pastor and what they include. First of all I will give you a broad overview and then move into some areas specifically. The broad overview includes preaching, adult/children's Sabbath School coordinator, church board member, young adult coordinator, music and worship committee, board of elders, deacons and deaconesses, worthy student committee, Women's Ministry, baptizing, marriage, pastoral counseling, Bible studies, pastor's Bible class and visitation.

As the children's Sabbath School coordinator I sit in a different Sabbath School division each week for twenty to thirty minutes at the beginning of Sabbath School. This gives me an opportunity to get acquainted with the leaders and find out what their needs are, meet the parents of the children, as well as getting acquainted with the children. Many times these leaders of our Sabbath School division feel that they are neglected and that the staff really doesn't know what they are going through. This is true unless someone is there to see what they are experiencing. So, by going in they feel supported in what they are doing. These are some of our hardest working members in the church and the least recognized. And I want them to know they are appreciated for the service they are giving to the church.

Young adult coordinator. There are four teachers who teach once a month in this class. I check in with each of these young adults to see how they are doing, as well as facilitate discussion in areas that they may not have taken a look at before. I also arrange for guest teachers to come in, in order to enrich the class as well as broaden their views. We cover different topics, as well as topics of interest to the young adults. Topics that they may be having questions about, whether it's about the church, Bible or areas that effect their personal life.

The next area that I spend time in is Women's Ministry. The Women's Ministry program formulates wherever I am to meet the needs of women. I have a women's council that meets once a month to plan programs for the year. The programs that are planned can be for the whole family, men and women specifically, or just women. We attempt to have a variety of programs to meet the different needs of the congregation. The most important thing happening on the women's council is the level of vulnerability that is experienced. Just a month ago, every woman in the group spoke about their loneliness in life and how they come to church each week and don't feel close to anyone, and they were all married. But this committee had become a place where they could share what is going on in their lives and have fellowship and friendship. By experiencing closeness on the committee, they then can take it into the church service and feel closer about the whole worship experience. Besides the fellowship that is going on in the Women's Ministry, leadership is also being developed, and I am in the process of training a woman to be the coordinator, when that is necessary and possible for her to take over. The fact that programs stop when a pastor leaves is not a good sign. With good leadership the programs in church continue. I like to think about the women's ministry being a large umbrella. Underneath that programs for women can be developed, such as: women's bible study group; parenting; health; nutrition; self esteem. We have a lady right now that is talking about having a program for adopting a grandparent, and I've asked her to develop this and present it to the council, and then we will present it to the church. So, each woman under the umbrella of the Women's Ministry functions in a different capacity in the church.

The next area is pastoral counseling. In pastoral counseling I deal with all ages. I have teenagers come with problems that they have with dating. Women come with marital problems, with self esteem, and where to go with their life. Recently, a woman came wanting to know what God's will was regarding her husband hitting her. A woman who has been physically or

sexually abused as a child will not be comfortable coming to a male pastor. I consider it a privilege to be able to be there for those who are hurting - to be available in an honest, realistic way. I only see people once or twice, and then I refer them because I do not feel I have the expertise to do counselling on a long term basis or any in-depth therapy. But I know resource people and places that I can refer people that have serious problems beyond my capabilities.

The next area is preaching. I love preaching, and I preach once a month. I love opening the Scripture and bringing it down to a practical level where people live. I believe that unless I do that, then the Bible is nothing more than a book of stories. What difference does it make in my life about the laborers in the vineyard. Matthew 20 opens up with, "The Kingdom of heaven is like a land owner." And you know the story. The laborers came at different times and were all paid the same. And this story bothered me for years until I understood God's grace. This story isn't about union labor management, nor equality, nor the willingness of the people to work, but of God's generosity, His grace for all of us. Grace is the great equalizer. Grace can speak to the people in the pew. It can speak to the mother that is worried about her teenager, to the person who feels guilty about past sin, to the person struggling with sin now. There is enough grace, and it's offered to everyone. I know recently I had a woman talk to me in the hall before going into church before sabbath school, and she seemed to be pretty depressed and discouraged. I ended up talking to her about her son who was having problems in school and not getting along with the kids and not getting along with the teacher. I was able to deal with her on a personal level and share some personal experiences that I had had. And then later, this very same day, her son came to me (who I haven't had that much contact with) across the church sanctuary after church and looked up at me and said, "I would rather hear you preach than anybody." This boy is nine years old, and for some reason there is a connection with me. And I'm glad for that. Whether it's the programs that are developed or preaching, they are avenues to reach the hearts of people of all ages.

We have a board of elders that are meeting that is developing Home Bible fellowships. And this again, is an avenue to get close to people, to open the Scripture, and then to meet their needs on a daily basis. At the beginning we started by reading, The Problem of Wineskins and discussing the philosophy and direction of the church. Later we will go into actual Bible study, studying the books of Acts and John. After that, each elder will then conduct home Bible fellowships in their homes, and we will divide the church membership into different areas. As pastors, we do not see our responsibility as doing everything, but training and delegating.

The next area is visitation. I am actively involved in visitation, and each week I plan on visiting so many people. This is where and when I get to know people on a personal basis and affords me the opportunity to be available when a need or problem arises. It is because I have been in their homes, that they will feel comfortable in coming to me with a problem. I figured out many years ago in my ministry that there were two vitally important things that were necessary in being an effective pastor. One was preaching and the other, visitation. And if one had to go, let it be

preaching. Although I believe preaching is important, I believe that visitation is more important. We need to be in people's homes. My associate and I believe that we are a complement to each other's work. He has stated a few times that he is going to visit a young woman and would feel more comfortable if I came along. And this is where we complement each other, because we can plug into each other's visitation schedule and be there with each other when there's some difficult situations that come up.

The next area is pastor's Bible class. I'm currently teaching a doctrinal class for people that are new to the church. I am trying new approaches and methods for integrating these people into the church in a positive way. Not only do we discuss and study the beliefs of our church, we talk about how they can fit into the body of believers and what their gifts are.

Last, but certainly not least is the area of baptism. I have worked with people for over twenty years, studied the Bible with them, introduced them to the Adventist church, and worked with them through some difficult passages of Scriptures. Then when it came time for them to be baptized, I turned them over to the senior pastor. Children, teenagers, and adults have asked me through the years why it was that I couldn't baptize them. I had trouble coming up with a good answer. I could study the Bible with them for years, I could work through difficult passages of Scripture, I could be with them in some difficult, personal crisis in their lives, but when it came time to go through this special ritual of baptism, I wasn't able to do that. And I never thought there would be any difference in me, or in them, to do the actual baptism. But there was. On July 11, 1987, I had my first baptism. I returned to my previous church where I had worked for five years and baptized four people - three teenagers and one adult man.

I want to tell you about Thomas - the fourteen year old that I baptized. When he was nine years old his parents came to me out of desperation. They felt out of control, and they didn't know what to do with this child. I had seen Thomas around the church and around the school, and I had spent time talking with him. He was a bundle of energy bouncing off the wall. He had ideas that wouldn't stop of things he wanted to do. But all these ideas and the way he wanted to handle them, drove people crazy. I listened to his ideas and saw them to be very creative. They just needed to be channeled and not stifled. So his parents came to me out of desperation because he was having trouble at school and asked if I would spend time with him. So, I started seeing him once a week. He would come over from school and we would spend an hour together. I started to say that we talked, but actually he talked and I listened. And I did this for about a year. We would end up going for an ice cream cone or a 7-up or whatever he wanted to do during that hour. He could tell me anything he wanted to tell me. What happened is, I became his friend. So when his sister wanted to be baptized who was a couple of years younger than him, he thought about it. And he came to me and said, "I don't know if I want to be. I'm not sure I want to be baptized. In fact, I don't think I want to." And I said, "You don't have to Thomas." And I ended up going, even though I lived in a different area, I drove a half an hour to Riverside every week, and picked up his sister and her girl friend and took them for a soda pop, and we talked about the

different doctrines of the church and about their baptisms. And I asked him if he would like to go, and he said, "Yes." Well, I took the girls home and, then I took him for a soft drink. We talked on many subjects. We talked about heaven, and he said, "I'm afraid if I'm not baptized, I won't go to heaven." And I assured him that baptism would not make him perfect. That baptism did not guarantee heaven - that he would still make mistakes. But baptism was just an outward expression that he loved Jesus and wanted to commit his life to Him, even though he would still make mistakes, and even though he would struggle with problems. And then he said, "If I decide not to be baptized, will you still come and spend time with me?" And I said, "Yes, I will come and spend time with you because you're important to me and because I love you." And I went. I went for three months and picked up his sister and her girl friend, spent time with them for an hour, and then took them home, and then picked up Thomas. And we had a wonderful time. At the end of the time I assured him that he still didn't have to be baptised, that it was just our special time together. After some time, he decided he wanted to be baptized. There was excitement in his voice. And he said, "I want you to do it, because I've been closer to you than any other pastor in my life." And he said, "I want to be first, because you've been special to me, and I thought there would never be any difference when I stepped in the water. But when I stepped into the water that July in '87, there was a difference - a difference that I had never experienced before in my life. I knew that the Holy Spirit was involved in the whole process - that the Holy Spirit had led both of us to this day.

This day was not only special because of this teenager and the five years we had spent together becoming friends, but this baptism was the culmination of the twenty years I had spent with people - a celebration of all that I had worked for. Doing this baptism validated my call to me, personally - my call of God to the ministry. It also validated my call to the church family. Ministry motivates and energizes me. People are my priority. They have been for over twenty years and continue to be so. I continue to pray and work for effective ways to apply God's grace to the felt needs of the congregation. And as I sat in the Sligo church this morning and sang the closing song, it touched my heart. The song was, "I Surrender All." And as I sang the words, "All to Jesus I surrender. All to Him I freely give. I will ever love and trust Him. In His presence daily live." It took me back to my childhood and with tears I remembered as a child, surrendering my life and my heart to Jesus, wanting to please Him and to do His will - that's why I'm here today.

Sincerely,



Delores Robinson
Associate Pastor

DR/eg

Copy to Elizabeth Stearndale