

Concerns Regarding Spiritual Formation

Documentation showing inroads of Spiritual Formation into the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Compiler's thoughts are in italics.

All other text is related to its associated link found at the end of each section.

“Before the final visitation of God's judgments upon the earth there will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. The Spirit and power of God will be poured out upon His children. At that time many will separate themselves from those churches in which the love of this world has supplanted love for God and His word. Many, both of ministers and people, will gladly accept those great truths which God has caused to be proclaimed at this time to prepare a people for the Lord's second coming. The enemy of souls desires to hinder this work; **and before the time for such a movement shall come, he will endeavor to prevent it by introducing a counterfeit.** In those churches which he can bring under his deceptive power he will make it appear that God's special blessing is poured out; there will be manifest what is thought to be great religious interest. Multitudes will exult that God is working marvelously for them, when the work is that of another spirit. Under a religious guise, Satan will seek to extend his influence over the Christian world. In many of the revivals which have occurred during the last half century, the same influences have been at work, to a greater or less degree, that will be manifest in the more extensive movements of the future. There is an emotional excitement, a mingling of the true with the false, that is well adapted to mislead.” GC 464

“The next reformation is due. It will focus on what it means to know God with a power that changes who we are and how we relate. I predict the Spiritual Formation Forum will play a vital role in the Spirit's next great movement.” Larry Crabb, The Association of Christian Counselors

"By now enough water has gone under the Christian Spiritual Formation bridge that we can give some assessment of where we have come and what yet needs to be done. When I first began writing in the field in the late 70s and early 80s the term "Spiritual Formation" was hardly known, except for highly specialized references in relation to the Catholic orders. Today it is a rare person who has not heard the term. Seminary courses in Spiritual Formation proliferate like baby rabbits. Huge numbers are seeking to become certified as Spiritual Directors to answer the cry of multiplied thousands for spiritual direction." Spiritual Formation, A Pastoral Letter by Richard Foster

Spiritual Formation: A movement that has provided a platform and a channel through which contemplative prayer is entering the church. Find spiritual formation being used, and in nearly every case you will find contemplative spirituality. In fact, contemplative spirituality is the heartbeat of the spiritual formation movement.
<http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/spiritualformation.htm>

Contemplative Spirituality: A belief system that uses ancient mystical practices to induce altered states of consciousness (the silence) and is rooted in mysticism and the occult but often wrapped in Christian terminology. The premise of contemplative spirituality is pantheistic (God is all) and panentheistic (God is in all).
<http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/>

Spiritual Formation and its ancient, classical Spiritual Disciplines is spreading rapidly throughout the Christian community and is even affecting our Seventh-day Adventist denomination. Could this be the counterfeit we were warned of?

“Please pray for me (Wayne Anderson) as I will be speaking to a group of Seventh day Adventist pastors from the Los Angeles area on Saturday afternoon, November 8, 2003. Most of the work we have done with Adventists has been with those from Orange County, San Diego County, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. This group from the LA area will be new to the process. We are planning eight monthly meetings beginning with the one in November. The meetings will be held at the Hollywood Adventist Church and will go from 3 PM to 6 PM.” Wayne Anderson is one of the founders of The Leadership Institute – Integrating Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development. He is also the Spiritual director at the Institute for Spiritual Formation at Talbot School of Theology.

<http://www.westgate-church.org/missions/missionaries/anderson/index.htm>
<http://tli.cc/journey/index.htm>

“In addition to the on site ministries described above, I also enjoy team teaching a semester of Senior Bible at Mesa Grande Academy in the area of World Religions; teaching an occasional contract class at La Sierra University for graduate students (Christian Spiritual Resources), and being involved with the Leadership Institute through the Journey, which works with other pastors in our Conference to support pastoral spiritual formation.”

http://www.calimesasda.com/index.php?option=com_na_content&task=view&id=7



Each year about this time, the Faculty of Religion full-time faculty meets in a cabin overlooking Lake Arrowhead for their annual fall colloquium. The morning is spent in retreat fashion thinking of ways to deepen personal spirituality, in preparation for helping students who come to Loma Linda University to deepen theirs.

This year the sharing discussion centered around two articles, one by Mark S. Burrows, professor of the history of Christianity at Andover Newton Theological School titled "To Taste With The Heart," on the deep reading of Scripture; the second article is one written by Robert Mulholland, professor of New Testament at Asbury Seminary, on ways of reading Scripture.

Both articles are concerned with how we listen for "God's word" as found in the Bible. Mark Burrows appeals for a listening beyond reading for information to a more transformational reading as the reader listens with the heart, with all that is within us spiritual, as well as intellectual. Robert Mulholland offers a way to do this by harkening back to a method used early in Christian tradition, namely *Lectio divina*, 'spiritual reading.'

<http://www.llu.edu/news/today/oct1002/other.html#5>

"Reading (*lectio*) - Slowly begin reading a biblical passage as if it were a long awaited love letter addressed to you. Approach it reverentially and expectantly, in a way that savors each word and phrase. Read the passage until you hear a word or phrase that touches you, resonates, attracts or even disturbs you.

<http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/lectiodivina.htm>

The "exercises of Ignatius Loyola" are based on a practice called *Lectio divina*, in which certain words from Scripture are repeated slowly in a meditative fashion. According to former New Age medium Brian Flynn, *lectio divina* (especially the way it is taught and practiced by many contemplatives today) is occult based:

By taking passages of Scripture, which have an intended meaning, and breaking them down into smaller, separate segments, often for the purpose of chanting over and over, the true meaning of the passages are lost. Rather a form of occult mysticism is practiced--with the hope and intention of gaining a mystical experience that God never intended when He gave the inspired words to His servants (*Running Against the Wind*, pp. 133- 137).

<http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/afa.htm>

In September 2005, Pope Benedict XVI stated: "If it is effectively promoted, this practice (*Lectio divina*) will bring to the Church - I am convinced of it - a new spiritual springtime." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina

An Ancient Way of Praying with Scripture http://www.ymsp.org/resources/practi...io_divina.html

Mike Perschon of Youth Specialties compares the four steps of *Lectio Divina* to “four levels of consciousness...which introduces you at each new level into a whole new world of reality” that occurs through the four levels of repetitious reading:

1- LITERAL LEVEL CONSCIOUSNESS

2- Moral level of consciousness

3- the Allegorical level which requires a Spiritual level of listening

4- We simply rest in the presence of the one who has used His word as a means of inviting us to accept His transforming embrace. We call this level, Union of Life or the unitive level of consciousness.

An Experience of *Lectio Divina* http://www.cellofpeace.com/refl_lectio.htm

The actual practice of *lectio divina* begins with a time of relaxation, making oneself comfortable and clearing the mind of mundane thoughts and cares. Some *lectio* practitioners find it helpful to concentrate by beginning with deep, cleansing breaths and reciting a chosen phrase or word over and over to help free the mind. Then they begin with the four steps:

Lectio - Reading the Bible passage gently and slowly several times. The passage itself is not as important as the savoring

of each portion of the reading, constantly listening for the "still, small voice" of a word or phrase that somehow speaks to the practitioner.

Meditatio - Reflecting on the text of the passage and thinking about how it applies to one's own life. This is considered to be a very personal reading of the Scripture and very personal application.

Oratio – Responding to the passage by opening the heart to God. This is not primarily an intellectual exercise, but is thought to be more of the beginning of a conversation with God.

Contemplatio - Listening to God. This is a freeing of oneself from one's own thoughts, both mundane and holy, and hearing God talk to us. Opening the mind, heart, and soul to the influence of God.

Naturally the connection between Bible reading and prayer is one to be encouraged; they should always go together. However, the dangers inherent in this kind of practice, and its astonishing similarity to transcendental meditation and other dangerous rituals, should be carefully considered.

<http://www.gotquestions.org/lectio-divina.html>



Trans-European Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church: You are looking at an outline of our plan for the next five years. We are the Trans-European Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church: Christ-centered, Bible-based, interested in the wellbeing of man as a whole, and with an endtime focus. (page 20)

1.5 Spiritual Formation and Nurture

1.5.1 Discipleship and Spiritual Formation - Paul Clee

GOAL: Build widespread awareness and practice of discipleship in all fields, including the disciplines of spiritual formation.

IMPLEMENTATION: Develop and use seminars for local training on the use of spiritual disciplines: Inwardly (meditation, prayer, fasting, study), Outwardly (simplicity, solitude, submission, service) and Corporately (confession, worship, guidance, celebration).

RESOURCES: Literature such as: The Equipping Church (Sue Mallory); Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home (**Richard Foster**); Celebration of Discipline (**Richard Foster**)⁷

<http://www.ted-adventist.org/about/files/strategic.pdf>

Albert James Dager, of "Media Spotlight" writes Foster's book "Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth" is a book which calls for deeper spirituality than that which the Bible teaches! Foster's teachings are filled with Buddhism, Yoga, T. M., the exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, Eastern religion, and extremely spiritually destructive practices.

http://www.despatch.cth.com.au/Despatch/foster_vol_7_2.htm

Richard Foster speaks on personal renewal by meditative prayer where one centers down becoming quiet and passive and then uses guided imagery and visualization of Christ. His book Celebration of Discipline was on the Christian bestseller list for many months. In his chapter on meditation he stresses discovering "the inner reality of the spiritual world which is available to all who are willing to search for it." While Foster does say one should distinguish between Eastern meditation and Christian forms, and that they are, "worlds apart" Foster also encourages "centering" exercises and concentrating on one's breath, also a common Eastern technique: unfortunately, his methods offered have similarities to new age or Eastern techniques that are used in meditation. Foster's meditation aimed at centering oneself begins by concentrating on breathing. Inhale deeply, slowly tilting your head back as far as it will go. Then exhale, allowing your head slowly to come forward until your chin nearly rests on your chest. Do this for several moments, praying inwardly something like this: "Lord, I exhale my fear over my geometry exam, I inhale Your peace. I exhale my spiritual apathy, I inhale Your light and life. Then, as before, become silent outwardly and inwardly. Be attentive to the inward living Christ."

This clearly is combining eastern ways with Christ and it has a Christian veneer but is decidedly unbiblical. The Bible forbids this: "For thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they are filled with customs from the east, and

are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they strike hands with the children of foreigners.” Isaiah 2:6. The Bible tells us to keep our minds on guard and protected. To bring oneself into a passive mental state, this type of consciousness is a steppingstone to the occult. For when the mind is not protected anything can enter in. Emptying thoughts means falsehood can be sent in without any resistance. 2 Cor. 10:5 states “casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” Biblical meditation is having our minds actively engaged on contemplating God's word. James 4:7 says to submit to God resist the devil and he will flee from you. Resistance is key to staying sober in mind. To do this one must be aware of their surroundings, thinking. Unlike New Age meditation, biblical meditation doesn't involve mysticism or emptying the mind. Rather, biblical meditation involves objective contemplation and deep reflection on God's Word as well as His works, not on images or dreams. Christian meditation calls us to look to God, not inward. The purpose is that our minds may be filled with godly wisdom and insight so that our hearts may be filled with comfort, happiness, and joy. To echo the opening words of the psalmist, "Blessed is the man ... [whose] delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:1, 2). We think and use our mind to grasp what is being expressed by his word and allow it to affect our heart.

<http://www.letusreason.org/NAM27.htm>

Richard Foster's books are arrayed with quotes and instructions from New Age teachers who are well versed in the beliefs and agenda of the occultists. Although many of his musings and enthusiastic devotions are “pleasant” to read, indeed quite inspiring to those who are unaware of the traps, they either directly contradict the Bible, or lead into demonic possession. When I read “Celebration of Discipline” for the first time, many years ago now, I was strangely moved by it, until my eyes were opened by the Holy Spirit. It seemed “spiritual” and seemed to promise a new way of living. Foster seems to present deep love of Christ in his teaching. Some of the book is just common sense, such as the teaching about living a simpler life-style, being less concerned about material possessions. But, the “good” is vastly out-weighted by the questionable sources and lead-in to the spirituality of the New Age.

Albert James Dager, of "Media Spotlight" writes of the mystical practices Foster teaches and indulges himself in: "Unfortunately, all these exercises serve to do is open the person up to demonic influences that assuage his or her conscience with a feeling of euphoria and even "love" emanating from the presence that has invaded their consciousness. This euphoria is then believed to validate that the person is on the right spiritual path. It may result in visions, out-of body experiences, stigmata, levitation, even healings and other apparent miracles."

Writes Dager: "Like John Wimber of Vineyard International Ministries, it is out of the religious traditions of Quakerism that Foster has come with the message that today's Church is missing out on some wonderful spiritual experiences that can only be found by studying and practicing the meditative and contemplative lifestyle."



Tony Campolo, professor emeritus at Eastern University and founder of the Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education, will be the featured speaker for Black History Weekend at Walla Walla University, held Feb. 1–2. [2008] A Sabbath afternoon forum, "The God of Intimacy and Action: The Challenge to Welcome and Embrace Diversity," is jointly sponsored by the Black Faculty and Staff Fellowship, the Faculty Development Committee, the School of Theology and the Association of Adventist Forums. <http://www.gleaneronline.org/103/1/34188.html>

Tony Campolo says in his book *Letters to a Young Evangelical*: "Intimacy with Christ has developed gradually over the years, primarily through what Catholic mystics call "centering prayer." Each morning, as soon as I wake up, I take time--sometimes as much as a half hour--to center myself on Jesus. I say his name over and over again to drive back the 101 things that begin to clutter up my mind the minute I open my eyes. Jesus is my mantra, as some would say. The constant repetition of his name clears my head of everything but the awareness of his presence. By driving back all other concerns, I am able to create what the ancient Celtic Christians called "the thin place."... After a while, an inner stillness pervades."

Tony Campolo states that he “learned about this way of having a born-again experience from reading the Catholic mystics, especially The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola” who developed “a ‘oneness’ with God,” through contemplative practices. Campolo says that when the Reformation took place, we “left too much behind” and that “some Catholic saints” helped to deepen his prayer life. He later reiterates: "Having an intimate relationship with Christ is at the core of being an Evangelical." He explains there are three things to consider: 1. "Centering prayer," 2. "Contemplative Bible study" and 3. "Spiritual Disciplines."

<http://www.fromthelighthouse.com/blog/index.php?cat=24>

http://www.newmorningtv.tv/todaysshow_101303.jsp (see centering prayer video under Waking Up)

It is no secret that chanting a mantra indeed empties the mind of thought and opens one up to a different state of consciousness. Mantras are used in yoga, Zen, Hindu, and Transcendental Meditation. Here is what some of these websites say about mantras:

From a Yoga website: “Modern science has reaffirmed what yogis have known for thousands of years - that SOUND is able to affect the chemistry of the body and mind, and alter thought patterns. (...) Mantra Meditation is a VERY Powerful technique! You will discover that the repetition of Mantra allows your mind to focus and concentrate more completely on sound, and clear away other thoughts, emotions and distractions which divert our energies. Our senses become more acute and our mind become sharper and more perceptive as the mind clears away the jumble of unnecessary inner dialogue.”

http://www.focalpointyoga.com/mantra_meditation.htm

From a Meditation website: “The repetition of a mantra...is meant as a method of practice which brings about a power (siddhi) to reach the supreme state of consciousness. In this state there is silence within the mind which becomes still (shaant) and eventually you will merge the mind or individual awareness with the whole, which is Pure Consciousness and Knowingness. Every time you practice you obtain the result, as this fourth state of consciousness is always with you.”

<http://meditate4life.com/four-stages.htm>

In spite of the well known purpose of mantra repetition to clear the mind and achieve this state of altered consciousness, many Christians today are mistakenly teaching that this is how to meditate on the Word of God. But is this how we fill our minds with God’s Word - by emptying our minds?

<http://www.rr-bb.com/showthread.php?t=47533>

The origins of Centering Prayer by Thomas Keating:

<http://www.centeringprayer.com/intimacy/intimacy01a.htm>

I listened to the DVD of Campolo’s Friday evening presentation to our students at Walla Walla University and here is the transcript from the recording where he elaborated on his meditation technique for receiving the “Holy Spirit”.

“The Pentecostal thing never worked for me. But I do know what it’s like to be surrendered to the Holy Spirit. I wake up in the morning, before I have to I wake up, and I center down on Jesus. I say his name over and over again, because there’s something about that name. It drives back the animals - those hundred and one things that come in to capture my consciousness the minute I wake up - and creates this sacred space, this thin place as the Celtic Christians called it. And in the stillness and the quiet of the morning I wait, I wait. I don’t ask God for anything, I just wait, for the spirit to flow in, to flow into my life. You see, the Bible says they who wait upon the Lord – when was the last time you waited twenty minutes or half hour for the spirit of God to take possession of you? When was the last time you became still, so that the spirit of God, and I don’t mean quiet, there’s a difference between still and quiet, isn’t there? You can be in a noisy room and be still. In the stillness and quietude I wait, wait for the spirit. I wait for the spirit to come and invade me, to flow into me, to explode within me, and the Bible says it shall be in you like a fountain of living water flowing up, in, and through you and out into the world...and in the stillness of the morning I surrender and wait, and wait, for the spirit to come in. You say does it happen every time? Most mornings not, but often enough the spirit comes and I come alive in Christ Jesus...we need the miracle...we won’t overcome our racism until we wait upon the Lord, unless we surrender and say, Spirit of the living God, fall fresh on me, break me, mold me, make me, for if Christ is in you and you are in Christ you become a new creation.” Tony Campolo

The Dean of the School of Theology said in his letter to me, “This is just a note to let you know that Campolo spoke 4 times while here on campus, and he was well-received. On the Friday night, he did mention how he begins his day by meditating, but did not elaborate on his techniques.”

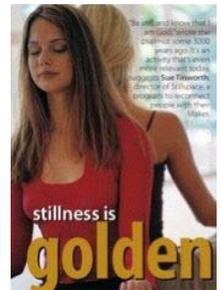
Regarding Campolo’s devotional practices, the President of Walla Walla University stated the following in a letter to a church member: “His brief statement on Friday evening about his own devotional practices seemed appropriate to me. Some of the arguments against him on the idea of “centering prayer” seem to me a little strained and to make logical leaps and connections that appear unjustified.”

The March, 2009 issue of the *Signs of the Times Magazine – North America edition* Centering Prayer is alluded to: "In his book *The Other Side of Silence*, Morton Kelsey defines quiet meditation as 'the art of letting down the barrier that separates our rational consciousness from the depth of our souls.' He also notes that 'silence unbinds a person from ordinary perceptions and attitudes and offers a fresh look at life and reality.' . . . Consider the example of one woman who heads for her sacred space each morning after taking her children to school. 'It's the place where I go to center myself,' she says . . ." *Signs of the Times*, March, 2009 p. 15

The November, 2004 issue of *Signs of the Times Magazine – Australia New Zealand edition*, Centering Prayer is promoted in an article called *Stillness is Golden*. At the end of the article an online prayer labyrinth is promoted: **The Labyrinth** - This is a spiritual experience that invites you to be still and silent as you participate in progressive experiences integral to the spiritual journey.

<http://web.ukonline.co.uk/paradigm>

<http://www.signsofthetimes.org.au/archives/2004/november/article5.shtm>



Leonard Sweet was our speaker at a pastor's conference six years ago. I was concerned back then and wrote to my conference president. I am even more concerned today as I have spent considerable time researching the current contemplative/spiritual formation movement within the evangelical church of which Sweet is a major player.

Sweet states in his book, Quantum Spirituality: "Mysticism, once cast to the sidelines of the Christian tradition, is now situated in postmodernist culture near the center.... In the words of one of the greatest theologians of the twentieth century, Jesuit philosopher of religion/dogmatist Karl Rahner, "The Christian of tomorrow will be a mystic, one who has experienced something, or he will be nothing." [Mysticism] is metaphysics arrived at through mindbody experiences. Mysticism begins in experience; it ends in theology." Quantum Spirituality (Dayton, OH: Whaleprints, 1991), p. 76

In his book, Soul Tsunami, Leonard Sweet promotes spiritualism by promoting labyrinth walking. He writes: "Labyrinth walking is an ancient way of praying. Read Lauren Artress's book Walking A Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995). Take an "audio tour" of the labyrinth or go on one of the "pilgrimages" at Grace Cathedral's "Veriditas: The World-Wide Labyrinth Project." Soul Tsunami, p 432

How is Labyrinth walking spiritualism? If you will read Lauren Artress's book that Sweet recommends you will readily see we are dealing with occult spiritualism in Christian garb.

In the book Sweet is recommending Artress writes: "The labyrinth is a large, complex spiral circle which is an ancient symbol for the divine mother, the God within, the goddess, the holy in all creation." Walking A Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool." p 67

The fact that this quotation not only tends to affirm the effort to re-fashion God in a manner He has not seen fit to reveal Himself, as feminine, but much more significantly, it is the panentheistic "god within" which is involved -- which perpetuates the lie of the serpent, "ye shall be gods" (Elohim).

The Labyrinth "Is truly a tool for transformation, a crucible for change, a blueprint for the sacred meeting of the psyche and the soul, a field of light, a cosmic dance, it is a center for empowering ritual." Walking A Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool." p 176

Artress says that "You walk to the center of the labyrinth and there at the center, you meet the Divine." (Lauren Artress, "Q and A with Lauren," Veriditas, Vol. 1, no. 2, Summer 1996, p. 18)

Artress describes her discovery of the labyrinth as one of the "most astonishing events of my life." For her, the labyrinth is a "spiritual tool meant to awaken us to the deep rhythm that unites us to ourselves and to the Light that calls from within."

"An important fact to know is that geomancy and other occult arts are often incorporated in the building of labyrinths. Charles Gilchrist, a labyrinth promoter, states it has a direct connection to "Sacred Geometry," a powerful potential as an oracle. And there are other "oracle systems" that are related to Sacred Geometry, Astrology, Numerology, I Ching, Rune Stones, and the Tarot." <http://www.letusreason.org/Nam30.htm>

“Veriditas is the non-profit organization that has grown up around the labyrinths at Grace Cathedral. They are dedicated to teaching people the history, use and potential of this spiritual tool. Veriditas Project founder Lauren Artress promotes the labyrinth as a way to connect with the divine feminine, the god within.” (Penn, September 1999 The New Age movement in the Episcopal Church).

Dr. Artress states, “The labyrinth provides a sacred space where the inner and outer world can commune, where the thinking mind and the imaginative heart flow together... a space to listen to our inner voice of wisdom”. Walking A Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool.” p 180

“The labyrinth is a shared esoteric tradition; in Native American culture it is called the Medicine Wheel and Man in the Maze. The Celts described it as the Never Ending Circle. It is also called the Kabala in mystical Judaism. One feature they all share is that they have one path which winds in a circuitous way to the center.”

<http://www.crossroad.to/articles2/05/teichrib/labyrinth.htm>

Listening to and reading books by men such as Leonard Sweet will have an effect on our church. As you can see below, prayer labyrinths are being embraced by some within our church:

Calimesa Seventh-day Adventist Church: “Weather Watch, a Union-wide time of prayer and renewal begins for us next weekend. Prayer Service on Friday night, Oct. 6, 7 pm in the sanctuary: a time for worship, community prayers, and silent prayers. Sabbath, Oct. 7, **enjoy a Prayer Labyrinth** set up in the Fireside Room following second service, and open until 4 pm. All ages welcome to participate!” http://calimesa.adventistfaith.org/site_data/386/assets/0005/8550/9-29-2007Bulletin.pdf

Trans-European Division and Newbold College (Education Leadership Summit): “**The Labyrinth Experience** - Newbold Gymnasium”

http://www.newbold.ac.uk/component/option,com_events/task,view_detail/agid,147/year,2009/month,05/day,10/Itemid,1683/catids,265/

La Sierra University: ““Adventist Women and the Earth: A Response to Ecofeminism’ will take place at the La Sierra University Church. The conference will feature talks, workshops, panels, a film screening, **prayer labyrinth** and community outreach activities.” <http://www.lasierra.edu/news/2009/apr/Ecofeminism.html>

Newbold College (Week of Spiritual Emphasis): “To encourage participants to think about their spiritual journeys, the organising team had invited MA Theology student, Patty Miranda to arrange a **labyrinth** – a mini spiritual journey in Salisbury Hall. In candlelight and against a background of tranquil music, the path led individual seekers on a spiritual journey where they encountered music, meditation, art, media and symbolic activities at interactive stations. Audio prompting challenged participants to rethink their relationship with themselves, other people, the planet, and God. Albanian MA student Ermira Kollarja was moved by her labyrinth experience. She said ‘It was beautiful. I cried three times. When I dropped the stone into the water, it felt like Jesus was beside me lifting the burdens from my shoulders. It was so real.’” <http://adventistnews.org.uk/news607.htm>

Signs of the Times: The Labyrinth - This is a spiritual experience that invites you to be still and silent as you participate in progressive experiences integral to the spiritual journey. <http://web.ukonline.co.uk/paradigm>
<http://www.signsofthetimes.org.au/archives/2004/november/article5.shtml>

Escondido Seventh-day Adventist Church: “**Prayer Labyrinth** April 4 following lunch after church.”
<http://www.escondidosda.org/women-s-ministry>

Redlands Academy: “Students have donated to projects sponsored by ADRA, World Vision, Heifer International and the International Red Cross. They have participated in a "global issues experience," a **prayer labyrinth-type contemplative adventure** across a world map with stations designed to enable students to confront their attitudes about the big issues.”
<http://www.pacificunionrecorder.com/108/6/35598.html>

North Hawaii Community Hospital (SDA): “The grounds of North Hawaii Community Hospital in Waimea have a **5-circuit labyrinth** that is used both as a healing path of prayer for the hospital community and as a fundraiser.”
<http://www.heartpath.com/Content/labyrintharticles.htm>

Hundreds of Christians have taken part in labyrinth prayer walks, and many churches across North America and Europe are embracing this tool as a means to expand their spiritual experience. The Rev. Jill Geoffrion, a "certified labyrinth facilitator" and author of such books as *Christian Prayer and Labyrinths* and *Praying the Labyrinth*, writes:

"We are currently in a period of historic labyrinth revival. Churches, retreat centers and Christian camps are placing these prayer tools inside and outside. Christians all over the world are installing labyrinths in their yards and gardens. Many are using the labyrinths as a ministry tool, bringing portable versions to prisons, national denominational conferences and church group meetings. It is conservatively estimated that there are over 5,000 labyrinths in the United States alone. God is blessing the use of the labyrinth; many are being drawn closer to Jesus, experiencing healing and gaining spiritual clarity as they pray on its path."

"The Labyrinth is an archetype, a divine imprint, found in all religious traditions in various forms around the world. By walking a replica of the Chartres labyrinth, laid in the floor of Chartres Cathedral in France around 1220, we are rediscovering a long-forgotten mystical tradition that is insisting to be reborn. The labyrinth is a shared esoteric tradition; in Native American culture it is called the Medicine Wheel and Man in the Maze. The Celts described it as the Never Ending Circle. It is also called the Kabala in mystical Judaism. One feature they all share is that they have one path which winds in a circuitous way to the center."

<http://www.crossroad.to/articles2/05/teichrib/labyrinth.htm>

The Rev. Jill Geoffrion states that "God is blessing the use of the labyrinth; many are being drawn closer to Jesus, experiencing healing and gaining spiritual clarity as they pray on its path."

On the surface this sounds great. But is God really blessing this "new thing"? Can God bless something that has its origins in esoteric doctrine and ancient pagan mythologies? Adding to its historical pagan significance is the fact that the labyrinth has never lost its occult meaning. Labyrinths are still being used, and will continue to be used, as an instrument of pagan spirituality.

If God is going to bless labyrinth prayer journeys, how is He going to deal with Deuteronomy 12:1-14, 18:9-13 and Exodus 34:10-17? In each of these Scripture passages God explicitly tells His people to refrain from anything used in pagan practices. Moreover, the entire book of Jeremiah is a warning against involvement in alternative religious practices.

<http://www.crossroad.to/articles2/05/teichrib/labyrinth.htm>



The following is from the Campus Chronicle, The student forum of Pacific Union College.

A remarkable week of prayer: "While the rest of the world was distracted by the pope's travels, rumors about the future of an acquitted killer, and assorted earthquakes, hurricanes, and cease-fires, something extraordinary was happening here in Angwin. A Catholic was speaking for the week of prayer.

"Brennan Manning is more than simply a Roman Catholic. He is also an ex-priest and a recovering alcoholic. As far as anyone remembers, he is the first "non-Adventist" to be invited to take the pulpit for this special week. It may be a sign of PUC's spiritual maturity that we recognize him as a deeply committed brother in Christ."

<http://chronicle.puc.edu/>

In *The Signature of Jesus*, Manning teaches how to suspend thought. He instructs his readers methodically: The first step in faith is to stop thinking about God at the time of prayer. Contemplative spirituality tends to emphasize the need for a change in consciousness; we must come to see reality differently. Choose a single, sacred word; repeat the sacred word inwardly, slowly, and often. Enter into the great silence of God. Alone in that silence, the noise within will subside and the Voice of Love will be heard.

<http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/manningexcerprayone.htm>

See: <http://www.faithalone.org/journal/1997ii/Caddock.html> for a review of the book, *Signature of Jesus*



The Doctor of Ministry Discipleship and Spiritual Formation Concentration integrates an understanding of a theology of discipleship and spiritual formation, with the process and dynamics involved in the participants' personal spiritual growth and consequent modeling, mentoring and teaching roles within the context of family, church and community.

<http://www.andrews.edu/sem/dmin/concentrations/discipling/index.html>



THE ADVENTIST CHAPLAIN is a quarterly publication of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, the chaplaincy services department and official endorsing agency of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

A Word About This Issue's Special Focus (July-September 2003)

While serving as a chaplain near Chicago, I took a class in Spiritual Direction at nearby DeAndreis Theological Seminary. It was my introduction to the classic ministry form refined through the centuries by Catholic religious and clergy and in recent decades discovered by many Protestants as well. It is a ministry that focuses on discerning God's moving and guiding in our daily lives. I have asked two Seventh-day Adventist women trained as spiritual directors to give us an overview of their ministry. First Delcy Kuhlman will provide an overview of the ministry and its process; then Diane Forsythe will focus on the qualifications of spiritual directors. Several spiritual direction training programs are available for chaplains and pastors. For more information, visit www.sdiworld.org and take the navigation bar to "Training Programs and Retreats." Some of the better known programs are The Shalem Institute* and The Upper Room,** but you will find others as well. ~The Editor

"But what if you have a spiritual need that another sermon or another counseling session won't help? What if you want to listen to God more and more fully; and engage God more and more deeply? It could be that you need a spiritual director more than a chaplain or pastor. Sometimes a pastor or chaplain is also a spiritual director. But all pastors and chaplains are not spiritual directors any more than all medical doctors are cardiologists." (page 5)

"For a better understanding of this process or to help discern God's invitation into it, the reader might find *Sacred Companions* by David Benner or *Soul Keeping* by Howard Baker a very good read. Other resources can be found at www.shalem.org/ and www.sdiworld.org" (page 4) http://www.adventistchaplains.org/pdf/newsletter/jul_sep_2003.pdf

David Benner, the author of Sacred Companions clearly promotes contemplative spirituality in his book.

* (In their own words) "Shalem is an ecumenical Christian organization devoted to the support of contemplative spirituality." <http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/shalem.htm>

** Upper Room is an organization that promotes mantra based meditation and is the creator of the popular, meditation tool Walk to Emmaus. <http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/newsletter072307.htm>

Spiritual Direction - Started by Mystics, Promoted by Christians

[Spiritual Directors International \(SDI\)](http://www.sdiworld.org) is an interspiritual "learning community committed to advancing spiritual direction around the world" with a membership that "consists of people from many nations and many faiths." According to SDI, spiritual direction is "the contemplative practice of helping another person or group to awaken to the mystery called God in all of life," and they respond "to this call by tending the holy around the world and across traditions.

Ray Yungen discusses SDI in *A Time of Departing*: To underscore the scope and reach of the contemplative prayer movement let's look at the numbers put out by an organization called Spiritual Directors International (SDI). On their website this group gives ample evidence of what their practices are. In one national conference, the following was presented: This workshop offers an opportunity to study and experience the director's role in a person's move into the beginning and early stages of contemplative prayer, silence, and openness to new sorts of praying. One of the objectives of SDI is "Tending the holy around the world and across traditions." A 2003 *Christianity Today* article, [Got Your Spiritual Director Yet?](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/20030707a01b.asp), confirms two things, one that spiritual direction is contemplative, and two that it is becoming a part of evangelical Christendom. The article explains that popular Christian author Larry Crabb is changing his views. Once a believer in psychology he is switching to spiritual direction. The article credits contemplatives (mystics) such as John Cassian and Ignatius of Loyola for getting spiritual direction into the church and suggests that we can learn more about it from Richard Foster, Eugene Peterson, and Dallas Willard - with this we completely agree. As Rick Warren stated in his book, *Purpose Driven Church*, Foster and Willard are key players in the Spiritual Formation movement, but while Warren says that this movement is a vital wake up call for the church, we say it is a terrible seduction for the church. <http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/blog/index.php?p=185&more=1&c=1>



Pathways is a program that has been recently developed by the Roseville SDA Church and will be presented to pastors, conference leaders and church members of the Northern California Conference. This program is closely related to Spiritual Direction.

The following is the announcement for the Pathways Retreat:

This is being sent as a reminder about the Roseville Pathways Retreat scheduled for March 7-9, 2008 at Leoni Meadows [Northern California Conference Camp]. Our leadership team felt we should open this weekend up for representatives from churches throughout the Conference and Union interested in learning how to hold and nurture newly baptized members into the church.

This weekend will allow visitors not only to capture the concept of Pathways, but to catch the spirit of the special relationships formed between Pathways team members and the newly baptized member. This is what makes Pathways work. That relationship becomes transformational in the lives of both. While the weekend is planned primarily for the benefit of establishing that relationship, guests will learn much by hearing the presentations and observing the process of bonding that happens over the course of the weekend. The guests will be welcome to join us in all our meetings, as well as observe the modeling that happens, and even the intimate bonding between the new member and their Pathways mentor. Our leadership team will make ourselves available, after the last session on Sunday morning, just for our guests for a question and answer session. We want to do all we can to encourage this type of ministry in as many Adventist Churches as we can.

Note to our guests: Currently we have several members among our Pathways team skilled enough to be trainers, and others who are learning the skills. This weekend is our first retreat with the newly baptized from our fall series. About 30 of them will spend the weekend with us, along with the approximately 30 pathways trainers and trainees. During this weekend you will be able to experience the actual bonding taking place between new member and their pathways partner - a sacred event. Since the Conference and Union helped fund this program for the purpose of it becoming a model for other churches to follow, we want to encourage interested pastors, conference leaders, and church members to join us for what we hope will be an inspiring weekend. The goals of Pathways are:

Pathways is a program developed to fill a need in the church – turning new converts into a new generation of Adventist leaders. And in the process equipping church members with the skills necessary to disciple others in the same way Jesus did. There are four essential tasks required in Pathways:

Beliefs form the foundation of the soul. Our beliefs answer the questions: “Who am I,” “Where do I come from” and “where am I going.” Behaviors and feelings flow from these beliefs. Developing a belief system strong enough to protect as well as guide us to spiritual maturity is the foundation on which Pathways is built.

Spiritual Disciplines are essential in developing and maintaining relationships with our Creator and fellow human beings. They require the development of skills, often foreign to our natural disposition, in order to be successful. Training and monitoring our progress here is essential for spiritual success. Learning and practicing spiritual disciplines is a never ceasing passion in Pathways.

Interpersonal Skills are the pathways that connect ourselves with others. The process of knowing another begins with knowing oneself. Pathways teaches people how to know and care for themselves as well as how to know and care for others. This brings peace, yielding its fruit of wisdom and energy to accomplish our purpose in life.

Mentoring or discipling is the grandest of all gifts God has given. Pathways links one person to another in a bond of love, accountability, learning, and commitment. It is the fastest and most efficient method for growth. Mentors in training are linked with a mentor in order to establish and experience relationships built upon trust, integrity, honesty, commitment and truth.

Here are some of the classes in the Weekend Schedule:

SABBATH –

9:30 a.m. – The Gift of Presence “making myself available to another person,” by Gordon Arruda & modeling team.
This is the first in a trilogy of what it means to become a sacred companion.

10:30 a.m. – The Gift of Presence – 2 (personalizing presence with my Pathways partner, and then sharing my response about what that was like with the whole group)

11:00 a.m. – The Gift of Hospitality “making space (or place) for another person in my life, receiving them into my heart, devoting myself to them, where they can be welcome, safe, and heard,” by Gordon Arruda & modeling team.

3:00 p.m. – The Gift of Hospitality – 2 (personalizing hospitality with my Pathways partner, and then sharing my response about what that was like with the whole group)

4:00 p.m. – The Gift of Dialog – “a mutual exchange of inquiry for the purpose of exploring spiritual truth about God, what he is doing, etc. No one is trying to teach another, but rather a mutual exploration and discovery benefiting both parties,” by Gordon Arruda & modeling team.

The following indented section is from a letter written by one of the pastors of the Roseville SDA Church:

The entire program is a product of the Roseville SDA Church. When we started this, just over two years ago, there was almost nothing available in Adventism to meet this overwhelming need in our church. The entire NA division recognizes the problem, is crying out for help in resolving it, but there was nothing. That is the reason why the Pacific Union Conference Evangelism Endowment Fund and the NCC chose to help fund our project. Since that time, Pastor Ben Maxson, from Paradise has also designed a program.

Our program is designed to:

1. Teach new converts how to maintain and grow their own devotional life with God via spiritual disciplines.
2. Connect them with trained church mentors who become their most intimate friend over the two years following their joining the church
3. Teach them the reasons behind what we believe
4. Get them involved in ministry

We use selected EGW books; books by David Benner: *Desiring God's Will*, *The Gift of being yourself*, *Sacred Companions*, and *Surrender to Love* (which we have found to be the most helpful). We also use some mentoring handbooks from a company who specializes in working with church groups from the Auburn area. Hope this helps.

Benner's book, *Sacred Companions*, openly promotes the teachings of Merton and is actually a who's who of mystical and panentheistic writings such as atonement denier Alan Jones (*Reimagining Christianity*), Thomas Keating and a host of like-minded writers. <http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/newsletter011408.htm>

The mentoring handbooks Pathways uses come from a place called Faith-Centered Mentoring and More. In the Christ-Centered Mentor's Handbook, on page 8 it says: “Keith R. Anderson and Randy D. Reese propose a practical and structured approach to spiritual mentoring which is built on the centuries-old concept of spiritual direction. We see their approach as very compatible with our Christ-centered mentoring.”

Following is a sample list of customers for whom Faith-Centered Mentoring and More has provided resources and/or services.

Adventist Frontier Missions, MI
Andrews University, TN [sic MI]
Arrow Leadership Ministries, Canada
Biblical Ministries Int'l., GA
Calvary Bible Church, Grass Valley, CA
Christian Medical Doctors Association, TN
First Baptist Lakewood, CA
HIS Alapitrvny, Hungary
Lebanon Baptist Church, GA
Legacy Ministries Int'l, OH
Living Testimony Baptist Church, TX
Marienella, Ireland
MentorLink
MOPS
Northside Christian Church, CA
Saddleback Church, CA
S.D.A. Theological Seminary, MI
Serving In Mission (SIM), NC
The Salvation Army
Willow Creek Community Church, IL
<http://www.faithmentoringandmore.com/html/customers.html>

To see what Spiritual Direction is really all about, investigate the websites where you will find the following paragraphs. As you do, bear in mind that what comes from Rome leads to Rome. Note carefully interspersed divine cautions, such as:

“Do not depend upon human beings for spiritual help. Resist the temptation to make flesh your arm. Look to God as children look to an earthly Father. Believe that He loves you and that He will help you, even as He has promised. If you will believe, you will have confidence, trust, reliance, and rich blessings, because you will realize that Christ is the foundation of your faith.” GH, March 1, 1901

Spiritual direction occurs when one individual (normally identified as a spiritual director) accompanies another person (the spiritual directee) in their journey toward being transformed into the image of Christ. Although it is an ancient practice of the church, it has been largely ignored (until recent years) by many in “evangelical” churches.

<http://ruach.wordpress.com/writing/papers-written/reflections-on-one-on-one-spiritual-direction-direction-in-common-and-personal-spiritual-direction/>

Spiritual direction has been practiced by people, including those in religious life, for many years. Thomas Merton, in his books *Spiritual Direction and Meditation* and *The Wisdom of the Desert*, recounts the practice of spiritual direction by the desert fathers. These were individuals who, according to Merton, lived in the desert to seek Christ. In separating themselves from society to live in the desert, they were cut off from formal guidance provided by the bishop. The desert life was solitary, and it was allegedly dangerous because of temptations. To discern the spirit, the desert fathers resorted to seeking advice and guidance from spiritual directors, who, in some ways, took the place of the bishop. Spiritual directors guided the formation of the desert fathers. In later years, spiritual direction continued to be practiced. Much is written about spirituality and spiritual direction as practiced and lived by the saints. The book *Carmelite Studies 1*, edited by John Sullivan OCD, is a compilation of articles and essays written by various authors about the practice of spiritual direction by noted Carmelites, such as St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila.

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3885/is_200201/ai_n9024347

In the technical sense of the term, spiritual direction is that function of the sacred ministry by which the Church guides the faithful to the attainment of eternal happiness. . . . In one way, the Church requires all her adult members to submit to such private direction, namely, in the Sacrament of Penance. For she entrusts to her priests in the confessional, not only the part of judge to absolve or retain the sins presently confessed, but also the part of a director of consciences. In the latter capacity he must instruct his penitents if ignorant of their duties, point out the wrong or the danger in their conduct, and suggest the proper means to be employed for amendment or improvement. The penitent, on his part, must submit to this guidance. He must also, in cases of serious doubt regarding the lawfulness of his action, ask the advice of his director.

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05024a.htm>

“It is a backsliding church that lessens the distance between itself and the Papacy.” ST, February 19, 1894

It's [Spiritual Direction] sort of a cross between counseling and confession. But spiritual direction is neither. It's actually much more. According to area spiritual directors, spiritual direction has the potential to help you balance your life, remove sin, and — most importantly — deepen your relationship with Christ. And — if you're lucky — maybe even help you become a saint. What exactly is spiritual direction? The New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia describes spiritual direction as "the private guidance of souls according to their individual needs." Local spiritual directors define the term differently, but all agree that the ultimate purpose is developing personal holiness. According to Sister Micaela Randolph, OSB, director of Sophia Center's Souljourners program in Atchison, spiritual direction is "holy listening." The Sophia Center trains spiritual directors in a three-year program that prepares them with classroom knowledge as well as practice in providing spiritual direction. "Spiritual direction is holy listening on the part of both the director and directee," she said. "It is a deep listening which leads us to respond, to change, to move or go deeper."

<http://www.theleaven.com/localspirit031006.htm>

“God has been greatly dishonored by His people leaning upon human beings. He has not told us to do this. He has told us that He will teach us, He will guide us. . . . Think of how many promises He has given us, which we may grasp by the hand of faith. . . . He wants us to become acquainted with Him, to speak to Him, to tell Him of our difficulties, and obtain an experience in asking of One who never misjudges and never makes a mistake.”

Manuscript 144, 1901

To share another's experience of God is a gift and a grace for the director, who is as much recipient as is the directee, in this graced relationship of sharing life's process. Two journeys meet at this encounter, and the mystery of deepening union occurs in each. There is a great longing today, for Christians to be able to reflect on their own lives with another person who will continue to listen in faith. My increasing awe and faith and sense of mystery continue to draw me into this ministry, which, I believe, needs to move into a more central place in the Christian experience.

<http://www.spiritualitytoday.org/spir2day/873921crowley.html>

“I shall not dishonor my Lord by encouraging people to come to me for counsel, when they have a standing invitation to go to the One who is able to carry them and all their burdens.” TM 487

The best spiritual directors are highly skilled at 'noticing', listening and attending to the key interior movements in a person's prayer. However this is not just a mystical thing. Because prayer covers all the major areas of one's life, so does spiritual direction. . . . Essentially the spiritual director discerns what Ignatius [Loyola] called the 'movement of spirits', whether good or evil, in the other.

<http://aibi.gospelcom.net/articles/spidir1.htm>

There is a longing in every human heart to be fully alive. Do you feel disconnected? Do you need a spiritual tune-up? Are you just going through the motions, is your focus unclear and stress getting the upper hand? Have you asked these questions: *“I wonder where God is? Why can't I be more spiritual? I wish I knew what I should be doing with my life?”* When life begins to feel unbalanced, and your joy and enthusiasm are drained by an emotional fatigue you cannot name – *it's time to take action!* A Spiritual Director is willing to walk alongside of you, to help you see where you are called to be in this time of your life, to help you encounter God in unexpected places and circumstances where you did not expect to find God. *You are not alone!* A Spiritual Director is a compassionate friend who accompanies you, walks with you, loves you, cries with you, and laughs with you. Spiritual Direction is a way of leading us to see and be attentive to the real Director – the Spirit hidden in the depths of our being. As we become attuned we can more easily utilize resources God has already given us. We can *trust our experiences and decisions make a difference in our life.* We get to live from the beauty of who we are! A Spiritual Director listens for the movement of the Divine within you and encourages you in how to work with the Spirit. The blessings are clarity, focus, stability, peace and a lightness of heart.

http://www.peacejourney.org/Spiritual%20Direction_2.htm

“The promises of God are full and abundant, and there is no need for anyone to depend upon humanity for strength. To all that call upon Him, God is near to help and succor. And He is greatly dishonored when, after inviting our confidence, we turn from Him--the only One who will not misunderstand us, the only One who can give unerring counsel--to men who in their human weakness are liable to lead us astray.” TM 381



Women Clergy Conference Focuses on Nurture, Mentoring, and Education

The North American Division hosted its third annual Women Clergy Conference in Donaldson, Indiana, October 15-18, 2006, focusing on spiritual leadership with the theme “Soul Designer.” Scores of female pastors, chaplains, and others in spiritual leadership throughout the division attended, as well as several female seminarians from the Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan. **Ruth Haley Barton**, co-founder and president of The Transforming Center—a Christian organization located in Wheaton, Illinois, that provides resources for pastors—began the conference with her presentation, “Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership.” <http://www.adventistreview.org/article.php?id=873>

Ruth Haley Barton trains thousands a year in the art of contemplative prayer. “Ask for a simple prayer to express your willingness to meet God in the silence . . . a simple statement . . . such as ‘Here I am.’ . . . Help yourself return to your original intent by repeating the prayer that you have chosen.” —Ruth Haley Barton Quotes taken from Discipleship Journal Vol. 113 1999

Ruth Haley Barton was trained at the [Shalem Prayer Institute](http://www.shalemprayerinstitute.com) for Spiritual Formation.

“This mystical stream [contemplative prayer] is the Western bridge to Far Eastern spirituality . . . It is no accident that the most active frontier between Christian and Eastern religions today is between contemplative Christian monks and their Eastern equivalents.” —Tilden Edwards, Shalem Founder

<http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/ruthhaleybarton.htm>

What will we be doing on the boat? While on-ship, there will be general session worships, workshops, small groups, spiritual directors, meals, Christian comedy, and much more.

Sample Workshop Topics

Living Single

Marriage

Parenting

Debt Management

Life Coaching

Conflict Resolution

Spiritual Formation (Basics of Christianity, Prayer, etc.)

Relational Evangelism

Responding to Pluralism

Social Justice Roundtable

National and International Adoption

Creation and Environmentalism

Connecting with Local Missions

Youth Leader's Training

Children's Ministry Training

<http://www.cruisewithamission.org/article.php?id=30>

Prayer Chapel

You will have resources always available to seek God in new ways while you are on Cruise with a Mission. A prayer chapel will be open 24/7 with interactive stations where you can try praying with art, praying for the world, praying intercession, and waiting on God. There will be young adults to support you if you need partnership in prayer, or just a quiet place to be with God away from the activities of the boat. The prayer chapel will be an oasis where you will be welcomed to come into God's presence alone or with your friends to lift up your heart and be restored.

<http://www.cruisewithamission.org/article.php?id=22>

Evidence that Interspirituality/Emergent/Spiritual Formation philosophy is making inroads into our church is found in what is happening with Faith House Manhattan, Partners in Innovation, Kaiser, Dr. William Loveless:

<http://www.sdapartnersininnovation.org/>

<http://www.kaiser.net/index.cfm>

http://www.sdayouth.net/a_transcript_of_a_majority_of_dr.htm

Samir Selmanovic, a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, is pioneering a ministry called Faith House Manhattan. This project is endorsed by **Tony Campolo**, author, **Brian McLaren**, author, **Jon Paulien**, author and Dean of the Faculty of Religion at Loma Linda University, **Raj Attiken**, President of the Ohio Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and founder of yearly leadership gathering, National Conference on Innovation, **Ryan Bell**, Senior Pastor of the Hollywood Adventist Church and the director of Re-Church Network, **Roy Naden**, Professor Emeritus, Andrews University, **Monte Sahlin**, author, church growth consultant, and Vice President for Creative Ministries in Columbia Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, **Nathan Brown**, Editor, *Signs of the Times* (Australia & New Zealand), **Lawrence T. Geraty**, President, La Sierra University, California, **Johnny Ramirez-Johnson**, Professor of Religion, Psychology, & Culture, School of Religion, Loma Linda University, **Jon Dybdahl**, previous president of Walla Walla College and a member of 2010 Edinburgh Planning Group, **Samuel Leonor**, international speaker, chaplain of La Sierra University.

http://samirselmanovic.typepad.com/faith_house/endorsementsearly2.pdf

The following was taken from a Lighthouse Research Newsletter: In the Manifesto, under the chapter "The Sweet Problem of Inclusiveness," the following statements are made. These are all in context and from the same author, Muslim raised Samir Selmanovic who later served as a Seventh-day Adventist pastor and now is part of Emergent Village. Selmanovic states: "Christianity's idea that other religions cannot be God's carriers of grace and truth casts a large shadow over our Christian experience" (p. 191).

The message that Selmanovic is preaching is none other than what Alice Bailey calls the *rejuvenation of the churches*, where Christianity will be melded into the other religions of the world, ultimately leading to a universal global religion, and in which the gospel message of Jesus Christ will be completely compromised. Emerging spirituality is quickly overtaking much of mainstream Christianity, right before our very eyes. If your pastor or youth leader is telling your

church to be involved with spiritual formation, they are taking you down a road the same as Samir Selmanovic when he says he seeks "to bring progressive Jews, Christians, Muslims, and spiritual seekers of no faith to become an interfaith community for the good of the world," or when he says, "We have one world and one God," and "Imagine: One humanity, One pulpit, A rich diversity of voices, All learning from one another and cherishing the traditions of one another."

Last week I attended a short meditation class by a wonderful guide (Thank you Michelle!). She taught us *Square Breath*, a Sufi practice. It was unlike anything else I have experienced before, centering first on one's breathing, then on one's heartbeat, bringing them in sync, one's own person becoming an expression of gratitude for the gift of life and love of God. Sufi's would say, "stain your prayer rug with wine." I did just that this week. I got lovedrunk with God. *Samir Selmanovic, November 8, 2007*

http://samirselmanovic.typepad.com/faith_house/2.WhatIsFaithHouseProject.pdf

<http://www.emergentvillage.com/podcast/samir-selmanovic-on-finding-our-god-in-the-other>

<http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/newsletter061907.htm>

ADVENTIST REVIEW, January 29, 2004

Excerpts from **The Gentle Whisper – Connecting with the Divine through solitude**

By Bonita Joyner Shields - assistant editor of the Adventist Review

In the fourth century, men and women entered the desert en masse in a movement known as the Monastic movement. These "desert fathers and mothers," as they were called, exited society in order to lead a solitary, contemplative life of prayer. They were seeking a deeper experience with God. While I'm not advocating a reclusive lifestyle (neither did Jesus), I've had a fascination with these men and women of faith, and have learned much from them about the spiritual discipline of silence.

In his book *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality*, Belden Lane explores what the desert meant for these ancient men and women, and what it can mean for us today.

"To submit to silence in prayer is to admit that we stand naked before God, without even words to cover ourselves. Words are the fig leaves we continually grasp in the effort to clothe our nakedness." Lane, p.68

I have a chair in the corner of my bedroom. Technically it belongs to Roy *and me*, but we both know it's really Bonita's chair! (Our cats, however, haven't learned this yet.) This is sacred space for me; it's where I retreat for solitude: to read, talk with God, and get away from the crowds.

This past spring I decided it was time for me to take an extended personal spiritual retreat. (No, I didn't go camping; I'm not there yet!) I left home on a Sabbath morning and headed out to a personal retreat center, where I got a room, meals, and all the solitude I could handle until Sunday afternoon. Even before leaving on this relatively short excursion, though, I wondered how I would fill up that much time with solitude.

What I discovered after spending this time reading, writing, praying, walking, eating, thinking, planning, crying, laughing, and *sleeping*--almost all of it in silence--was that my body, mind, and spirit craved more (especially the sleeping!). No distractions. No noise. No places to go, people to see, things to do. A peace and calm worked their way deeper into my soul. I felt that I had more deeply connected with the Divine.

"True contemplation can never fulfill itself in 'the false sweetness of a narcissistic seclusion.' It has to re-enter the world of others with its newly won freedom. . . . The contemplative returns to the ordinary, not in spite of her detachment from it, but because of that detachment. No longer driven by fear of rejection and loss, she is able now to love others without anxiously needing anything in return." (Lane, p.75)

<http://www.adventistreview.org/2004-1505/story2.html>



Adventist World, December 2007

Re-Formation in Iceland

By Gavin Anthony - director of Youth and Discipleship for the Iceland Conference.

"The Iceland Conference is building its discipleship model around spiritual formation, a term that identifies the focus of discipleship—the practical and spiritual re-forming of broken human hearts back into the image of Jesus."

“To learn more about the spiritual formation work in the Iceland Conference, go to www.reflectingJesus.org
<http://www.adventistworld.org/issue.php?issue=2007-1012&page=14>

Listening to God's Words

A form of scriptural meditation that emphasizes listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking through the text. (*Lectio divina*)

<http://www.reflectingjesus.org/index.cfm?fa=contentGeneric.tzmfjdyjkusdlrfj&pageId=98947>

Discipleship Links

[Spiritual Formation Forum](#)

[Renovare](#)

[Dallas Willard](#)

<http://www.reflectingjesus.org/index.cfm?fa=contentNews.news&directoryId=15882>

“But as I began to search for the editor’s email address to attach the document, an alarming thing happened. All of a sudden, the hairs all over my body stood up on end as the room was filled by an evil presence. It is hard to describe, but my mind suddenly went very hazy and it was as though all the energy in my body was being sucked out. From previous experiences, I knew what was happening. All I could do was slam my laptop shut, and find a phone to ask someone to pray for me. However, as I stood up, my knees buckled because I had already become so weak. In a strange way, I was almost glad for that experience. If what I had been writing was important to Satan, it was evidently important to God. The next day I emailed off the manuscript, confident of God’s hand in my life.”

<http://www.reflectingjesus.org/index.cfm?fa=contentGeneric.mnbxtkkccslhzorn>



Many Conferences and Unions have taken advantage of the free GC License for netAdventist and are offering the system without cost to their churches. Please check with your conference/union office, or go to our signup page to see if yours does.

<http://www.netadventist.org/>

One of the features of this subsidized web service that many of our churches are subscribing to is the news and devotional thoughts that are updated regularly. One of these services is called The Bible Says . . . Below are some thoughts that have been posted:

Prayer and Presence

Even Einstein was drawn to prayer as a mysterious experience that has potential to transform life and our journey with God. The Psalmist once quoted God as saying, "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). I'm learning more and more that I simply need to stop talking so much in prayer and start being silent, listening, quieting my heart and mind enough to simply be in the mysterious and unexplainable Presence. I need to let go of more of my own personal agendas when I come to God and let Him be God. The psalmist was so right—it's in the stillness that we really experience God meaningfully.

By Greg Nelson

<http://www.e-gracenotes.org/article.php?id=2243>

Creating Sacred Space

As much of his art shows, Van Gogh actually was quite adept at discovering experiences of the divine in very unlikely or normal places. Making sacred spaces by looking for and affirming the presence of God around us is a profound spiritual practice – seeing God in the eyes of a little baby, or deliberately creating a sacred altar in a corner of your house where you are reminded of God’s activity in your life and where you pay attention to God’s presence as you bow in prayer – specific ways to carve out sacred space to point your heart toward God.

By Greg Nelson

<http://www.e-gracenotes.org/article.php?id=1985>

Are You Listening?

This inability to really listen unfortunately impacts our relationships in profoundly negative ways: we don't connect deeply with people. And it impacts our spirituality: we aren't fully present to God either. Have you ever stopped to think about how much you've missed by not listening? Could this be why the poet quotes God in Psalms 46:10 as saying, "Be still and know that I am God?" The ability to know and experience God comes in the willingness to quiet the many

distractions and noises all around and within in order to focus and pay attention to God. It involves learning how to be fully present to God—and that necessarily involves listening, which necessarily involves selective filtering, which ultimately enhances meaningful connection. Deep listening is an art that must be learned and practiced. It's a discipline of giving attention to what matters most and the willingness to invest adequate time in it.

By Greg Nelson

<http://www.e-gracenotes.org/article.php?id=2002>

Greg Nelson teaches contemplative disciplines on his website:

“Place yourself in a comfortable position and allow yourself to become silent. Some people focus for a few moments on their breathing; others have a beloved "prayer word" or "prayer phrase" they gently recite. For some, the practice known as "centering prayer" makes a good, brief introduction to lectio divina. Use whatever method is best for you and allow yourself to enjoy silence for a few moments.” [TOOLS FOR THE SOUL, Part 2: Lectio Divina \("sacred reading"\)](http://www.secondwindsf.org/?page_id=51)
http://www.secondwindsf.org/?page_id=51

“*Nothing in all creation is so like God as silence.*” (Meister Eckhart, 14th century Christian mystic) Meditation is the art of silencing the mind. When the mind is silent, concentration is increased and we experience inner peace in the midst of worldly turmoil. Purpose: unclutter the mind, increase concentration, take control of thoughts, experience complete peace and inner stillness, mind-body relaxation and alignment. Concentrate on a candle flame. Narrow your gaze to the small tip and block out all other thoughts. When you get distracted, go back to focusing on the candle flame. The important thing is that you concentrate only on one thing at a time. http://www.secondwindsf.org/?page_id=51
[TOOLS FOR THE SOUL, Part 1: Prayer and Meditation](http://www.secondwindsf.org/?page_id=51)

More contemplative teachings of Greg Nelson:

[PRACTICING YOUR SPIRITUALITY, Part 3: Deep Listening](http://www.secondwindsf.org/?page_id=51)



GODencounters Schedule for 2008

GODencounters is a movement of (SDA) young adults who are wholeheartedly seeking a 24/7 experience of GOD, recklessly living for His renown. Daring to deepen intimacy with God, GODencounters gives focus to seven discipleship themes where practices of the Christian faith are emphasized.

“We prayed GODencounters would be a catalyst for deep, personal experiences with GOD,” asserts co-founder Jeff Gang. “[GODencounters is] not an act or a program, but an everyday, every moment way of living.” GODencounters aims to deepen devotion to Jesus by developing disciples, walking recklessly in His footsteps.

http://www.godencounters.org/primary/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=182&Itemid=86

The Art of “Being Still”: A Work in Progress Here are some helpful hints for “being still.” First, identify “sacred space” where you spend nonnegotiable time with God free of distractions. Yes, that means turning off the cell phone! For some this may be a special room in the house, your patio, under a tree in the yard, your car during your lunch break, taking a walk. Second, take some deep breaths imagining Christ breathing the breath of life into you and you exhaling out your worldly cares. Third, ask God to speak to you. If you choose to read Scripture ask yourself what might God be telling you in that passage. Next, learn to listen. If you find your mind wandering, slowing repeat the names of Jesus over and over again. When I have done this I have never come away empty handed.

http://www.godencounters.org/primary/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=82&Itemid=76

Spiritual Formation is to be promoted worldwide in our church as revealed in this *Adventist News Network Feature*

“Spiritual formation is a topic being raised by many pastors and church leaders in a growing number of Christian denominations. It's no longer enough to just know doctrine and facts—in today's hectic society people are searching for something deeper and more meaningful, something that makes sense in their whirlwind lives.

“Spiritual formation is not a new idea or concept, and "a lot of Protestants are in the same boat—we are rediscovering it," says Dr. Jon Dybdahl, president of Walla Walla College, an Adventist institution in Washington State. And, he adds, the Adventist Church has some work to do.

"Traditionally the Adventist Church has emphasized intellectual truth and accepting certain facts and ideas about

God," Dybdahl says. "At least in many places it has not talked so much about the importance of directly experiencing God.

The Adventist world church created the International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education (IBMTE) in September 2001, designed to provide overall guidance and standards to the professional training of pastors, evangelists, theologians, teachers, chaplains and other denominational employees involved in ministerial and religious formation, or spiritual formation, in each of the church's 13 regions around the world. *Adventist News Network Feature: Church, Congregations Increase Focus on "Spiritual Formation"* February 3, 2004, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

<http://news.adventist.org/data/2004/01/1075843904/index.html.en>

Meditation/contemplation techniques may bring the practitioner to experience any or all of the following three stages:

1. Bring the body to a relaxed state
2. Empty the mind by focusing concentration
3. Connect to an entity

<http://users.stargate.net/~ejt/NewsV3N15.htm>

On Loma Linda Broadcasting Networks TV May 16, 2009, on a program called Views to Use where the topic was Sacred Rhythms: Solitude, John Brunt, senior pastor of Azure Hills Adventist Church, Grand Terrace, CA asks the question "What do you do about the problem of the racing mind, to have silence and solitude, for some people it's just hard to get the mind to quit and concentrate. Do you have any tips on what one can do?"

In answer to this question, John Choi, Spiritual Formation Pastor at Azure Hills stated: "I have this prayer, this same prayer that I pray and I just pray it and let my mind calm down and then after that I go into meditative prayer. That seems to work for me." Earlier in the program Pastor Choi quoted Henri J. M. Nouwen who promotes contemplative prayer. He states: "The quiet repetition of a single word can help us to descend with the mind into the heart ... This way of simple prayer ... opens us to God's active presence." —The Way of the Heart (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1991).



Living with Hope seminar materials from the NAD Church Resource Center are now available at no charge for pre-release download at www.livingwithhopeseminar.com A complete 16-part Bible seminar sharing fundamental Seventh-day Adventist beliefs

Living with Hope is coming in July 2009 free to every Seventh-day Adventist Church in the North American Division on Pastor's DVD Volume 16.

In lesson 11 of this series entitled Spiritual Disciplines Richard Foster is mentioned four times. Here is part of the sermon manuscript:

There are many spiritual disciplines. **Richard Foster** in his ground breaking book *Celebration of Discipline*,^[i] divides the disciplines into the inward, outward, and corporate disciplines.

Under the inward disciplines come meditation, prayer, fasting, and study. Under the outward disciplines come simplicity, solitude, submission, and service. Under the corporate disciplines come confession, worship, guidance, and celebration.

The Old Testament uses two different Hebrew words to convey the idea of meditation and they are used fifty-eight times. Meditation is actually very simple. It is being still so you can hear God's voice and obey His word.

Foster says that simplicity is an *inward* reality that results in an *outward* life-style. Don't make material possessions your god. We can be seduced without realizing it since we live in such a consumer oriented society and are constantly bombarded with advertisements. These are meant to convince us we have a need when in most cases we do not.

According to **Richard Foster** the purpose of this discipline is actually freedom. Then he makes this remarkable statement, "I said that every Discipline has its corresponding freedom. What freedom corresponds to submission? It is the ability to lay down the terrible burden of always needing to get our own way."^[ii]

The discipline of guidance is not one we hear much of, perhaps because many religions have abused their powers in trying to control people. Nevertheless when we become part of the body of Christ we are stating that we desire a healthy family to *gently* restore us if we are headed off track. This is where we allow others to offer advice and guidance. Today's

society has become very individualistic. The corporate discipline of guidance gives permission for others to become involved in our lives.

Celebration is at the very heart of the way of Christ says **Richard Foster**. How does celebration differ from worship? Worship includes celebration but also much more. Worship is a group of people giving to God His worth. Celebration is giving thanks in a group, celebrating life, expressing joy over what God has done but does not necessarily focus on God.

^[i] Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998).

^[ii] Richard Foster, 100

Richard J. Foster: “[W]e must be willing to go down into the recreating silences, into the inner world of contemplation. In their writings, all of the masters of meditation strive to awaken us to the fact that the universe is much larger than we know, that there are vast unexplored inner regions that are just as real as the physical world we know so well.” — *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (New York, NY: HarperCollins®, 1980), 13.

“Thomas Merton has perhaps done more than any other twentieth-century figure to make the life of prayer widely known and understood . . . his interest in contemplation led him to investigate prayer forms in Eastern religion ... [he is] a gifted teacher” —Renovare, Richard J. Foster, Emilie Griffin, *Spiritual Classics* (New York, NY: HarperCollins®, 2000), 17.

Thomas Merton: “If only they [people] could all see themselves as they really are . . . I suppose the big problem would be that we would fall down and worship each other . . . At the center of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusions, a point of pure truth . . . This little point ...is the pure glory of God in us. It is in everybody.” —*Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1989), 157, 158.

There are 3,762 churches and schools that use Adventist Church Connect provided by the North American Division. My church uses this web service and as I looked at our website today I noticed on my homepage, under the “Staying Young” feature, the following article:



The Art of Yoga

The ancient art of yoga has been practiced by many people in various cultures and settings. It has become a growing trend in recent years in the United States.

If you have been looking for ways to gain strength, flexibility and good posture, stress relief as well as health benefits, then yoga might be for you.



Yoga increases our strength through the different poses that are practiced and provides muscle tone. There are different poses that work on each specific muscle in the body.

Flexibility can be obtained by stretching your muscles, which helps release lactic acid that often times builds up when we use our muscles and can cause symptoms such as tension, pain, fatigue and stiffness. Our joints can gain an increased range of motion as well as feel smooth and flowing rather than rigid.

A lot of us suffer from mild to moderate postural problems. With increased strength and flexibility, we will be able to sit up straighter and feel like we are taller without it feeling unnatural.

Yoga is also known for helping us become more aware of our bodies, so when we do slouch or find ourselves in a slumped position, our body will likely be aware and try to re-correct itself.

In the practice of yoga, there is a focus on our breathing. Most of us are in a hurry and don't take the time to focus for even five minutes on breathing more slowly and more steadily. Yoga also focuses on quieting our busy mind; allowing us to be in the present and focus on our breathing, pose or our balance. This in turn helps the mind and thoughts to slow down which results in the body being able to feel calm and less stressed.

Yoga is said to help increase blood flow as well as decrease blood pressure and heart rate. This can help decrease the risk for stroke and heart disease, as well as help with lowering cholesterol. Yoga has proven to help with a wide variety of conditions such as arthritis, asthma, sleep disorders, etc. It can also help keep our immune systems strong and help ward off colds and other illnesses, or at least shorten the duration of them.

As you can see, there are many different benefits of practicing yoga. There are others that were not mentioned, but are still being studied, such as yoga's affects on depression as well as certain personality disorders.

The only way to know if you will receive these benefits is by trying yoga for yourself. It is recommended to try a class that lasts eight weeks long in order to gain these benefits.

By Erika Gladden. Copyright © 2009 by GraceNotes. All rights reserved. Use of this material is subject to usage guidelines.

<http://www.e-gracenotes.org/article.php?id=3154>

The publisher of GraceNotes is the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. The Center for Creative Ministry is the GraceNotes content coordinator for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America.

<http://www.e-gracenotes.org/article.php?id=2>

The Art of Yoga was removed after I voiced my concern to the North American Division.

<http://www.e-gracenotes.org/comments.php?id=3154>

CREATIVEMINISTRY

<http://www.creativeministry.org/>

Even the physical positions in Yoga come right out of the Hindu scriptures, and are designed to put one into this state of consciousness where you imagine that you're God. Therefore, Christians who think they're getting relaxation and/or exercise, are really getting Hinduism! They think they're getting science, but they're getting religion. It's mislabeled and it's dangerous! (Summarized from Dave Hunt's comments on a 1988 John Ankerberg Show program, "The New Age in Society.") John Weldon and Clifford Wilson wrote in *Occult Shock and Psychic Forces* that Yoga is really pure occultism. Hans-Ulrich Rieker, in his book *The Yoga of Light*, also warns that misunderstanding the true nature of Yoga can mean "death or insanity." Also a little known fact is that virtually every major guru in India has issued warnings similar to these; i.e., deep-breathing techniques such as the ones taught in Yoga are a time-honored method for entering altered states of consciousness and for developing so-called psychic power. Yoga is one of the basic means of reaching this altered state of consciousness. And the altered state is the doorway to the occult.

<http://www.pastornet.net.au/response/articles/18.htm>

Many New Age gurus, as well as Teresa of Avila who was a 16th century Catholic mystic, distinguish between meditation and contemplation. According to them, meditation is the process for arriving at the state of contemplation. Total mental silence and physical quietness is achieved through meditation, which leads into contemplation, the non-verbal communication by "God." For Catholic mystics, New Agers, and non-Christian meditators, one of the primary purposes of meditation/contemplation is to experience God and be infused with His love. In chapter 25 of her "The Way To Perfection," Teresa of Avila describes the love she experienced during contemplation: "In case you should think there is little gain to be derived from practicing vocal prayer perfectly, I must tell you that, while you are repeating the Paternoster [Our Father] or some other vocal prayer, it is quite possible for the Lord to grant you perfect contemplation. In this way His Majesty shows that He is listening to the person who is addressing Him, and that, in His greatness, He is addressing her, by suspending the understanding, putting a stop to all thought, and, as we say, taking the words out of her mouth, so that even if she wishes to speak she cannot do so, or at any rate not without great difficulty.

"Such a person understands that, without any sound of words, she is being taught by this Divine Master, Who is suspending her faculties, which, if they were to work, would be causing her harm rather than profit. The faculties rejoice without knowing how they rejoice; the soul is enkindled in love without understanding how it loves; it knows that it is rejoicing in the object of its love, yet it does not know how it is rejoicing in it. It is well aware that this is not a joy which can be attained by the understanding; the will embraces it, without understanding how; but, in so far as it can understand anything, it perceives that this is a blessing which could not be gained by the merits of all the trials suffered on earth put

together. It is a gift of the Lord of earth and Heaven, Who gives it like the God He is. This, daughters, is perfect contemplation."

Although Teresa of Avila wrote: "she is being taught by this Divine Master, Who is suspending her faculties," it is not by the suspension of our faculties that we come into the fullness of God's love or by which He teaches us.

It is by reading and understanding God's word that we learn to walk in His word, fulfilling the command of Jesus. He said that whoever loves Him keeps His commands, which results in the perfection of His love: 1 John 2:5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

The first step in any mystical meditation is always to relax the body. A person is encouraged to find a place where he will not be disturbed, so the meditative process will not be broken. Yoga is often used as a way of bringing the body to a relaxed state. It's not necessary, but what is emphasized is that the body be comfortable in order to avoid distraction. There is a form of yoga where one concentrates on the various parts of the body (arms, legs, etc.) to bring them to a point of relaxation. The adherent is told to concentrate on each part of the body and release tension in each part one by one. If pursuing healing, he visualizes flowing water or rushing air washing away the tensions and anxieties or the impurity of the part of the body that is sick, then visualizes healing coming to that part.

Whether a person is pursuing healing or a deeper spiritual experience, the point throughout the meditative process is to never allow the mind to be distracted. If it does become distracted, repetition of the mantra holds the mind focused until the other thoughts or distractions subside. Sometimes a symbol is pictured in the mind and used instead of, or along with, the verbal mantra. Other practitioners use a phrase from Scripture or even the name of Jesus.

The repetition of Scriptural phrases to attain an altered state of consciousness is not why God gave us Scripture. Scripture was given so that we could understand God and His ways, and our need for Him, by knowing His plan of salvation. Scripture is to be read and studied and understood with a fully alert mind, not used as a technique to bring a person to a state of silence in which he does not or cannot think at all.

According to Teresa, meditation is the focusing on and reflection on some religious theme, often the life of Jesus while on earth. Or it could be the simple process of repeating a prayer, such as the Our Father. Mystical meditators often use a breathing technique to bring the body into a relaxed state, and in some cases the breathing itself is an actual part of the mantra. A person concentrates on his breath and does not try to control it. Often a two syllable mantra is used, focusing on the first syllable when breathing out, and then on the other when breathing in. Sometimes, the person counts each breath.

Often the consciousness is altered through the meditator's visualization of himself as a symbol, such as a candle or a bird. Through such visualization, he "becomes" the symbolic object, and at this point enters a deeper realm of the occult. This is the point at which he is "detached" from his thoughts and bodily senses and enters the state of contemplation, where he can do nothing but wait for "God" to mystically invade him.

<http://users.stargate.net/~ejt/NewsV3N15.htm>



In 2001 Pacific Press published a book by Debbonnaire Kovacs entitled "Devotional Retreats" in which the author teaches the reader how to meditate. You will notice the components of mystical centering prayer in what she is presenting.

"The thing you need most is often the hardest thing to come by— at least fifteen or twenty minutes of peace. . . . Once you have a comfortable spot and some quiet time to yourself, you're ready to begin. . . . Your mind is so used to scrambling, on six levels, at ninety miles an hour, that it takes practice to shift into neutral. An almost universal complaint of beginners at meditation is, "I can't do it. My mind just wanders!" . . . Others may meditate on nothingness, but Christians must meditate on something—actually, on Someone. . . . Apparently in Bible times, people meditated out loud. So you could say, or murmur, or whisper one of the names of God. . . The important thing is to think of something that will help you to concentrate on Him. Not on thoughts about Him or to Him or from Him, yet, but just on Him. When intruding thoughts come in, calmly and patiently turn your mind back to its focal point. . . . Take several deep breaths, (preferably outside or in front of an open window), inhaling from the abdomen, not from the chest. Exhale slowly and completely, to clean stale air out of your lungs and get your circulation going. Then with eyes closed, begin to breathe slowly and evenly, consciously relaxing your body, especially the muscles of the face, neck, and shoulders, where tension collects."

Devotional Retreats, p. 17, 18



On the *Spiritual Resources for Adventist Teachers* you will find this link: [Lost in Wonder - Online Prayer Labyrinth](http://www.sdaedspiritualresources.net/resources.php?view=secondary&category=517) Reflectively journey through 10 stages of Christian prayer online. "A labyrinth is an ancient spiritual tool that leads the traveler along a meditative path. Through images, words, music and actions we hope that you are able to consider your spiritual journey and be inspired and challenged."
<http://www.sdaedspiritualresources.net/resources.php?view=secondary&category=517>

A *Spectrum* interview reveals what the effect of *Spiritual Formation* can have on our young people:
http://www.spectrummagazine.org/articles/spectrum_interview/2010/03/01/year_center_action_and_contemplation

Many of the people implicated in this paper certainly mean well and would not intentionally engage in spiritualistic activities. My point is not to condemn anyone but rather to warn away from any involvement with New Age ideas. It would be better to not even use spiritual formation terminology to express Christian growth concepts because of its association with the emergent spiritual formation movement which is decidedly spiritualistic. And certainly we should not use their books in our endeavors to help our people grow in their Christian walk.

If you wish to understand more about these issues, read the books "Hidden Agenda" by Jan Voerman (SDA author), "A Time of Departing" by Ray Yungen and "Faith Undone" by Roger Oakland
http://www.amazon.com/Hidden-Agenda-Jan-Voerman/dp/1572584513/ref=sr_1_1/103-9943120-8052669?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1182882226&sr=8-1
<http://www.amazon.com/Time-Departing-Ray-Yungen/dp/0972151273>
<http://www.amazon.com/Faith-Undone-emerging-reformation-deception/dp/0979131510>

John Witcombe
pastorjcw@gmail.com

Last Revised: March 5, 2010