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## New Life

Shirley Freed

Andrews University, freed@andrews.edu

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## EDITORIAL

# NEW LIFE

As I write this, it is May in Michigan. Usually I have my garden planted by now, but this year it is different. Daytime temperatures linger in the 50s and 60s F, and night temperatures stay close to freezing. We've had a long, hard winter, with the total snowfall in the range of six feet and unseasonably bitter cold temperatures for weeks on end. I'm ready for spring!

The calendar tells me that spring arrived March 20; I am starting to see some evidence. All of the snow is finally melted! Robins with nesting material in their beaks tell me spring is here. Squirrels scamper about the yard, trying to remember where they buried hazelnuts and acorns. Canada geese honk overhead while bluebirds, sparrows and wrens argue for the nesting boxes. The deer are nipping new growth off the hostas and shrubs. The sun is shining brighter today than yesterday. The air is full of possibilities.

Every year at this time, I marvel at the strength and determination in my daffodils and other perennials. Throughout the winter they were buried under piles of dead leaves and heavy snow. Yet when the warmth of spring comes, something mysterious happens inside those dormant bulbs and roots. New life slowly emerges and I watch as they push their way through the old, dead leaves. Nothing stops them—not even a surprise snowstorm.

Spring showers wash the earth clean and encourage new growth in the trees, shrubs, flowers and grass. The green of spring is brilliant. My flowerbeds call me. Did the delphinium survive the winter? And what about the butterfly shrubs I planted last fall? I push away the dead leaves and there they are—evidence of new life. Stems peek through the soil, venturing into the cool Michigan spring. I get curious and start digging around for other plants. Oops! I accidentally break off a newly sprouted lily. It's too early. I can't see all the new growth yet. I need to wait.

Shirley Freed, Ph.D., is Professor of Leadership and Qualitative Research in the graduate Leadership Program at Andrews University. She is also Managing Editor for the *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*.

My husband and I grew up in Canada and learned early the predictability of the passing seasons: summer, fall, winter and spring. Other places, like Florida and Hawaii, have primarily two seasons: wet and dry. The Philippines and parts of Africa, too, experience just two seasons and the transition between the two may be fairly gentle. But the change from winter to spring here is really dramatic. During winter, it seems like nothing is growing. There is no evidence of new life. Everything is covered with snow. But then spring comes. Soft breezes begin to blow, clouds tumble across the blue sky, and everything seems to wake up. The earth bursts with new life.

The church also longs for “new life.” Out of curiosity, I Google “new life church” and receive millions of hits in less than a second, confirming my suspicion that we are all interested and focused on new life in our church communities. We notice church buildings closed, locked and shuttered; others have been repurposed and now serve as restaurants, homes and other businesses. We wonder why this is happening. We long for some indication that new life is coming to our churches.

This issue of *JACL* opens with Gyeongchun Choi’s article describing the behaviors of a “leading servant.” He makes the point that all Christians are servants first—serving one God—and that servants only become “leading servants” when they actively pursue God’s will. Choi’s thoughts feel like the fresh, clean breezes of springtime.

The interview with George Barna has several powerful insights. What would happen if churches actively gathered and used data when making decisions? Additionally, Barna’s model of discipleship provides a renewed way to think about spiritual growth.

The three feature articles provide some indication of newness of life. Tracie Jacobs’ article describes the leadership behaviors of African-American women elders. The surprising finding in her study is that the women generally scored higher on five leadership practices than a national sample. Does this indicate “new life,” or have African-American women always played an important leadership role in the church? The second feature article, by Timothy Puls, LaVerne Luddan, and James Freemyer, focuses on the relationship of authentic leadership to ministerial effectiveness. Don’t be put off by the statistics in this article. We want to feature many different kinds of research and writing in this journal. So skip around in the article a bit if you need to, and you will find the essence of the results showing a positive relationship between authentic leadership and ministerial effectiveness. Finally, Randy

Wolff's article shares research about leaders and their use of power in facilitating organizational change. Both of these topics, authentic leadership and power issues, offer new perspectives on how to relate to one another in the church setting.

The Leadership Lived section shares the story of an engineer's mentoring experience. While mentoring may seem like an "old" idea, this story brings new insight into how mentoring can unfold when we really care for others.

The Dialogue section reports the perspective of millennials in general about church life in American, and then further focuses on Adventist millennials. While the survey data reported feel like a draft of cold air, the interview data help us see the importance of relationships—especially intergenerational relationships. Please sit down with a group of friends and strategize ways your church may become more inviting. We can be intentional about changing our churches so millennials will find them more relevant.

The book reviews and dissertation abstracts also provide information and innovative ways to think about our work as church members. Look for the books that talk about the network and the mission as the "real" leaders. Taking the focus off of an individual leader is a new idea! I trust you'll sense possibilities for new life as you read the spring issue of *JACL*.