

Andrews University

Digital Commons @ Andrews University

Faculty Publications

8-1-2019

Calling Out the Silent Majority

Gerald A. Klingbeil

Andrews University, klingbeil@andrews.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pubs>

Recommended Citation

Klingbeil, Gerald A., "Calling Out the Silent Majority" (2019). *Faculty Publications*. 3163.
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pubs/3163>

This Popular Press is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.

Perspective



Calling Out the Silent Majority

Why we need to talk about pastoral burnout, depression, even suicide.

The following was originally posted on AdventistReview.org. Due to the universal nature of the concern it addresses, we have included it in this month's Adventist World.—Editors

Some months ago a disturbing piece of news popped up on my news feed. "California Church Shocked After Pastor Commits Suicide," blasted the headline—and for a moment my heart beat faster.

Andrew Stoecklein, the lead pastor of the evangelical Inland Hills church in Chino, California, passed away after having attempted suicide a day before. The church's website showed a dynamic young pastor with a wonderful wife and three young sons.

What pressures, pain, and hurt must have driven this young man of God to step into the irreversible void of suicide?

We don't like talking about burnout, depression, or even suicide when we talk about Adventist pastors. Yet all of these emotions and conditions are a present reality in Adventist clergy as well. Spiritual leaders, dynamic pastors, passionate preachers, consummate

evangelists—they all constantly face the real challenges of ministry in a media-driven world of constant tweets and Facebook postings, where personal space becomes less and less available.

Pastoring is hard and can be very lonely at times. Pastors live in the "on" mode most of the time. They have to. They need to be shepherds caring constantly for a diverse and often hurting flock.

We expect them to be administrative geniuses, leading people from different walks of life with differing needs and experiences who don't always see eye to eye. They should look beyond the walls of their church buildings to reach the unreached and lost. They should keep an eye on the church building's structure and maintenance, while at the same time expanding their media presence in a world that expects full media coverage.

I am an ordained pastor, and I often feel overwhelmed by the needs I see around me. So what can we, members of local congregations, do that goes beyond diagnosis? Here are four practical suggestions:

First, tell the pastors in your life again and again how much they are appreciated. I know that the large majority of members love and appreciate their pastors, but are we speaking up? Most of the time a pastor hears from members when they are unhappy or when there is

conflict. Positive feedback will go a long way in affirming a pastor who experiences constant pressures.

This doesn't mean that we may not sometimes disagree with the pastor. But we disagree in a Christ-like manner while at the same time affirming our loving relationship.

Second, open your heart and, if possible, your home to your pastor. When last did you invite the pastoral family for a meal without an agenda?

Third, commit to pray for your pastoral family on a daily basis. Wonderful things happen when we pray for people. God is able to take away overly critical attitudes.

Fourth, hold up your pastor's arms when there is need for loving, yet decisive, support. Don't forget that pastors are not superheroes. Like all of us, they are human and frail, and they make mistakes. Sometimes holding up your pastor's arms means volunteering to look after three young children so that the pastoral couple has a free evening (or weekend) for themselves and their needs as a couple. Sometimes holding up your pastor's arms means speaking up in a board meeting when the tone is not right or the subject gets too personal.

I am calling out the silent majority in Adventist congregations in support of their hardworking, at times hurting, pastors. Go, get busy, and do it right away before we read another painful headline. ©