



Hampden Heights Sentinel

HIGHLIGHTS:

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- An insidious disease is progressively attacking younger adults. Page 3
- Biblical writers make few distinctions between the work that God actively performs and the work that God passively allows or permits. Page 4
- Our practice on dependence must be day to day, so that we have it for the end days. Page 5

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For the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield for those who walk uprightly. ~Proverbs 2:6-7 NIV~

Information Regarding Covid-19

reprinted from Adventist Risk Management website (adventistrisk.org)

With the continued spread for the novel (new) coronavirus COVID-19 causing concern around the world, Adventist Risk Management, Inc. (ARM) is committed to providing relevant information for our clients regarding best-practices for prevention and mitigation of this serious disease.

Below are resources designed specifically for Seventh-day Adventist churches and schools, as well as important information from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). We have also included answers to several of our most frequently asked questions.

Adventist Risk Management, Inc. (ARM) recently published an article and hosted a number of webinars on reopening churches. We've compiled some of the questions asked most frequently during these webinars. Because this information is constantly changing, please check back regularly to get the latest information on these topics.

These Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and answers are not a substitute for any governing laws or guidelines from public health organizations or your Conference guidelines. They are designed to be quick

reference guides based on our research of applicable laws and guidelines. As knowledge about this pandemic is growing and changing, applicable laws and guidelines may change as well. It is your responsibility to stay current with any applicable laws or guidelines.

Q. Thorough and regular cleaning of churches is recommended, both before they reopen and even during services. Does this mean the church has to hire professional cleaners?

A. Cleaning to eliminate viruses should be more involved than regular cleanings. Professional cleaning services should be sought that are up to date on the latest procedures recommended for cleaning. If you normally use church staff or member-volunteers, be sure they are familiar with these procedures and have the additional time and cleaning products required to do a thorough job. If a professional cleaning service is used, have a written agreement that specifies the level of cleaning, the cleaning products or type of cleaning products to be used. Have the contract reviewed by counsel, particularly any liability-shifting provisions and make sure the service has liability insurance with sufficient limits.

Q. Should churches take attendance or participate in so-called "contact tracing" in order to track who may have come into contact with someone who becomes infected with COVID-19?

A. Churches are not required to take attendance. If you decide to gather that information or any other information, you should disclose this to the congregation. Local regulations should be checked and followed. If any local law is not understood or appears to be contrary to your right to freely exercise your religion, check with your conference attorney, the General Conference Office of General Counsel, or ARM's legal services department. You should follow the guidance from your public health officials, including how and what information to record; however, seek legal advice in instances where you are uncertain. Churches who are required or chose to participate in contact tracing should generate minimal records and treat such records as personal information. Follow data privacy laws in protecting this information including having a plan to destroy or purge the information after a specific time period and as soon as possible.

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Regarding Covid-19 (continued from page 1)

Q. What safety measures are church members and visitors expected to follow when attending church?

A. Based on the advice from organizations such as the CDC and others, we are recommending churches ask congregants (over the age of 2) to be:

1. Screened for a fever before entering the church
2. Wear a mask or cloth face covering
3. Maintain proper social distancing at all times. Designated seating areas in the sanctuary should reinforce social distancing policies, however, individuals from the same household may sit together.
4. Refrain from attendance if you are symptomatic or have been exposed to someone who is symptomatic in the last 14 days.
5. In some instances, limit the number of worshipers who can attend to allow for proper social distancing.

Q. Should the pastor be expected to wear a face covering while he's preaching?

A. In general, yes, it is recommended that a pastor or any presenter use a face covering while speaking from the front. The use of face coverings is designed to minimize the spread of the virus through droplets.

Guidance from most governing authorities is two-fold: wear a face covering and stay more than 6 feet (2 meters) apart. Face coverings are particularly emphasized in enclosed spaces (inside buildings). It would be advisable that a pastor should wear a face covering if they are not at least 12 feet (4 meters) from the congregation and a well-ventilated room.

Q. If someone refuses to follow these policies, what steps should the church take to enforce them?

A. Have a plan for such instances. While every interaction with people should reflect the loving character of Christ, each church should have a plan to deal with people who refuse to follow the rules. Remind the person that the church has a responsibility to protect everyone in attendance and following the current guidance from your conference, local governing authorities, and public health agencies is the best way for churches to provide a safe environment. A plan may involve two or three deacons at the entrance or entrances who may intercept or remind worshipers of what is required. A colorful sign that highlights the requirements. A plan should be in place for a worshiper who may have forgotten to bring a mask. In extreme circumstances, it may become necessary to discontinue the service and dismiss the worshipers to protect the safety of the participating congregants. Nevertheless, the first attempt will be to persuade people many to cooperate fully even if they disagree.

Q. Does singing pose a higher risk of spreading the virus?

A. Yes. Because the most common form of virus transmission is from droplet spread, and singing, which is typically done with more volume and force than talking, increases the distance that droplets can be spread. This is true even when wearing a face covering. It is better to err on the side of caution and refrain from singing during the early stages of reopening.

Q. Should we discontinue the distribution of bulletins, Sabbath School quarterlies, or other material at church?

A. We recommend reducing or discontinuing distribution of materials as much as possible. Handling and sharing materials is another way for the virus to spread. It also requires more work to clean up after services and poses additional risk to those who are cleaning. Alternatives to paper bulletins are large screen and verbal announcements, as well as emailed updates or an emailed bulletin prior to service.

Q. Passing an offering plate is not recommended. What other options do churches have for collecting tithe and offering?

A. Many churches and conferences have instituted a variety of online and mobile giving options. Another option is to have a central offering drop-off container where people can bring their tithe and offering as they come into the sanctuary or as they leave. This should be monitored to ensure the safety of the funds collected

and the security of the congregation.

Q. Should churches suspend communion and foot washing services?

A. Yes. ARM recommends continuing with the remote communion practices many churches have instituted during the stay-at-home phase. The way foot washing and communion services are traditionally conducted poses an increased risk for transmission of the virus. ARM recommends temporarily suspending this part of the service in person in the early stages of reopening.

Q. How do the lower levels of Sabbath School classes and VBS programs maintain social distancing?

A. A good guide for this aspect of our ministries is the guidance given to Daycare Centers, Child Care, and Education environments, as they more closely parallel the activities in our Children's Ministries classes. Younger children are going to have a much harder time understanding and practicing social distancing. These are also the classes where there are normally more teaching aids shared between children. If you are not able to manage the expectations for these classes, suspending the younger division classes may be the best option during the early stages of reopening.

Q. For churches that rent their facility to a Sunday congregation or other outside groups, what policies should be in place before reopening occurs?

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Regarding Covid-19 (continued from page 2)

A. While renting our church facilities is a common practice for many congregations, it increases the potential for additional challenges when looking to reopen our church buildings. Issues you may want to address with rental groups fall into three categories:

Access to the Building - The building owner needs to advise the tenant that the church will not be made available and rent will not be collected in the event that a governmental entity has prohibited church services. This language may already be in your lease agreement. Your lease will determine when rent is collectible and may permit you to collect rent. In many instances, you may collect rent if you make the building available to your tenant and they choose not to

hold services.

Disclosure of COVID-19 Diagnosis - Generally, a tenant is not required to inform the owner of a person becoming ill. As part of a written pandemic disaster plan that covers how to deal with a building outbreak or contamination, both the owner and the tenant will inform the other party if a member in their congregation tests positive for the virus. This type of mutual notification will prioritize the need for cleaning and can help minimize additional exposure. Information shared between congregations should include the date they were diagnosed with COVID-19 and what dates they attended in the two weeks prior to their diagnosis. This information may also be shared with public health

officials if requested.

Expectations and Responsibilities for Cleaning - Unless otherwise stated in the lease, it should be the responsibility of the building owner for cleaning the building prior to use by either party. A specific plan should be developed to fulfill the CDC recommendation of cleaning during services for both congregations. This includes cleaning bathrooms and high-touch areas, such as faucets, door handles, water fountains, and countertops.

Some of these items may already be covered in your rental agreement. Work with your legal counsel determine what is covered and what is not and draft a letter to the pastor of your renting congregation outlining any

additional or modified policies. This should be characterized as an addendum to the lease and should be signed by both parties and copies should be distributed to both parties.

Q. What is the potential liability to my organization by keeping my schools, and churches open.

A. The answer to this question cannot be fully answered as anticipating what someone could allege your organization should have done to prevent... A good test is "what would a prudent person/organization do." It would be recommended to plan in advance for prevention and safety, watch what public schools in the area are doing, follow advice from the Center Disease Control, World Health Organization, and resources from Adventist Risk Management.

The Path to Better Health by Leo Pena

Colorectal Cancer Affecting Younger Adults

In late August of 2020, Hollywood was shocked with headlines announcing the death of one of its most famous actors; "Black Panther Star Chadwick Boseman Dies of Cancer at 43". A statement posted on Mr. Boseman's Instagram account said that he learned he had stage 3 colon cancer in 2016, and that it had progressed to Stage 4.

Usually thought of as a cancer that hits the 50-plus crowd, colorectal cancer rates are actually decreasing among that age group. Disturbingly, however, there's

been a rise of the disease among young adults, which was once considered rather rare. Why is this happening, and what kind of natural cancer treatments or preventative measures can or should be taken?

In a recent study cited below, "Colorectal Cancer Incidence Patterns in the United States, 1974–2013, JNCI: Journal of the National Cancer Institute, Volume 109, Issue 8, August 2017, djw322", the study found that of the majority of colon and rectal cancers, nearly 90 percent, are still among people ages 50 and over. But researchers also report that while colorectal

cancer rates have been steadily declining among people born between 1890 and 1950, they've been sharply rising with each generation since 1950, by about 1-2 percent a year for adults in their 20s and 30s. That means someone born in 1990 would have twice the risk of colon cancer, and four times the risk of rectal cancer at the same age than if they were born in 1950.

A 2020 report shows that colorectal cancer is expected to cause more than 50,000 deaths in 2020, including 3,640 deaths in people younger than 50 years. When these cancers show up

in younger adults, they're often diagnosed at a much more advanced stage. Doctors often confuse the symptoms with something else, like hemorrhoids, since colorectal cancer rates among this age group used to be rare. While colonoscopies, which check for pre-cancerous growth (polyps), are recommended for adults over the age of 50, there's no standard recommendation for younger adults at this time because, until now, there's never been a real need.

What Are Colorectal Cancers?

Colorectal cancer is used to describe cancer that begins in the colon or the rectum,
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Alabaster Box by Dave Taylor

Who Hardened Pharaoh's Heart?

After 430 years of sojourning in the land of Egypt, the children of Israel were brought out by the hand of God (Exodus 12:40-41). Although Israel's release from Egyptian servitude was foretold to Abraham, the stubbornness of Pharaoh's heart battled against God's purposes. Even though Pharaoh's resistance to Israel's freedom appeared to delay their departure from Egypt, they ultimately departed on the 430th anniversary of their arrival in Egypt, on "even the selfsame day" (Exodus 12:41). There are 19 verses between Exodus Chapter 4 and Exodus Chapter 14 that address the status of Pharaoh's hardened heart. Eleven of these verses (58%) ascribe the hardening of Pharaoh's heart directly to the action of God. Five verses (26%) indicate that Pharaoh's heart was hardened without declaring the source of that condition. Three verses (16%) testify that Pharaoh himself hardened his heart. How are we to understand this seemingly contradictory set of explanations? Are we to believe that in some instances Pharaoh hardened his own heart, while at other times during the ten plagues, God hardened Pharaoh's heart, preventing him from responding to Moses' request in a positive way? While this solution of considering each instance separately may eliminate the appearance of contradiction and may liberate our minds from thinking about this any more deeply, it does not provide a very satisfying solution, nor does it reveal broader principles of truth.

Let's step back briefly from the question of who performed the heart-hardening. What do we know about God's purposes in this struggle between Israel and Egypt? Did God derive some amount of pleasure from the destruction and death visited upon the Egyptians? "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezekiel 33:11). Was God's primary purpose punitive or redemptive? Did God desire to punish the Egyptians and save Israel, or was it His plan to reveal Himself to both Egypt and Israel? Part of God's purpose is revealed in Exodus 10:1 "And the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh: for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him:" God desired to show His mighty signs to convince Pharaoh that the Creator God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob held a greater authority than the mere ruler of Egypt. Ultimately, because of Pharaoh's intransigence, God declares "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord" (Exodus 14:4). God's actions toward man are always intended to be redemptive in nature. Sadly, Egypt found out that the God of Israel is Lord only after the destruction of Pharaoh's chariots in their mad pursuit across the Red Sea.

Now let's consider the testimony of the Philistines. Some five centuries after the exodus, the Philistines found that capturing the Ark of the

Covenant from Israel was not the great prize that they had anticipated it to be. Ever since the Ark was within their borders, the Philistines had suffered from plagues of tumors and rodents. The Philistine priests and diviners said to the Philistine rulers, "Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?" (1 Sam 6:6). As they argued for return of the Ark to Israel, the pagan priests revealed their understanding of the additional suffering endured by the Egyptians because they had hardened their hearts against the God of Heaven.

So, who hardened Pharaoh's heart? Perhaps one of the reasons that this is tricky for us to understand is that the hardening occurred in the heart of an enemy to Israel. Can we find any scripture in which God is said to have hardened the hearts of His own people? Take a look at this amazing complaint from the prophet Isaiah. "Why, Lord, do you make us wander from your ways and harden our hearts so we do not revere you? (Isaiah 63:17, NIV). This sounds like borderline sacrilege! It almost appears that the prophet is accusing God of evil deeds! Can we imagine that God would ever actively make us to wander from His paths of righteousness or harden our hearts so that we could not show Him the reverence He is due? To say that God hardened Pharaoh's heart or the hearts of His people is to acknowledge that God is the ultimate authority, power and ruler in the

universe. Because of this understanding that God is "in charge," Biblical writers make few distinctions between the work that God actively performs and the work that God passively allows or permits. God hardened Pharaoh's heart in the sense that He did not take action to soften Pharaoh's heart by His indwelling Spirit. This work of "softening" could only be accomplished by Pharaoh's permission through a surrender of his heart to God. Since this permission was not forthcoming, God used the only tool available to benefit Pharaoh, and that was the application of difficult circumstances.

"The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened" (Desire of Ages, p22). "To deprive man of the freedom of choice would be to rob him of his prerogative as an intelligent being, and make him a mere automaton. It is not God's purpose to coerce the will. Man was created a free moral agent" (Patriarchs and Prophets, pp331-2).

Let us never participate in hardening of our hearts or contribute to the hardening of the hearts of others. May we join the cry of David in our time of trouble, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me" (Psalm 51:10-11). If that is our desire, God promises "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26).

Going Deeper by Barbara Snyder

Faith, Not Fear

Fear is defined as an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or feels threatening. Fear in a general sense implies anxiety, and often a loss of courage. If each of us were asked to name what makes us afraid, our responses would be varied. Some people are afraid of snakes or spiders, some of being a victim of crime, or an automobile or plane accident. To others, it is fear of change in family status such as empty nest, divorce, a child's lack of success, looking foolish, old age, separation, abandonment, or poverty. Often our fears seem strange or ridiculous to those who do not identify with them, or to those who know that our fears are not realistic, or that they are statistically near impossible.

Many Seventh Day Adventists are afraid of our great hope, the Second Coming of Christ. Of course, one cannot freely admit this predicament as it would likely be labeled a lack of faith. I was an Adventist for about 15 years before the U.S. put together a coalition to drive Iraq out of Kuwait in 1990-91. I surmised that prophetic events were now in place. The reason for this, in my mind, was the fact that the coalition involved many countries world-wide, and that the invading Iraqi army was in the Middle East in close proximity to Israel. I was afraid, and I prayed and prayed for victory and safety for our troops. I do not remember praying for the Lord's coming. I was not raised Christian (This biased

my understanding and feelings.) but I had a friend who was born and raised in a SDA home, educated in Adventist schools, including college, graduate, and doctorate, and served in Adventist communities for decades. He was fearful! He said he knew that fear didn't make any sense (It doesn't have to...) He said that the schools, family, and the church put so much emphasis on end time events when he was a child that he became fearful, and still was fearful.

So, why were we so afraid? There are some specific answers. One reason is that children, in particular, need to feel safe. Talking about the little and big time of trouble is not a comfortable subject, especially for children. Children need to feel loved and cared for. They cannot care for themselves in the best way possible; that is the adult's job. Secondly, the sealing of the Holy Spirit is complete before the Seven Last Plagues, so why do we give the plagues more than a few minutes of our time? Third, the emphasis, both time wise and goal wise is on the wrong subject. If we are going to talk about these perilous times, our focus should be on the sealing. What is it? What is it based on? How is it achieved? Who decides? When the answers to these questions are found, the character of God shows through and our responsibilities become clearer.

There are many verses pointing to the end time events, but there are many more verses depicting God's care and direction. Revelation 14:7 says, "Fear God and give Him glory for the hour of

His judgment has come." First of all, the word "fear" here is better translated "Give reverence". "... for the hour of His judgment has come." is neither a noun or a verb. It is a dangling participle or a descriptive clause that describes a why/when. Scriptural focus is on the reverence. "You" is the noun. "Give" is the verb. "Him" is the pronoun. We can take a hint from that. Our command is to honor Him in our day-to-day life, to listen for His will and guidance daily, and to watch out for the manifestations of grace always.

Stories about specific events in the New Testament illustrate this repeatedly. The storm on the lake in Matthew 8:23-25 tells the story of Jesus calming the waves. By His command, despite 12 strong men rowing with all their might, that boat arrived safely on the other side of the lake. The strength of the men meant nothing. And only after they saw this miracle of the waters, did they honor Him as Lord of Lords and King of Kings. Just as there is nothing we can do about the final end of the world, about the timing, about the plagues, we can Honor Him as He has commanded in the beginning of Rev. 14:7.

More examples include Mark 6:30-34. Jesus taught the huge gathering crowd. There were no fast-food courts in the area; only a boy with 5 small loaves (my guess is they were the size of dinner rolls) and 2 small fish. No one produced food for the crowd but Christ. After that, the people wanted Jesus as king. He had to send the people away.

Certainly, the timing was wrong. Timing is almost everything. (Also, a hint.) Lastly, in Mark 9 the disciples could not dissipate the anxiety and fear that the father suffered, or the scourge that the child suffered. In seeking the Lord's help, the father confessed his belief and unbelief at the same time. He admitted his fallibility. The disciples couldn't understand why they could not overcome the evil spirit. The father acknowledged his unbelief; the disciples did not. Eventually they all saw their powerlessness. Jesus could, and wanted, to release the child from the grip of the evil spirit. Immediate was the need and immediate was the blessing.

Many Biblical examples such as these demonstrate the power of God, not the preparedness or power or proclivity of man to overcome the enemy at the end. Even though not mutually exclusive, our practice on dependence must be day to day, so that we have it for the end days. To complete the scriptural examples, I would refer you to Hebrews 4:1-2. [The Message](#) translates as: "For as long, then, as that promise of resting in Him pulls us on to God's goal for us, we need to be careful that we're not disqualified. We received the same promises as those people in the wilderness, but the promises didn't do them a bit of good because they didn't receive the promises with faith. If we believe, though, we will experience that state of resting." Hint: an athlete gets disqualified for acts committed or neglected while in the game. (cont. page 6)

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The Path to Better Health (continued from page 5)

which are both part of the large intestine. They're usually grouped together because they both share many comparable features. Colorectal cancers usually begin with the growth of polyps along the lining of the colon or rectum. This is what colonoscopies look for. Most polyps are benign, but some can eventually turn into cancer.

According to the American Cancer Society, the wall of the colon and rectum is made up of layers, and colorectal cancer begins in the innermost layer, though it can grow outward. Once the cancer cells are in the wall, they're able to grow into blood vessels or lymph nodes, traveling outside the colon or rectum and into the rest of the body.

The stage of a person's colorectal cancer depends on how far into the wall the cancerous cells have gotten, and whether it's spread to different parts of the body.

Researchers aren't completely sure what's caused the increase in colorectal cancer rates among a younger crowd, but they do have their suspicions.

Our genetics likely haven't changed significantly since the 1950s. What is dramatically different are the foods we eat, our inactive lifestyles, and ever-increasing rates of obesity. Proven lifestyle factors that can increase the risk of colorectal cancer include:

- being overweight
- consumption of processed meats
- low levels of physical activity
- low levels of fiber consumption

Emulsifiers, which are additives often used in processed foods to improve the texture and extend the shelf life, have been linked to colon cancer.

Ways to Help Prevent Colorectal Cancer.

If you want to reduce your risk of colorectal cancer, no matter what your age, there are several lifestyle changes you can make.

1. Get Moving. We've become much more sedentary than people just a generation or two ago were. A sedentary lifestyle leads to a host of health effects, none of which are positive:

heart disease, diabetes and poor circulation.
2. Overhaul Your Diet One study specifically points to the fact that foods like processed meats and nutrient-empty refined carbohydrates, along with not enough fiber-rich foods, could be adding to the upward trend in colorectal cancers. A lot of it has to do with inflammation. Just two weeks of a Western-Style diet, heavy in refined carbohydrates and low in fiber, led to increased inflammation in the colonic wall.

Research shows that a switch from a traditional diet heavy in fish and plants to a Western diet has been attributed to a rise of colorectal cancer in Japanese adults in just one generation.
3. Avoid Smoking and Excess Alcohol.
4. Inform Your Doctor of Family History If someone in your family, particularly a first-degree connection (your parents or siblings), has had colorectal cancer, it's important to share that information with your primary care physician. Your doctor can help you better closely monitor any changes in your health, and recommend earlier screening or even genetic testing.

Going Deeper (continued from page 5)

Likewise, if we preach before we listen, our words may not be timely. In other words, we will try to stop the waves and wind ourselves, try to take credit where none is due, think we have something to tell the world when what we need to show to our own children we neglect.

Fear is not in our Lord's vocabulary except to warn against it. The end times will come soon enough. We do not prepare for the end times, we prepare for each day as it comes, devote time to seek His face, hear His word, and do His bidding. Always and only looking to Jesus. If we fail, which we will, we still

must look to Him like the snake on the pole in the wilderness. He is waiting for our permission to mold us, to forgive us, to enable us, to redeem us. He never gives up. The work is His. We are only participants in this for the long haul.

If you feel drawn, spend time with these verses:
"So, therefore be at peace, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." Luke 12:32.
"God has not given you a spirit of fear, but of power, and love, and a strong mind." 2 Tim 1:7
May God bless you this New Year 2021