



General Conference Executive Committee Newsletter

An informative publication for members of the General Conference Executive Committee as a service through the office of the Chair

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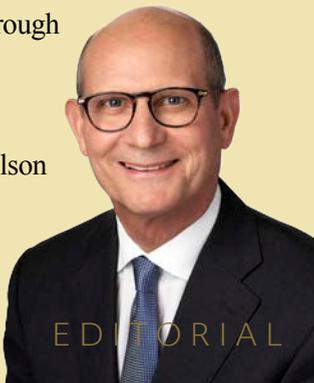
Leadership cannot exist in

a vacuum. By its very nature, leadership involves working with people—listening and learning, casting a vision and motivating others to make the vision their own. Extraordinary leaders “see what the future could be like; they articulate it, motivate people towards that future, and then outline the way to make the future a reality,” as stated by Branimir Schubert in this issue’s lead article on “Diamond Leaders.”

As leaders, God invites us to shine for Him, following in the footsteps of the greatest Leader of all—Jesus Christ, “who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. . . . He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:6-8, NKJV).

Jesus invites us to daily take up the cross and follow Him. He invites us to catch the vision of His reality, and for the great work He has called us to lead. May we each be Diamond Leaders for Him—all through His power!

Ted N.C. Wilson
President
Seventh-day
Adventist
Church



EDITORIAL



DIAMOND LEADERS:

WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES, CHARACTER,
AND COMMITMENT COMBINE

BY BRANIMIR SCHUBERT, D.MIN.¹

The closest I have ever been to real diamonds was during my days as a graduate student in France. No, my parents were not rich. They did not shower me with expensive jewelry. On the contrary, to support my studies, I worked as a security guard in nearby Geneva, Switzerland, where I would spend the night patrolling various businesses that included world-famous banks, watch factories, and well-known jewelry shops.

Recently, I was again exposed

to diamonds. As I read about them, it occurred to me that good leaders are much like diamonds—precious, rare, attracting attention, and impacting people’s lives.

THREE ASPECTS OF A DIAMOND

Some say leaders are born; others say leaders are the product of circumstances. The debate continues, and much has been written arguing that leaders are “made” or developed. My humble contribution to this dialogue

—continued, next page



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All three elements, when harmoniously overlapping and working in unison, can potentially produce a “diamond leader.” However, in reality, leaders are rare, just like diamonds. Carbon is everywhere, charcoal and graphite abound, but diamonds are few.

brings no stunning new revelations. However, diamonds have taught me something significant that has helped me understand the qualities of a good leader.

First, diamonds are created under pressure. They are produced approximately 160 kilometers (100 miles) underground, where the pressure registers five times greater than on the surface, and where the temperature becomes hot enough to melt iron. With carbon exposed to such conditions, the circumstances are perfect to transform carbon into a diamond.

Similarly, I believe that leaders “emerge” under pressure. Circumstances “push” true leaders to the surface. Just like diamonds, they “erupt” when circumstances demand strong leadership. The more severe the circumstances, the higher the chances of an ordinary person becoming an extraordinary leader.

Circumstances, however, are not enough. The second major element is the readiness of the individual to respond to challenges. I call this “character.”

A diamond contains nothing but carbon, but a big difference exists between “ordinary” carbon, which is transformed into graphite or charcoal (useful, but not precious), and a diamond. You can buy a pencil worth 50 cents, containing graphite, or you can buy a diamond, such as the Star of the Season, a 100-carat diamond, worth more than \$16.5 million.

Colorless diamonds are the most precious, and the rarest. Most diamonds are “contaminated” by yellow or brown tinting due to nitrogen or other unwanted substances. It is similar with people. When circumstances and character combine, the potential for something extraordinary emerges. The more “flawless” the character, the purer the motives, the higher the likelihood of ordinary people emerging as extraordinary.

Rough diamonds are not as valuable as those that have been polished and cut to reveal all their beauty and potential. Similarly, leaders that have the right character and have been exposed

to conducive circumstances, will be of limited value unless they commit to further growth. All leaders are people who have a passion to continue developing their skills, to improve their leadership tools, and to maximize their potential influence.

All three elements, when harmoniously overlapping and working in unison, can potentially produce a “diamond leader.” However, in reality, leaders are rare, just like diamonds. Carbon is everywhere, charcoal and graphite abound, but diamonds are few.

BORTS²

Less than 1 percent of all diamonds produced result in polished diamonds over one carat in size. About 85,000 tons of rock are blasted and crushed in order to produce a handful of gems.³

Leadership literature sounds alarm bells indicating a severe “leadership vacuum” in all vital areas—government, church, and business. Most potential leaders never make it to the diamond stage because of character flaws. This is

not the time nor the place to start listing all the church leaders (or politicians and business leaders) who lost their positions because of character flaws. However, the vast army of unknown fallen leaders becomes even scarier—those pastors, chaplains, priests, local government leaders, corrupt politicians, and so forth, whose falls never make the front pages.

The “almost” leaders are those who have some aspects of leadership potential, but who do not allow themselves to grow or who do not become leaders of character and integrity. Instead, they often become disruptive to the organization.

We’ve heard the saying, “Lead, follow, or get out of the way.” The “almost” leaders are unable to lead; they are not willing to follow; nor do they want to get out of the way. And so they “grind” in an abrasive manner, becoming “organizational bort.” They frustrate the vision; they become criticizers and morale killers. Their “almost” ability has an influence, but it is negative, draining enthusiasm and the positive attitude any organization needs to achieve its goals. And once they have succeeded in their efforts to frustrate the victory of others, they point out how right they were to criticize in the first place!

THE SECRET

In contrast, “diamond leaders” are extraordinary. They have the ability to go beyond simple usefulness to the organization and become shapers of the organization’s destiny. Through their positive sparkle and sharp vision, they chart the course, determine the way, and catch the

imagination of the masses.

Nobody marvels at the beauty of the sandpaper, which is made of inferior diamond material, but everyone is stunned by the beauty of a stone that has become precious, sparkling reflected light in amazing colors, and adding value to their owners.

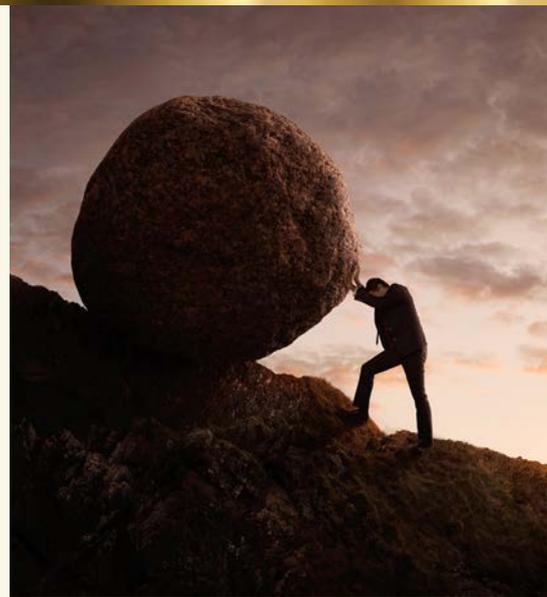
There’s more. “Like graphite and charcoal, which is nanocrystalline, diamond is an allotrope of carbon. It is the structure of its crystal lattice and the uniform bonding of the atoms within that together produce its exceptional optical and physical properties.”⁴

This is the secret—the internal structure and the uniform bonding of the atoms. Some individuals are “wired” for leadership. The Scriptures call this the spiritual gift of leadership. Some are uniquely called to step up to the level of exceptional leadership. All of us have leadership abilities and potential, but some are especially gifted, called, and entrusted with the gift to influence others.

Just like the spiritual gift of faith, all of us should have faith but some are especially gifted with extraordinary faith, able to move mountains. Similarly, extraordinary leaders are unique because they are gifted with the ability to move the most difficult mountains on this planet: people and organizations. They see what the future could be like; they articulate it, motivate people towards that future, and then outline the way to make the future a reality.

“SCRATCH RESISTANT”

Diamonds have another quality: “Its scratch hardness is beyond that of all other materials. On



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the Mohs' scale⁵ of hardness, a diamond measures 10. Measured on a sclerometer,⁶ which moves a diamond across a surface under pressure until a scratch is produced, diamond is shown to be 140 times more scratch resistant than corundum (ruby and sapphire), regarded as the next hardest gemstone. In fact, only diamond will scratch diamond."⁷

Diamond leaders can withstand pressure and will influence the environment rather than being influenced by it. By definition, leaders function in high pressure settings. Because leaders can identify problems and suggest needed changes, they create an environment of stress. Human nature prefers the status quo rather than change, and so leaders need to be "scratch resistant." Harsh words will be spoken, criticism will be whispered, and confrontations and conflict will be a reality. How a leader handles these pressures will determine their ability to make a difference.

To be "scratch resistant" is not the same as being tough. "Another important physical property different from hardness, although often confused with it, is toughness. This is the ability to resist disruption under pressure. A diamond in a vice will withstand extreme pressure and puncture the steel jaws."⁸

Adversity and challenges tend to demonstrate the true leaders. X-rays and heat are used to differentiate between real diamonds and fakes. Adversity, setbacks, apparently hopeless situations, the desire to give up or let go—these are the challenges Christian leaders need to confront. To be tough is not the same as being heartless, just as being "scratch resistant" is not the same as being emotionally

untouchable and unavailable. In this environment, Christian leaders can set the standard and demonstrate an alternative to the "survival of the fittest" mentality.

REFLECTING REALITY

Leaders need other leaders to stay sharp. Only other leaders can help hone the skills needed and provide the coaching and

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mentoring necessary to stay "on top of the game." It is vital that there is constant exposure to what others are doing, thinking, writing, and saying. This becomes an integral part of growing and developing the skills, attitudes, and character needed to lead effectively.

Another quality [of diamonds] comes through: "Important optical properties of a polished diamond—other than its color—are seen in its high refractive index (2.4175), high degree of clarity, color dispersion, reflectivity, adamantine luster, and scintillation."⁹

Leaders are masters of reflecting reality: they capture the present and reflect it back to their followers, thus providing reasons for change and motivating followers to something

better. No individual or organization will want to change unless there is not only a clear understanding of the present, but a vision of a better future.

Who are you? A "pencil leader"—soft, brittle, insignificant, half used and discarded, or a "diamond leader"—strong, unique, rare, and making a difference?

Our church today needs "diamond leaders"—those who are committed, who have impeccable characters, and are able to withstand any pressure for the greater good. It's a calling, one requiring commitment and, indeed, the utmost humility.

ENDNOTES

¹ This article first appeared in the December 2008 issue of *Ministry*,[®] International Journal for Pastors, www.MinistryMagazine.org. Used by permission. At the time, author Branimir Schubert was serving as vice chancellor at Pacific Adventist University, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. He now serves as Adventist HealthCare Director of Mission and Culture at Sydney Adventist Hospital, in Australia.

² Borts are "small, granular, opaque diamonds, used as an abrasive in cutting tools," Lexico, www.lexico.com/en/definition/bort.

³ Microsoft® Encarta® 2007. © 1993–2006 Microsoft Corporation.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary defines Mohs' scale as "a scale of hardness for minerals that ranges from a value of 1 for talc to 10 for diamond." www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Mohs%20scale.

⁶ An instrument used by mineralogists to measure the scratch hardness of materials.

⁷ Microsoft® Encarta® 2007.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

Inspired Counsel on Christian Leadership*

Solomon was never so rich or so wise or so truly great as when he confessed, "I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in." Those who today occupy positions of trust should seek to learn the lesson taught by Solomon's prayer. The higher the position a man occupies, the greater the responsibility that he has to bear, the wider will be the influence that he exerts and the greater his need of dependence on God. Ever should he remember that with the call to work comes the call to walk circumspectly before his fellow men. He is to stand before God in the attitude of a learner. Position does not give holiness of character. It is by honoring God and obeying His commands that a man is made truly great (p. 13).

No man is so high in power and authority but that Satan will assail him with temptation. And the more responsible the position a man occupies, the fiercer and more determined are the assaults of the enemy. Let God's servants in every place study His word, looking constantly to Jesus, that they may be changed into His image. The inexhaustible fullness and the all-sufficiency of Christ are at our command if we walk before God in humility and contrition (p. 5).

The path of men who are placed as leaders is not an easy one. But they are to see in every difficulty a call to prayer. Never are they to fail of consulting the great Source of all wisdom. Strengthened and enlightened by the Master Worker, they will be enabled to stand firm against unholy influences and to discern right from wrong, good from evil. They will approve that which God approves, and will strive earnestly against the introduction of wrong principles into His cause (p. 4).

CHECKUP

BOOST YOUR BRAIN POWER

Food that encourages peak brain performance

By Sanitarium Health Food Company, Sydney, Australia

Eating well is important for your brain, as well as your body. Your brain needs fuel and nourishment to perform at its best—now, and in the future. What you eat can make a big difference to your mood, how clearly you think and your memory.

While there isn't a single go-to brain food, for a healthy brain it's all about eating plenty of nutrient rich, high fiber plant foods, while cutting out saturated fats (mainly animal fats).

These plant foods have been linked to better cognitive performance and memory function—so remember to add these foods to your diet.

LEAFY GREENS

These powerful greens are generally rich in vitamin E, folic acid, vitamin K, lutein and beta-carotene, which research suggests may play a role in protecting the brain. A recent study discovered that older people (average age of 81 years) who ate a serving of leafy greens a day preserved their memory and thinking skills. The results showed those who regularly ate their greens had a cognitive age 11 years younger than those who didn't eat leafy greens.



BROCCOLI

Broccoli is part of a bunch of veggies called the cruciferous family. This includes cauliflower, cabbage and brussel sprouts. They are rich in vitamins and minerals that may help memory. One of these is vitamin K. It helps regulate calcium in your bones and brain. Vitamin K has anti-aging benefits and is at the heart of emerging research about Alzheimer's disease.



PUMPKIN SEEDS

These tiny seeds have big brain credentials. They are a plant-based source of zinc, which supports everyday learning by helping brain activity and function. They are also a source of magnesium, an essential mineral that helps maintain mental and emotional function.



MUST-BUY BRAIN FOODS

GO NUTS. Nuts include a wide range of nutrients that are important for brain health like vitamin E, magnesium, calcium, zinc, iron, manganese, copper, B group vitamins, and healthy fats. Regularly eating nuts can improve cognition and memory, and boost learning skills.

CLEVER CITRUS. Citrus fruits such as oranges and mandarins are particularly high in flavonoids—nutritional compounds important for maintaining cognition and memory as we age. If you are not a citrus fan, try apples and berries for a flavonoid boost.

WHOLE GRAIN BREAKFAST. Eating breakfast daily can lift your mood and has been associated with improved cognitive function and concentration in school kids. For long-lasting energy choose healthy breakfast options like whole grain cereals or oats, low fat yogurt and fruit or whole grain toast and spreads.

NOTHING TO LOSE

BY ANDREW MCCHESENEY, ADVENTIST MISSION

Sintayehu Kidane Berhanu, 39, standing outside a Seventh-day Adventist church in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in August 2018.



The first two years of studies at Addis Ababa University flew by for Sintayehu Berhanu. But then a teacher scheduled the final statistics exam for Saturday. Without a passing grade, Sintayehu would not graduate.

The young Ethiopian had done well in the class, and he approached the teacher for help. “I believe that Saturday is the Sabbath,” he said. “I spend the whole day serving God.”

The teacher laughed scornfully. “This is an academic institution,” she said. “We are free from religion and cannot entertain this kind of case.”

Sintayehu persisted. “I’m sorry, but this is my belief,” he said. “Would you please change the day of the exam?”

“It’s impossible,” the teacher said.

Sintayehu, the first Adventist in his family, told relatives about the situation and asked them to pray. But instead, they pressured him to take the exam. An uncle living in Germany reminded him that he, as the oldest sibling, was responsible for six younger brothers and two sisters. Their parents had died some time earlier.

A relative in the United States saw a loophole. “Why don’t you take the exam and be baptized

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THE THIRD TIME
HE FAILED, HE WAS
EXPELLED FROM
THE UNIVERSITY.

again afterward?” he said. “It’s like taking a shower. Sometimes they do it like that in the U.S.”

Sintayehu, who had been baptized as a boy attending Akiki Mission School, dismissed the suggestion. “I believe that baptism is done one time,” he said. “You should not plan on doing it again and again. God is sitting on the throne, and He tells us to keep the Sabbath.”

Even an Adventist pastor urged him to take the exam.

“Satan is tricking you,” he said. “He is trying to cancel all the years of effort that you have put into your education.”

“I believe God is in heaven, and He knows what is happening in my life,” Sintayehu replied. “He has something better for me. I need to wait.”

Sintayehu missed the exam,

and the teacher gave him a failing grade. The next year, Sintayehu retook the statistics class. The same teacher taught the class, and she scheduled the final exam for Saturday. Again, Sintayehu missed the exam and was failed. The third time he failed, he was expelled from the university. Sintayehu thought it was the end of his education, but he wasn’t worried.

He found a teaching job at an Adventist preschool in Debrezeit, a town located 25 miles (40 kilometers) from Addis Ababa. A year passed. Then the university announced that it was changing its rules. The previous semester, it had been forced to expel a large number of students who had failed classes three times. So, it decided to welcome back students with a grade point average of 2.0 or higher.

Sintayehu returned to the university and took the statistics class for the fourth time. His former teacher had left the university, and he easily passed the statistics class. When he graduated, an Adventist school in Addis Ababa immediately offered him a job because of his good reputation from teaching at the preschool. Later he earned a master’s degree and went on to work for Adventist World Radio. Today, he is a television producer for the Adventist Church.

THE BACK PAGE

Directions: For more information on an item, click on the corresponding number on the map.

1 Barry C. Black, 62nd Chaplain of the U.S. Senate in **Washington, D.C.** has been [named Becket's 2019 Canterbury Medalist](#) for his honorable defense of religious liberty for people of all faiths. The Canterbury Medal, Becket's highest honor, recognizes an individual who has demonstrated courage and commitment to defending religious liberty in America and around the world. Black has served as Senate chaplain since 2003 and is the first-ever Seventh-day Adventist and African American Senate Chaplain.

2 Lay-led volunteer medical group [AdventistHelp](#) and [ADRA](#) are partnering to [construct a field hospital in the Kyaka II Refugee Settlement in western Uganda](#). The settlement is a rapidly enlarging population of more than 100,000 Congolese refugees fleeing the fighting in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. This stand-alone facility will house

an outpatient block providing primary care, dental services, and physiotherapy. There will also be an emergency block with a lab, ultrasound unit and X-ray. As funding allows, a second phase will include wards and an operating room.

3 A special project led by leaders and staff of the Colombia Adventist University in **Medellin** [provides Venezuelan migrant families with business opportunities](#). The initiative assists the families by providing them with the tools to start their own small business.

4 Roughly 600 families were affected by the tornado that swept through **Los Angeles, Chile**, followed by a waterspout near Talcahuano and Concepción. [ADRA Chile were the first volunteers certified to arrive](#) in the area before the emergency.

5 An Adventist doctor from **Sydney,**

Australia, Dr. Ken Micklethwaite from the Westmead Institute, is at the forefront of [a revolutionary treatment that could potentially cure cancer](#). In an interview with Australian current affairs program *60 Minutes*, Dr. Micklethwaite said he and his team have been working with modified immune cells, called CAR T cells, which could help cure blood cancer.

6 More than 370 baptisms took place in **Southern Philippines** as [a response to Total Member Involvement evangelism](#). A group of Adventist lay people from a wide range of professional backgrounds took turns preaching, singing, and giving lectures every night of the week-long campaign held in Tagum City, Davao del Norte.

7 A groundbreaking ceremony was held for [Mongolia Missions Gateway International Education Corporation Project](#) on a

huge 58-acre piece of land in **Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia**. Several institutions will be established under the corporation, including an international academy, a vocational school, a wellness center, an agricultural center, and an income-generating resort. The location of the project is only a 15-minute drive from the new Ulaanbaatar International Airport. The capital city of Mongolia is expanding closer to the project's location. More than half of Mongolia's population of 3 million live in Ulaanbaatar.

Important Meetings, October 2019

at the Seventh-day Adventist Church World Headquarters Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.

- 3** Presidents Council
Secretaries Council
Treasurers Council
- 6, 7, 10** Division Officer Interviews
- 8** GC & Division Officers
- 10, 11** LEAD Conference
- 10-16** Annual Council