

Three Simple Practices That Will Help You Communicate the Adventist Message to Secular People

By: **Samantha Angeles Peralta**



Sam Neves is the associate director of communication for the GC, and a passionate evangelist. Photo courtesy of adventist.org.uk.

The Seventh-day Adventist (Adventist) Church is facing a communication crisis. According to Sam Neves, Associate Director of Communication for the General Conference (GC) of Seventh-day Adventists, there are more Adventist churches in more countries than all of the McDonalds, Subway and Pizza Hut restaurants combined. So why hasn't everyone heard the unique message of the Adventist Church?

"We are extremely fragmented," declares Neves. "A non-integrated message is a weak message. We have to unite our voices to make our message known."

Neves has always been passionate about bridging the gap between secular thought and Adventist beliefs. Prior to serving at the GC, he pastored for more than a decade in England and spent the majority of his ministry leading secular people to Christ.

"The local church lives and breathes to bring people to the waters of baptism," he said. "I'm still a pastor; I still want to see people baptized. I want to see them transformed by the three angels' messages. That's what communication should be—the use of all possible tools for the communication of the gospel and the mission of the church."

Neves suggests three steps local church leaders can take to help them communicate the Adventist gospel message more clearly to secular people.

1. Seek to understand secular people.

"Communication is listener-centric," Neves reminds pastors. "So in order for us to communicate well, we need to understand the listener."

For those who want to reach secular people but are not sure how to begin, Neves suggests simply finding a public place to observe and listen to the conversations of people in the community.

"If a local pastor can find a space, maybe a mall, or even a bar or pub where he can get juice, sit down and observe, he can start to hear what is important to secular people," says Neves. "What do people care about? What are their joys, their frustrations? What are the deep issues people are going through?"



"Communication is listener-centric."

Neves cautions that this is not the time to share the Adventist message.

“The less a pastor speaks to secular people at first, the better,” Neves suggests. “He just needs to begin listening, begin to understand.”

In addition to regular, intentional listening and getting out of the “Adventist ghetto” in which so many ministers find themselves (interacting mainly with Adventist people), Neves suggests an additional step that will help leaders understand the secular mind.

“If you can bear it, interact with secular media, films and music and try to understand what’s behind it,” said Neves. “Go to the charts—what are the top three most-listened to songs in secular countries? What are the issues people are struggling with that are expressed there? Begin by listening and trying to understand secular people—that’ll be a great start.”

2. Shape your evangelistic messages to address the needs of people in your community.



What are the needs in your community?

“Most of us pastors, when we do evangelism, we try to deal with fear of volcanoes, wars, terrorists, school shootings,” observes Neves. “But most secular people aren’t losing sleep over that. But they do lose sleep over other things. What are those things?”

Oftentimes, Neves has seen that the issues that secular people are struggling with are common to all people, such as handling rejection from their children or grandchildren, struggling with work or with finances, or dealing with the uncertainty that death brings.

“If you’ve been committed to listening to secular people regularly, and it’s become part of your routine, you will be able to translate the gospel in every sermon, every message, every communication,” he said. “If we are able to communicate the true gospel of Jesus in their language, they will respond in a way that we’ve never imagined. I’ve seen it, time and again.”

Neves also encourages church leaders to be bold in declaring the Adventist message and pointing people to the Bible.

“In Europe, we’ve gone through an ugly process the world doesn’t need to experience,” he cautions. “For 20 years, we’ve been saying, ‘Just be a good Christian, and people will ask you questions about your faith.’ But nobody asks questions! And if they do, they ask Google, not you!”

Rather than hope secular people will ask to be led to Jesus, Neves encourages people to be intentional about leading people to a Bible study.

“Our church’s promise to the world is that we can help them understand the Bible to find freedom, healing and hope,” said Neves. “That’s the purpose of the Adventist Church.”

3. Join the worldwide church to declare Christ’s message of

freedom, healing and hope with a united voice.

One of Neves' major projects has been the visual re-branding of the Adventist Church. On the Church's resource [website](#) for visual identity, the team states:



Advent Sans font is available in more than 800 languages.

“Our churches, ministries, and organizations have spent such a long time trying to stand out that it can be difficult for people to tell we all stand together...it is becoming increasingly important to find a way to help people know we are all Seventh-day Adventists.”

Neves challenges Adventist leaders on every level to join the global Adventist Church by embracing the Adventist identity in all of its visual communications. The Adventist identity [website](#) provides the Adventist logo, Advent Sans font and other design elements such as the [Creation Grid](#) that local leaders can use to identify their ministries as uniquely Adventist.



The Creation Grid Layout

“Almost every country is using the Creation Grid already,” said Neves. “There are hospitals trying to make their menus fit the Creation Grid, so when people drive by a church, they will stop there. It’s about transferring trust.”

The integration of the church’s official font, logo and Creation Grid are simple, but highly effective ways of communicating a united, worldwide message of freedom, healing and hope to those who have not heard it before.

“If we work separately, if we are fragmented, we will dilute the potential of the church to communicate effectively and be known,” says Neves. “As the African proverb says: ‘If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.’ We are taking the time to go together.”