

# 25 WAYS PASTORS CAN SUPPORT THEIR SCHOOL

BY STUART TYNER

**P**astor Mark hadn't been in town three full days when a delegation of students and parents showed up for an appointment at his church office. Boxes of books still cluttered the office floor, pictures and framed diplomas leaned against the walls, and Mark had to rummage through several Sabbath school rooms to find enough chairs for everyone.

But the new pastor also sensed the urgency of the meeting, so within a few moments, the entire delegation was seated in a small circle facing Mark. One of the eighth graders had been prompted to begin the session.

"We want to welcome you to our church," Cheryl said, "and let you know how much we anticipate your support of our school."

In the next half-hour, the visitors presented their new pastor with a list of 25 ways he could demonstrate the high value he placed on Christian education. It's a list that all of us should keep handy, adding to it whenever a new idea comes to mind, and sharing it with every pastor in our constituency.

Fortunately, most of us already experience the full support and encouragement of our ministers. But when we feel a weakening of support, or when such support

is in question, here are a few creative ways to invite the tangible evidence of a pastor's good will.

### **Support Through Church Programs**

1. **Dedication Ceremonies.** At the beginning of every school year, hold a teacher dedication service. Be sure the administration, faculty, staff, and board of the school are notified in advance and will be able to attend. Invite all those connected with the school to come to the front of

the church or to be on the platform. Give the participants flowers or other tokens of your appreciation for their hard work. Talk of the accomplishments of the past school year, the advances made during the summer months, and the challenges that will be faced this year. Ask a student and a parent to join you in a prayer of dedication.

2. **School Groups.** During the school year, be sure to invite school musical groups to take part in your worship ser-

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vices. Introduce the director, interview a couple of students, and thank the group publicly. After the performance, write a thank-you note to the director and ask him or her to read it to the group.

3. **Church Communications.** Feature announcements and notices of school activities in your church bulletin and in your newsletter. In fact, it would be great to have a regular column in your newsletter that talks about school life. Ask different faculty members and students to contribute to the column.

4. **Bulletin Boards.** Display pictures of school activities and outings on your church bulletin boards. Circle students

who are members of your church, and note each name and year in school on the margins of the display. You might even want to leave space in the display for the students who are pictured to autograph the pictures.

5. **Congratulations.** Highlight the achievements of teachers and school groups. Announce awards and honors, the completion of advanced degrees, anniversaries (“10 years teaching at our school,” etc.), and academic and athletic achievements.

#### **Support Through Sermons**

6. **Sermon Illustrations.** Use illustra-

tions in your sermons that come from the school world of children, not just from the adult worlds of business, parenting, etc. Know when the kids are facing tests, when dramatic occurrences (such as the injury of a classmate, the illness of a parent or teacher, or a school mission trip) are on the minds of the children, or when specific challenges are causing stress. Speak to those realities.

7. **Guest Speakers.** From time to time, share the pulpit or the responsibility for teaching a Sabbath school class with the conference education superintendent, the principal, or teachers from the school. However, reserve the sermon on your con-

the increased impact for faith maturity when the home, the church, and school work together.

### **Support Through Unscheduled Appearances at School**

11. **Good Mornings.** Show up at school bright and early on a school morning. Stand at the curb and welcome the kids to school. Tell the students you just wanted to see them and wish them a good day.

12. **Sack Lunches.** Take a sack lunch to school some day and eat with the kids. Ask them if it's OK for you to offer the blessing for them, and then have a great time talking with them about what's happening.

13. **Lunch Is on Me.** Announce ahead of time that you're going to provide lunch on a particular school day this week. Take pizza and salad, cookies and soft drinks for all the kids who are members of your church. Encourage them to bring one of their friends to lunch.

14. **Tour Guide.** Serve as a tour guide for new families in your church. Make the school your first stop. Introduce the new family to the principal and as many teachers as you can. Enlist the assistance of your members who are students in the same grades as the children in the new family.

15. **Videotape.** Videotape interviews with kids at school. Use the tape to introduce your sermon, to be part of a video church directory, or just for good memories.

### **Support Through Scheduled Appointments at School**

16. **School Worship.** Volunteer to provide worship at school. Try to give a worship in every classroom at least once during the school year (the smaller your school, the more worships you can give). Also ask the principal if you can give worship for teachers from time to time.

17. **Bible Class.** Talk with your school's Bible teacher about teaching a Bible class during the year. Explore the Bible curriculum to find areas of special interest to you. If you've visited the Holy Land, for example, you could talk about the geography of Bible lands early in the year.

18. **Baptismal Class.** Be sure to provide a regular baptismal class for students

who are thinking about this important step in their life. Hold the class at the school and announce during a school assembly the names of the students who are going to be baptized.

19. **Adventists in Public School.** Arrange for a time and place at the school where you can hold a small group meeting for Adventist students who attend public school. You won't need to talk about Adventist education to this group; this is a time for spiritual growth, not marketing. But just holding the meeting at the school will help to break down some of the barriers these kids feel.

20. **Visiting Chaplain.** Ask your principal if you can set up regular times and use an office as a visiting "chaplain." Two or three hours a week, go to the office, open the door, and be prepared to do some counseling. Walk in the hallways during class breaks and greet the kids. Before long, they'll know why you're there and come to see you with lots of questions.

### **Additional Personal Support**

21. **Your Children.** Send your children to the school. You'll take more responsibility for the excellence of the school program when your own children are affected.

22. **Home and School.** Be active in your support of the Home and School organization. Publicize the meetings at church, attend the meetings regularly, and volunteer to be part of Home and School projects.

23. **School Board.** Be faithful in attending school board meetings. Many pastors demonstrate their support by assuming the responsibilities of the school board chair.

24. **Raising Money.** Be a leader in the development work needed by your school. Help raise specific budgets for scholarships, mission trips, equipment, improvement, etc.

25. **Excellent Teachers.** Keep a list of excellent teachers whom you know personally. When openings occur in your school, recommend several names of people you feel fit the position and have the proper qualifications. ✍

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ference's Education Day for yourself.

8. **Quotations.** Occasionally during your sermons, quote the principal or a teacher, or even a portion of a conversation you had with a student. You could say something like this: "The other day while I was at the school talking to our principal, she said to me. . ."

9. **The Good Old Days.** Speak often about the good things that happened to you while you were attending Adventist schools.

10. **Core Values.** Whenever you discuss the core values of your church, be sure to include Christian education. Remember the *Valuegenesis* finding about