

# THE OTHER SIX DAYS

DANIEL W. PAWLEY

We sat with a pastor last spring who told us, "You know what I'd like to see in LEADERSHIP? I'd like to know what other pastors do with their time—how they schedule their day, plan for the week, determine their priorities for the future." So assistant editor Dan Pawley looked closely at how four pastors spent a typical week.

We also created charts that divide their days into three periods: morning, afternoon, and evening. After reading the four accounts, you might want to ask yourself how you spend your time. As Ted Engstrom notes in this issue's interview, if you're working more than eighteen of the twenty-one periods, you're not taking enough time off.

## Paul Bubna

If you try to phone Paul Bubna on Monday, you'll likely hear the high-pitched hum of a busy signal. Paul, the pastor of Long Hill Chapel (Christian and Missionary Alliance) in Chatham, New Jersey, likes to have few interruptions on his day off; he frequently takes the phone off the hook.

What he does like is to start a crackling fire in the fireplace and to join his wife and teen-age daughter—the youngest of several children—at the break-



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fast table. Consuming spoonfuls of Shredded Wheat, raisins, and scattered bits of All-Bran, Paul listens to his daughter talk about school, teachers, and friends.

After breakfast, she leaves for school, while Paul and his wife read Oswald Chambers in the warm glow of the fire. For an hour or so, they intersperse prayers and comments between the lines. Conversation flows with a laid-back, Monday morning ease. No phones ringing, no one to see, no appointments to keep.

A walking machine and an exercise bike wait in the basement. Paul, the victim of three heart attacks, exercises daily. In warm weather he walks the neighborhood; in the cold months he's in the basement.

After a while, Paul and his wife begin a leisurely circuit about town. They visit the bank, the shopping center, the dry cleaner; they browse in a bookstore, pick up eyeglasses that have received the optician's touch, and enjoy a slow salad bar lunch. Then they work their way back home, where, with a little luck, they coast through routine chores, supper, newspaper reading, television, and an enjoyable table game until bedtime.

Eleven o'clock, lights out.

In the early morning on Tuesday, Paul's surgical

## Four pastors talk about what they do with their time.

adhesions—the internal traces of open-heart surgery—wrestle him from sleep before six o'clock. But what could be a subtle daily torture to another individual is turned into a time of productivity. It's a time for sowing seeds for the Sunday sermon.

(One Tuesday morning, for instance, in the pre-dawn darkness of a December day, he struggled with a series he'd been preaching on the Gospels all during that month—a vivid portrait of how Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John each uniquely saw Jesus. The Luke portrait wouldn't come. Finally bits of inspiration started to form, and according to Paul, "I pictured this medical doctor going from village to village, visiting, healing, or just listening to people. Little by little I began to realize that the uniqueness of Luke's view was that he saw the *humanity* of Christ with greater perception than anyone else. Then the whole sermon seemed to come together.")

Paul finishes breakfast, leaves the house a little before eight, and arrives at church by eight. Since morning is a creative time for Paul, he deliberately arrives thirty minutes before any office staff. He positions a magnet on the check-in board to indicate he's in. The telephone answering device stays on.

He cleans his desk, a task he sees as a visible metaphor for the uncluttered emotional frame of mind he tries to bring to the office. Letters that need to be answered go into a mail folder on one side of the desk; all sermon sources go into a book holder on the other side.

Blocking out most of the morning for sermon study, Paul continues the preparation that began before dawn. But the sermon he prepares is not next Sunday's sermon; it is the *following* Sunday's. To protect himself from emergencies, he tries to stay a week ahead on his sermons—"so I don't get caught."

After a light lunch with one of the church leaders, Paul is back at the office by one o'clock. Since creativity drains from him like water down a pipe, he uses the afternoon hours for overlap business from Sunday: appointments, staff encounters, visitation. He spends Tuesday night at home.

The priority on Wednesday is Wednesday night prayer meeting. He sees to it that the printed prayer list is taken care of, but most of the day gets divided between preparation for the evening's talk and additional sermon study. Paul preaches his rough sermon into a tape recorder, has the secretary transcribe it, and uses the transcription for his notes. "Much quicker than writing it out longhand," he says.

Since Thursday night is tennis night for Paul, he skips his basement routine on Thursday morning. Instead, he lounges by the fire in the living room with a good book, the air filled with classical music, while shadows play on the beige carpet and early-American furniture.

After another leisurely breakfast, he's at the office to complete his sermon, to get the bulletin ready for printing, and to have a routine counseling appointment. Hospital visitation has been delegated to a staff member. He drops in on a shut-in and later has a satisfying yawn that seems to say, "Ah, it's been a smooth week."

That's when the interruption comes. Paul's daughter is on the phone as he steps through the doorway at five o'clock. She runs to him and says, "Dad, somebody's just died of a heart attack!" It's the son of one of the older women in his church.

Forget about supper. Paul and his wife jump in the car and head for the mother's home to break the

news. In the car, Paul relives his own three heart attacks—"a sharp pain in the middle of the chest that grows bigger and bigger until it feels like your chest is caving in."

How is he going to comfort this woman? Carefully using his gift of mercy, Paul brings a compassionate spirit to the woman. He speaks gently, feeling her pain of loss.

Later, he feels absolutely wiped out. He goes to bed.

In the morning, the experience lingers with him, but he knows work can't stop because of an emergency. His Friday frame of mind tells him to stay completely flexible in case more emergencies happen. What if the mimeograph breaks down, for instance?

Friday is staff meeting day. Paul's goals at these meetings are relational; he wants to build a team. One member leads a devotional time that speaks to a common area of each person's life. Everyone is called

## He knows work can't stop because of an emergency.

on to share something personal. Paul tries to be as open and vulnerable as he can—not an easy task for a basically shy and reserved man.

Remaining flexible, he ties up loose ends on Friday afternoon. That evening Paul and his wife go to a play.

Is it a wild imagining of some pastors that those who take time for Saturday morning men's fellowship have fewer men who invade the pastor's study during the week "just to talk"?

Paul thinks it works, so he takes the time. He meets an interesting mixture of businessmen, retirees, and younger guys just married. After prayer and Bible study, they laugh and cut up at a local res-

# Weekly Appointments

Morning	Afternoon	Evening
<b>SUNDAY</b> Have devotions Preach sermon in church Study have prayer with staff members lead worship services		lead evening service
<b>MONDAY</b>		
<b>TUESDAY</b> read mail, get organized work on sermon answer phone calls	visitation and counseling	
<b>WEDNESDAY</b> prepare Wed. night prayer list. work on sermon and prayer meeting lesson	visitation and counseling	lead prayer meeting and be available for counseling
<b>THURSDAY</b> get bulletin to secretary dictate sermon	attend evangelism class do hospital visitation and counseling	
<b>FRIDAY</b> prepare for staff appointments for planning & goal setting eat lunch with staff have group devotional time	fulfill miscellaneous appointments and return phone calls.	
<b>SATURDAY</b> attend fellowship breakfast have counseling appointments	finish sermon, tie up loose ends	

taurant. "All the barriers come down," says Paul. "These guys really want to be with me, get to know me, build relationships."

Saturday afternoon, it is understood by the staff, is flextime: a work day, but not necessarily an office day. It's a time for finishing tasks that have been squeezed out of the weekday schedule. Otherwise, Paul encourages staff members who have not had adequate time with their families during the week to spend this time with them. He and his wife go "curbing."

In New Jersey, when people want to discard an old piece of furniture, they put it out by the curb. "It's quite respectable," says Paul, "to drive around the neighborhoods and pick out something you like." He finds it a relaxing activity, and his wife refinishes the furniture they find.

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### Edward J. Hales

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At First Baptist Church in Portland, Maine, Edward J. Hales wages a frontal attack on the week's work every Monday morning. Ed is assiduous in work and study, an embodiment of the New England Protestant work ethic.

A near-opposite personality type to Paul Bubna—though no less an effective pastor—Ed plunges into his work on Monday: "If I don't get a jump on the week's activity, I'll be in trouble before the week's over." That he is the pastoral staff of his church prompts him to add, "A lot of things accumulate on Sunday that I have to give immediate attention to."

He's in the office shortly after nine o'clock. Stopping to chat for a moment with his secretary, he feels this initial, informal contact with her is important. In a few minutes he climbs a flight of stairs to his office.

A stack of visitor's cards waits on the desk. He looks carefully through them and takes them to the secretary. She types a personal letter to each visitor, following a form letter Ed has written.

After taking care of bits of unfinished business, such as preparation of the monthly newsletter, the eleven o'clock mail comes. Monday mail is the heaviest of the week, and Ed moves into it in bulldozer fashion. He handles each piece only once.

Then, after lunch, he begins dictating letters, using what may someday be patented as "The Ed Hales Time-Saving Dictation System." He includes good sentence punctuation as he goes along.

A few years ago, Ed had a secretary who could neither spell nor punctuate. In frustration he forced himself to learn to think grammatically as he dictated. Now, it's become such a force of habit that he catches himself wanting to include commas, semicolons, and paragraph breaks in casual conversation with his present secretary. Wouldn't it save even more time to have the secretary present while he's

dictating? "Absolutely not," says Ed. "Tying two people together for dictation is one of the biggest time wasters of all. Every time the phone rings, you get interrupted. You lose your train of thought. And if you need to pause before you say something, your secretary sits idle."

On Tuesday morning, after his daily bacon-and-eggs breakfast, he arrives at the office at half past eight. For three hours he does in-depth sermon preparation, and the secretary knows he cannot be disturbed until 11:30—unless, of course, there is an emergency. "But a pastor has to come to grips with what an emergency really is," says Ed.

A surprise premarital counseling session, for instance, is not always an emergency, according to Ed. Recently, a young girl popped in without notice, told how she was to be married in two weeks, and wanted immediate counseling. As lovingly blunt as possible, Ed told her, "Look, I'd love to do it. I want to help you. But this is going to take some time, and we need to set an appointment. We're going to have to work at this; it can't be done in fifteen minutes."

But the emergency does come. It comes on Wednesday, on a bright, sunny afternoon. Ed is in the middle of preparing for the Wednesday night service. He hears a volunteer in the next room filing music for the choir. She leaves unnoticed. In a little while the phone rings, and a weeping voice says, "Pastor, I've just hit a man with my car. Will you come?" She has called her husband, who works nearly an hour's drive from the accident, and he's suggested she get the pastor immediately.

"Yes, I'll be right there," says Ed, reassuringly.

By the time he arrives, paramedics have removed the elderly man from the hood of the car, and Ed looks at the shattered windshield. The woman is beside herself with shock. Ed suggests they pray. Then he follows the woman in his car to make sure she gets home all right. The following Sunday, in her husband's presence, the woman gives Ed a warm hug and says, "Pastor, I just want you to know that I love you."

Ed is back at the office working on Wednesday night's service. He's home for supper, then back at church, then back home again. A night person, he's fatigued, but his mind is still churning. He reads a book.

He tried once to make Thursday his day off but he found it didn't work. "I always seemed to have an unfinished agenda," he says, "and never felt ready enough for Sunday when I took Thursday off." Thus, he's at the office hammering away on his sermon. Completing the Sunday morning sermon outline, he has it ready for the bulletin by the afternoon.

# Weekly Appointments

Morning	Afternoon	Evening
<b>SUNDAY</b> Review sermon notes Lead two worship services stay flexible for counseling	attend visitation meetings	Lead Sunday evening service
<b>MONDAY</b> answer visitor cards make phone calls go through mail	answer letters- dictation work on sermon	attend board meeting have counseling session
<b>TUESDAY</b> have business lunch work on sermon- no interruptions have business lunch	take care of administrative concerns make hospital visit	do evangelism calling attend deacons meeting
<b>WEDNESDAY</b> work on sermon prepare Wednesday night service	continue Wednesday night preparation	Lead Wednesday night service
<b>THURSDAY</b> work on sermon prepare Sunday bulletin have business lunch	complete sermon	attend board meeting
<b>FRIDAY</b>		
<b>SATURDAY</b> take care of mechanical problems in church		

He goes to a local hospital to visit someone, but confesses, "We have a daily hospital list of six to ten patients and a shut-in list of forty to fifty. So I've found it necessary to put one of my retirees to work as visitation coordinator. This retired member does most of the visitation. My deaconesses make forty to fifty shut-in visits a month, and three of my deacons are actively calling on new membership prospects. I couldn't make it without them."

Friday does work as a day off for Ed.

It's a day of goofing off. He and his wife leave town after their twelve-year-old son goes to school. They may take a stroll on an ocean beach and look for the quaint little cottage they'd like to invest in. Out past the colonial and raised-ranch style homes; past the old decaying buildings and row houses, steam-cleaned and refurbished in 350-year-old Portland; past the harbor and waterfront section known as The Old Port Exchange; and they're out of the city for the day. "I'm a camera buff," says Ed, "and we'll

stop at a camera place along the way somewhere." They also stop for lunch at a seafood place on the ocean.

Returning in the afternoon, Ed spends the rest of the day working with his hands. He helps his son construct the model ship he's wanted to put together for three years. Woodworking at a well-equipped workbench is also planned. "I find working with my hands to be a welcome change of pace," he points out. "It gives my mind a chance to function on a different level.

"I solve some of my more complicated problems during these times, because my mind runs free. It doesn't take a lot of intensive study to put a model together, build a desk, or mow the lawn. You're not under the pressure of deadlines; you're free to consider options and variables. I even talk to myself sometimes."

When Saturday comes, Ed takes care of mechanical problems in the church. The parts of a typewriter

are on his desk; he tries to put the machine together and get it in working order. He makes sure he has all the data for Sunday's baby dedication and baptismal services. Ed works with lists, and he likes to have everything checked off by late Saturday.

Behind closed doors, he wraps up his sermon preparation. And like the desk he works behind during the week, his pulpit must be clean and orderly. "I am psychologically frustrated by a Sunday morning pulpit that's cluttered with stuff underneath," he adds.

### William J. McElroy, Jr.

It is Monday morning in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and Bill McElroy's wife still can't believe what her husband did the night before. To make the Twenty-third Psalm more meaningful to the youth group, Bill took a church member and his pickup truck forty-five minutes out into the country, borrowed a lamb from a local farmer, and brought it to

church. Dressed in old clothes, he carried the lamb from the truck and down the church stairs to where the young people were to meet. They loved it.

Having a membership class immediately prior to the youth meeting, Bill ran home and made the quick change into his suit clothes. After the youth program, he stormed the parsonage once more to grab his old clothes. Carrying the lamb up the stairs and out to the truck, he was careful not to step on the droppings. He drove the lamb back to its owner and arrived back at the parsonage just after ten o'clock. "I've seen you do some strange things," his wife says, "but that was surely the strangest!"

Anyway, it's seven o'clock on Monday morning, and Bill, pastor of the small but vibrant Olivet Evangelical Congregational Church, is reading to his three young children. The kids quietly eat breakfast as their daddy takes them through a children's version of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Fifteen minutes later they sing choruses, and each child prays a short prayer.

## Weekly Appointments

Morning	Afternoon	Evening
<b>SUNDAY</b> TAKE CHURCH VAN TO PICK-UP KIDS LEAD WORSHIP SERVICE LEAD SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS		LEAD MEMBERSHIP CLASS
<b>MONDAY</b> GO JOGGING DO - HOSPITAL VISITATION	do filing & administration flex-time for odd jobs around church	board & committee meeting
<b>TUESDAY</b> WORK ON SERMON WORK ON SUNDAY BULLETIN	Prepare for Sunday evening membership class and youth meeting	do general visitation
<b>WEDNESDAY</b> LEAD MEN'S BIBLE STUDY/Breakfast GO JOGGING WORK ON SERMON	continue sermon preparation	lead youth meetings attend committee meetings
<b>THURSDAY</b> attend exercise/devotional class write 1/2s & encouraging notes Prepare Sunday Evening Service	- <u>complete</u> sermon	
<b>FRIDAY</b> DO - SHUT-IN VISITATION	continue visitation	
<b>SATURDAY</b> Leave for Chaplain duty at local naval air station	Chaplain duty	Chaplain duty

## His oldest son said, "I hate God for making daddy be out so much!"

After the kids are off to school, Bill steps into his jogging suit and is off into the neighborhood. More than just exercise, it's a kind of daily ritual when he can move through the quiet residential streets, past the old homes of Bethlehem steel executives since moved, past old trees and familiar landmarks. The three-mile jog gets him ready to take on another week.

He showers, changes, and goes to the office for his morning devotions. At nine o'clock, he heads for the local hospitals to visit parishioners.

Tuesday is a busy day. Bill begins piecing his Sunday sermon together, organizes information for the weekly bulletin and monthly newsletter, prepares for the Sunday evening membership class, corrects the weekly quizzes for that class, starts the Wednesday evening youth lesson, works on the Wednesday morning men's Bible study, and cleans up administrative detail.

The newsletter is twenty pages long, and the church people look forward to having it arrive on time in the mail. They like to see what's going on in the church and find out whose birthday it is so they can send cards. But, since the church cannot afford a full-time secretary, Bill has to take up the slack.

He gathers all the information, types it up, runs it off, assembles and folds it, and gets it ready for mailing. The hours slip by, and it's two o'clock in the morning before he finishes.

At 6:30 on Wednesday morning, Bill's back at the church for the men's breakfast and fellowship. Later, he abbreviates his time for hospital visitation and begins writing his sermon. With a break for lunch, sermon preparation takes him until supper; then he's back at the church for youth meetings and a board meeting until ten o'clock.

He skips his personal devotions on Thursday morning because he meets with a group of parishioners for an exercise-devotional class. Led by his wife, the class provides an opportunity for people to spend time with the pastor's family. They exercise for twenty minutes and have devotions for the same amount of time. Usually they have a discussion about foods, dieting, and activities that are good and bad for their health.

After showering, Bill returns to his study, this time

to write notes of encouragement to people in the church. Writing short notes to his shut-ins, for instance, can take up a chunk of time, but it's a lot quicker than visiting each person. He tried one year to visit each adult on his or her birthday, but the time that took was too difficult to recover later in the week. The encouragement letters have been a time saver and an effective way to maintain communication with the congregation.

Thursday night means family night to the McElroys, and Bill lets nothing interfere. He learned this the hard way. A couple of years ago he became slack in setting aside weeknight time for his family. One night he was called to attend a meeting, and as he was leaving the house, his oldest son said, "I hate God for making daddy be out so much!" "That awakened me right away," says Bill. Now, they have a picnic right on the living room floor—hot dogs, macaroni salad, Popsicles—and later they go to the local library so the kids can pick out some books.

Friday is another loosely structured day for visitation and tying up loose ends. "I like to have everything finished up by Friday night," Bill says, and with good reason. Saturday finds him at Willow Grove Naval Air Station for his chaplain's duty. He can be awfully tired when he gets home on Saturday night.

All in all, not a bad week for a pastor who is the entire staff of his church. No outrageous interruptions—that is, until early Sunday morning.

The phone rings at three o'clock in the morning. A young woman from the church is calling for help. She's been drinking, swallowing different kinds of pills, and now she's trying to stay awake. She lives alone.

Bill comforts her, but is stern; he tells her not to go to sleep. He wonders what to say next. His wife calls the father and tells him to meet Bill at his daughter's apartment. They arrive a little after three o'clock.

Not being serious enough to warrant an ambulance or the hospital, Bill and the father get the girl to vomit the pills up. She feels better and rests. The father is very upset because it was just two weeks earlier that the girl had moved out of the house and into the apartment. Bill counsels him as well, and they remain at the apartment until seven o'clock.

Bill suddenly realizes he has a service to lead in just over two hours. In the early dawn, he drives home and tries to get some rest.

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### Arthur M. Umbach

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Farther south, at the Redeemer Lutheran Church in Richmond, Virginia, Pastor Art Umbach begins the week by updating his "care list."

The list features the names of parishioners who need the pastor's attention during the week. All the hospitalized members are on the list, and when they leave the hospital, Art puts a yellow line through their names. This indicates that, although they've been released from rigid medical care, they still need attention—perhaps just a note or an encouraging phone call. Eventually they are taken off the list.

The care list saves Art the time of making repeat visits to people who can be kept in touch just as effectively by telephone or letter. He keeps a running list of about thirty names.

On Monday morning Art also does his dictation and correspondence. From 10:30 until noon he looks over the Scripture text and gathers the sources for his Sunday sermon. He goes home for a lunch of sandwiches and fruit.

In the afternoon he heads for local hospitals to see patients on his care list. A normal visit takes half an hour. However, today he has a patient facing surgery. Art serves him Communion, which, after

Bible reading and a prayer for healing, takes up the better part of an hour. They come before God, unload their concerns through prayer, and confess their sins. The operation is a serious one; Art will be back to visit later in the week, perhaps more than once.

Tuesday, after a breakfast of various seeds and honey (a nutritional cereal his wife makes), he goes to the office and cleans his desk of unnecessary distractions. He leaves his office door open, but instructs the secretary that he would rather not be disturbed. She does her best but doesn't realize the church's property chairman is in the building taking care of necessary odds and ends.

While Art penetrates the sermon texts he's chosen, the property chairman wanders into the office. He's a fine fellow, Art says; they have a good relationship, and the man just wants to chat. With honesty and firmness, though, Art says, "I'd really love to talk with you, but I'm in the middle of preparing my sermon. Can I call you a little later?" The property chair-

## Weekly Appointments

Morning	Afternoon	Evening
SUNDAY lead 2 services, preach from memory		attend evening meetings at church
MONDAY have devotions at office do correspondence work on sermon	do hospital visitation	teach Bible class at church
TUESDAY have devotions at office work on sermon have counseling session	take care of counseling appts. do hospital visitation prepare for membership class	make phone calls from office lead membership class
WEDNESDAY do planning at office work on sermon	do visitation prepare for afternoon youth class	
THURSDAY write sermon meet with support group for lunch, fellowship	do hospital visitation	
FRIDAY		
SATURDAY put finishing touches on sermon	visit new people in church	

man respects his honest gesture and leaves while Art still has his train of thought for the sermon. No harm is done.

Another time, however, a man comes in off the street and tells Art that he needs some food. Thinking about the church's food closet, Art offers food to the man but discovers what he really wants is money. Art stands up, remembering how physical movements can move people toward the door, but it doesn't work this time. The man tries intimidation and even threatens physical violence. It takes more than half an hour just to get him to leave. Meanwhile, Art has lost his train of thought.

At eleven o'clock, he counsels an alcoholic. After lunch, he's back at the church for a time loosely structured for counseling or additional sermon preparation. He goes home for supper and returns to church for the weekly membership class.

Art patiently walks through his care list on Wednesday morning, makes a few caring phone calls, and writes some notes of encouragement.

Wednesday's also the time to determine all the tasks, administratively speaking, that require Art's immediate attention. He keeps an accordion folder close at hand that has three individual pockets. The top slot contains information about tasks that need to be taken care of immediately; the middle slot is for

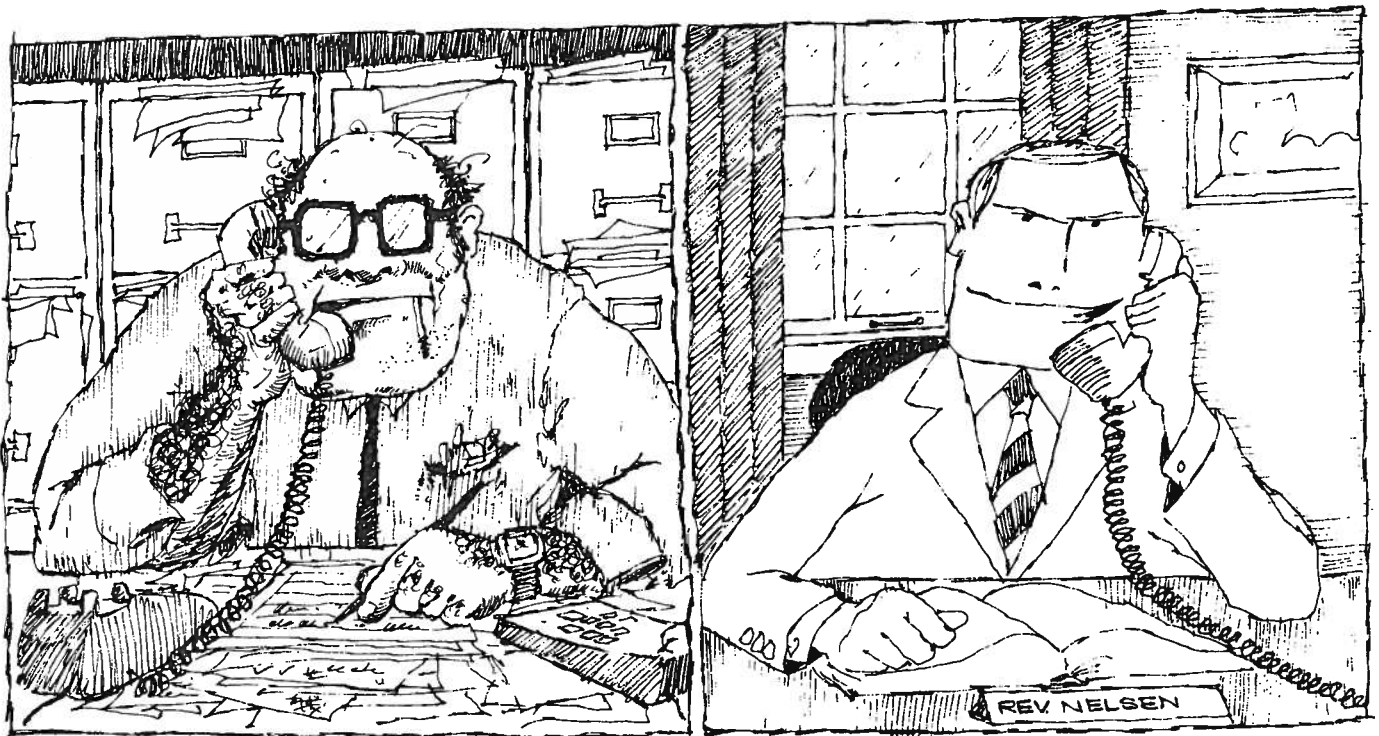
tasks that are a bit longer in range; the bottom is for long-term tasks. He consults his folder frequently. Furthermore, since he cannot possibly attend all the church's board and committee meetings, he reviews the monthly board report at this time. To effectively keep him up to date, the reports answer two fundamental questions: What have we done this month to accomplish our board's goals? What do we plan to do next month to accomplish our board's goals? By reading the answers to these questions, Art can make quick, concise evaluations of progress in different areas.

Preparation for a Wednesday afternoon youth class that Art teaches, and more sermon work, dominate a loosely structured pace during the early afternoon hours. One activity, though, that Art never spends a lot of time on is the search for sermon illustrations. He likes to glean illustrations on the run, and today he has to run out to a hardware store. As he walks along a store aisle, he notices something unusual. It's a flawed screw without a slot in the top. He buys it. On Sunday he will work it into his sermon, which deals with God's love for our useless, defective souls.

He takes Wednesday evening off to be with his family.

He uses all of Thursday morning to write out his

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*"Reverend, this is the Internal Revenue Service. Can you confirm that Mr. Jones gave \$2,306 to your church last year?"*

*"If he hasn't yet, I can guarantee he will."*

sermon. At lunch he meets with a support group of professional people from his church and community, who, in his words, "provide the kind of listening ears I can tell anything to." Often the group will be the major crutch that helps him hobble through all the crises and interruptions a week in the pastorate can offer.

One week, for instance, besides bearing the emotional drain of ministering to a couple going through an ugly separation, a forty-year-old man who discovered he had a brain tumor, and a young man who nearly died on the hospital operating table, Art had a couple in the church who lost twins in the seventh month of pregnancy. The woman had previously gone through three miscarriages. Now she was having to carry her twins for a whole week before they could be delivered, and Art was trying to comfort her and the husband.

"I can be very honest with my share group," Art confesses. "I tell them when I'm down or under extreme pressure." Being able to dump these things on this group of men helps Art get through the week. "I never miss attending," he adds, "except, of course, in emergencies."

He tries to leave Thursday afternoon and evening flexible, and if possible he takes them off.

Friday stays guarded; neither Art nor his wife schedules a single appointment. They have breakfast together, and for lunch they go to a local park for a picnic in the mild Virginia weather. Taking a long walk around the lake, they talk about pressures and in this way unburden themselves before the weekend comes.

In the afternoon they head home, and Art feels his hands itching to work with wood. He goes to his workshop, where for a year he's been building a cherry writing desk for his wife, and puts a coat of finish on it.

He turns and says, "You know, I wonder if there's any profession in the whole world that's as difficult to evaluate as the pastoral ministry?"

Building things out of wood, however, gives Art something to evaluate. He stands at a contemplative distance and studies the cherry-wood desk that came out of joyful sweat and toil; he sits in his recently completed family room and looks with pride on the cupboards and bookcases, the chair and crown moldings that are the by-product of many hours in the workshop.

But for days, weeks, and months at a time, the only visible evaluation of his real job manifests itself in a few growth statistics, a slightly raised salary, and a few generalized comments about how nice last week's sermon was. Deep inside he knows God is

## **"The crisis visit is one of the greatest opportunities God gives us to become close to our people."**

using him to reap great heavenly rewards in his people, but these things too often lack visibility, and Art finds himself staring blankly at a wall or out the window thinking, "What good am I really doing? Is my life making a difference?"

On Saturday he remains in a flexible frame of mind. He runs the sermon once more through his mind, makes a last-minute visit, and returns home.

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Interruptions. Crises. Emergencies. As shown by our four pastors, they roost in every pastor's schedule.

"But it has to be that way," says Ed Hales. "The crisis visit is one of the greatest opportunities God gives us to become close to our people."

To illustrate, Ed shares the following experience. "Recently, a ninety-six-year-old woman in our church prepared to take a bath, but she forgot to turn on the cold water. As she got into the tub, she was severely burned. Doctors tried to do skin grafting on the woman, but at ninety-six years old, the skin doesn't regenerate rapidly. I'm afraid she's going to need a lot more skin than she's able to produce.

"She's a fine lady, and when I heard about the accident, I willingly rushed to her side. I sat next to her, prayed, and when I looked up, her eyes were still closed. I thought she had drifted off to sleep. But after a moment, she began to pray for me, that God would be with me as I went about my daily tasks. She prays for me each time I go to visit her now."

No one disputes the momentousness of rushing to a parishioner in a time of crisis. Yet, still, the other side remains—the routine functions of the pastorate. Routines aren't the answer to every scheduling problem, but they can help control a schedule that must contain a good measure of looseness and flexibility.

Perhaps in the final analysis, the answers lie in what Ed Hales cautiously refers to as "a theology of interruption"—the constant awareness that even in the most interrupted weeks, the Lord provides the grace, as the right priorities are set, to carry pastors to the end of the week with their houses and ministries in order. ■

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*Who shall minister to the ministers, if not we, in our love for one another?* —Archbishop John L. May