Faith-Ann A. McGarrell

"Do You Know the Shepherd's Voice?"

My heart still plummets to my stomach when I remember her cry, "But Miss McGarrell, I listened to your voice!" Her words, filled with incredulity and disappointment, cut like a knife and stung. All I could do was apologize and remind her that "This was just a simulation."

Each year, students at the school where I taught were invited to participate with 70 other high school students in a region-wide leadership retreat for student leaders. The retreat took place at a remote encampment, far away from the bustling city. The presentations and activities that weekend focused not only on the voices that lead but challenged the attendees to pay attention to the voices they followed. In one afternoon session, the program planners launched a simulation to illustrate the theme. Students were divided into groups, blindfolded, and told to follow the instructions of their assigned group leader; the leader would guide them to a site designated as their "eternal home," representing eternal life. They were warned that although they might hear other voices, they should follow the voice of their leader since the other voices would be intent on leading them elsewhere—to "eternal death." Those assigned as group leaders were instructed to use verbal cues or physical ones, if necessary, to ensure that their flock made it from the main meeting lodge to the other side of the encampment.

The remaining adult chaperones and sponsors were given the task of being other voices—those that produced a counter message from the one being broadcast by the designated leaders. The adults were given the freedom to use any means necessary to distract. The simulation's initial launch was chaotic—many voices clamoring for attention and blindfolded participants unsure of whether to turn right or left. However, soon, out of the chaos arose a loosely ordered group of individuals leaving the lodge. As freezing rain drizzled from the gray October sky and the cold, crisp wind penetrated every layer of clothing, several colleagues and I determined that we would not walk the three-mile-long trail trying to distract the participants and inveigle them to follow our voices. So, we colluded with one of the bus drivers to start one of the vehicles and get the heat going. We then proceeded to cajole, in soothing tones, several of the participants to join us on the bus. "There's no need to walk in the cold"; "Come with us; the bus is warm!" and "Join us! We're going where you're going." Several resisted, chased us away, or told us to go tempt someone else. However, 25 listened, and we carted them off to the encampment site designated as eternal death.

As our band of captives sat in the bus, singing, chatting, and enjoying the warmth, the gravity of what we had accomplished began to weigh heavily on me—and also on my colleagues. We knew it was a simulation. We knew that this was not real. Yet, we knew that our students, oblivious to where the vehicle was going, were on that bus because they recognized our voices, and they did not imagine that we would lead them astray. During the debriefing, there were many tears as both students and sponsors weighed the magnitude of our words, the power of our influence, and each individual's personal responsibility to critique the voices that lead and those we follow.

My student's cry remains a constant reminder for me even today as the assault on education, both public and private, continues to spiral, twist, and bend amidst the challenging societal climate. There are so many voices demanding attention, postulating what should be taught, how and when it should be taught, and to or by whom. The issues continue to escalate: from debates about access and funding education globally to critical race theory and "wokeness" in schools and politicians demanding curriculum revisions; from mental and physical health crises facing students and teachers, Pre-K through higher education, to an increase in war and environmental disasters that threaten to suspend schooling for millions, especially girls; and, from persistent gun violence in U.S. schools to the infiltration of hardcore drugs in appealing packages (e.g., candy-colored fentanyl-laced pills and fruit-flavored vaping pens). Add to this the ravages of a global pandemic—the impact of which is yet to be fully grasped—and educators face the seemingly

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insurmountable challenge of deciphering whose voices will lead or which voices to follow.

One natural response is to bury one's head in the sand and pretend that these topics either don't exist or that they will go away if we stay submerged long enough; the tendency is to huddle in our enclaves and "shut the door and teach!"[1] But, we cannot; we must not. For Seventh-day Adventist educators, hiding from the fray is not an option. We have a calling, a mandate to prepare students for this world—and also for the world to come.[2] To do this, we must assess the winds of change, remember our mission, and chart a course to ensure that we don't lose any of our flocks. To do this, we must remember that the One who says, "'"Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out and face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you"'" (2 Chronicles 20:17, NIV),[3] then face our challenges head-on.

As Jesus walked the road to Emmaus, He came upon two disciples wrapped in discussion: "'What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?'" (Luke 24:17), He asked. They shared with Him the tensions of the time, their frustration, sadness, and fears. Jesus listened. He listened intently. And when they were finished, He reminded them of who He was and what He came to accomplish. In the midst of the very challenging times ahead, let us remember who our Leader is, what He came to accomplish, and the privilege we have to participate in the mission of Adventist education.

Several articles in this issue speak to the sensitivities teachers must cultivate as they interact with students. Patricia Schmidt Costa introduces the topic of "Affect Turn" and explores aspects of social and emotional learning that inform good practice. Using several personal examples from her more than 30 years of teaching, she challenges readers to see beyond students' behavior and do the work to get to the heart of the matter.

George Ashley and Cameile Henry delve into a topic that is uncomfortable for some and possibly taboo for many: race. They posit that children, from birth, are keenly aware of differences. To neglect to discuss the topic is to reinforce stereotypes, promote prejudice, and rob ourselves of the opportunity to fully understand God and the diversity He has woven throughout our world.

Shawna Vyhmeister discusses secularism's encroachment into higher education and puts forth recommendations for Adventist educators seeking to engage young adults even after they leave Seventh-day Adventist schools.

Several other articles provide food for thought. André Vasconcelos shares lessons from Jesus' encounter with the disciples on the road to Emmaus that can be applied to the classroom and even in a wider context as we navigate challenging times. Petra Pierre-Robertson offers an insightful book review of Vernon Euclid Andrews' *The Morning After the Night Before,* a historical memoir of early educational work in the Southern Caribbean. And finally, Almir Marroni shares his own experience as a literature evangelist and offers an opportunity for students pursuing Adventist education to gain the benefit of this resource.

As Adventist educators, we must evaluate the voices vying for our attention and weigh them against our foundational principles and values.[4] We hope the articles in this issue offer opportunities for self-reflection. And ultimately, we hope they challenge and encourage you as you participate with God in this great calling.

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Recommended citation:
Faith-Ann A. McGarrell, "'Do You Know the Shepherd's Voice?'" *The Journal of Adventist Education* 84:4 (2022): 3, 40.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The ideology behind the saying "shut the door and teach" is one that places the teacher at the center of student learning. In U.S. schools, teachers are designated *in loco parentis,* or in place of the parent, giving them decision-making responsibilities that govern the learning environment. One side of the debate says that teachers must shut out all external sources of interference (administrative demands, government mandates, parental intrusion, curriculum wars, etc.) and focus on the task of teaching. For those opposing the statement, the concept of shutting out all other perspectives is limiting and insular, leading to professional isolation. See "The Doctrine of In Loco Parentis" *Encyclopedia Britannica* (n.d.): https://www.britannica.com/topic/teaching/The-doctrine-of-in-loco-parentis. See also bell hooks, *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Jack Schneider and Jennifer Berkshire, *A Wolf at the Schoolhouse Door: The Dismantling of Public Education and the Future of School* (New York: The New Press, 2003); Kelly Treleaven, "Here's Why We Can No Longer 'Shut the Door and Teach'" *We Are Teachers* (2023): https://www.weareteachers.com/shut-the-door-and-teach/.

2. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1903), 13.

3. 2 Chronicles 20:17. Unless stated otherwise, all Scripture in this editorial is quoted from the *New International Version* (NIV) of the Bible. Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

4. "Seventh-day Adventist Philosophy of Education Policy," *General Conference Policy Manual* (2003), 221-228 (Education – Departmental Policies: FE 05, FE 10): https://circle.adventistlearningcommunity.com/download/PhilStat2003.pdf.

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