The Process and Adaptation of the Ministries of the Wausau Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Postmodern Matrix to Those Born After 1964

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Problem

It was apparent to many of the Wausau Seventh-day Adventist Church members, as well as the pastor, that there was an apparent lack or minimal level of participation of young adults (ages 17-35) in the life of the church. It was the strong desire of the pastor and many of the members of the congregation to be inclusive of young adults, provide ministries for and by them, and to foster an environment for them to be able to grow in a deeper relationship with Jesus. It was evident that the current practice and ministry levels at the church were not meeting the needs or attracting this important segment of the population.
ABSTRACT

THE PROCESS AND ADAPTATION OF THE MINISTRIES OF THE WAUSAU SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN THE POSTMODERN MATRIX TO THOSE BORN AFTER 1964

by

William S. Bossert

Adviser: Barry Gane
Method

A two-year process began with the introduction of the local elders to the current literature to assist them in what were the possible issues involved in the rejection of the young adults of the church. Concurrently, the pastor and his wife initiated a social/spiritual ministry (called Face2Face) at the onset of the project which was aimed specifically to college-aged young adults living in the greater Wausau area.

The worship liturgy began a process of change which included the inclusion of more contemporary Christian praise music to be blended with familiar hymns. PowerPoint presentations for announcements, worship service elements and sermon presentations were also included in the change process. The pastor endeavored to project a more positive, energetic and spiritual atmosphere during the Sabbath morning services.

Leading laity were engaged in many hours of discussion about what kind of a church they believed God wanted and a consensus was developed. A document defining the Wausau Church was then developed and adopted. It became the foundation for the future development of new ministries as well as educating new members or attendees to the ministry philosophy of church.

Results

At the conclusion of the project’s two-year time period, the church had more than doubled in attendance at the worship services. A generational shift of those born after 1964 went from 45.5 percent of the congregational attendees to 63.1 percent. All generational groups experienced growth, but those between the ages of 17-40 experienced the greatest and most significant increase. The increased participation was also reflected in the young adults increasing their numbers in leadership roles within the
church, as well as placing their children in the age-appropriate Sabbath School divisions. A twenty-year decline in church membership had been reversed.

Conclusions

The project was effective in achieving a significant increase of young adults’ participation in the life of the Wausau Church. It is evident that the process of laity education and change was effective in bringing about a new atmosphere or new church culture in which participation and growth could take place. The process of change that happened at Wausau Church may serve as a model to other local churches wishing to reach their young adults.
Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

THE PROCESS AND ADAPTATION OF THE MINISTRIES OF THE WAUSAU SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN THE POSTMODERN MATRIX TO THOSE BORN AFTER 1964

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
William S. Bossert
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THE PROCESS AND ADAPTATION OF THE MINISTRIES OF THE WAUSAU SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN THE POSTMODERN MATRIX TO THOSE BORN AFTER 1964

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES..........................................................................................................................vi

Chapter
1. INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................................1
   Purpose of the Dissertation .................................................................1
   Statement of the Problem .................................................................1
   Statement of the Task ........................................................................1
   Justification of the Dissertation ..........................................................2
   Description of Dissertation Process ..................................................3
   Limitations of the Dissertation .........................................................4
   Methodology ......................................................................................7

2. ANALYSIS OF THE YOUNG ADULTS RELATIONSHIP TO THE
   WAUSAU SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH ........................................10
   The Central Wisconsin Church District ...........................................10
   Demographic Information on District Churches ................................12
   Young Adult Participation Prior to Project Beginning .....................13
   Chapter Summary ...............................................................................19

3. TOWARD A THEOLOGICAL AND CURRENT LITERATURE
   UNDERSTANDING OF RELEVANT CONSIDERATION TO THE
   POSTMODERN MATRIX .............................................................................20
   Establishment of Jesus’ Repeated Calls for Evangelism of All People
   Groups.........................................................................................................20
   Four Generations in One Church .........................................................27
   Builders..................................................................................................29
   Boomers.................................................................................................31
   Busters..................................................................................................32
   Bridgers.................................................................................................35
   How and When the Crisis Surfaces ......................................................38
   Cultural Backgrounds .........................................................................39
   Generational Principles ......................................................................39
   The Loss of Youth and Young Adults ................................................42
   Possible Implications for the Wausau Church ....................................43
   Generational Cycles ............................................................................47
LIST OF TABLES

1. Tomlinson's List of Christian Behavioral Views .......................................................... 42
2. Barna's Survey of Teen Internet Usage ...................................................................... 94
3. Potential Attendees from Church Directory ............................................................. 166
4. Active/Regular Attendees at Worship ..................................................................... 168
5. Generational Shifts in Attendance ........................................................................... 170
6. Shift of Generational Groups Active in Leadership ................................................. 171
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Dissertation

Statement of the Problem

Upon my arrival in June 2003 at my new church district,¹ I noticed that within the Wausau Seventh-day Adventist Church (Wausau Church) there were very few young adults (ages 17-35) participating. Yet, on the current church membership records at least thirty-two youth and young adults’ names appeared. Upon further investigation, it became apparent that these young people were choosing (actively or passively) to not participate in the regular local church programs nor were they choosing to attend any of its worship services. Many of these young adults were the grown children of active members of the Wausau Church. It was apparent to me that there was a serious disconnection between the local church and those young adults.

Statement of the Task

It was the purpose of this project to: (1) discover the causes for the “disconnect” of the young adults from the life of the church; (2) develop workable strategies, processes, educational and event programs, along with the inclusion of various related ministries to change the trend and re-establish them into active participation again; (3) to

¹ The Wausau District includes Antigo, Merrill, Moon, and Wausau Seventh-day Adventist Churches, in Wisconsin.
find and encourage other youth and young adults not associated with the Wausau Church to participate and for them to develop a spiritual relationship with Christ; and then, (4) to evaluate the results.

Justification for the Dissertation

The Wausau Church was selected for this project for a number of reasons. Wausau Church (1) has a larger attending membership than any of the other three churches in the Central Wisconsin District,¹ (2) it is somewhat centrally located within the four-church district, (3) it is located the largest town/city north of Madison – the state capital, (4) it has a larger group of Adventist youth and young adults from which to draw, (5) it is located in a community with several colleges² and a few professional training institutions, (6) it was in the process of building a new church facility that would more adequately provide space for various ministry activities, and (7) it is the church family that is most open to changes in ministry that may be conducive to young adult ministries.

Therefore the justifications for the project were as follows:

1. It was apparent to many that there is a lack or minimal participation of young adults (ages 17-35) in the Wausau Church. Such a lack of participation from this particular age group was of great concern to me, the parents of these young adults, and the regularly attending members of the church as a whole.

2. There was a strong desire on my part and many of the active congregational members to be inclusive of young adults, to provide ministries for them and by them, and to foster an environment for them to be able to grow in a deeper relationship with Jesus.

¹ As assigned and designated by the Executive Committee of the Wisconsin Conference of SDA.

² Cardinal Stritch University, Northcentral Technical College, University of Wisconsin Marathon County, and Vision Community Bible College.
Although their personal salvation was and remains a burden on the hearts of many of the parents and members of the congregation, there was a deep desire for them to be active in church at worship and involved in its ministries as well.

3. It was believed by all the church family that Jesus wants to give His gift of salvation freely to all peoples — youth and young adults included. This is not only a personal belief, but a fundamental belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.\(^1\) The Wausau Church family recognized that this people group was not being “reached” for Christ as effectively as they would like to see.

4. It was assumed that many youth and young adults may have recognized their own need for some type of spiritual balance in their lives, but that they might not be sure where and/or how they could accomplish it. Is it possible that the ministries of the Wausau Church could in fact provide at least part of the answer to their quest?

**Description of the Dissertation Process**

1. Current literature was reviewed. This included books, articles and other resources on the principles, strategies, and practical programs that might assist pastors and/or youth leaders to develop, equip, and evangelize youth and young adults in the *postmodern* matrix.

2. Data of the Wausau Church were collected from various sources, such as the Wisconsin Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (WCSDA). Demographics and additional data were be gathered about the greater Wausau community. Informal interviews or surveys, as well as other informal information gathering methods, were

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\(^1\) *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .: A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988), 106. Fundamental Belief #6 suggests an all-inclusiveness of Christ’s atonement.
employed to gain greater understanding concerning youth and young adults and their spiritual needs and development.

3. Strategies for deeper spiritual development, equipping for ministry, and evangelizing young adults through the Wausau Church were developed. Such strategies included an educational process for the current church family as to what youth and young adults may need in their spiritual development and what they may need for active participation in the local church. Discussion of postmodernism and its possible impact on the young adults within and without the Wausau Church and community occurred with church lay leaders.

4. A reclaiming strategy was developed and implemented within the project’s limitations and focus. An evaluation process of assessment was developed.

5. The formal project began in June 2003 and concluded in June 2005.

**Limitations of the Dissertation**

It should be noted that there were naturally a number of limiting factors present throughout the project. They may be summarized as follows:

1. *Time constraints.* The dissertation process and the duration of the project itself, by necessity, had an added element of limitations in both time and scope. It was the intent of the project setting, exercise, and assessment to take no longer than twenty-four months. More definitive results might have been available with the passage of more time (years, not months) for the project to proceed to fuller effectiveness and more comprehensive results. Certainly three to four years in project duration would have possibly provided greater opportunities, longer development of ministries, and additional time for more detailed evaluation. If the dissertation process did not strictly control
length of time of the project’s duration, it is believed that a ten-year study would have greatly increased the evaluation period and yielded more workable solutions and results. It should be understood that the elements of the project, however, would proceed beyond the closure of the dissertation process and hopefully be under continued development for years to come. It is also hoped that the results achieved will have a long-time impact upon the ministry of the Wausau Church and the Wausau community as a whole.

2. **Church size.** Wausau Church is a relatively small church. Alice Mann, a student of congregational size in relationship to their effectiveness, suggests that Wausau Church size would be categorized as a *pastoral size church* (50 to 150 in attendance) where there is “a coalition of several overlapping family-friendship networks unified around the person and role of the pastor.” Yet, Wausau was part of a four-church district, and therefore the pastor’s attention directed toward Wausau and its ministries is not the sole focus of his time or attention. This “part-time” pastorate and four-church district relationship have had their limitations, and therefore would have influenced any and all programs and ministries.

3. **District-wide appeal:** It is worth noting that the youth and young adults events, ministry participation, and educational process have reached beyond the immediate Wausau community to the other churches in the Wausau district. A few of the members and their friends from the Antigo and Merrill district churches have participated regularly in the young adult ministry events. It is also observed that other churches outside the Wausau district are asking for information and observing the ministry in

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Wausau for possible ideas and methods that they might use within their own churches.\footnote{Leaders from the Marshfield, WI, area have attended and asked for information and help in establishing a young adult ministry in their area. Marshfield is 45 miles from Wausau.}

4. **Church building project:** The State of Wisconsin and Marathon County purchased the Wausau Church facility located on Oriole Lane by the process of *intimate domain*\footnote{A legal process where a governmental organization may seize private property for the public good by acquisition and compensation of loss.} in the summer of 2003. Expansion of the state and federal highway system, and corresponding roads and highway connections, forced the church to leave its facility at the end of December 2003. For almost a full year, Sabbath services (Sabbath School and the Worship Service) were held in the Mountain of the Lord Lutheran Church two blocks north from the new church’s location. Until the new church facility was completed enough to occupy (December 2004), meetings, committees, social gatherings, etc., were required to meet in private homes, at times in other commercial/business facilities, or even other rented spaces. It is assumed that not having a permanent meeting location for the greater part of this project affects this project. It is believed that having such a permanent meeting location would make it easier for meetings and gatherings of various types. Whether this would be a positive, negative, or neutral influence, it is determined to be somewhat beyond the scope of the project to determine.

5. **Number of participants:** Initially a core group of young adults upon which to build a ministry was non-existent. Over a period of a few months, a group of five to eight participants began to emerge. Yet, it appeared that a group of twenty-five to thirty-five possible participants was available and might be willing to be involved in a Wausau youth and young adult ministry.
6. Appearance of two divisions: It became immediately apparent that there would be at least two divisions of the target group. Those who had finished their education, had steady jobs, and were looking forward to family life made up one segment of the group. The other group seemed to be made up of those still completing their education, looking for a life partner, and deciding on a career. Because of the diversity of their interests and their maturity and developmental level, different events and programs had to be developed.

Methodology

The project process proceeded with the following methodology.

1. Historical and statistical assessment: A brief assessment of the Wausau Church's recent history as it relates to youth and young adults, and their participation in the church's worship and ministries, was evaluated. This assessment required examining membership records, as available, informal interviews with long-term members, and any other related materials that might be helpful. A quick review of the demographics of the Wausau community noting trends and groups was taken.

2. Examination of theological considerations: An examination of the Scriptures searching for theological instructions, counsels, and/or commands from Christ, the prophets, or apostles that might be relevant to the project was done. Special attention was given to Jesus’ commands to work for the salvation of all people groups, and any statements on relational or generational issues that might be applicable to cultural society shifts.

3. Research and evaluation of current literature: A brief overview of the current literature available was given which related to the project. Of necessity, a discussion of
issues found in *modernity* and *postmodernity* was included because of their potential influence upon the youth and young adults in Wausau, as well as these cultural influences upon the Wausau Church membership as a whole. Included within an overview of the current literature was a discussion of the presence of generational issues and intergenerational relationships, as well as possible influences of the appropriate stages of personal spiritual growth and development.

4. *Relationship of building events and ministries:* As noted earlier, the Wausau Church is presently in the process of building a new church. The church’s building committee chose to have part of the construction done by a general contractor and part done by the donated labor of the members themselves. The time and resource allocation certainly has had its affect on the ministries of the local church. But the building project should not necessarily be viewed negatively. Certainly it did take time and resources from normal church ministries that one might expect. But it also afforded opportunities for youth, young adults and adult members to work together towards a common goal. Therefore, it might be fair to conclude that the building project has had mostly a positive affect on the membership and community in that it has created a feeling of newness, progress, and excitement. Although it might be difficult to fully measure the impact of the building program, it should be noted that in all likelihood it did have a positive effect on the youth and the young adults.

5. *Church and conference informational or educational events:* Educational events on generational issues, modern and postmodern culture and their possible impact upon the local church, young adult ministry needs, etc., were conducted. Those educational events occurred through the use of sermons at the worship services, Saturday
afternoon seminars, frequent small group discussions, providing key leaders with relevant books or articles on the topics, and personal interviews and discussions. Interaction with the Wisconsin Conference leadership usually took the form of sharing current books or articles on the issues, requesting my attendance at the National Pastor’s Conference in March of 2004, and leading in the young adult/college-aged camp meeting pavilion using postmodern elements.

6. Interviews with non-attending young adults: Using the qualitative method of research, a few informal interviews were conducted to assess their beliefs, levels of commitment to the local church and/or denominational loyalty, and what may have triggered their decision to not participate. These informal interviews also sought to discover what avenues might still be open for them to again be active in church ministry and worship. I conducted the evaluations, and therefore there may be some effect on the results from my presence as a pastor and representative of the organized church.

7. Evaluation of the project: Although the ministry for young adults is a continual process and elements of the project hopefully will be ongoing into the future, a June 30, 2005, deadline was arbitrarily set for the project evaluation. Young adult interviews were gathered, data collected, and personal observations noted. These made up the evaluations and recommendations as listed later in this document.
CHAPTER 2

ANALYSIS OF THE YOUNG ADULTS’ RELATIONSHIP TO THE
WAUSAU SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

The Central Wisconsin Church District

I began my new pastoral assignment to the Wausau district on June 1, 2003. The Executive Committee of the Wisconsin Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, located in Madison, made the pastoral assignment and established the parameters of the district. The Wausau Church district, at the time of the pastoral assignment, consisted of four Seventh-day Adventist churches all located within a forty-mile radius of the City of Wausau.¹ One church was located in each of the following towns or communities: Antigo, Merrill, Moon,² and Wausau. In the winter of 2005, the Moon church officially closed, creating a three-church district. No other churches were assigned to this pastoral district assignment.

I attended each of the four churches throughout the summer of 2003, and noticed a consistent absence of a representative or proportional group of young adults (ages 18-35) as might be expected from the general population of the communities involved. My personal observations and first-impression conclusions were made from noting those who

¹ See fuller discussion of the four churches in the pastoral district assessment as presented to conference officials in Fall of 2003 in Appendix D.

² Moon is an unincorporated farm community with only one business establishment, a local bar. The church site is approximately 5 miles outside the town of Mosinee, and is located on a dirt road.
attended church for worship on Saturday (Sabbath) morning.\footnote{The pastor preaches at each of the churches every other week. Therefore, Merrill and Antigo churches have the pastor present on the second and fourth weeks of the month, and the Moon and Wausau churches on the first and third Sabbaths of each month. On the fifth Sabbaths, the pastor preaches at Wausau.} Although each of the four churches had their own unique “personality” of membership, it appeared that this particular age bracket of the area’s general population was consistently absent from each.\footnote{The Merrill church attendees reflected more of a senior-aged group membership. With only a few exceptions, all the attendees had reached retirement. The median age could be as high as 75.}

I am concerned with the eternal salvation and spiritual welfare of people of all ages in my community, as well as the members of the congregations where I am assigned. I wanted to discover why this particular age bracket of adults in significant numbers were not participating within the life of the church. Upon a superficial review of the membership records, I discovered that there were indeed young adults “on the church books,” or had their names listed in the church directory prepared quarterly by the church clerk.\footnote{Not all the names listed on the church membership roles from those born after 1964 were listed as members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This might indicate that the individual was never a baptized member of the church.} But for whatever reason or reasons, many of them were apparently not choosing to be active in the life of the church.\footnote{Attendance at the worship services was an unscientific evaluation instrument that the pastor used to get some idea of what the level of interest was and participation was.} It also appeared to me that a significant percentage of the young adults listed on the church membership records were the grown children of currently active members. It was apparent to me that there was a serious disconnection between the local church and those young adults.
Demographic Information on District Churches

Being unfamiliar with the communities I was assigned, a quick demographic study was initiated. This quick look at the various communities themselves revealed where the population centers were in the district and what might be the most productive place among the four communities of the district in which to launch the project.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau as found in the report from the 2000 U.S. Census, Antigo’s population is listed as 8,560 with 1,498 falling within the 20-to-34 age bracket. Merrill’s population is listed as 10,146 with 1,920 within the 20-to-34 age bracket. Mosinee (the town that was the main community of the Moon Church district) had a population in 2000 of 4,063 with 868 within the same age bracket.

The Wausau community is made up of other small townships or municipalities as well as the City of Wausau itself. Within the Wausau community these small municipalities consist of Kronenwetter, Rib Mountain (location of the Wausau Church), Rothschild, Schofield, Weston, and the City of Wausau. These communities tightly border each other and are easily identified as part of Wausau both socially and economically. Taking all the communities as a whole, the greater Wausau area population in 2000 was 59,396 with 10,882 residents within the 20-to-35 age bracket or 18.3 percent of the population.

Wausau does have unique population characteristics when compared to the U.S. population as whole. When statistics are examined of the area racial groupings, the

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1 Perhaps the location of the Moon church made it difficult for the Mosinee community to identify with it. The church was located on a rural dirt road, 5 miles west of town next to a small graveyard.


3 Ibid.
Wausau community is 90 percent White, 8.1 percent Asian, 0.4 percent Black, 0.8 percent Hispanic or Latin, and 0.4 percent Native American. The 2000 U.S. national census indicates that 75 percent of the U.S. population is White, 12.3 percent is Black, 12.2 percent is Hispanic or Latin, 3.6 percent is Asian, and 0.9 percent is Native American. Unlike the nation as a whole, Wausau remains a north-central city with a WASP (White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant) strongly predominate majority. One might observe there is little racial tension in Wausau.

The Wausau Church was selected for it offered the greatest density of population from which to establish a program, it is the largest city among the four-church district, it is centrally located, and had the largest membership from which to draw. It also seemed most open to actively doing something positive in ministering to the young adults within and outside of the church.

Young Adult Participation Prior to Project Beginning

The Wausau Church was selected for the project for the reasons sited above, as well as in chapter 1. Here are my general observations about the membership records, attendance, and participation levels of the church family at Wausau in the early summer of 2003. Included in those observations will be the specific information concerning those born after 1964. These pastoral observations and data might be considered a fairly

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1 Wausau has a significant permanent Hmong Community.

2 U.S Census 2000 Demographic Profiles.

3 Wausau has a large Lutheran influence as well as a strong Roman Catholic presence. Lutherans as well as Catholics operate their own school K-12 systems.
representative sample of how the Wausau Church was prior to the initiation of the project elements.

Several ways of evaluating or assessing the Wausau Church in June of 2003 could have been done. To help arrive at an objective understanding as possible with the available or known information, more than one statistical instrument was used. It should be understood that none of the available instruments to me provided a perfect evaluation of the church, but did help me to gain a clearer understanding when they were taken together.

The first and maybe most obvious method was to simply check the official church membership records. As of June 2003, the book membership of the Wausau Church\(^1\) stood at ninety-four. Looking into past clerk records to the current membership list, I discovered the church has experienced a steady twenty-year decline. Such data from the church clerk’s membership records do give a specific and accurate indication as to who was recognized to be a baptized Seventh-day Adventist and also a member of the Wausau Church.

Although the church membership records can be a valuable tool for evaluating the increase or decrease in Seventh-day Adventists who are members of the Wausau Church, it does not indicate the attending individuals who may not be official members of the church (such as children of members who are not baptized), nor does it indicate the number of those actually attending. For example, there may be active or attending individuals who actually have their membership at a different Adventist church.

\(^1\)Book membership would list those individuals who were baptized members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This book membership listing was established by confirmation of the local and Wisconsin Conference clerk’s membership records.
Although membership records may be helpful for some statistical analysis, they do not really give a complete picture of the attendance at the local church on any given Sabbath morning.

The project process, therefore, attempted to gather additional types of information which might lead to a greater sense of actual participation activity and provide another method of more realistic evaluation. Inadvertently, the Wausau church directory\(^1\) became a valuable source for providing additional participation information.

In the June 2003 Wausau church directory, a total of 127 names are listed. This, of course, is more names than the 94 individuals found on the church membership official records recorded either by the local church clerk or the Conference counterpart. Closer evaluation of the June 2003 directory indicates that many of those listed are indeed the children of members living at home. The church directory then suggests that the church family is indeed larger than what appears on the membership records.

A closer look at the listing of the names in the 2003 directory indicates that there are 36 who might be classified as young adults (17-41)\(^2\) listed. That would suggest that these young adults occupy almost 28.3 percent of the 127 names listed in the church directory.

These numbers could be a positive indication of the church family, but it could also be somewhat misleading. Simply having their name listed in the church directory shows a type of relationship to the church but does not indicate any real level of

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\(^1\) The local church clerk prepares the church directory and includes the names of baptized members, children living at home who may or may not be baptized members, individuals or families that attend regularly, and those members who may still have their membership at Wausau but have moved out of the area and are no longer attending the church.

\(^2\) Indicates the project parameters to include those born after 1964.
participation. Therefore another review of the church directory could be done to look for those who are participating and who are attending on a fairly regular basis.

Of the 127 listed in the church directory, 77 could be considered regular attendees.\(^1\) That would mean that approximately 61.6 percent of those who could attend actually did when the project started. Yet, I observed that somewhere between 45 to 55 attended the worship service on any given Sabbath morning in the summer and early fall of 2003. That would mean that on any given Sabbath between 36 percent to 44 percent of the possible attending membership (the 127) could be present. Or, if compared to those who were considered to attend regularly (the 77), 58.4 percent to 71.4 percent could be present for worship.

When the review of the church directory listing focuses on the young adults only, it lists 36 names. Of those 36, 17 could be considered as regular attendees at worship. This offers several ways of calculating the percentages for evaluation. When comparing the 17 attending to the 36 young adults listed in the directory, 47.2 percent appear to be active in their attendance at the worship service. This might give somewhat of a false reading, for earlier it was noted that of the 127, young adults made up 28.3 percent of the names listed in the directory. Yet when the 17 are compared to the 77 who are considered to be active in their attendance at the worship service, just 22 percent of that possible group attend.

One might conclude from the information derived from the names listed in the church directory that the young adults are seriously under-represented in attendance at the

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\(^1\) A regular attendee would mean that individual attended the worship service one to two times each month. It would also exclude those listed on the church directory list who lived too far to attend on a regular basis.
church. The statistical analysis of the church directory then would confirm the informal observations of the pastor and the lay leadership alike.

Another process that might be used to glean an understanding of the information in the church directory is to consider who is active. That is, who goes beyond simply attending church one to two times a month, and actually takes a leadership or support role to assist the church in its ministries. For the sake of the project's objectives, it will be considered that anyone who teaches a class, participates in the music ministry of the church, collects the offering, assists with the treasurer's work, etc., would be considered active beyond attendance.

Therefore, of the 127 names listed in the June 2003 church directory, 34 (or 26.7%) could be considered as active in some type of leadership or support ministry role. But when compared to the 77 who are actively attending, 44.1 percent are in active leadership or support roles. Although there are no data available on the attendance at worship services of the 34 leaders and support staff, it might be safe to conclude their attendance would be more regular and/or more frequent than those who would not have leadership or support assignments. If that is indeed fairly factual, then that would mean approximately 45 percent of those attending on any given worship service, during the summer or early fall of 2003, were in a leadership or support role.

There is at least one more factor that could be drawn from simply evaluating the names contained in the church directory listing. That is to follow the classifications of the generational groupings.¹ For the sake of following trends over the length of the

¹ A description and definition of each of the four generational groupings within the Wausau Church is given in fuller detail and explanation in chapter 3.
project, children 17 or under were considered to be one grouping. Therefore, four
generational groups plus the children under 17 years of age were noted.

From the directory listing of names, and understanding the approximate age of
each name, the church family was divided into the generational five groups. **Builders**
numbered 30 and occupied approximately 24 percent of those names listed. **Boomers**
numbered 30, as well, and again occupied approximately 24 percent of the 127 names
listed. **Busters** numbered 19 and occupied 15.2 percent of the names listed in the
directory. **Bridgers** came in at 17 or 13.6 percent of the names listed. The children’s
group contained 29 names or 23.2 percent of the church directory names.

But when compared to the active attendance listing of 77, the percentages shift.
Considering the 77 as 100 percent of those attending, the **Builders** occupy 21 individuals
or 27.2 percent. **Boomers** have the exact same numbers – 21 and 27.2 percent. But the
**Busters** attendance is at 11 which is 14.2 percent of the whole. The **Bridgers** have 6
attending or 7.7 percent. The last grouping, the children under 17, have 18 attending or
23.3 percent.

These statistics from June 2003 reveal that a serious drop-off in attendance begins
to appear with the Busters and is most serious among the Bridgers. The congregation’s
concern of “where are all the young people” is clearly justified when one looks into the
facts contained in the church directory listing.

The project process did not attempt to assess the spiritual maturity or development
of any of the generational groupings within the Wausau Church. Although such
instruments of evaluation might provide valuable assistance to the needs of the
individuals within the church and projected ministry development, the limitations of the project scope did not provide for ample opportunity or resources to do so.

**Chapter Summary**

Therefore, the Wausau Church was chosen as the project group with the most potential for a successful launching of a ministry program designed to impact young adults (those 17 years of age and born after 1964). Research and program elements would be implemented with that particular target group in mind, yet it would not neglect the education and inclusion of other generational groups within the local church.
The Christian church has consistently understood the words of Jesus, as recorded in Matt 28:18f., as a call/command to go out and evangelize the whole world. The great Gospel Commission is seen as the “marching orders” for not only individual followers of Christ, but also applies to the organized church as well. That command of Jesus directed his followers to “. . go and make disciples of all nations.” That all-inclusive command seems unmistakable. The church has understood that Jesus called his followers to go to the entire world for the purpose of “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you (Matt 28:18-20).”¹

The church’s understanding of its duty to put into action that command of Christ is very well-known and well-established. A simple perusal of countless books and articles written over the entire period of Christian history, and from almost all households of faith within Christianity, only confirms this fact that Jesus called his disciples to evangelize all peoples with the gospel.

¹ All biblical references are from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise noted.
Seventh-day Adventists clearly teach, and have made it part of their fundamental beliefs, that the gospel of Christ is to be taken to the whole world and all people groups. The Adventist Church accepts the command of Christ (the great Gospel Commission) as being directly applicable to it. The 11th Fundamental Belief has this clarifying statement contained in its understanding of the role and purpose of the church. "In continuity with the people of God in Old Testament times, we are called out from the world; and we join together for worship, for fellowship, for instruction in the Word, for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, for service to all mankind, and for the worldwide proclamation of the gospel."¹

Such a calling to reach out evangelistically to all people groups is reflected in the words of Ellen White. Although the following statement would be primarily speaking of the cultural and racial differences throughout the world, it certainly could be fairly assumed that it is applicable to all people groups including those who would be considered “young adults” or “youth.” In Christ Object Lessons, White wrote:

No distinction on account of nationality, race, or cast, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple, that every soul may have free access to God. . . . In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free. All are brought nigh by His precious blood.²

Evangelism of the whole world is of such importance to the Seventh-day Adventist Church that it is part of the baptismal vow. The acceptance of the baptismal vows is required of all new believers upon their acceptance of the faith and prior to the

¹ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, 16th ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association).
² Ellen White, Christ’s Object Lessons (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press), 386.
administration of the rite of baptism. Sometimes the baptismal vows are presented orally and the candidates are asked publicly to acknowledge the acceptance of those vows prior to their baptism. At other times they may be given privately. But no matter what process of candidate examination throughout the world field is used, it is clearly understood by the church (and denomination as a whole) that it is to evangelize all people groups. The world-wide mission outreach of the church is testimony to the broad denominational acceptance of this evangelistic task.

When discussing outreach and mission, the church may speak of people groups by identifying them using country of origin, regions, languages, cultures, or ethnicity. These descriptive words are familiar and quickly come to mind as terms to describe groups for evangelism program development.

Over the years, the Adventist church has also seen the need to identify people groups in terms of ages. The local churches and denominational structures have established various departments or programs in recognition of these various age groupings. Examples of such might be: the youth department (seen at all levels of denominational organization), Pathfinders, and age-related Sabbath School divisions. All are evidences of the world church’s recognition of the need for age-sensitive groups.

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1 *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 209.

2 Referring to the ministry and mission areas in which the Adventist church is currently operating.

3 For example, the “10-40 Window.”

4 Generally spanning the ages of 10 to 30.

5 Generally spanning the ages of 10 to 15.
As Christian parents\(^1\) wonder how to pass along their spiritual and moral values to their children,\(^2\) popular cultural trends and shifts are evidently having their influence.\(^3\) These shifts and changes in the church in North America are evidently very troubling to many within the church. What may be most disconcerting is the sweeping cultural, political, and social changes that are challenging the very core of the church’s ecclesiastical identity, its long-standing belief and values systems, and its core organizational structure on both the local church and conference levels.

Perhaps those within the church should not overly concern themselves with these societal changes. Why should these rapid and sweeping changes concern those who live and work within the church? Shouldn’t the membership of the church expect the church (globally) to “go through” to the end as it exists now?

The Scriptures are clear that God is indeed changeless.\(^4\) “For I, the L ORD, do not change” (Mal 3:6). And the writer of Hebrews declares that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb 13:8). Yet, while the church does affirm that God does not change in his steadfast love toward mankind, and that his truth remains the same, one realizes that generations, cultures, and eras do and will change.

\(^1\) Monty Sahlin and Norma Sahlin, *A New Generation of Adventist Families*, (Portland, OR: Center for Creative Ministry, 1997), 95-96. For purpose of this project parents will generally refer to Boomers with that designation.


\(^4\) It should be noted that the Scriptures do at times speak of God who does change his mind. The Old Testament example of Nineveh would be such a time when God changed his judgment.
The process of passing on leadership from one mature leader to the next younger leader is well-established in Scripture. A good example of such a passing from one generation to the next might be that of Moses passing the leadership on to the younger Joshua, even though Joshua was sixty years of age at the time. From the story of the burning bush, it was clear that God selected Moses to lead a generation of people, the Israelites, out of bondage in Egypt. Yet, it is also clear that the Lord used Joshua, not Moses, to reach a new generation that wandered for forty years in the Wilderness to then lead them as a nation into the Promised Land.¹

Every day the church is challenged as to how it can pass on leadership to the next younger generation. The church may find it particularly difficult now in the matrix of the changing cultural factors of Western World.² Accepting the call of Christ to evangelize all people groups, including young adults and youth, pushes the church (globally and locally) to assess how it is doing and, if necessary, what corrective steps it needs to address for greater effectiveness. Although the church easily understands its responsibility to reach young adults and youth, often an effective ministry to do so appears to be deficient, lacking, or thwarted by existing structures and beliefs systems.

Jon Paulien, giving his presidential address before the Adventist Society for Religious Study on November of 2004 in San Antonio, related his concern about the church's struggle in the postmodern society. He commented: “The Seventh-day

¹ Gary L. McIntosh, One Church, Four Generations: Understanding and Reaching All Ages in Your Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2002), 21.

² For the purpose of this project, the North American culture is primarily the focus of research.
Adventist Church, with its rigid structures and traditional approach to outreach, will certainly not be able to continue with business as usual in a post-modern world.\(^1\)

It will not be the purpose of this chapter (or this project as a whole) to discuss the validity or relevance of the doctrinal truths the Adventist Church has believed, published, or heralded. Yet, there is no doubt that the postmodern culture is challenging the foundation of those doctrinal positions, how they were derived, and what relevance they have today. Although this paper will not attempt to address those important issues, it will suggest that directly facing the challenges and openly discussing the doctrinal issues\(^2\) is a vitally important task that needs to be addressed now. Many young adults and youth may still be waiting to understand the “why” of the faith and its relevance for their lives.\(^3\) It is now evident that the formulated answers of the past are not sufficient to answer the questions of the present.

Just how the postmodern matrix may be impacting the young adults, as well as the whole church itself, may be incredibly challenging and complex. Programs and ministries that may have worked well in the last fifty years seem almost completely ineffective today.\(^4\) The continuing failure to connect with significant numbers of young adults with any meaningful ministry program or theological material seems to be an everyday reality. Personal spiritual growth may be taking place outside the influence of

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\(^4\) Mark Miller, *Experiential Storytelling: (Re)Discovering Narrative to Communicate God’s Message* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 5-6.
the church and its doctrinal structure. The problem of disenfranchised young adults and youth from active participation in the church may be of epidemic proportions across North America, Western Europe, and Australia.

Like so many other pastors, I have been constantly reaching out for something—anything new that would once again work effectively. I know that change is constant, and the church must change or suffer irrelevance. I must almost reluctantly agree with Leonard Sweet when he observes, “What is fresh and innovative today is stale and obsolete tomorrow. If you’re doing church the same way you were a year ago, you’re falling behind and failing.”

Serious questions concerning the church as to whether it is losing ground in the Western cultural world seem to grow louder each year. Is the world church slowly slipping away and/or fading into insignificance? It is a frightening thought that the best years for the Adventist Church in North America may be behind us. It is very possible that the old ways of doing church will not be adequate for ministry in the new millennium as Lyle Schaller suggests in his book, Tattered Trust. And perhaps the hardest pill to swallow is the apparent continued rejection of our own young adults and youth to find their active place within the religious culture of the Adventist Church. Roger Dudley

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1 Tim Celek and Dieter Zander, Inside the Soul of the New Generation (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 87-93.


3 Leonard Sweet, Aquachurch: Essential Leadership Arts for Piloting Your Church in Today’s Fluid Culture (Loveland, CO: Group, 1999), 16.


warns, "The disengagement of such a large percentage of well-educated young adults who should now be assuming leadership in the church threatens the future viability of our movement."

Four Generations in One Church

The Wausau Church is probably not unlike many other Seventh-day Adventist churches spread across the Midwest. Wausau is characterized by its population of sixty thousand or so; its semi-rural setting; and its middle/working-class values. The Wausau Church is probably not unlike many other Christian churches in North America. It is most likely experiencing somewhat of a shift within the congregation from what R. Wuthnow calls "dwellers" to "seekers," although that shifting may have been almost unnoticeable in the beginning months (summer of 2003) of this project.

Wuthnow identifies dwellers as those characterized by stability and personal security within their own social structures. Dwellers tend to live in their own familiar world of a particular local or regional social/religious tradition. It is not that they remain untouched by social change; it is that they are relatively well-anchored amid the rapid flux. Perhaps dwellers, when sensing the threat of change in the shifting culture, may actually dig deeper into their "dwellings."

Seekers, however, push out to explore new vistas and will frequently navigate among alternative belief systems. For seekers, the sacred is constantly fluid and portable. The development of spirituality for a seeker is likened unto a process or coming to a state

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1 Roger Dudley, Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories for a 10-Year Study (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 36.

of becoming. And if one listens closely, the language *seekers* employ fits their experience in a life of fluidity.¹

Wuthnow sees the constant shifting or crossing over from the established social culture of the *dwellers* to that of the fluidity and portability of the *seekers*. For example, the historic lines that once separated Protestant denominations and various faith-based groups are now increasingly blurred and are less important. Wuthnow shows that people are restructuring their spiritual lives, realigning their institutional loyalties, and reordering their commitments. Leadership within the local church (whether it is recognized or not) is now faced with the reality of this shift² and the inevitable invasion of religious pluralism within the *seekers* who attend the local church.³

It is clear that within the attending membership⁴ at Wausau there are the four identifiable major generational groupings. Each of the four groups, however, is not equally represented in numbers. Also present within the Wausau Church is the definite shifting from *dwellers* to *seekers* that Wuthnow suggests. Yet, possibly because of its location in rural Wisconsin, the obvious invasion of religious pluralism is not as widespread or visible as one might find elsewhere. Yet there are a few within the congregation who have or are frequently attending other local Evangelical churches while still maintaining their book membership at Wausau. This cross-over to other churches seems to not present any conflict problems in these individuals’ thinking.


² Bruinsma, 16.

³ Carroll and Clark, 39-40.

⁴ As defined in chapter 2.
The *dwellers* and *seekers* shifting process might be directly tied to the four generational groupings within any church—Wausau included. The older members tend to be *dwellers*. Yet, that is a generalization that cannot be absolutely tied to just the seniors. *Dwellers* might actually be found in the other generational groups represented within the church itself. The same cross-generational groupings could be observed for *seekers* as well. It is possible that *seekers* could be found in the Builder group\(^1\) of individuals born before 1946. Far more seekers could be found in the Boomers group than would be found in the Builders group.

Although many important subgroups could be carved out of each of the four main generational groups, for the purposes of this project, just four main generational groups (plus the children under 17 years of age) will be used. Each of the four groups brings unique characteristics, interests, and “personality” to their generational group. A brief description and overview of issues of each group will follow.

**Builders**

The term *Builders* will be used to identify those born prior to 1946. This group consists of approximately 19 percent of the U.S. population or about 54 million people. The Builders generation has also been called the *G.I. Generation*,\(^2\) *Strivers, Survivors*, and *Seniors*.\(^3\) This group could easily be sub-divided into several groups. But for my purpose here the sociological significance is not great enough to require further division.

The Builders are the *get-it-done* generation. They tend to be loyal, faithful and

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1 Builders and Boomers.

2 Those who enlisted in the US military during World War II.

3 Schaller, 27-29.
committed. Today most are in their sixties or older, and some even remember the Depression of 1929, World War II, and days long before there was television. The late Bob Hope, John Kennedy, George H. Bush, and Billy Graham are all examples of the Builder generation.

It is here in the Builders group that most dwellers tend to be. Builders grew up in an era when Protestantism held a cultural dominance or hegemony that evidently no longer exists.

By cultural hegemony we have in mind not just a widely accepted set of beliefs and practices but power – social, economic, political, and, perhaps most important, cultural. This future suggests a web of interlocking connections, be they based upon marriage, ethnicity, friendship, membership in a voluntary organization, or structure of community leadership. Personal as well as institutional networks figure prominently in exercising and maintaining power. In a more subtle sense, power implies the authority to define and enforce values and norms; to shape notions of propriety, taste, preference, and style; and to legitimate a way of life. So-called mainline Protestantism enjoyed an influence that was outwardly visible and that reached deeply into the experience of life space of Americans.

The onslaught of religious pluralism, for those comfortable to the familiar or traditional structure and institutional control developed by their denomination, can be very troubling. Builders may not understand the acceptance of pluralism within the present younger generational culture, and these Builders may find the inclusion of religious pluralism very confusing or heretical. Many Builders may fear the church “they always knew and loved” is slipping away from any resemblance of institutional identity or control. Calls to “bring back the church of their youth” and to return to the “biblical

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1 McIntosh, 16.

2 The 41st President of the United States.

3 Carroll and Clark, 39-40.
authority” that was held dear in the past are both examples of a familiar refrain heard from the Builders. Their observation of change is most likely correct, but the cause of the change and resulting conflict may be framed within their own personal worldview or past cultural systems.

Boomers

The term Boomers will be used to identify those individuals born from 1947 to 1964. The Boomers generation, representing 26.5 percent of the U.S. population, has also been identified by other terms such as Yuppies, the Vietnam Generation, Challengers, the Destructive Generation, and the Me Generation.

These idealists were at the heart of the most violent and furious youth upheaval of the twentieth century. The Boomers moved to self-discovery and expression. San Francisco during 1966 found young people streaming to the Haight-Asbury community to “put flowers in their hair” as a sign of an anti-establishment movement – the Hippies. The television network nightly news frequently featured young people protesting (often turning to riots) in the streets of the major cities against the Vietnam War. “You build it


\[\text{Within the Adventist Builder group, efforts to use statements from the writings of Ellen G. White might be employed in an attempt to reverse the perceived change. See Ellen White, Selected Messages, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing, 1958), 387-391.}\]

\[\text{See Peter Collier and David Horowitz, Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts About the 60s (New York, NY: Free Press Paperbacks/Simon & Schuster, 1996).}\]

\[\text{McIntosh, 71-72.}\]

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up, mother, we gonna tear it down,” was Jacob Brackman’s motto for his Boom generation.¹

The Boomer’s fixation on self has forged an instinct to make plans and judgments according to wholly internalized standards, based in immutable principles of right and wrong. As Boomers entered mid-life, a divide took place between those mostly fortyish modernists and New Agers at one end, and the mostly thirtyish traditionalists and evangelicals at the other. Each side refused to compromise on matters of principle — believing, like anti-abortionist Bill Tickel, that “it’s just easier to have blanket absolutes.” This values clash reflects an important bipolarity between the generation’s first and last waves, whose differences have been widely noted by pollsters and marketers.²

Boomers were the first of the present generational groups to embrace the social, religions, and political pluralism. Peter Berger’s classic description of the move from modernity to postmodernity as a transition “from fate to choice” fits the dawning of this group’s place in the culture. What Boomers perceived from their elders was a take-it-for-granted religious world. But for Boomers that was not sufficient. They eagerly embraced a world with more options whether in a range of various religious traditions or internally within a single tradition.³ Boomers broke free of the Builder’s established institutions, standards, morals, and social systems.

Busters

The term Busters will be used as a term to identify the group of people born in the years from 1965 to 1983. This group makes up approximately 24 percent of the U.S. population. The Busters generation has also been identified with many different terms,

² Ibid., 303-4.
³ Carroll and Clark, 40.
but the most used terms other than Busters are the *Nowhere Generation*, *Post-Boomers* (*Posties*), the *Echo Generation*, *Baby Boomlet*, *Twentysomethings* and *Thirtysomethings*, and the 13th *Generation*. The 13ers name recognizes this generation as the 13th generation since America’s founding fathers. The most popular term, however, has been *Generation X* or simply *Gen X*. For the purpose of clarity within this project the term Busters will be used.

It is this generation that has the distinction of being the most aborted generation in history. Over a million and a half abortions are performed in the US each year. This generation, like none before it in US history, has had to face a latchkey world with divided and often dysfunctional families. It is this generation that was the first to sense that the party is over. Unlike their parents, they were told that as they grow up they would have less, earn less, and do less. This generational group tends to get married later in life (often in their 30s) and purchase a home later. This could be because an

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1 At times in this project, the term *Gen X* or *Generation X* will be used in lieu of the *Buster* term for consistence with the current literature.

2 Strauss and Howe, 121-123.

3 Ibid., 324.


5 Referring to children who come home from school where neither of the parents is home because both are working or possibly because of divorce or single-parent status.

6 Zustiak, 41-56.

7 The lifestyle that Boomers were living provided in part by the Builders.


9 Sometimes referred to as “the postponed generation.” See Celek and Zander, 38-39.
unprecedented number of them are still living at home with their parents.¹

What the Boomers came to accept as religious pluralism, Busters grew up with it deeply embedded in their consciousness. With the rise and institutionalization of greater racial and gender equality, Busters brought that new pluralism and liberation into the world of theology and church. Other world religions (like Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Sufism, Sikhism, an Baha’ism) found a ready and open audience in the US within the Buster group. As the world became “a village” through the advancement in technology and communication, religious pluralism and beliefs crossed over formerly defined religious lines in a strange mix. Christianity often got mixed with non-Christian belief systems.² Busters saw nothing unusual or negative about these mix-and-match religious beliefs.³ Nor did they seem concerned about the virtual impossible intellectual or theological conflicts such mixes created.

Note this intriguing evaluation on the spiritual interests of the Busters from Gary Zustiak:

They are very religious, very interested in spiritual things, but it would be a grave error to interpret that spiritual hunger and interest as “Christian.” The religious interests and practices of Generation X are very syncretistic. A typical Xer will borrow a little bit of ritual from Catholicism, some meditation techniques from Eastern mysticism, some native American practices and wrap them all up in a New Age philosophy and make that his own special brand of “spirituality.”⁴

² Celek and Zander, 91-92.
³ Carroll and Clark, 42-43.
⁴ Zustiak, 158.
Bridgers

The term *Bridgers* will be used to identify those born after 1977.\(^1\) It was estimated that in the year of 2002 this generation would actually reach in size nearly 74.7 million people in the US or 27 percent of the population.\(^2\) If that indeed did happen, it would then be the largest of the four generational groupings.\(^3\)

The Bridgers generation may be known by the name of *Millenniels* or *Mosiacs*. But they also may be referred to as the *9-11 Generation* due to their presence in the cultural matrix when the dramatic attack on the World Trade Center in New York City by terrorists took place on September 11, 2001. But for our purpose here, the name *Bridgers* will be used to describe this generation that was coming of age in the transition from the twentieth to the twenty-first century. Literally, their generation is a bridge into the new millennium.\(^4\)

Of all of the four generational groups, the Bridgers, as well as to a slightly lesser degree the Busters, are a generation that is very technologically astute. They started their lives with cell phones in their hands, laptops in their backpacks, and Walkmans blaring music through their earplug speakers. They tend to be more tolerant of all types of diversity and they are super-fragmented regarding their preferences. They know who Bin

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\(^1\) It should be noted that pre-high school age individuals will not be included in this project, and therefore are not being identified specifically as part of the *Bridger* group.


\(^3\) U.S. Census information in 2003 of these numbers of this age group are not available for reporting within the time period of this project.

\(^4\) McIntosh, 162.
Laden is, how to use the Internet effectively, and cannot wait for the next upgrade to their personal digital assistants (PDAs).¹

Bridgers have yet to be clearly defined since they are still a developing group. There is no doubt, however, that their lives are affected by the pluralistic society around them and the rapid increase in technical knowledge. George Barna’s research of the Bridgers reveals some important perspectives that help bring understanding of this age group.

1. The younger they are, the less likely they are to say they are physically attractive.
2. The younger they are, the less likely they are to claim to be emotionally sensitive.
3. The older they are, the more likely they are to feel stressed out.
4. The older they are, the more likely they are to become politically aware and the more likely they are to have more precise ideological positions on social and political issues.
5. The older they are, the more likely they are to be searching for meaning and purpose in life.²

Barna’s research goes farther when comparing the Bridgers’ attitudes to that of the Busters. Note these differences of generational attitudes. Bridgers tend to:

1. be more upbeat – they are less cynical, less skeptic and less pessimistic;
2. be more interested in developing a meaningful career and doing what must be achieved to facilitate a viable career;
3. view education as an irreplaceable preparation for life, rather than as a means of proving their worthiness and gaining acceptance from parents;
4. consider religion, spirituality and faith to be a positive dimension of life, but neither central nor critical for fulfillment;
5. utilize a mosaic thinking style;

¹ Ibid., 17.

6. exhibit less emotional sensitivity – they take a joke, handle criticism and understand the context of abandonment more readily;
7. feel more vitally connected to other people and to their culture.¹

The Bridgers are the first full American generation to grow up without social mores and taboos about sex.² Even the Boomers and the Busters had some understanding of right and wrong, but the Bridgers do not understand morality as the same context as the previous generations did. Perhaps the church can and should step up and help fill that void.³

And closely aligned with the lack of morality among Bridgers is also their obsession with material things. Materialistic values and material gain consume much of the drives of Bridgers. The availability of thousands of technological gadgets and their rapid upgrades to new and better features helps drive that materialism. But even for a nation with unlimited wealth, eventually that would be forced to stop. It could be that the Bridgers will be the first generation to really experience a lower standard of living than their late Boomer or early Buster parents.⁴

It should be kept in mind that none of these comparisons make any generation right and the others wrong. Nor should the conclusion be drawn that one generation is better than another. These kinds of insights do help enhance understanding of how to relate to each of the four generational groups more appropriately, and do help increase understanding as to how each sees the world. While the dwellers tend to be found in the

¹ Ibid., 23.
² Walt Mueller, Understanding Today's Youth Culture (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1999), 243-246.
⁴ Ibid., 61.
Builder generation, the *seekers* tend to be dominate in the three remaining generational groups. Of course, there are always exceptions.

**How and When the Crisis Surfaces**

Having the presence of at least a few representatives of each of the four major generational groups in one church brings serious challenges and great opportunities. Some may have assumed that conflict within the church between the generations mainly focused on music preferences.¹ Builders (dwellers) tend to love the traditional hymns played on the organ. The Boomers, however, grew up listening to *The Beatles* and *The Stones*. Therefore they may prefer a rock and roll² atmosphere.³ Contemporary Christian music is fine with Boomers, as long as it is loud enough. Busters, and many Bridgers, may prefer a more eclectic form of rock music.

It is the Builders who generally fear the coming of contemporary Christian music into the worship service. Builders may fear that such music is from the devil with its rock-n-roll beat. They may reject any inclusion of pop-band instruments such as drums, electric guitars, electronic keyboards, etc., into the music tapestry of the church service. Although probably not cognizant of it, Builders may be used to the old Western European emphasis of the first and third beats in the music while rejecting the African emphasis on the second and fourth beats as found in rock-n-roll music. One might question if there isn’t an underlying hint of racism in the rejection of such musical rhythms.

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² Such boomer preferences can be seen in their enjoyment of contemporary Christian music that is often found in growing churches. The presence of a rock-type band with electric guitars, electric bass, drums, and electronic keyboard are all acceptable as appropriate instruments for worship.

³ McIntosh, 72.
Cultural Backgrounds

But other issues between the generations surpass just musical preferences. Diverse cultural backgrounds may be the root source of friction, and not just personal or generational preferences. Some may see these cultural preference clashes as battles over the heart and soul of the church itself. Some may believe that the faith is being gravely compromised and the church taken over by known *strangers*.\(^1\) Perhaps, however, the reason for the conflict escapes any attempts at rational discussion of issues between groups. Often heated and at times angry debates take place focused on the expressions of the conflict and not the true reasons for the conflict.

Generational Principles

Bob Whitesel and Kent R. Hunter outline three generational principles that might be helpful in understanding the reasons and the dilemmas that the conflicts between the generations pose.

The first is that “the Builder generation has fear of being forced out by the Boomer and Generation X interests.”\(^2\) This fear could be generated by the sheer numbers of the Boomers and the Busters (Gen X) when they are combined as one united or vocal group. The Boomers and Busters together within the Wausau Church now dwarf the Builders. The sense of losing control over their (the Builders) church may give rise to continual conflict, distrust, and angry resentment. Some Builders may give up the fight

\(^1\) **Strangers**—those who have different behavioral or belief practices that are not accepted as normative by another older generational group.

when they sense they are outnumbered, and move to another area Builder-type church to re-establish themselves.

The second generational principle outlined by Whitesel and Hunter is that "the Boomer generation is expected to wield the same power in the church it has been given in the marketplace." Although Boomers may not be aware of it, their prosperity and security have been an outgrowth of the Builders' work. The implications may be that Boomers have unrealistic expectations of the impact and leadership roles they expect to use within the church. They want and expect to be involved in the decision-making process, and will most likely avoid any church where they sense their advice is not wanted.

The third generational principle is that "Generation X does not want to be a clone of the Boomer generation." GenXers (Busters) are out to forge their own identity and not live under the umbrella of the Boomers. They may even find many of the activities of Boomers distasteful. Therefore, they are interested in institutions that are more open, accepting and tolerant. George Barna predicts that "within the next 10-15 years, there will be a showdown between the numerous, wealthy, cunning Boomers and their reflective, combative successors, the Busters." Perhaps this is already happening within the local church with the arrival of emerging church. Will the church then face another

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1 Ibid., 24.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
5 A new type and style of local church generally made up of Busters and their children. This new type of church emphasizes the experiential side of faith over institutional structural.
era of conflict when the Builders are gone from the leadership scene and the Boomers are facing their own fading influence? Hard to know, but it certainly is possible.

What may be of greater concern is that the generations appear to be worlds apart in what they perceive as acceptable Christian behavior. Various “taboos” that were once clearly understood by the members of the Builder church have failed to connect with the emerging generations. Such shifting is becoming more and more obvious within Adventism in North America, Europe, and Australia.

But today Christian behaviors as practiced or believed by the Busters are far different from those taught and held sacred by the Builders. Builders are shocked at the new “liberal” behaviors that once were thought to be absolutely unacceptable. Today the ground has moved. Dave Tomlinson provides a helpful table (Table 1) in a more up-to-date list of Christian behavior views as practiced by the post-Builder groups.

It is tempting for the older generational groups to be critical of these new shifting morals and behaviors. It is tempting to shame and isolate the Busters who participate in them. George Barna counsels, “The important thing to keep in mind is that all the generational descriptions and prescriptions are useful for one purpose: to help us understand, serve and love each other better.”

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1 Celek and Zander suggest that the Boomers fail to recognize that the “Busters have never wanted to rule the world. They merely want to rule their own individual destinies.” Celek and Zander, 31.


3 Gillespie and Donahue, 73-74.

4 Dave Tomlinson, The Post Evangelical (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 55.

5 Barna, Real Teens: A Contemporary Snapshot of Youth Culture, 25.
Table 1. Tomlinson’s List of Christian Behavioral Views

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Claim</th>
<th>Possible Reality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td>No – not really</td>
<td>Some do in private (especially cigars)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking</td>
<td>Okay</td>
<td>Not usually in bars, except nice ones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theater/Cinema</td>
<td>Okay - yes</td>
<td>Provided it’s wholesome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambling</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>The Stock Exchange is acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Papers</td>
<td>Okay</td>
<td>Especially the New York Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horoscopes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Some do have a sneaky look.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premarital Sex</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Never admit to it in public anyway.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swearing</td>
<td>No – not really</td>
<td>Definitely not in public</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Dave Tomlinson, The Post Evangelical (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 55.

The Loss of Youth and Young Adults

Roger Dudley’s multi-year monumental study\(^1\) on why our Adventist youth are leaving the church (and the 10-year follow-up Valuegenesis Study\(^2\) from the John Hancock Center at La Sierra University) have highlighted the issue of the changing realities within the North American Adventist Church in stark and sobering terms.\(^3\)

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\(^1\) Roger Dudley, Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories for a 10-Year Study.

\(^2\) V. Bailey Gillespie and Michael J. Donahue, Valuegenesis Ten Years Later: A Study of Two Generations.

\(^3\) Dudley, Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories for a 10-Year Study, 35.
Although the research tended to focus initially on junior and senior high school students, the ten-year longitudinal study only reinforced the alarming loss of our youth and young adults. In personal conversations with Dr. Dudley, I understood that this youth and young adult loss, as evaluated in North America, is now also being reflected in many of the other world divisions of the church.

Such losses of youth and young adults have not passed unnoticed at the local church. Frequently church members ask, “Where are all our young people?” Sabbath School youth divisions which once may have been vibrant and full of activity, now stand empty week after week. Some of our Adventist academies\(^1\) (secondary education schools), which once had packed dormitories, now offer each student his or her own room with whole resident hall sections darkened all school year.\(^2\)

**Possible Implications for Wausau Church**

Although it may be difficult to evaluate exactly what is happening in every church, there may be some general insights into what could be transpiring in the local church. As the Builders reach retirement, their participation at the church may be shifting. The loyal congregants (dwellers), who staffed and maintained the various church programs and ministries, are now facing the reality of the onset of geri-atrophy with limited energy and resources. Many of the Builders may now be living with small fixed incomes, various chronic health limitations, and/or may wish to save personal time to enjoy their grandchildren. Yet, as their incomes tend to now be limited, the repair and

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\(^1\) Very few Adventist educational institutions track their graduates for analysis of the outcome of the institution’s program. Tracking the “product” of their educational system is rarely accomplished.

\(^2\) Wisconsin Academy school year 2004-5.
maintenance needs of their local church building may be growing year by year. These retirees may envision the day when they can “rest” from their years of faithful service in the Sabbath School departments or other such ministries, and let the next generation take over those tasks.¹

It may be assumed by the pre-1946 generation that the program the Builders have established and systemized will be carried on by the next generation of leaders exactly as it was developed and handed down to them. Such an assumption is proving to be deeply flawed.² Often the Builders do not understand why the Boomers, as well as the Busters, are not stepping up and carrying on their ministry and programs which for years have been the very core structure of church. Besides, Builders are living longer and may see no reason to turn over leadership to others.

But as the time arrives for the next generation to assume the mantel of leadership, the youth and young adults may be or are already long gone. These young members may be tired of sitting on the sidelines and feeling like second-class members. They may be tired of waiting to be a real part of the church leadership. They are bored with the programs of the Builders and long for something fresh. As a result of the “wait your turn” structure employed by the Builders, slowly the youth and young adults go elsewhere to become involved or they go nowhere at all. By the time the aging congregation awakens to the fact that the youth and young adults are gone, it is often way too late.³

¹ Whitesel and Hunter, 34.
³ Whitesel and Hunter, 34.
In reaction to the loss of their youth, a local church may hunt for a “fitting” youth pastor and charge him or her to bring the youth back to church. The task given to the youth pastor may be almost impossible. He or she may be looked upon as the primary source of drawing the youth or young adults back while still maintaining the traditions and practices that meant so much to the Builder generation. Failure and burnout of the youth pastor may follow. The search for an even more energetic and creative youth pastor takes over the church that it may find yet the one “ideal” person as “the solution” to the problem. “Without a clear and proven plan, many congregations will face one of two destinies. Either they will die a slow and agonizing death, or they will suffer a generational upheaval – comparable to an earthquake where the landmasses separated – resulting in a generational fissure that defies bridge building across the ensuing chasm.”

All across North America, the absence of youth and young adults is visible in most Adventist churches large and small. Dudley challenges the church as a whole to awaken to this frightening possibility of tremendous loss for the foreseeable future. “We cannot predict the future, but the frightening possibility that the present picture represents tomorrow’s reality should involve our leaders and members in some serious consideration. Like Social Security, the impending problem will be easier to address now than if we wait until the system breaks down. The church can have no

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1 A youth pastor that the Builders have a sense of comfort and trust.

2 Whitesel and Hunter, 36.

3 Adventists do tend to send their children away to boarding high schools and colleges. Such may contribute to the problem of young adults connecting positively to the local church after their educational experience is complete.
higher priority than stemming the loss of young adults and winning back those who have left its ranks.\(^1\)

The slow and continued "graying" of the church\(^2\) is visible everywhere.\(^3\) Perhaps in the light of this "graying" process within the local church, it should be thinking of adding a retirement center instead of local elementary school to the church. It may be the more appropriate or realistic option.

We may shudder at the thought, but there is a growing concern that the denomination in North American will be closing more than half of its churches in the next fifteen or so years. Not from lack of effort, but the membership will have simply faded away, transferred elsewhere, or will be then resting in Jesus. Such concerns are not within Adventism alone. In 1986, Richard B. Wilke, then bishop of the Arkansas area of the United Methodist Church, sounded his denomination's alarm to the over 2 million member loss.\(^4\) Other national denominations may also be experiencing continual membership losses as well.

Attempts to address these issues have met only minimal effectiveness.\(^5\) Although a few bright spots of hope may dot the North American division's landscape, by and large the continued loss of youth and young adults goes on unabated. Churches in small rural areas are already giving up on even meeting together for worship as the Builders pass

\(^1\) Dudley, *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church*, 37.


\(^3\) It is recognized that with ethnic Adventist church this "graying of Adventism" may not be so visible as in mostly White churches.


\(^5\) Such as the church-planting program across North America.
away. If this loss of youth trend continues, Dudley’s warning of the loss will indeed seriously effect the church’s long-term relevance and survival.

**Generational Cycles**

Perhaps a partial explanation of the changes in our society being experienced within the local church and elsewhere are due to what William Stauss and Neil Howe call the “Generational Cycle.”¹ It is an accepted fact that life must and does change. But most would probably agree that the more comfortable and predictable that change is—the better. With predictability comes some level stability or personal sense of control.²

Stauss and Howe noticed that starting with the Protestant Reformation and ending with the chaotic 1960s, a recurring pattern of *spiritual awakenings* could be actually charted then followed, predictably, by a recurring *secular crisis*.³ The returning spiritual awakening period followed by the secular crisis period they noted took about twenty years. These cycles of generational spiritual awakenings, followed by a secular crisis, followed by yet another spiritual awakening – secular crisis, can give great insight into what may be transpiring within the current social movements.

As a cycle moves back and forth (or rotates), it pivots around either the spiritual awakening point or the secular crisis point. There is a spiritual awakening point, pivot or era at one end of a twenty-year cycle and then followed by a secular crisis point, pivot or era at the other. Stauss and Howe noted that by tracing the history of the social dynamics

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¹ Strauss and Howe, 69-79.

² Just such a generational cycling can be seen through the Book of Judges as one calamity was followed by a time of peace with a new judge arriving on the scene.

³ Strauss and Howe, 95.
within North American, it was possible to see that following each secular crisis point an outer-directed era or emphasis followed. That outer-directed era highlighted social interaction towards others – projects and programs for the betterment of all mankind. Then, after a spiritual awakening pivot, an inner-directed era came to be. This inner-directed era highlighted the return for one’s own search of the inner self. The two major pivots (spiritual awakenings and secular crises) were always followed by either the inner- or outer-directed social elements in their respected order. In each of the cycles, an outer-directed era followed on the heels of the secular crisis, and an inner-directed era followed the awakening.

Following their research theory, the last secular crisis occurred during the time preceding and then through World War II. Prior to World War II, Americas had experienced a period of excess and over-indulgence (the Roaring 20s). Then as the 1930s dawned The Great Depression settled in that put thousands of Builders out of work, and forced a social coming together in the face of the war threat from Europe and Asia. The crisis era of war-rallying Americans naturally gave birth to the next era of outer-directed emphasis. American influence could be felt around the world as leading the victory in World War II.

Such outer-directed emphases, as Americans experienced following World War II, do not last. The outer-directed era eventually depletes the spiritual and personal social resources, and an inner hunger develops. The last time such a spiritual awakening took place was in the late sixties into the seventies. Instead of continuing to build bigger and

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Ibid., 99.
better institutions, the shift within society placed emphasis on the inner self.¹ It was the era of going to San Francisco and putting flowers in one’s hair. The antiestablishment mood (Hippies) and the so-called generation gap of the period reflected the massive gap in values between the Boomers and their parents.²

If the generational-cycles principle has validity and gives reliable hints about the future, then the present inner-directed era should be running out of steam about now (2003-6). Perhaps the global war on terrorism is part of that secular crisis that will once again pull people together to return to an outer-directed, work-together era. Perhaps the tragic Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2005 or the Hurricane Katrina disaster in New Orleans will trigger the outer-directed era. It is probably way too soon to tell. Perhaps a deeper and greater world conflict or strife is quickly coming upon us. “World Tensions, internal strife and border conflicts will peak between 1995 and 2010. . . . Widespread contamination by a nuclear device will have occurred either by accident or as an act of political/military violence. Epidemics and mass starvation will be common in World 3 (the Third World). Environmental degradation will be substantial.”³

Could it be that in response to such strife, a world-wide vision would foster the possibility of some grand society developing in the next ten to fifteen years? It is possible if the Strauss/Hunter cycle model follows the repetitions of the past.

Yet, as helpful as an understanding of Strauss and Howe’s Generational Cycles might be, it may not be complete or fully conclusive. Perhaps laid right on top of the

¹ Ibid., 299-300.
² Mike Regele, Death of the Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 32.
fading current inner-directed era, at the onslaught of a secular crisis, is something larger and stronger than the implications of twenty-year cycles. Perhaps a global cultural shift is taking place. Perhaps this global cultural shift rudely takes precedence over any twenty-year cycles, a grand shift that Leonard Sweet calls a cultural “tsunami.”

Perhaps there is a combination of *generational cycles* and a cultural paradigm shift taking place at the very same moment. Each may mask the effects of the other. But one (generational cycle) may be overwhelmed by the other as the cultural shift consumes all. It is unavoidable that each element of the cycles or the great cultural shift will have broad implications for the local and denominational church.

Yet the quest for answers goes on beyond simply acknowledging that generational cycles and a great culture shift is here. Questions persist. Why are not renewed efforts, more energy, and money working to make the church better and more effective? National satellite evangelistic programs have been repeatedly tried with mixed or disappointing results. Contemporary worship music has been introduced to some of the local churches which seem to attract the Baby Boomer generation, yet the Busters and Bridgers fail to respond with any encouraging numbers.

Perhaps it is because it is a failure to grasp what may be really transpiring

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1 Leonard Sweet, *Soul Tsunami: Sink or Swim in New Millennium Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 16.


4 See McIntosh, *One Church, Four Generations: Understanding and Reaching All Ages in Your Church*, 96.

5 Ibid., 139, 166.
culturally in the world around us.  

Perhaps it is a failure to recognize the social and technologically dynamic changes or shifts in the secular Western world. Perhaps the modern era or culture is passing and a new, postmodern culture is emerging. Monsignor Romano Guardini (1885-1968) was probably correct when he suggested in the late 1940s that “the modern age is essentially over.” He concluded that the church was on the right track, but riding the wrong train. The cultural era called modernity is passing, and with that change comes a profound impact upon the church’s ministry, doctrinal integrity, organizational structure, and mission from the grass roots to the top Adventist denominational structures in Silver Spring, Maryland.

German theologian Jurgen Moltmann also observes that “the Christian faith is losing its mobilizing power in history. Many abandon Christianity because they can find in it no power of the future.”

Postmodernism

The term postmodern suggests that it is “post” or after the modern era. But that would not be quite accurate. It is difficult to define for it is philosophical, pragmatic,

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5 Rogier Bos, Next-Wave Interview with Stanley J. Grenz (Vancouver, BC: Carey/Regent College, 1999); available from www.next-wave.org/may99/SG.htm.

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and full of many culturally transitioning trends that are not known how they end.\textsuperscript{1} Simply, it is what follows modernity. It would be nice if the tools of modernity could be used to describe postmodernity. But postmodernity does not lend itself to be dissected, defined, or labeled easily.

The post suggests something that grows out of the past but is different from it. The past is never left behind completely but is taken up into the present, even if the present diverges from it or rebels against past traditions. Postmodernity makes us of history, but it neither makes a clean break from the past nor looks for examples from which lessons can be learned. Instead, postmodernity borrows from both the premodern and modern ages, carefully selecting items from the past to create its own lessons.\textsuperscript{2}

In this current cultural context, “post” indicates that modernity itself is now in question. Not so much that modernity is ending, but that it is over-extended.\textsuperscript{3} Western culture certainly will continue to rely on some of the methods and products of modernity in the future. It is the methods of modernity that are often the tools for the present advances in technology and scientific discovery.

How long postmodernity will be dominate in the culture is not knowable. Professor Michael Sugrue, of Princeton University, considers postmodernism to be a "philosophical cul-de-sac.” He seriously doubts whether postmodernism will even be

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\textsuperscript{1} Chad Hall, \textit{All This Postmodern Stuff: What's It Mean, What's It Matter?} (Carey, NC: Baptist State Convention, 2002); available from www.next-wave.org/jan02/matter.htm.

\textsuperscript{2} Chuck Smith Jr., \textit{The End of the World... As We Know It} (Colorado Springs, CO: Water Brook Press, 2001), 46-47.

considered seriously a decade from now.\textsuperscript{1} Yet, the cultural shift that is taking place is a reality of our Western society and, therefore, examining it closely may provide important contemporary clues to more effective ministry methods and concepts.

**Shifting World Views**

*Modernity* is generally understood to be the era that has stretched roughly from the time of the Age of Enlightenment of the sixteenth century (the Age of Reason and Science)\textsuperscript{2} to the 1970s.\textsuperscript{3} Perhaps modernity actually was kick-started by a change in technology which included a breakthrough in shipbuilding that created the caravels\textsuperscript{4} and the creation of the Gutenberg Press (moveable type).\textsuperscript{5} Perhaps it was the new printing press technology that made the Reformation possible.\textsuperscript{6}

Whatever general date or period that may be selected, modernity is understood to be the change in thinking, a liberation in thinking,\textsuperscript{7} that moved *the person to the center* to see the world around him/her in a dispassionate, impersonal way.\textsuperscript{8} This change from the medieval worldview, that focused on a theo-centric universe, opened the door to the incredible advances in understanding of the natural world that did cross all academic

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\textsuperscript{1} Sam Blair, *Why Be Postmodern?* (Newport Beach, CA: The Ooze, 2005); available from www.theooze.com/articles/article.cfm?id=1172.

\textsuperscript{2} Also referenced as the *Enlightenment Project*. See Bruinsma, 16.


\textsuperscript{4} Ocean-worthy vessel that could circumnavigate the globe.

\textsuperscript{5} McNeal, 53.

\textsuperscript{6} Sweet, *Aquachurch*, 63.

\textsuperscript{7} McNeal, *The Present Future*, 54-55.

\textsuperscript{8} Grenz, 4.
discipline lines. The modern worldview touched and affected philosophy, theology, sociology, as well as the sciences of physics, mathematics, biology, and chemistry. Use of the "scientific method" of arriving at knowledge (truth) helped provide a rigorous foundation for systematic theology and often was felt to validate such things as the "proof-text" method of arriving at doctrinal understanding.

The transition of cultural periods is difficult to pinpoint, however, and it may take several decades or longer to understand that such a period has arrived, transitioned or even departed. And making the process of understanding the transitions more difficult is that cultural periods tend to overlap or run concurrently with one another during those transitions. Therefore, it is possible that a few individuals or people groups may actually still be living in the medieval cultural period today in the twenty-first century. Consider the issues and struggles of the Amish community in their desire to cling to the cultural and social dynamics of the nineteenth century while living in the twenty-first century.

But for the sake of this discussion, it will be assumed that many in our Western culture understand or perceive their worldview through the eyes of modernity while perhaps their next-door neighbors are living in postmodernity. Each may not recognize that the other has a really differing worldview, but sense they just do not agree or see things the same way. It may be here, at the crossroads of this transition of worldviews, that the church is trying to remain relevant. It may be here that the church is once again in an awkward struggle in trying to maintain its identity and mission.

Modernity

To understand the effect of postmodernism upon our culture, the contrast with modernity needs to be drawn. As the contrast is understood, the awkward struggle the
church is enduring may be clarified and thoughtful solutions may be available.

Although many factors could be cited as participating in the development of modernity, perhaps a logical and familiar place to start would be with Rene Descartes. Descartes laid the philosophical foundation for modernity with his focus on doubt. This led him to conclude that the existence of the thinking self is the first truth that doubt cannot deny. This underlying conclusion was a formulating principle taken from Augustine’s dictum *Cogito ergo sum* (roughly translated as, “I think, therefore I am”).¹

Therefore, Descartes defined human nature as a thinking substance and the human person as an autonomous rational subject. Later, Sir Isaac Newton, as well as Francis Bacon, continued to create the scientific framework for modernity initiated by Descartes. Newton identified the physical world like a machine with laws and regularity which could be understood, trusted, and used by the human mind.²

Along with reason, science took on an important role – a role that assumed that science was capable of revealing the whole of truth within the universe. Therefore, with the rise of and importance of the method of scientific discovery, inherent humanism became more prominent.³ “Aristotelian materialism gained ascendancy over Plato’s metaphysics.”⁴

Modernity has as its basis that knowledge is certain, objective and good. That knowledge is accessible to the human mind. It assumes that knowledge is not only

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² Ibid., 2-3.

³ Smith, 18-19.

⁴ McNeal, 53
certain and rational, but also objective – separated from human intuition and emotion. Such leads the modernist to conclude that his knowledge is founded on objective facts, and he/she approaches those facts in a dispassionate manner.\(^1\) It is the stand-from-afar observer who is simply recording what is visible and verifiable. The modern scientist, for example, considers that the discovery of knowledge is always good since it simply is the understanding of the natural facts around him.

This powerful and successful approach to nature and culture has come to dominate the modern university and our social, economic, moral, and cognitive structures. Human reason, as exemplified in the deductive thought of mathematics and physics, would come to replace the superstitious worldviews or religion and other forms of irrationality. Reason, science, technology, and bureaucratic management would improve our knowledge, wealth, and well-being through the rational control of nature and society.\(^2\)

The twentieth century gave rise to an even fuller development of the modernity characteristic. Through stunning advances in technology, the modernist sought to bring even greater rational organization and control to life in order to improve the human existence. It was believed that the use of modern science methodology would be the solution to the problems facing the world.

Chuck Smith observes, “Whereas the premodern challenge was to reconcile facts to faith, the modern challenge was to reconcile faith to the facts. If there was any serious


conflict, faith was the loser." It was this modern (Enlightenment) thinking that sought to replace faith in God with human reason.

Brian McLaren, in his book *A New Kind of Christian*, gives a clarifying list of the elements of modernity that have been part of the Western world for over 500 years. This list provides a quick overview of what made up modernity as it fully developed in the twentieth century.

1. Modernity was an era of conquest and control (Columbus to Western culture)
2. It was the age of the machine.
3. It was the age of analysis.
4. It was the age of secular science.
5. It was an age aspiring to absolute objectivity.
6. It was a critical age.
7. It was the age of modern nation-state and organization.
8. It was the age of individualism.
9. It was the age of Protestantism and institutional religion.
10. It was the age of consumerism.

Such a list appears to the modern cultural student as proper and unchallengeable. Yet, postmodernism represents a complete rejection of modernity foundational assumptions and of how the process of these elements (listed above) was achieved. It is

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1 Smith, 18.


the total abandonment of modernity's love affair with the grand narrative that answers all
questions in a unified worldview. "Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the
Enlightenment Project was beginning to run out of steam, as Friedrich Nietschze and
Sigmund Freud came on the scene. New philosophical approaches that focused on
language and the interpretations of text began to blossom. They began to deliver a
message of relativism, uncertainty, and even pessimism. The Holocaust, if anything,
made it impossible for life to continue as before."  

As a noted theologian and postmodern observer, Leonard Sweet's list of
"coinciding opposites" highlights the difference between what McLaren listed of
modernity and Sweet's list comparing both modernity and postmodernity.

People are moving on a continuum, and I speak here of a macramé
of complementary, not conflicting or contradictory energies, from
systematic to narrative, from conceptual to perceptual, from mechanistic
to organic, from monolithic to biolithic, from being to becoming, from
existential to transpersonal, from math to image, from nothing-but to as-
if, from product to process, from linear to field, from establishment to
movement, from hierarchy to network, from private to public, from
reductionism to holism, from structure-oriented thinking to process-
oriented thinking, from denominational to ecclesial, from means to ends,
from theory to fiction, from nation to multinational, from eclectic to
ecology, from common sense to intuition, from emotion to volition, from
action to character, from divine power to divine presence, from what we
know to how we know, from "how much we have (quantity) to "what we
have" (quality), from win/lose to win/win, from
authoritarian/bureaucratic to cooperative/charismatic, from literalism to
multidimensionalism, from system to story, from religious to spiritual,
from epic to lyric, from "Here I stand" to "This way we walk."  

Many social observers agree that the Western world is in the process of change.

Pinpointing the start of postmodernism is difficult, but most agree that the change was

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1 Bruinsma, 16.

most noticeable beginning in the 1970s, and fully blossoming by the mid-1980s. Postmodernism is an effort to move beyond the structure and restraints imposed by modernity. It is a rejection of the modernity mind-set, yet ironically it was that very mind-set or worldview that gave the foundation for postmodernity.

Deconstruction

Although postmodernism is at heart a spiritual movement, it is an outgrowth of the process known as deconstruction. Deconstruction, developed by French philosopher Jacques Derrida (d. 2004), is the practice of unraveling or taking apart piece by piece the meaning from within the written language to show how what is written is put together out of the assumption that it cannot be true. This is different from modernity as it would look to understand the parts and therefore understand the whole. Deconstruction challenges the understanding of those parts.

Derrida's influential interpretative activity emphasized the inability of language to refer to a fixed, stable meaning. Derrida labeled this inaccessible meaning presence. He pointed out that in presence the meaning of words cannot be limited by the intentions of the speaker or writer. The mere presence of the reader's life experience, beliefs, and mood do change or affect the meaning and interpretation of the words.

Postmodernism abandons the quest for objective reality found in modernity.

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3 McNeal, 53.
Gone is the idea that the world has a center of knowable truths. Postmodernism sees an ever expanding world of differing viewpoints and realities. "Deconstruction is the relentless pursuit of the impossible, which means, of things whose possibility is sustained by their impossibility, of things which, instead of being wiped out by their impossibility, are actually nourished and fed by it."\(^1\)

Postmodernism abandons the belief that rational, dispassionate knowledge will lead to good. More and more of the present generation lacks confidence that humanity will be able to solve the world’s great problems.\(^2\) The optimistic worldview is replaced by a persistent pessimism. One wonders if the events surrounding the scandals of the Clinton Administration, the 9-11 disaster at the Twin Towers in New York, and other events may be influencing the acceptance of a postmodern worldview(s)\(^3\) into the mainstream of American life.

Note these words from the late Stanley J. Grenz, professor of theology and ethics at Carey Theological College and Regent College. "The postmodern mind refuses to limit truth to its rational dimension, and thus dethrones the human intellect as the arbiter of truth. There are other valid paths to knowledge besides reason, say the postmoderns, including the emotions and the intuition."\(^4\)

Grenz drives the point home, acknowledging that in postmodernism there are "other valid paths to knowledge besides reason . . . including the emotions and the

\(^{1}\) Ibid., 32.

\(^{2}\) McIntosh, 130-133.

\(^{3}\) Postmodernism is seen as a multitude of worldviews. No single overarching view is acceptable in postmodernity as a result of deconstruction.

\(^{4}\) Grenz, 7.
This elevation of the use of emotions and/or intuition as being of equal validity to rational, dispassionate reason is the knife to the heart of modernism – the scientific method. This elevation of emotions and/or intuition as valid paths of coming to knowledge and understanding truth hits hard the assumptions of leading people to biblical truth through the methods of modernity used almost exclusively by the church.\(^2\) In short, postmodernism sees reality as relative, indeterminate, and participatory. It is what Chuck Smith calls “spongy.”\(^3\)

Postmodernism (sometimes called liquid modernity) has an incredible flexibility in the explanation of meanings. In the contemporary setting, a wide variety of perspectives and applications are seen. What may be interpreted as a definition in one discipline may not be the same in another. Architecture, for example, may reflect one interpretation of meaning of expression while sociology an entirely different understanding of the meaning of the same expression. This illustrates how postmodernism is “not so much a thing, but more as a set of concepts and debates.”\(^4\)

Postmodernism and deconstruction have suffered bad press, but the reality is that the process of deconstruction and its effects are here. The modern era is passing or becoming less significant, new worldviews (postmodernism) are emerging. With that passing the church, which at one time had a favored position in the mainstream culture, is now facing increasing ridicule and isolation. Through the eyes of postmodernity, the

\(^1\) Ibid.

\(^2\) McNeal, 54.

\(^3\) Smith, 75.

\(^4\) Glenn Ward, 6.
church is thought to be archaic in its mission, purpose, and theology. That moment of the church’s favored place and position is now clearly past.¹

What the printing press was to modernity, the computer screen and the Internet are to postmodernism. Today’s media and academia are very visible examples of the influence of postmodernism. Recent movies, such as Matrix and Star Trek versus Star Trek: The New Generation television series, illustrate in very visible ways the change from modernity to postmodernity worldviews.²

**Implications of Postmodernism for the Church**

**Personal Behaviors and Beliefs**

Those who are in pastoral ministry cannot but be affected by increasing influence of postmodernism and the process of deconstruction for it comes through our church doors each week and sits in our pews. It is not only in the young minds of our congregation but, to somewhat lesser degree, the older ones as well. It is presented in split-second images and language every night on television. It is visible in countless appearances through advertising, and through the methods and textbooks of our educational systems. And their ever-increasing influence will challenge the very core of the church’s existence.

Leonard Sweet notes, “Anyone doing ministry during transitions is in the business of deconstruction. To ‘deconstruct’ is to ‘make the familiar strange.’ Jesus’ use of parables did precisely this: They made the familiar strange. Biblical parable and metaphor

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¹ Regele, 202.
² See Grenz, 1-10.
work to shock us into new awareness. They break open our structures of expectation and make us receptive to new and fresh insights."

What once was thought to be the “faith we all believe,” gets a radical shaking from the process of deconstruction when one’s personal faith or belief structure is eroded or challenged by the influence of postmodernism. When individuals enter the church community bringing with them a mixture of Christian truths, non-Christian traditions or myths, as well as their own personal beliefs, conflict and confusion may erupt. Peace may seem restored when individuals simply “agree to disagree” or reply that they believe what they feel is right for themselves, and others are free to believe whatever they feel is right for them.

A world-wide church, which is endeavoring to bring together a structural framework for doctrinal unity, will face unique challenges in such an atmosphere. The impact of postmodernism is most likely to first present itself in the local church where postmodernists rub shoulders with the modern theological culture of the membership. Perhaps, as Sweet suggests, the challenges to the local church may actually assist in its revival of a deeper personal spiritual life of the members. At least, the local congregation may be the first to be challenged to recast its theology in postmodern language and thought.

Impact on Biblical Hermeneutics

It may serve as a warning to pastors, biblical scholars, and church leadership to notice what postmodernism may do to established doctrine structures. Such a process of

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1 Sweet, 150.
deconstruction on biblical hermeneutics\(^1\) can be staggering in its implications for understanding truth.

The very meaning and mission of deconstruction is to show that things—texts, institutions, traditions, societies, beliefs, and practices of whatever size and sort you need—do not have definable meanings and determined missions, that they are always more than any mission would impose, that they exceed the boundaries they currently occupy. What is really going on in things, what is really happening, is always to come. Every time you try to stabilize the meaning of a thing, to fix it in its missionary position, the thing itself, if there is anything at all to it, slips away.\(^2\)

As one might guess, deconstruction has profound implications on biblical hermeneutics. Gone are the tools of modernity where higher criticism and literary analysis\(^3\) were employed to derive from the passage the historically accurate knowledge about the people, events, and religious understandings of the people who produced the ancient texts. The detached observer of modernity is gone and has been replaced by the reader who enters into a dialog with text to gain his or her own biblical truth.\(^4\) To the postmodern, truth is not found in the church, or in the Bible, or in science, but in community and in story.

Doctrinal statements and doctrinal defense structures can almost always be classified as a product of modernity.\(^5\) When deconstruction happens to the modernity-established view of truth based on interpretative exegesis of the text, the background and contextual meaning of the biblical writer becomes unimportant. Set aside is the quest to


\(^2\) Ibid., 31.

\(^3\) Historical Critical Method.

\(^4\) Zustiak, 137.

\(^5\) McNeal, 55.
discover the Bible prophet's intention of any particular passage. The shift of "truth" discovery is then placed on the reader to provide his or her own interpretation. Once the reader senses his or her own interpretation of the text, then it is just as valid as the biblical writer's intent.

Immediately, the universally accepted principles of interpretation\(^1\) are destroyed since they would not be useful tools, but mere obstacles held over from modernity. Biblical interpretation would then rest entirely on the reader whether schooled in exegesis or simply a casual reader with no particular training or religious background. Such an interpretative free-for-all can only lead to the personal dismissal of any doctrinal positions held by any denomination.

Impact on Evangelism

A third area in which postmodernism and deconstruction may have significant impact is in the area of evangelism. The local church, as well as denominations as a whole, will inevitably be affected by the impact of postmodernism on people's individual belief systems and on how the Bible is to be understood as truth. The resulting cultural change may then have a negative impact on how public and personal evangelism is done. If personal beliefs are based on feelings and intuition rather than rational biblical hermeneutics, then the use of a well-reasoned presentation of doctrine may or will fall flat. The programmed series of Bible studies based on the rational (modernity) view of the Bible will most likely not be effective in real "kingdom growth" to the local church.

Postmoderns might perceive a typical evangelistic series where the doctrines of the church are presented in a rational, organized, and methodical delivery as simply another

\(^1\) Hasel, 163.
example of “assembly line” faith. Such they would most likely reject from the start. They also would most likely perceive the churches and their evangelistic methods to be hopelessly out of touch.¹

Therefore, the local church may be forced to adapt or change its approach as to how it arrived at truth (what process it used), how it is to be presented, and how new and fresh the story of God can be shared. Most local churches within a denomination look to the organizational structure to accomplish the establishment or structuring of the theological teaching. Yet, in the postmodern culture, the local church may be called upon to step up and be more fruitful in the sharing of the biblical story.

Just how open the church is to be “receptive to new and fresh insights”² will remain to be seen. For years, pastors and other Christian observers have sensed that things are not going as they should. A flood of books and articles have hit Christian bookstores for the last three decades trying to explain the decline of church growth in North America and what to do about it.³ Such a response is routinely based on modernity assumptions.

Perhaps, when not really understanding that a cultural shift was taking place, authors have endeavored to awaken the church to minister to what they perceived as a secular/materialistic culture. Although there is no doubt to the secular flavor of today’s Western culture, secularism may have been mistaken for what really was the passing of modernity and coming of postmodernism yet in its infancy.

¹ Smith, 90.
² See Ralph Neighbour, The Seven Last Words of the Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973).
³ As a sample of such books, see Hollis L. Green, Why Churches Die: A Guide to Basic Evangelism and Church Growth (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1972).
Perhaps an example of such might be found in Jon Paulien's book, *Present Truth in the Real World*. Before understanding the effects of postmodernism and the cultural shift, Jon Paulien suggested several years ago that the ideal philosophy of life for those interested in reaching secular people for Christ is what he called “radical conservatism.”\(^1\) He wrote: “The radical has to do with how we reach out to secular people; the conservative has to do with how we maintain our faith in the course of that outreach.”\(^2\) Although Paulien’s words may still be excellent counsel, they may not really be as applicable to postmodernism if he means to suggest that to “maintain our faith” means keeping to our doctrinal structure formulated through modernity. If so, such a suggestion may miss the reality of the type of sweeping change that is taking place. Today, Paulien sees the world shifting in a massive cultural shift.\(^3\)

Some already know there is no other option than to move into the culture with all its new worldviews.\(^4\) They believe that the church needs to find its footing and mission in the rapidly changed paradigm. Yet is postmodernism a cunning act of deception of the devil or is it something that the Lord can use to prepare people for His coming?

**The General Challenges Facing the Church**

Before a discussion can take place concerning young adults and youth as the church tries to relate and be relevant in this postmodern culture, a brief overview of the

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2 Ibid., 73.


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church's general awkward struggle in the culture itself should be addressed. Various questions need to be asked as a basis for any discussion concerning the Busters and Bridgers and how to minister to and with them.

Therefore, how can a church's doctrinal belief system based on the foundation or structure of rational modernity survive or, if it does survive, be relevant to the postmodern culture? How can it fulfill its mission and ministry in the postmodern world when it seems to be only equipped with tools of modernity? How will the present church's organizational structure (local, nationally, and worldwide) function or remain relevant when many of the participants have already embraced the values of postmodernity and deconstruction? Can the institutional church hold fast to its lines of identity and demarcation when the culture has blurred all them?

Is it possible that postmodernism will seriously challenge how our doctrinal principles (the 27 beliefs) are currently understood, structured and rationally presented? Are there signs that postmodernism is already challenging the methods/organization of our global mission (locally and world-wide) and our many well-established ministries? Could it be that postmodernism challenges the very heart of our church's organizational structure, financial supports, and communication systems? Postmodernism is here and is likely to be present in our culture for at least the near future. Perhaps the church is

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1 Barna, Real Teens: A Contemporary Snapshot of Youth Culture, 24-5.


3 I recognize the recent inclusion by the denomination of a 28th Statement of Belief, but it came after the closure of the project process.

4 This is not a challenge to the integrity of doctrine arrived from Scripture but how it is formulated and presented. There is a degree of modernity interpretive style to how the doctrines are defended.
journeying down the familiar path of modernity unaware or unable to adapt to the emerging culture that has taken another way.

Howard A. Snyder opens his provocative book, *Radical Renewal: The Problem with Wineskins Today*, with this statement: “It is hard to escape the conclusion that one of the greatest roadblocks to the gospel of Jesus Christ today is the institutional church. Some years ago a student protester held up a sign, ‘Jesus Yes! Christianity No!’ I think he expressed what many feel: The institutional church too often represents something radically different from the Jesus Christ of the Bible.”

The above statement, as shocking or uncomfortable as it may make the church feel, does highlight the sentiment of the protester and his conclusions about the institutional church. His sentiment is not alone. It is not hard to locate other young people who have expressed similar thoughts. It is at least plausible that such a sentiment is part of many who have a postmodern young adult mind-set.

**Options for the Church in the Postmodern Culture**

What are the church’s options in relating to the postmodern culture? What avenues of ministry may be yet open to it?

One option for the church faced with the presence of postmodernism is denial. Some doubt that any society or cultural change has or is actually taking place. They may believe that postmodernism is simply a myth perpetuated by those who need something

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3 Regele, 25.
stew about. Yet, it may be a reality that soon literally scores and scores of churches will be standing monuments\(^1\) of a former era. Such a potential future for the church shocks and disturbs. Simply concluding that it is *just another sign of the nearness of Jesus' return* or that it is *the time of the shaking*\(^2\) may be a self-justifying answer to do nothing and not be an adequate explanation. Could it be that because we do not understand postmodernism, we relegate it to the catch-all pile of more "evidences of the end?" Or a congregation caught up in the mundane day-to-day activities of maintenance might fail to sense anything is different. Cultural change is hard to recognize as it is happening.

Another option on how the church could address the presence of postmodernism is to simply *ignore it*. It could continue its work and minister as if modernity is the only cultural era that matters and the only one that will last until the appearance of the Lord at his second coming. Long-standing church structures, both physical and doctrinal, are well established and may be resistant to any change\(^3\) or reformation. So by ignoring it, perhaps it or they (the postmodernists) would leave the church alone. The problem might be that the young adults schooled in postmodern thought and culture just might leave or be in the process of leaving the church alone. They may already be leaving or stepping outside the influence of Christianity or the church because we are ignoring the postmodern culture of which they are such a part.

A third option the church may employ in reaction to the onslaught of the postmodern culture is fear of *uncontrollable diversity and disunity*. Believers confronted

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\(^1\) Such monuments may be seen in empty churches all over Western Europe.


\(^3\) See Neighbour, *The Seven Last Words of the Church*. 

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with postmodern ideas or philosophy may recoil in horror at any invasion of anything
different from the established structures based on modernity.\(^1\) Out of fear of potential
destructive disunity of the church (local, regional and denominational) leadership may try
to hold in check the forces of postmodernism knocking at its door. Maybe the fear that
the postmodern culture is just another step towards a godless liberalism, and the fear of
loss of our denominational identity, would drive away anything that hints of
postmodernism. Such fear could bring a reactionary stance from the pew. A few on the
far right within the church may fear that all this cultural shifting talk is only more
evidence of a grand conspiracy to bring down the faith with our denominational seminary
and seminary-trained pastors as shadow co-conspirators. The irony is that the most
prominent postmodern tool, the Internet, may be the communication method chosen by
those who fear the cultural transition to combat the change at the grassroots level.

Historically, the church struggled to adapt to the last cultural shift when the
medieval period began to fade at the onslaught of modernity. Scientists who dared
challenge the teachings of the church (such as the movement of the planets around the
sun) were excommunicated. But now, centuries later, the church is extremely comfortable
in the rational robe of modernity. So much so that it probably dismisses the intrusion of
postmodernism as merely a passing fad, or humanist/secularist propaganda.

Evangelicalism, as well as Adventism, shares close ties with modernity.\(^2\)
Adventists believe they are the children of the Reformation,\(^3\) pietism, and revivalism.

\(^1\) Grenz, 163.

\(^2\) Ibid., 161.

\(^3\) Ellen White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association,
1911), 148.
Adventism was born in the modern era. As products of the modern era, Adventists have used the tools of modernity in structuring the rationale of its beliefs, its methods of evangelism throughout the world, and its presentation of the gospel itself. The effectiveness of these methods is apparent by growth of the church in the middle of the twentieth century in North America. Thousands became Seventh-day Adventists through the use of radio and television. The use of the local evangelistic nightly series became the backbone of church growth as pastors and evangelists held meetings and presented a rational, scientific explanation of the fundamental beliefs of the church. Such four to six week evangelistic meetings were then followed by an appeal for baptism to join the church. One might reason that an “invitation to become a Christian has largely become an invitation to convert to the church.”

The church equipped with the tools of modernity requires its adherents to accept the established denominational beliefs it has carefully developed. In modernity, the church presents its structured beliefs as the rational, scientific establishment of the biblical truths. Evangelists are schooled to present rational and well-reasoned understandings of the beliefs of the church in such teachings as the Sabbath, the second coming, the state of the dead, and other such doctrinal truths. The use of the rational method of reason found in modernity forms the basis for understanding and organizing a belief system to the eternal truths of Scripture. The new convert is then asked to rationally understand these principles, accept them as truth, sign the baptismal pledge, be baptized by immersion, and

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3 McNeal, 11.
join the denominational church. Oh, of course, the convert should start some sort of relationship with God. But the postmodern philosophy is knocking at the door of the church. Postmoderns perceive this method of processing into church membership as assembly-line faith and it is frequently rejected. Postmodernism has at its heart spirituality. Not Christianity or the church, but true personal spirituality.

"Many are increasingly weary of doctrinal fine print and establish their own truth, largely, but not exclusively, within the framework of Adventist tradition. They tend to regard Adventism as one option among other options and are not so sure that their traditions are the one and only true church."

A fourth option the church may have when faced with postmodern culture is to fail to address the new world view. When confronted with someone who has a postmodern worldview, the church may throw up its hands in frustration. As the postmodern listens to the well-rehearsed rational presentations of doctrinal truth and then unexplainably concludes – “it’s not truth to them,” the church shakes its head in collective disbelief. The postmodern culture or method of assimilating truth through emotional or intuitive discovery throws the modern/rational church off stride. The modern church does not know how to handle the objection because the use or process of rational modernity is not accepted by the postmodern. Yet, the church is so submerged in modernity and sees only one way to present its truth and to win souls for Christ that it has no idea that any other way it could minister might exist.

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1 Bruinsma, 19.
2 Ibid.
The modern church, faced with what appears to be an insurmountable obstacle, may dismiss the postmodern as foolish, emotional, unreachable, and hopeless. The church may attempt to move on to more “fertile ground.” That fertile ground may be simply where modernity is still valued, but the church may interpret the reception of its presentation as “those with whom the Holy Spirit has been working.” The church will then miss the fact that the postmodern may actually be more ready to be open to a relationship with God than the person with a modern worldview.¹ The clinging to the modernity view may hide the opportunities for evangelism and ministry within the postmodern culture for the church.

This struggle within Adventism between those who have modernity as their worldview and those who have postmodernity as their personal worldview can be clearly contrasted.

[Modern Adventists] are found wherever there are Seventh-day Adventists. They are the traditional Adventists, mostly conservative in their beliefs and in the way they view their church and the surrounding world.

They believe in the grand story (the “metanarrative”) of Adventism as God’s “remnant church,” with its worldwide mission mandate, called forth by God at the appointed time and assured of ultimate success.

Modern Adventists believe in absolutes. They dislike questions that may undermine the certainties of the believers. They defend the historical positions of the church with regard to doctrine, organizational structure, worship, and ethics. They welcome a strong emphasis on eschatology and are staunchly anti-ecumenical. They hold a very “high” view of inspiration, both with regard to the Bible and Ellen G. White. They are strong on policy and on the church manual. They want their church to remain united and believe that this unity is fostered by uniform programs and a solid central system of governance.

But postmodern Adventists are a growing minority, in particular in Western countries: the United States and large parts of Europe and Australia, with small groups in other parts of the world. They tend to be well educated and tend to be in more affluent areas. They do not have the

¹ See Brian McLaren, More Ready Than You Realize.
same interest in the metanarrative of Adventism as their “modern” brothers and sisters.

Their focus is much more regional or local. They are often suspicious of the church’s hierarchy and . . . are simply not interested in the upper layers of the church’s organizational structure. They are weary of ecclesial authority and do not unduly worry about church discipline, policy, or the church manual.

They tend to allow for diversity in doctrine, and want to pick and choose which of the 27 fundamental beliefs of the Church they will embrace. Their religion is much less rational than traditional Adventism. Experience, celebration, praise, and Holy Spirit are the catchwords for the way many of them want to “do” church.

They are open to outside influences, even tend to engage in some cross-border shopping, for they usually view other, in particular evangelical, Christians in a much more positive light than modern Adventists do. The postmodern Adventist will often tend to postpone or have reservations about making a total commitment to the church and its message.

Although at present the modern Adventism is still in the majority (especially in leadership positions) the fertile ground where the church is effective in evangelism is shrinking – particularly in the Western world. Modernity, and its influence, continues to fade and postmodernism expands with more and more acceptance. The language of the postmodern is being heard in the public square. “Scientists” at our nation’s leading universities are introducing the philosophy of postmodernism and deconstruction in the academic disciplines. Evidence of such is the challenges of secularists to the theories of Darwinism. And although not immediately recognized, the results of the philosophy of postmodernism and deconstruction are visible in our public and private schools, secular

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1 Bruinsma, 20.
2 Ibid., 19.
3 Tom Clegg and Warren Bird, Lost in America (Loveland, CO: Group, 2001), 25.
4 From the arts, sciences, media, academia, to name a few
and private colleges, and in the Western churches across almost all denominational lines. “Many of us differentiate between conservative and liberal Adventists. That may, however, turn out not to be the most significant classification. Modern verses postmodern may well be the most challenging division among us.”

Challenge to Our Doctrinal Structure

It has been said many times that “the methods may change, but the message never changes.” That is certainly a respectable belief and with which there might be general agreement. Yet, what is meant by “methods” and what is meant by “message?” Could we mean that changing the order of service (liturgy) in the local church or the use of television over radio for evangelism is a method change? Could we understand the twenty-seven denominational beliefs are the message and therefore no part or inference would ever change? Is that outlook reflective of our development of the later half of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, and not really have anything to do with method or message or the flow of Christian history?

Brian McLaren describes this message and method mixture in his faith community context which clearly articulates the dilemma.

In this case methods would include style of music, order of service, structure of governance, gender of preachers, mode of baptism, requirements for membership, list of taboos, style of preaching, color of carpeting, projection technology and the like. We wanted to change a number of these things (remember when getting guitars and drums in the service was a big deal?) and felt that we had biblical grounds for doing so. But many of our bothers and sisters who were more adverse to change felt that each of the items on our “to be changed” list had been biblically justified with a chapter and verse (except the carpet color, maybe, but

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1 Bruinsma, 21.

then there’s that verse in Revelation . . .). For them, to change from doing it the biblical way (that is, our current, traditional way) was to become less biblical, so it must not be done. To assure them that the few changes we wanted to make were safe—merely cosmetic, tame, and superficial (methodological), not undercutting the foundations of the faith (the message) at all—we would repeat (passionately and often) our line about methods changing but the message not changing (sic).

But McLaren continues as he questions how the church arrived at the method and message dilemma in the face of church history.

My questioning was intensified by my interest in church history. The more I read about the patriarchs and Celts and anchorites and monastics and mendicants and scholastics and Reformers and Anabaptists and Pietists and all the rest, the more I realized that the method-message system that I followed and believed was relatively new. Methodologically, I had to admit that Luther never asked anyone to say “the sinner’s prayer.” Calvin never issued an “altar call” or asked people to “come forward” for salvation. Augustine never invited anyone to accept Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior.” St. Francis didn’t summarize the gospel in terms of “four steps” or “four laws.” Menno Simons didn’t use “the bridge diagram.” Polycarp never asked “the two diagnostic questions,” and Gregory of Nyssa never talked about “the born again experience” or “the Rapture” or “plenary verbal inspiration or inerrancy.” Aquinas never asked how many people “crossed the line” after his preaching, nor did Pascal wonder how many “made a decision for Christ” after reading his Pensees. The apostle Paul himself didn’t even use “the Roman Road” when he preached in Rome or anywhere else!

These relatively new methods that I and my tribe practiced (sinner’s prayer, bridge diagram, four laws, two diagnostic questions) fit the message as I understood it, while the differing methods of earlier times and places differed from mine precisely because their message differed from mine.¹

It is the struggle between changes in methods and in message that may lead the Adventist church to awkwardly try to work by interpreting the changes using the modern worldview. Yet, what is really behind the struggle and the constant fluidity of change is the postmodern diversity of worldview challenge. Could it be that the church will have to

¹ Ibid., 192.
face these foundational issues squarely to remain relevant? Or will it be too much work -
too difficult a task for the church to confront the challenge? Are we already financially
spread too thin to turn to yet another challenge? Are we too far down the modernity track
to retrace our steps and find another way? Will deconstruction continue to run roughshod
over our systematic theology and leave discontent, confusion, anger and apathy in its
exhaust?

How can the church work its way through the doctrinal system or structural attack
from deconstruction? Perhaps a solution may be to address the problem from a new
perspective. Perhaps the solution may be to operate a type of constructionist view of
postmodernism. Such a solution might look like this:

First, the church would need to listen to what postmodern people are asking. They are not asking about how one is justified, or how their sins can be forgiven. They
are not asking which day is the correct day to worship, or how the second coming of
Christ appears in end-time prophecy. They are asking about life - their life. They are
looking for meaning for their lives.

Actually, the church is ready to answer these questions concerning how to have
meaning and fulfilling lives. And the church is also ready to discuss justification and
forgiveness. In this new postmodern world, however, people "long for a story that
provides a point of integration for them in a world awash in complexity." That story or
thematic narrative, which the church has and should provide, can be presented as

1 Ibid., 194-5.
2 Regele, 216.
3 Ibid.
unsurpassable to any other narrative story offered by any other culture, faith community or philosophy. The gospel story cannot be surpassed in its breath, effect, and value to the individual. Postmodernity has aspects that are indeed dangerous to the underpinnings of the core of the biblical message and the reliability of salvation, but it also offers great opportunities.¹

Second, the church must share the gospel—the unsurpassable story—in language that addresses their questions, not the church's.² Church leaders or laity cannot quote scriptural verses to them and assume that they heard and understood them. Simply pointing out that Jesus declared himself to be the Way, the Truth and the Life,³ and then assuming that his declaration is of sufficient authority for validity and belief, may be totally meaningless to the postmodernist.⁴ Quoting isolated passages of Scripture, outside of the narrative story context, will not be helpful to the postmodern mind. This is not an insurmountable obstacle in presenting truth, for in the early church era, narrative story was the background building block for understanding and faith.

In order to be effective in our story telling, the church must speak with authenticity, not authority.⁵ Practiced stories and memorized lines will be seen as hype or spin. When the church speaks sincerely, it will have a broader and open acceptance among the present culture, and it will be heard.

¹ Bruinsma, 20.
² Ibid., 217.
⁴ McLaren, More Ready Than You Realize: Evangelism as Dance in the Postmodern Matrix, 14.
The church's doctrinal structuring may need to be redeveloped and re-presented in a narrative, experiential-type format. It may need to draw the postmodern into the process of discovery and experiencing the story of Scripture in a personal way. *What is the story of the Sabbath and how does it impact me and my need to connect with God?* for example, may be the approach that could be the bridge to the postmodern mind.

In order to make a connection with the postmodern, the church may have to rethink\(^1\) or assess entrenched views. Views such as: (1) the obsession with bomb-proof truths, (2) the culture is the enemy,\(^2\) (3) the church is for us, (4) the gospel is a religion, and (5) the need for administrational gatekeepers—all may actually put a stranglehold around any possible voice to the culture.\(^3\) Such views and practices may run well in the culture of modernity, but will inevitably be crushed in postmodernism.

The Challenge to Our Global Mission

The postmodern challenge to the church's global mission is also troubling. Its quest to constantly add new members to our membership lists and to build more and more churches where the members can meet speaks of our modern worldview obsession. Denominational leadership may eagerly embrace and promote yet another "year of evangelism,"\(^4\) as they chart a continued slowing in baptismal growth, particularly in North America. Or they may have great enthusiasm and celebrate over 1,200 church plants in

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1 Sweet, *Soul Tsunami*, 152.


3 Regele, 202-209.

4 To be understood to mean a year of special emphasis on evangelism as the first pastoral priority.
nine years, yet fail to answer questions about why so many of the church plants fail within just a few years after opening. Great celebration might be done over the addition of one new church in a local conference, while nothing is mentioned concerning the four churches that closed during the same period.

Perhaps for the church to function in the new culture it needs to move from the context of what might be referred to as “solid” church to “liquid” church. “Solid” church can be descriptive of the church as it operates within its structures, institutions, and regular meetings. Modernity is the platform for solid church. Our Adventist organization and ministry structures are clear examples of “solid” church. The layers of organizational structural authority within the church have the clear outline from the business world and modernity.

“Liquid” church is not bound, however, by walls, organizational structures, drafted doctrinal statements, or established institutions. It is a series of interconnected relationships and communications. It is like the worldwide web (Internet) in that it goes everywhere and reaches everyone equally. Liquid church flows out of believers across the dinner table, the ball park, the community service center, and a thousand and more other ways. It needs no administrative structure to function. And why might that be important? Two reasons are given by Pete Ward in his book, Liquid Church.

First, the mutation of solid church into heritage, refuge, and nostalgic communities has seriously decreased its ability to engage in genuine mission in liquid modernity. These mutations degrade the gospel genetic code of the church. This means that what is offered in our churches and more importantly what many people seek has been devalued to a greater extend. Solid church has found ways to adapt to the new environment, but these adaptations have left it with a limited repertoire of communal

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reflexes. By offering refuge to some, solid church fails to find ways to connect to the liquid search of others. By claiming to be community, it often struggles to find ways to be the kingdom of God in the wider society.

Second, liquid church is essential because it takes the present culture seriously and seeks to express the fullness of the Christian gospel within that culture.¹

Instead of the structural system within the local church being the place where members are invited to participate in a voted and structured ministry, liquid church flows out of the active ministry of everyone (official church member or not) who is joined to Christ. As individuals become joined to Christ² and then communicate that experience to others, a network pattern that grows from this faithful communication is then identified as church.³

This move or shift from solid to liquid has profound implications. For the emphasis then shifts also away from the control of the administration (whether denominationally driven, or clergy/church board driven) to the believer.⁴ North America is experiencing a profound paradigm shift that affects every area of our society including the church. Issues of trust, issues of financial support and issues of conflicts in interdependence with denominations are only fueling the paradigm change in the new world of postmodernity.⁵

² Perhaps without ever becoming an official member of any faith group or denomination.
³ Ibid., 39.
⁴ In postmodernity, for example, the mission board of a denomination becomes less and less significant. In the past, the mission board called, selected, financed, supervised, and organized the employees and structures in the mission field. In postmodernity, the mission is self-appointed, self-supporting, self-directed, and may have little or no contact or approval from any denominational mission board.
The Challenge to Our Organizational Systems

The Internet has changed the world and how it conducts business. Some fellow living in Wausau, Wisconsin, operating a tiny business in half of his garage can challenge for a piece of the market that once was the sole realm of a large department store like Nordstrom. How? The Internet. It leveled the playing field.

I was talking to some young people in Kenya, Africa. They were living with no electricity or running water in a remote village on the eastern shoreline of Lake Victoria. During the conversation, one of the young men asked me to send him some information when I returned to the States. I asked him for his address. He said, “Oh, can you e-mail it to me?”

E-mail? The whole world is now connected throughout the diverse cultures and countries via the Internet. “As the Protestant Reformation Church used the book, the Postmodern Reformation Church will use the hypertext of the Net."¹ Today, each person is able to communicate globally. The website has become the new broadcast site. A small church in Wisconsin can potentially have as much influence in some specific area of ministry as the denominational headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. Such a communications change may make some institutions unnecessary or unneeded. The local church can operate more and more independent of the church structure above it.² Resources and materials can be and are acquired from anywhere in the world via the

¹ Sweet, Soul Tsunami, 33.

² The local church might bypass the approved list of worship hour speakers by simply turning their local satellite dish to whatever religious programming they desire. Local laity may then set the boundaries of acceptable doctrinal teaching and acceptable religious programming without the knowledge, control, or consent of the denominational or local conference leadership.
Internet. Therefore the need to work exclusively through the local Adventist Book Center, or any other denominationally owned book center, becomes less important. In the future, local church leaders may look less and less to what is recommended and provided by the denomination, and turn to the quick and easy material available online. Materials from other Christian organizations are already finding their way into the Sabbath Schools, ministry departments, and libraries of local churches via the Internet. There is no indication at this time of that trend reversing.

At the local church level, the need for the traditional nominating committee process of selecting local church officers/leaders may face an uncertain future. The postmodern culture may move the local church leadership election process to a more open, freer participatory inclusiveness, and resource people to develop their own new ministry. As a church lives in a more open leadership structure, a local church’s yearly nominating committee list, for example, may contain the names of only the head elder, the clerk, and the treasurer. The rest of the leadership roles may then be filled by members and even non-members volunteering their talents and services. As a result of the shifting changes in our postmodern culture, a few churches may have already abandoned the nominating committee process altogether.

With this new and constant development of new ministries within the local church, the traditional denominational departmental system is not able to adapt, keep up, or be relevant. If the local church has a *Four-wheeling Ministry for Jesus*, should the conference also have such a leadership organization structure above it? If the local church has a *Single Mothers with Small Children Ministry*, should the local conference have one

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1 A Christian recreational vehicle ministry.
as well? The rapid growth and diversity of ministries within postmodernity, as it plays out within the church, will force the church denominational organizational structure to change to a more flexible, resource-type model.

It is not the purpose of this project to ascertain the importance or relevance of any of these new conference departments. What is important to see is that the postmodern world is bringing about this new way of doing ministry. Laity are experiencing active, personal ministry and initiating ministry development for themselves. They are going on short-term mission trips. They are developing new ministries which operate on their own or are loosely connected to the local church. Local church leadership is shifting to all the people and not just the voted leaders.

The church as a whole needs to awaken to the wonderful opportunity that is opening up to it. In the new plethora of worldviews, ministry opportunities and the work of the church will be needed. But it will function and minister in a far different from that of the culture of modernity. It will look and feel different. It will be more exciting, more personal, and more flexible.²

The Challenge the Church Faces with Its Young Adults and Youth

The challenges that the church faces in its relationship to the Busters and Bridgers have their own unique character. There is little doubt that these two younger generations are transitioning through their own age-appropriate maturation. It would be naïve to

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assume that the levels of maturity and experience of the younger generations were equal or consistent with the two older generational groups.

James W. Fowler, in his class book, *Stages of Faith*, details the six different levels or stages of faith development. The first stage, Intuitive-Projective faith,¹ tends to focus on children ages three to seven. George Barna's research identifies this stage and the early years of the next stage as an extremely important period in the individual's life in regard to making life-long decisions for the faith.² For the purpose of this paper, however, this stage tends to be outside the boundaries of project research study. Several of the other, but not all, stages, however, are helpful for clarification within the project's parameters.

The second of Fowler's stages, the Mythic-Literal faith, is when a person begins to take on the stories, beliefs and observations that symbolize belonging to his/her community. “Beliefs are appropriated with literal understandings, as are moral rules and attitudes.”³ The second stage is usually reflected in the development of those in elementary and junior high school. Yet, the elements of this stage may actually be carried by some into adulthood. Such individuals who express their faith at this mythic-literal level have almost exclusive reliance on narrative as a means of organizing their meanings. The central importance of this level is the *principle of reciprocation* in divine-human

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³ Fowler, 149-150.
relations. Individuals see an “I did something for you, you now do something for me” working relationship.¹

The present study, however, focuses upon those who are high-school age and into their late thirties. Although a few might still see life and faith through the eyes of Stage 2, most involved in the focus of the project study are not at this developmental faith level.

In the third stage, Synthetic-Conventional faith, an individual’s experience of the world now moves beyond their family. New arenas demand their interaction. These new areas now move out from the family to the school, work, peers, media and perhaps religion. It is a time of confusion.² It is a time of conformity, but not necessarily to modernity. Now their faith must function in a new mix of experiences. Their faith is called upon to absorb new or different values. Faith must provide an understandable orientation as the complexity and diversity of the new social arenas are presented. Faith must then provide a basis for identity and personal outlook.³

Stage 3 is typically the world of the adolescent. It is a “conformist” stage in the sense that the expectations and judgments held are often the same expectations and judgment held by significant others (including their peers) in the person’s life. Beliefs and values are deeply felt, but not examined objectively.⁴ Adolescents tend to look at life through “rose colored” glasses even though they are trying to find their own identity. This stage of faith and belief development is often reflective of that breaking away from parental authority, and decisions or values might reflect emotional reasoning rather than

¹ Ibid., 148-149.


³ Fowler, 172.

⁴ Ibid., 173.
rational evaluation.¹ Perhaps that makes this group more open to postmodernity and its values.

But Fowler warns of two concerns for this third stage. He suggests two deficiencies or dangers. “The expectations and evaluations of others can be so compellingly internalized (and sacralized) that later autonomy of judgment and action can be jeopardized; or interpersonal betrayals can give rise either to nihilistic despair about a personal principle of ultimate being or to a compensatory intimacy with God unrelated to mundane relations.”²

The normal track of moving on to the next stage is when the individual faces serious clashes or contradictions between valued authoritative sources. When the practices or policies that once seemed sacred and unbreachable are challenged or broken, the track is open for critical evaluation of how one’s beliefs were established. The process of “leaving home” often triggers a personal re-evaluation of one’s beliefs, background, self and personal values.³

It is a challenge to the church to recognize that such a movement or transition in this Stage of Faith is present within its youth. And it appears that the church has not been able to adequately present or “sell” its long-held values (or standards) to this group of youth as they transition. The youth rejection of some of the behavioral values has been discussed for several decades.⁴ The John Hancock Center for Youth Ministry


² Fowler, 173.

³ Ibid., 173.

⁴ See Dudley, Why Teenagers Reject Religion.
commissioned a book following the original *Valuegenesis* study which directly addressed this issue of how the church can pass along its values to the next generation.\(^1\) Other similar books\(^2\) followed as the church tried to address the shifting acceptance of the Adventist values.

In the Dudley study, four values appeared to be weakening and most likely would not survive as values in the upcoming generation. Those four with the poorest acceptance rate were (1) the prohibition of wearing jewelry, (2) listening to rock music, (3) dancing, and (4) attending the theater (specifically movies). Dudley observes, “It seems most certain that these four standards will not hold in the near future of the church.”\(^3\)

Fowler’s fourth stage, Individuative-Reflective faith, is most visible in the grouping of late adolescents and young adults as they begin to seriously take responsibility for his or her own commitments, beliefs, values and attitudes. The struggle that takes place is when the development of one’s own values begins to separate from that of the group. Unavoidable tensions develop as individuals apply their own rational or critical examination of the beliefs of the group and draw their own conclusions. Self-fulfillment and self-actualization are the primary concern over service to or being for others.\(^4\)

This stage, which most likely includes the young adult years (18+), is marked by a

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\(^3\) Dudley, *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories for a 10-Year Study*, 41.

\(^4\) Fowler, 182.
double development. The self that once drew its identity from the interpersonal circle of significant others, now moves away to development of personal identity not based on others. This stage sees the self developing its own worldview. It is a stage of "demythologizing" and the individual will tend to evaluate information independently. The danger in this stage is the over-confidence in one's own conscious mind to assess "reality" and the perspectives of others into its own worldview. Postmodernity is a welcome platform for such world views as they come out of Stage Four since holding one's own view is in itself its own reality.

**Busters' Unique Challenges to the Church**

The challenge of the Busters is that it is the first generation that believes that truth is relative. In 1987, Allen Bloom opens his book, *The Closing of the American Mind*, with this statement. “There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative. If this belief is put to the test, one can count on the students’ reaction: they will be uncomprehending.”

With the Hebrews of the Old Testament, God was the center of their lives. The tabernacle was constructed right in the center of their encampment. You literally could not miss it in your daily routines. It dominated the plain.

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2 Fowler, 182-3.

Now, many centuries later, that God-center has been lost.\(^1\) With the Age of Enlightenment, God as the center was replaced with humans as the center – a key element of modernity and established earlier in this chapter. As discussed earlier, reason and science held salvation, not God. With the loss of God came the loss of meaning. The individual was no longer unique. In the postmodern world, even cause and effect was destroyed for it was simply a construct of the human mind.

As a result, “morality lost its center because it used to be grounded in the character of God.”\(^2\) When God was taken out of the picture, so was morality. There could then no longer be any moral absolutes. The concept of holiness is all but completely gone from the postmodern culture.\(^3\) The government has taken prayer, the Bible, and morality right out of the national culture. An incredible vacuum of biblical literacy has followed in that path.\(^4\) The Buster generation does not know what the Builders and the Boomers know of God.\(^5\)

This presents an incredible challenge to the church. It can no longer be relied upon that the general population will have a Christian orientation. Trying evangelistically to reach Busters quickly with the biblical truth of Christ may be extremely difficult. A

\(^{1}\) Possibly the basis of *The Death of God* movement.

\(^{2}\) Zustiak, 154.

\(^{3}\) Ibid., 161.


much longer process would be necessary in order for this particular generation to “learn” the story of the Bible of which it knows little.¹

What would it take to reach the Busters for Christ? What could be done to reach this generation which has embraced the world of no moral absolutes and the relativism of all truth? How can a church based on the reality of biblical truths meet the inquiry of the Busters seeking mystical experiences?²

Busters will respond better to a church that is authentic,³ a tell-it-like-it-is church family. Poorly designed or routine worship services, for example, will not hold the attention of the Busters who generally grew up thinking church was boring. They look for a church that has a mission, and is definitely going towards its goal, one that focuses on local issues and who answers their questions.⁴ Churches that can cast the gospel through the vehicle of a narrative story will have greater effectiveness than those that present truth in the rational forms of modernity.⁵ Churches that can emphasize the personal spiritual disciplines of faith, prayer, worship, fasting, and service will have the tools to help the Buster find deeper meaning and an enriched spiritual experience to his or her faith.⁶

Bridgers Unique Challenges to the Church

The Bridgers are influenced by their daily exposure and use of a wide variety of

¹ Gelernter, 29.


³ McLaren, More Ready Than You Realize: Evangelism as Dance in the Postmodern Matrix, 48.

⁴ McIntosh, 142-144.

⁵ Hahn and Verhaagen, 30-31.

⁶ Ibid., 99-113.
technology. Bridgers are on the Internet every day and may spend more time with it than
watching television. It is on the Internet that they find a wealth of information of all sorts
that might include news, events, and personal shopping as well as educational and
business projects. They check out new music and videos. They participate in chat rooms
or express themselves with personal blogs. They maintain existing relationships and make
new “Internet friends.” They buy products more and more frequently online. But what is
of note to the church is that within the last few years, the interest in seeking and having
spiritual or religious experiences has increased among Bridgers 200 percent.\(^1\) Such
seeking is now being done by Bridgers over the Internet, visiting countless varieties of
religious and semi-religious websites.

The debate of how the church will live on the Internet is long and certainly not
over. And it would not be fair to say that the Bridgers are turning from the local church to
cyber-church in droves. Yet there is no doubt that the Bridgers do seek out spiritual
information and religious resources over the Internet. Table 2 a few expected uses of such
searches by Bridgers as researched by Barna and Associates of 374 teens surveyed.\(^2\)

The use of the Internet among Bridgers should signal to the church the possibility
of Internet involvement and connection with that generation. This group tends to be
interested in spiritual matters, although not necessarily Christian matters. David
Gelernter, senior fellow in Jewish Thought at the Shalem Center in Jerusalem, observes:
“College students today are (spiritually speaking) the driest timber I have ever come

\(^1\) Barna, Real Teens: A Contemporary Snapshot of Youth Culture, 35.

\(^2\) Ibid., 37.
across.⁹¹ These Bridgers tend to be very open to spiritual discussion as long as those conversations are open, non-authoritarian nor dogmatic. Yet, three out of four are admittedly still trying to figure out the purpose or meaning to their lives. What is frightening, however, is that 53 percent believe that the purpose of life is for enjoyment and personal fulfillment. The lack of spiritual depth and moral reflection and their own philosophical superficiality support such a perspective.²

Table 2: Barna’s Survey of Teen Internet Usage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teenage Internet Usage for Faith in the Future</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read a short religious reading to motivate, challenge or focus</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit prayer requests to a group that prays for people’s needs</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to religious teaching from online archives</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in a chat room or discussion group regarding faith</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in independent study course on faith matters</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy books or study guides about religion or faith</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy religious music</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in a Bible study online, in real time</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be mentored/coached in spiritual development</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in an online class that meets regularly</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship through real-time video streaming experience</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Gelernter, 29.

² Barna, Real Teens: A Contemporary Snapshot of Youth Culture, 83.
What would it take for the church to reach these Bridgers for Christ? In a world culture so fluid and confusing, what commitments would the church have to take? What is to explain the new interest among youth and young adults in matters of spirituality that has not been seen for decades?¹

Thom Rainer, dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism, and Church Growth at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, studied 576 evangelistic churches in America that seem to be successful in reaching young people. Here is a brief description of what he found as part of the churches’ ministries that were having success.²

The first element that Rainer noticed among the churches he studied was that they demonstrated unconditional love to the Bridger. Many Bridgers come from broken families, fatherless homes, and/or abusive situations. These successful churches assume that millions of Bridgers are starved for love. The offering from these churches of unconditional love drew the Bridgers like a magnet. This element of love transcends all the generations, and is not subject to postmodern influences. It can be practiced as Christ desired and directed³ to his church.⁴

A second element Rainer discovered was that each church had established clear

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² Rainer, 173-4.
³ John 13:34-5.
⁴ John 15:12; 1 Cor 13:13; 1 John 3:16.
boundaries. These churches assumed that the Bridgers had grown weary of the adult world that does not know right from wrong. Bridgers are desperate for clear behavioral boundaries.¹ Many of them have not received any discipline at home, but they responded well to the churches that drew those boundaries in love.²

The third element found in these churches was the element of high expectations. The churches challenged the Bridgers and offered them opportunities to respond. Evidently, churches with high expectations of all their members, as well as Bridgers, are more likely to succeed as a church.³ This element seemed to be crucial in keeping the young Bridgers associated with the church.

And the fourth element outlined by Rainer was that these churches were culturally sensitive.⁴ They made the changes in their ministry that would effectively reach the Bridgers while not compromising biblical truths and essentials. This may be an area where the church can learn from the postmodern cultural issues and effectively work within it. Paul’s expression of becoming all things to all people⁵ may be applicable here.

Possible Solutions to the Postmodern Challenges

Does the current literature suggest leadership practices, ministry methods/tools, and practical solutions to the postmodernity challenges to the church in general, and more
specifically, to Busters and Bridgers? If postmodernism is indeed the new era, what can or should the church do? How can a church based on the structure of modernity survive the challenges of the postmodern philosophy?

If the church follows the pattern it employed the last time it faced such a cultural change, that course could be wrought with intense conflict and turmoil at all levels. Perhaps this time, the church might elect to use a different approach and process a fuller, earlier acceptance of the cultural shift that has once again taken place. Perhaps the church could see postmodernism as an incredible opportunity, and actually benefit the cause of Christ from the change. GenXer, Ken Baugh, comments, “I think postmodernism is the best thing to happen to the church in two thousand years. Modernism didn’t allow for faith at all, and you can never intellectually prove Christianity 100 percent. Postmodernism is a friend of the church because it takes us back to the faith being part of the equation.”

Is the renewed interest in a deeper and more personal spirituality an opportunity for the church? Perhaps it is the greatest moment ever presented in contemporary times. And if our culture is truly turning to a more personal spiritual life, how does the church work in the realities of this new era?

Before possible solutions that stem from the literature are offered, it is important to note this warning comment by Dean Borgman. It is crucial that this perspective be kept in mind as each believer works within the new cultural environment. Borgman warns, “None of us will ever solve all the problems of interpreting faith and culture. There are no

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2 Rabey, 46.
neat answers to these complex issues. But we can arrive at some partial answers by humbly accepting help from those working from different perspectives. Christ is the key to our interpreting culture."

It is the attempt of this portion of the project to offer partial answers. Because of the constant flow or liquid nature of the postmodern culture, the relevance of any of the following suggestions may be only punticular in nature and not applicable over long expanses of time.

Possible General Measures for the Church

If the church is to be relevant in today’s emerging culture, postmodernism needs to be understood and appreciated for what opportunities it may bring to the church. It would mean that the church would have to use the process of discovery to understand how postmodernism is useful and helpful. As indicated previously, postmodernism is not without its problems. In particular the process of deconstruction can be very difficult and troubling for the church.

It would be a challenge for the church, however, to rediscover the revelation of God through the eyes of postmodernism. That would mean that the church’s modernity conclusions would have to be challenged and re-established within the context and narrative of postmodernity.

Perhaps for the church and its ministries to be relevant in the postmodern world, *the first step would be to understand postmodernity*. Perhaps the church (locally and

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globally) should “go to school” and learn about the culture and its effects on its plethora of values, belief systems and “structures.” This could possibly be done by informational/educational-type seminars for in-field pastors hosted by the local conferences, or by local pastor-led workshops for church laity on postmodernism, or many other awareness-type programs and seminars.

Naturally, when any discussion of the changing culture arises, questions come to mind about the impact of such a new culture and what impact it may have upon the historical prophetic understanding of the Adventist Church and its fundamental beliefs. Perhaps a good question about such a rediscovery process of the church would center on the church’s historic place as a “counter-culture” to the world around it. The church would still be a counter-culture for she would be in the world, but not of the world (of which Adventists have a special prophetic sense). The church’s historic distancing from the sins and degradations of the world would still be in place.

But raising the awareness of postmodernism and learning to work within it would most likely be no more of a problem than the church working in the culture of modernity of which it is most familiar and comfortable. It is very possible for the church to be a counter-culture influence, and yet be using the appropriate tools and language of

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1 But primarily where postmodernism is an established cultural development.

2 Perhaps in conferences where week-long camp meetings are still done, general educational sessions could be held to raise awareness in postmodernism and the church.


4 Mark 4:12 (Eph 6:12).


postmodernity. Postmodernity as a thought structure is not evil or wrong — anymore than modernity as a thought structure is evil or wrong.

What may raise some questions is the behaviors that grow out of individual reactions to the acceptance of postmodernity. It may be the practicing behaviors of one’s postmodern faith that may cause those with modernity-based faith to be critical. Shouldn’t it be safe to assume that the church would still be calling people to righteousness in the postmodern culture as it has done for the last 150 years? Yet that calling to righteousness would of necessity be couched in a different language and narrative story.

Some might assume that such a process of encountering and assimilating postmodernity discovery methods would weaken the church’s historical stands in theology and challenge the viability of its fundamental beliefs. And if deconstruction were allowed to run uncontrolled over truth, such fears would be justified. As a consequence, some may fear that postmodernity would be a tearing down of our long-standing pillars of truth.

Frustration over the lack of morality in society as a whole and particularly among the youth and young adult culture may inspire some to be judgmental about such postmodern spiritual quests or behaviors. Some within the church may try to apply modernity-reasoned solutions to the perceived moral lapses.¹ The application of such modernity-based solutions would most likely be totally ineffective. Yet, postmodern-based solutions may be most effective and bring about wonderful results.

It must be remembered that the early Christian church was not born with the backdrop of modernity, nor will the passing through one cultural era to another crush it-if

¹ Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler, Right from Wrong (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1994), 238.
the past transitional shifts are of any indication. Just as the historic church eventually learned to use modernity to its advantage, so the successful church of today will learn to function within postmodernism for the advancement of its mission. The key might be how that transition from modernity to the postmodern culture is accomplished. The church most likely cannot make the shift or go weather (survive) the inevitable process “through straightforward development, but rather through inspired and imaginative leaps.”

Most likely the church will continue to use the methods of modernity alongside the discovery and implementation of postmodernity. The use of modernity and its rational approach to thought and truth may also be employed to assist in the process and understanding of truth in postmodernity.

A possible second step for the church to be relevant in the postmodern culture is the rediscovery of the authenticity of faith. Modernity, and the use of the detached scientific and rational discovery of truth, may have diminished the personal participation of the believer in living an authentic faith in Christ. McNeal suggests, “Church activity is a poor substitute for genuine spiritual vitality.” The cry to “feel my faith” may have been almost totally abandoned as the church worked to defend its doctrinal truths with a rational defense. Northern European culture may have influenced the way the modern church conducted its work with a stoic, formal, and emotionless precision.

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1 Dave Tomlinson, *The Post Evangelical* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 92.

2 McNeal, 7.


4 Such rational defenses were evident as early as the reformers’ responses to the Council of Trent. See Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, trans. Fred Kramer, 2 vols. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing, 1978).
The emerging church in the twenty-first century will be challenged to move beyond the limits of rational doctrinal truth or rational faith to discover passionate spirituality built on truth. It is one of the great challenges facing the church today. The use of praise choruses in growing churches can be seen as an expression of this longing for more experiential spirituality. Such a desire for deeper spirituality should be familiar to the church. Jesus called the church to make disciples, followers, who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness. “At the core, GenXers’ hunger and thirst for satisfying relationship with God and others. This is nothing new, and spiritual mentors can help them discover and experience true faith, hope, and love in a new way. We call it narrative discipling.”

Various churches have been experimenting in increasing their ministries to help satisfy that hunger of people to feel their faith and to an authentic relationship with the living God. For some, that has meant worshipping in a very different manner and experiencing God in a more personal way.

Dan Kimball’s church (Santa Cruz Bible Church in Santa Cruz, California) is just such a church that is endeavoring to minister to the emerging postmodern culture. At any given worship service, one might find a multitude of sensory activities going on all at the

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1 McNeal, 55.
2 Mead, 32-42.
4 Matt 28:19.
5 Matt 5:6.
6 Hahn and Verhaagen, 21.
same time. While the service is in progress, video screens might be providing various visual artistic presentations or photos building on the day’s worship themes. In another corner of the worship room, tables with various art supplies are laid out for worship participants to immediately create their own worship expression on paper (or through some other art media) and then display them for all to see. In another section of the worship room, prayer process activities are going on so that worshippers who want to pray immediately have a place to go and do so. In ministering in the multi-sensory world of the postmodern, Kimball has capitalized on many different forms of worship expression.¹

And where do these new approaches have their roots? Kimball and others are actively looking back, way back, into the New Testament church to find hints and ideas for what might be useful or applicable for today’s postmodern culture. Kimball has been a leader, however, in this search of the past,² and he has led in the planting of another sister church, called, Vintage Faith Church, that capitalizes on what they perceived to be just such early church methodologies and practices.

Robert Webber, in his book Ancient-Future: Rethinking Evangelism for a Postmodern World, also suggests that the church look to the early church’s relationship to the Roman world culture of the apostles to rediscover how to negotiate meaningful church practice in the postmodern world. In his book, Webber carefully presents the many similarities the early church encountered during the influence of the Roman culture. Webber notes that the dominance of the Roman cultural world at the time of the New Testament church appears to be very similar to the many issues the postmodern world

presents to the church.\textsuperscript{1} Such similarities as a non-Christian culture majority and sharing of Christian truths delivered in a narrative form might open new understandings for the twenty-first century church.\textsuperscript{2}

Much has been written concerning the changes to the local church and the worship experience. A complete or at least comprehensive review of that literature is not within the scope of this project. Yet it is recognized that having a dynamic experiential worship service is an incredibly vital element for the church in the postmodern world.

Over the last two decades, many Protestant churches have moved to a contemporary Christian music format with twenty to forty minutes or longer of congregational singing of praise-type choruses. Usually those praise choruses are presented with a small band consisting of electronic keyboard, lead and bass guitars, drums and a few vocalists. Some of the larger churches\textsuperscript{3} have big bands which might include brass and woodwind instruments. What frequently develops is that these contemporary Christian churches do draw the Boomers for a while, but they seem to fail to reach or attract the Busters and Bridgers in any significant numbers. Although many factors may attribute to this, the contemporary church may still be using the forms of modernity to meet the ministry needs of a postmodern seeker.

It probably should be noted that the contemporary music (Christian rock, if you will) may not be a key element in reaching the postmodern mind, nor those born after 1964. Churches that are programming their worship ministry around the increased use of

\textsuperscript{2} Kimball, \textit{The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations}, 43-44.

\textsuperscript{1} Robert Webber, \textit{Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelism for a Postmodern World} (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1999), 25-38.

\textsuperscript{3} Rabey, 109-110.

\textsuperscript{3} For example, Saddleback Community Church in Orange County, California.
contemporary Christian music may find that in spite of all their well-meaning efforts, connecting significantly with Busters and Bridgers may not happen.

According to Roberts and Marshall, in their book, *Reclaiming God's Original Intent for the Church*, a hallmark of the early church and God’s original intent was authenticity, that is, to be an authentic believer/witness for Jesus Christ and the gospel of his kingdom. Roberts and Marshall suggest it was God’s intent to call the church to do more than just add numbers, but to make authentic disciples — not just more volunteers. I believes it is the postmodern’s quest for experiential authenticity that could make the difference whether a church is effective or not. If the local church cannot provide an experiential and authentic worship and ministry, it will most certainly fade into insignificance in the postmodern world.

Therefore, authentic experiential faith and the full discipleship process goes beyond just a dynamic or contemporary-looking worship service. It also calls the individual to follow Christ into the ministry of reconciliation of the world to himself. It would mean that the believer takes the experience of his or her encounter with God and moves out of the worship center to live a Christ-like life in the real world. It is caring for the needs of the world. Authentic spirituality is more than worship, it moves the believer to take the authenticity of being with Jesus and care for those in need around them. What

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3 2 Cor 5:19-21.

the church “must do is two things: create a culture informed by missiology and create venues where people can practice being missionaries.”

Jim Wallis, preacher, activist and author of *Faith Works*, makes this appeal. “I’m appealing to the growing moral energy in the country for service, both individual and in families. And I’m especially hoping to engage a whole generation of young people, who are searching for meaning and connection.”

A third step for the local church as it makes the decision to be authentic might be the determination to *be more involved with the community* and its needs. Sadly, Adventist churches tend to have little or no contact with the local community around them. This puts not only a significant drag on the prospects for church growth, but also can foster misunderstandings of Adventism within other community faith-based groups. But Adventist congregations that do put an emphasis on community involvement (usually in non-traditional ways) do experience greater growth. The local church would need to work vigorously and consistently in seeking to push out from a church-building-centered ministry only to a more community-involved ministry if it is to be viable in the postmodern culture.

It will be a constant challenge to the church to continue being real and authentic in all of its in-church programs, member ministries, theology, worship expressions and service outreach ministries. Any suggestion of practiced, contrived or pre-packaged religious ministries will be immediately seen as fake and be outright rejected. The

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1 McNeal, 61.


3 Sahlin, 20, 74.
postmodern is acutely aware from the constant barrage day and night of commercial advertisements that a well-deserved skepticism is part and parcel of the Buster/Bridger world. The new growth in entertainment of "reality" television programming is evidence of the rejection of postmoderns to the "pretend" world of their parents. The church must be seen as real, authentic, and in touch with the living Christ to maintain credibility in the postmodern world.

A fourth step the church may wish to take in order to survive the cultural upheaval is in its ministry programming for small children. Perhaps Jesus words, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matt 19:14), may have more meaning than just welcoming the children to church. Jesus' words may imply a far deeper significance and importance to be placed on the ministry to this important group. It would not be difficult to see the importance of passing along spiritual values to our children from the pages of Scripture.¹ And Adventists have historically put great emphasis on their children through providing children's divisions in Sabbath School, K-12, and beyond Adventist educational systems,² Pathfinder and youth organizations, and many other such vehicles to minister to the needs of children.

Yet, the high dropout rate of Adventist young adults and youth, unheard of thirty-five years ago, is very troubling.³ Roger Dudley's challenge for the church to turn to the

¹ Exod 12:26, 37; Deut 4:9-10; 6:1-7; 31:12-13; Ps 78:4-6; Prov 22:6.


needs of its youth and address the crisis cannot be ignored. Therefore, the local church
may need to address the issues squarely, and see from the earliest points of ministry in the
lives of children what it is doing and how it is working in effectiveness.

George Barna and the Barna Research Group studied the relationship between the
age of a person when they accepted Christ and compared it with their longevity to remain
an active, church-going Christian for the rest of their life. Usually Adventists have seen
that the “age of accountability” is around the age of twelve. Baptismal classes are aimed
particularly at that age group. But here is what Barna’s research uncovered concerning
the development of spiritual formation and the age of the child.

Research regarding all facets of moral and spiritual development –
whether related to worldview, beliefs or behavior – shows that such
development starts as early as age two. The process then progresses
rather quickly. Social scientists have known for years that the moral
foundations of children are generally determined by the time the
individual reaches age nine. Our research confirms a parallel outcome in
the spiritual dimensions. By the age of nine, most children have their
spiritual moorings in place.

The implication of these findings is clear: Anyone who wishes to have
significant influence on the development of a person’s moral and spiritual
foundations had better exert that influence while the person is still open-
minded and impressionable – in other words, while the person is still
young. By waiting until a person is in his or her late adolescent or
teenage years, the nature of influential attempts must be significantly
different, because the spiritual foundation has already been formed and
integrated into the person’s life. At that stage, spiritual influence requires
a more complex process to dislodge what already exists prior to replacing
it with a divergent perspective. Research data and person experience
informs us that it is far easier to have influence before the foundations are
firm. The older a person gets, the more difficult it is for him or her to
replace existing moral and spiritual pillars.

Our efforts to teach and nurture children are an investment in the
future – theirs and ours. Children who are exposed to and embrace godly
lives enjoy the lifelong benefit of God’s blessings and significant
opportunities for influential service. Adults who invest in those children
will also reap a rich dividend as God’s kingdom prospers through the

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efforts of those young people when they apply what they have learned for decades to come.¹

Before leaving Barna’s research, one more point needs to be noted. It hits the heart of the need of the church to reach its children. Barna makes this important point after observing that most churches pour the vast majority of their financial and personal resources into reaching adults.

Most churches and faith communities pour the bulk of their resources into trying to affect the lives of adults and are often disappointed to find the return on investment minimal at best.

The reason for the low yield is simple. First, the fundamental thought patterns, beliefs and behavioral patterns of adults were formed many years ago and are generally too entrenched to change without a radical commitment to personal transformation. Such a commitment comes at great cost and demands substantial focus. Most adults are simply not willing to go that route.

Second, because most adults received “ministry leftovers” (i.e., limited funding, minimal instructional resources and teaching that was ill-focused) when they were young, they became exactly what we made them: well-intentioned, inadequately nurtured, minimally equipped secular people who dabble in religious thought and activity. Nearly half of the adults who attended church regularly as children and now bring their own offspring to a church do not even know Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior, even after more than a quarter of a century of consistent church exposure and involvement!²

The implications from Barna’s research are absolutely profound. The perceptive leadership of the local church should turn its attention to the relevance and impact of the children’s ministries from Cradle Roll through the young adult departments. But if the research is correct, then particular emphasis needs to be placed on the younger divisions of kindergarten and primary divisions of the Sabbath School and various other ministry programs for that age group.

¹ Barna, Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions, 47-8.
² Ibid., 48.
A fifth step the local church might wish to take is to re-organize the leadership structures it uses within the local church. As modernity’s influence is fading, the long-accepted organizational structures built on business models from modernity are also fading.\(^1\) As previously addressed in this chapter, the process of the nominating committee, the selection of officers, and the carefully guarding of who may lead various ministries will most likely continue to fade as well.

There is an inevitable yet imperative shifting of leadership from a clergy-driven model to a laity-driven ministry model.\(^2\) The church must (and will if it is to remain relevant and viable in the new postmodern era) seek new structures for its work and ministry.\(^3\) Committees will need to be of shorter term, be far more flexible, and be more specifically task-oriented.

A new ministry development model\(^4\) will need to be developed that would allow individuals to experiment and create their own ministries within the local church without the long and often ministry-killing effect of board oversight. Ministry will need to move outside the four walls of the church into the marketplace, the workplace, the school and other community places. “We need a church in every mall, every Wal-Mart supercenter, every Barnes and Noble.”\(^5\) Thus, the church needs to be freeing in its approach to ministry development, trusting the work of the Holy Spirit.

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\(^1\) See Synder, 83.
\(^2\) Mead, 1-15.
\(^3\) Ibid., 31.
\(^4\) Foremost in developing a structure for new ministry development is the one used at Saddleback Community Church in Orange County, California.
\(^5\) McNeal, The Present Future, 35.
A sixth step that the local church may need to take as a solution to being viable in the postmodern era is to address the financial future of the church and the differences in giving patterns that postmodern believers will most likely employ. With the blurring of denominational lines, and the mix of individuals making their own choices, the donation dollar will not necessarily be given through church channels as has been the case of the Builders. Not even the tithe will necessarily find its way through the normal church offering envelope. Although the Boomers have been partially making these types of financial giving changes for years, the postmodern influence on diversity of interests, projects and other “worthy” causes will have a direct impact on the giving to the church both locally and globally.¹

Although the Adventist denomination may make appeals through the Advent Review or through various local conference or union conference papers, it will be the local church which will need to “sell” the postmodern on the financial needs of the ministry and why he or she should support the ministry. It appears that the individual will take more and more responsibility for where his/her donations will be going and what those offerings are really going to do. In the not-to-distant future the church will almost certainly face some severe financial shortfalls, and the wise leaders will look for new and creative means to meet those changing giving-pattern challenges. The financial structures of modernity used historically by the church will most likely be severely challenged.

A seventh general step the church might take in the postmodern world transcends all eras and cultures. It may be the most important one element or step the local church can do that will directly affect the whole church family and the community. Jesus gave every follower of his a “new” commandment. “Love one another. As I have loved you,

¹ Mead, 20.
so you must love one another” (John 13:34). This challenging and yet simple direct command opens the door to how the church family is to treat one another within the household of faith, as well as those not yet part of Christ’s fellowship.

Jerry Cook, pastor at the East Hill Church in Gresham, Oregon, endeavored to practice this one principle. He said it was to love, accept and forgive everyone. He would often verbalize this commitment to love, accept, and forgive to even first-time visitors in his church. Here is a sample of what he would articulate frequently while sitting on his “preaching” stool at East Hill.

Brother, I want you to know that I’m committed to you. You’ll never knowingly suffer at my hands. I’ll never say or do anything, knowingly, to hurt you. I’ll always in every circumstance seek to help you and support you. If you’re down and I can lift you up, I’ll do that. Anything I have that you need, I’ll share with you; and if need be I’ll give it to you. No matter what I find out about you and no matter what happens in the future, either good or bad, my commitment to you will never change. And there’s nothing you can do about it. You don’t have to respond. I love you, and that’s what it means.

Cook goes on to add, in his book *Love, Acceptance and Forgiveness*, that a church which makes that type of a commitment to everyone who comes into their church has learned to love, and that church will be a force for God. Steve Sjogren calls it the “spearhead of evangelism in the world” by simply being kind. Christ-like caring and compassion for others (love) is to be the hallmark of the church.

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2 Ibid.


momentary politeness, but genuine caring about people and helping them get connected with the living Christ for eternity.¹

Loving, accepting, caring, and forgiving were clearly exemplified by Christ and are to be ingrained in the character of the church. It is the purpose of the church with Christ-like love to invite people to get connected to Christ. The church’s duty is to show who he is and what he is about. And to do that, the church must leave the condemning business of the Pharisees and move into the grace business of Christ.²

An eighth element or issue whose presence is subtle and often unspoken within the church is that of identifying oneself with a church name or denomination. Previously in this project, the issues of Boomers’, Busters’, and Bridgers’ relationships to institutions were adequately addressed. Here, however, the issue being addressed is more specific in nature: a general distrust of institutions or denominations. And the specific nature of the issue within Adventism may have several reasons.

Some may be personally embarrassed to be known in the community as a Seventh-day Adventist. They may be sensitive to the appearance of being different. Going to church on Saturday instead of Sunday, eating a different diet than the general population, sending their children to an Adventist church school, all may contribute to such discomfort. When other religious leaders label Adventists “a cult,” and accuse them of not being truly Christian,³ some may wish to keep a low profile out of shame. Some may use the shortened term “Adventist” as a way of softening the identification of being a

¹ Ayers, 28-29.

² John 8:1-11.

Seventh-day Adventist when asked their religious affiliation.

Others may see that the denominational name stands as a roadblock for evangelism. With society's suspicion of institutions and denominations, many evangelical Protestant churches have renamed themselves so that their denominational affiliation is not revealed in their church name. Saddleback Community Church, The Crystal Cathedral, Church on the Way, Willow Creek Community Church, and many others have taken this position.

What may be unknown within the Adventist community is whether changing the local church name would have any positive affect on the growth of the church and the comfort of some of its members. There certainly would be some who would fear that dropping the denominational identification from the local church name would mean just a step from pulling away from all accepted Adventist teachings. Yet, would the potential gain in growth be worth the effort in at least trying it?

Although many other elements could be included in this listing of issues or elements that face the local church in general, these will suffice to remain within the parameters of the project and its purpose.

Possible Measures for Busters and Bridgers

The challenges of ministering to and with Busters and Bridgers are significant. They are complicated by the cultural changes of postmodernism that are in constant motion and flux. Perhaps there may be some steps that the church can do specifically to

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1 In the not-too-distant past, Adventist public evangelists did not immediately identify their meetings as being Seventh-day Adventists for fear of the public's rejection.
address the needs and unique issues that Busters and Bridgers bring to the church as a whole.

Perhaps a first step in facing the challenges presented by the Busters and Bridgers is to allow these two generational groups to be part of the leadership and decision-making process of the church. Churches who are inclusive of youth in leadership positions and are active participants of the decision-making process will find these young generations responding positively.

Over the years, many churches have endeavored to include a youth representative or two on the church board in an effort to be inclusive of this age group. Also, youth have been invited to be “junior” deacons/deaconesses or “deacons-in-training.” These inclusive actions by the church leadership, as well intended as they may have been, tend to be short-lived in their duration. The pattern I have experienced in trying to include youth is that the nominated youth representative comes for a few meetings and then never shows again. The church committee that tried to be inclusive may conclude that they had made an effort to be “youth friendly,” but the elected representative seemed uninterested.

Such efforts of inclusion of youth might be viewed by the youth or young adults as only a type of tokenism, and not really a shared leadership responsibility. Positions might be given reluctantly, or in a controlled environment where youth opinions are not really solicited or taken seriously. One would wonder if such a practice would actually suggest to the particular youth representative selected to be a type of second-class leader.

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1 Most frequently the youth representative is of high-school age and is selected by the adults on the nominating committee of which no youth are members.

2 Assigning a youth to the role of “junior” deacon or “deacons-in-training” for example, might suggest that the nominating committee really knows nothing of the youth’s talents, interests, or desires. It becomes a way for the adult to “find something for him/her to do” which will not place the youth in a decision-making or opinion-expressing role.
Whatever the intentions by the church leadership were, the point here is the importance of genuine inclusion of Busters and Bridgers in the life of the church. There is no doubt that life-maturation factors need to be taken into account. But the church’s direction and ministries tend to be set by the older generations (Builders and Boomers) which then seek the younger generations to *come and join them*. That is not really being inclusive, and will not be as effective in the postmodern matrix of which these younger generations live and function. “The bottom line for many youth is simply wanting to be accepted and loved by the church that clearly shows that they are wanted, needed, and accepted.”

A second step that might be helpful to Busters and to a greater extent to Bridgers is the inclusion of several multi-sensory elements to the worship experience at one time. Already the uses of “PowerPoint” type presentations are made on a projection screen in many churches. But it may be of benefit to the younger two generations when more than one screen is used with different images projected at the same time, and when short video clips are interspersed with still images.

Television has introduced the Busters and Bridgers to the rapid changes in images and material. They are easily able to make those instant transitions of information, and to “multi-task” or multi-perceive several concurrent events taking place at one time.

Within the worship experience, the local church worship might not only have various images being projected on several screens all at the same time, but also have prayer centers open, arts development centers supplied with materials for creative worship

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1 Gillespie and Donahue, 94.
art and the constant flow of praise and worship music going all at the same time.¹

Although they may appear to be chaotic to the Builders, these additional worship elements might actually bring more active experiential participation from the young generational groups. Yet, it is important that Busters and Bridgers experience their worship and faith, not just be observers seated in the pews.

A third step that might help the church living in the postmodern matrix directly related to Busters is that generation’s inherent need to belong. More than a few churches have employed the ministry of small groups meeting either in private homes or neutral locations (like a coffee shop). The purpose was to involve the young adult in a small group and then lead them to church attendance – the ultimate goal.

But in the postmodern world, small groups for Busters must have other goals. Simply hoping to encourage church attendance to fill up the pews will not fly with Busters. They want help with their lives. They have a deep longing to belong. They seek to connect in spontaneous and healthy ways. The church can use small groups if it allows the postmodernist to be validated and to bring real help to their lives.²

A possible fourth step to address the unique challenges of Busters and Bridgers may be to connect them with the church through cyberspace. The local church can develop and maintain a creative, attractive and informative website. For the technosociety, accessing information off the Internet is a daily habit and expectation. An effective website can provide an important, vital link to the local church for the seeking

¹ For ideas of postmodern worship elements see Kimball, Emerging Worship: Creating Worship Gatherings for New Generations.

postmodern. A Buster or Bridger would most likely “check out” the church on the web first to see what it is like before ever considering walking through its doors. Churches without attractive and helpful websites are at a distinct disadvantage in the postmodern world.

The church may be tempted to create a cyber-church on the web in which they wish to have a “community” of believers only attached through the electronic media. Although much can be done to educate, inform, and present the narrative story of the gospel – cyber-community is not reality. In cyber-space, reality slips out of focus. Competing ideas are all evaluated as equal. And although the media is fascinating, it needs to be carefully employed by the church as it uses it to minister to postmoderns.¹

Another option that might be available to the local church is to offer wireless Internet access on the church site. Such access might allow individuals to connect and download church information, the day’s sermon notes, and other digital features.

A fifth step that might be helpful for the church is to focus on the need for Busters particularly, and Bridgers as well, to participate in the mission of the church. Following up on the thought of the generational cycles as developed by Strauss and Howe,² the church could actively embrace an increased “outward focus on others” period, starting now. This focusing outward can be seen in a renewed interest in involvement in such things as short-term mission projects both domestic and abroad. Busters and Bridgers will actively engage in projects that bring personal connection and the satisfaction of service to

¹ Lyon, 66-69.

² See previous discussion concerning the era following the secular crisis pivot point.
others.¹ This is actually an act of public reconciliation, where the church through the mission and ministry can be back in the community again.² Although important for the sustenance of the denomination's global missions' project, the offering plate will not be the first choice of postmoderns in how they participate in missions. The church needs to open the doors for options in mission service projects that allow for personal, hands-on participation.

Perhaps the sixth unique challenge that the two latest generational groups bring to the church is that of their lack of biblical understanding. Jon Paulien's lecture, entitled "The Post-Modern Acts of God," highlights this problem. Note his evaluation: "Imagine a continuum that goes from -10 to +10. -10 designates a person who has absolutely no knowledge of God. +10 designates a fully devoted follower of God. The zero point is the point of conversion and baptism. Traditional evangelism focuses on getting people from minus two into plus territory. But mainstream Americans tend to be far deeper into the minus continuum than the typical evangelistic 'interest.'"³

Evangelism of such a person who may be -6 or -8 on the continuum would be successful if that person moved to a -3 or -2. Therefore, the work of taking a person to the point of baptism would be a process that could take years, not a few short weeks.

The local and global church will need to develop methods and postmodern materials or avenues that will assist the postmodern seeker to come to understand the story of Jesus (the unsurpassable narrative). The patient telling and retelling of the

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¹ Sweet, Soul Salsa, 118.
² Kitchens, 76-79.
stories of Scripture need to take place for individuals who have no Christian background in order that they find their way.

The seventh challenge may speak directly to the pastor who preaches each week. In the past, preachers were able to assume that the congregation understood the basic elements of the Scriptures. Texts like John 3:16 could be quoted from memory by the majority of the listeners. The problem with the postmodern people is that the preacher can no longer assume that his listeners have those basic elements of biblical knowledge or understanding that were once part and parcel of the Builder’s culture.¹

In the modern church, the sermon is the focal point of the worship service. It serves as the vehicle of biblical truths to help resolve personal problems in our modern world. It emphasized the explanation of what truth is. Yet, in the postmodern church, the sermon is only a part of the experience in the worship service. The preacher shows how the ancient wisdom of the Bible applies to the kingdom living of a disciple of Christ. The sermon emphasizes the explanation and experience of who Truth is.²

So what is the preacher to do to reach the postmodern mind? How does he or she speak the gospel in the context of our present culture?

If the preachers are to learn from the Scriptures themselves, they might conclude that Paul, as well as the prophets of old, used their imagination and frequently wrote in prose or in poetry. The effective postmodern-sensitive preacher will need to immerse

² Ibid., 175.
himself/herself in the Scriptures so that the narrative of the Bible permeates the sermon with images that reveal the story of salvation through Jesus.¹

It is important then, that the preacher of the new emerging culture prepare the weekly message to assume the hearers know little of the biblical stories and their significance. Jeffrey D. Arthurs adds that the preacher needs to recommend Christianity not only because it is true, but because it is good.² Francis Schaeffer warned, “We must make sure that he understands that we are talking about real guilt before God and that we are not offering him merely relief for his guilt-feelings. We must make sure that he understands that we are talking to him about history, and that the death of Jesus was not just an ideal or a symbol but a fact of space and time. . . . Until he understands the importance of these things, he is not ready to become a Christian.”³

It is outside the scope of this project to debate which method of preaching is best, and what processes are best for adults to learn. Both expository preaching (used heavily in modernity) and/or topical preaching have their strengths and weaknesses. To the postmodern listener, the difference between the two is of no importance. What is powerful is that preaching can be a great way of showing this generation not only that there is truth in a world of relativism, but that there is Truth who loves them.⁴ It is what the Busters (in particular) and Bridgers need to hear.

¹ Brian J. Walsh, Subversive Preaching in a Postmodern World (Toronto: University of Toronto - Christian Reform Campus Ministry, 2005). Available from http://crc.sa.utoronto.ca/articles/


An effective preaching tool, then, appears to be the use of narrative style that pulls the postmodern into the experience of Scripture. "Experience is the new king of the mountain. There are no passive participants."\(^1\) And that narrative preaching style may be the most effective way to be inclusive of individuals with vastly different backgrounds in biblical understandings. Jesus, in his use of parables, told stories that made complex concepts understandable to all his listeners.\(^2\) So, today's preacher should be cognizant of the power and appeal of narrative preaching.

Another element or issue that may be of particular importance to Busters and Bridgers is what Adventists may refer to as "Adventist Standards." For several decades now, a few of the "Adventist Standards" have been failing to be observed (assimilated as behavioral necessities) by the upcoming generations.

Roger Dudley's research is instructive here. While throughout the early 1970s a renewed interest in righteousness by faith took place in the Adventist Church in North America, research indicates that many Adventist youth and young adults still have a law/works orientation to their Christian faith. Dudley cites research from a national survey of adult Adventists in which 65 percent agreed with this statement: "A person's standing before God is based on his or her obedience to God's law." The results also indicate that only a fourth disagree.\(^3\)

An Adventist emphasis on what constitutes appropriate Christian behaviors has evidently led the majority to believe that they must do something to earn salvation. It is

\(^1\)Mark Miller, 15.


difficult, then, for Busters and Bridgers, in particular, to accept the fact that their salvation
rests entirely on the merits of Christ’s substitutionary sacrifice and that they cannot do
anything to merit it.¹

Dudley draws this conclusion then: “The evidence indicates that for the vast
majority disobedience results not from a grace orientation to the gospel but from the law
orientation. Young people find that they cannot measure up to the demands of the law,
become discouraged, and quit trying because the task is hopeless; they are going to be lost
away. We have erred so long in the direction of the law, we need to begin to focus on
grace completely.”²

The law orientation background plays directly into the application of Adventist
Christian standards. The historic Adventist standards of banning the wearing of jewelry,
listening to rock music, theater attendance (movies) and dancing, have in particular failed
to connect with upcoming generations of Adventist youth and young adults. Although
there is still strong commitment to refrain from drugs, alcohol, and pre-marital sex³ – the
other four standards mentioned above appear to be the most debated and controversial.⁴

Dudley’s research team draws this conclusion to the standards issue of the four
that appear to be failing to connect. “This likelihood challenges the church to discover
fresh methods of presenting its standards to the next generation so that these standards
will be perceived as reasonable and beneficial. If we find no way to do that, perhaps, we

¹ Dudley, Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories for a 10-Year Study, 58.
² Ibid., 59.
³ Gillespie and Donahue, 74.
⁴ Perhaps they are fading along with the influence of the writings of Ellen White on the Busters
and Bridgers.
need to reexamine them to see if they really reflect what is essential in Adventist theology."

It appears that indeed those four standards will not be part of the Adventist theological interpretation of living the Christian faith in the lives of the Busters and Bridgers. It is probably far too late to make any type of reasonable defense to the postmodern world.

Tim Celek and Dieter Zander, in their book *Inside the Soul of a New Generation*, suggest four important concepts to remember when ministering to young adults. They suggest that in order for the church to be effective in ministry to this postmodern young adult culture it must have, what they call, the four "R's."

The first is that communication must be *real*. With a generation that is skeptical of everything, the church and the ministry must be real and transparent. Identifying with what Paul calls “earthen vessels” (2 Corinthians) keeps the focus on that the church is made of real people who make mistakes and have problems like others.

The second “R” that Celek and Zander suggest is make it *rousing*. Worship services and preaching need to be full of energy and life. They need to awaken and inspire. A common complaint of Busters and Bridgers of the church is that it is “boring.” The church must strive to ensure that the worship service is anything but boring.

The third “R” is *relevant*. “Busters are a pragmatic generation.” Howe and Strauss say, “Above all else, religion must be useful in order for them to listen to it.”

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1 Dudley, *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories for a 10-Year Study*, 76.
2 Celek and Zander, 101.
3 Ibid., 103.
4 Ibid., 104.
The church, its ministries, its teachings, and its worship must be relevant to the questions and interests of this generation. Relevance is what will help get beyond the boredom and apathy cited by this generation who may have been burnt by the church as children.¹

The fourth and final “R” suggested by Celek and Zander is relational. Busters in particular are tuned in to relationships. They may eagerly seek how to build and maintain successful relationships and may be open to what Jesus has to say about them. They may wish to avoid the relationship problems they observed in their Boomer parents. Or they may simply wish to build bridges to better relationships from their own lonely lives.

Relationships are important to young adults.

“When you’re real, you gain Buster’s trust. When you’re rousing, you gain their attention. When you’re relevant, you speak their language. And when you’re relational, you build bridges to the next generation. To previous generations these were important ingredients in ministry. To the Buster generation, these ingredients are essential. Without them, you’ll not engage the heart, mind, and soul of this generation.”²

Although this listing of elements or issues that involve the ministry of and to Busters and Bridgers is not exhaustive, it does provide some essential elements upon which this project program may be established.

Chapter Summary

The recognition of the change and creatively working in the new postmodern era may, in actual fact, be the church’s greatest opportunity. Andy Crouch comments, “There is every reason to believe that postmodernism is calling forth new ways of reading the

¹ Ibid., 105.
² Ibid., 108.
Scriptures and the Christian tradition that expose vitality in the unlikeliest places. Why should we not hope that our generation, prompted by the new challenges of postmodernism, will discover new depths and previously uncharted territory in the Gospel? . . . We are in the midst of an intensely exciting period in which the church, under the duress of new questions, is finding new languages and new songs.\(^1\)

Perhaps the dawning of the postmodern world can help the church repair the rift between the natural sciences and theology.\(^2\) Perhaps the church can lead in inviting people to see their lives holistically, and not through the microscope of rationality. Perhaps the postmodern culture will revitalize worship and deepen the authentic spiritual lives of our people.

Whether we like it or not, God has placed the contemporary church here in the most interesting of times. The shift in culture may cause anxiety, but it can be the adventure the church needs to survive. Rather than shrink from the culture, the church needs to embrace the new realities and learn to live within its worldview while maintaining an identity.\(^3\) “The future can no longer be an assumption. The future is now an achievement. There is a race to the future. Who will get there first? Will the Christian church? The time to save God’s dream is now. The people to save God’s dream is you.”\(^4\)

The challenge is enormous. The cultural change continues whether the church likes it or not. The church’s choice may be to either find its footing in the new

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\(^2\) Kitchens, 10.

\(^3\) For specific ideas and strategies, see Brian McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix*.

\(^4\) Sweet, *Soul Tsunami: Sink or Swim in New Millennium Culture*, 34.
postmodern world or live out its days without relevancy. Perhaps it is not for the
membership to see what is happening to the church, but to see what is happening to
Jesus’ church.\footnote{Ayers, 14-15.} Perhaps the prayer to be offered is to simply ask, “Lord, show me your
church today.”
CHAPTER 4

PROJECT PROGRAM AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The project program and its strategies were built on a number of factors. In order to initiate an effective ministry program for Busters and Bridgers, the entire Wausau Church program needed to be considered. Therefore, this section of the project description will first focus on program elements that were done of a general nature that applied to the entire church family. Such general elements became an important part of the development of programs specifically aimed at the Buster and Bridger groups. These program elements should not be viewed as separate from the specific Buster or Bridger lists, but an indispensable part. All the elements listed below formulated the project’s program.

The listing of those general elements should not be understood as appearing in their order of importance, nor should one conclude that all elements were of equal value to the success or progress of the project. Each element was designed to make up a unified program and needed at least some of the other parts to be successful.
General Program Elements Initiated

Local Elder Awareness of Postmodernism Issues

In the summer and fall of 2003, three books were provided to the four serving local elders. The first was Dan Kimball’s book *The Emerging Church*.

Kimball’s work was soon followed by giving each elder Rick Richardson’s book, *Evangelism Outside the Box: New Ways to Help People Experience the Good News*. Each elder received free copies of each book. Then over a period of several months of frequent meeting and discussing the contents, possible applications for the Wausau Church were noted. The purpose of sharing these books and discussing them together was to raise the elders’ awareness of postmodernism, the emerging church, and the new possibilities for church growth. Three of the four elders seemed to appreciate the information provided and looked forward to planning church evangelistic programs in new and different ways.

The third book given to the four elders was Brian McLaren’s *More Ready Than You Realize*. Like the books by Kimball and Richardson, the elders discussed the issues and information of McLaren’s book during a couple of evening meetings. This book was discussed concerning the issues of postmodernism and their possible implications for the Wausau Church and its ministries. The sharing of these books was the first step in providing the elders with background information concerning postmodernism and the shifting culture. Like the first two books shared, three out of the four elders seemed

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eager to understand the basic principles and concepts laid out in McLaren’s book.

In the fall of 2003, the Wisconsin Conference held its annual Local Church Elders Retreat. The main speaker for the weekend was Monte Sahlin. Sahlin had just finished his research on the current state of Adventist congregations in the United States. Three of the four elders were able to attend that retreat. Upon returning to Wausau from the retreat, the next elders’ meeting focused on the information shared by Sahlin. Other materials presented concerning the state of the Adventist church and the cultural shift from modernity to postmodernism were also discussed.

It is noteworthy that raising the awareness of the elders to postmodernism and its relationship to the struggles of ministry in Wausau did help in the overall process of change in the church. But it was also observed that the elders as a group did not take an active leadership role in the change process. Three of the four elders did actively participate in the change process but not through the group of elders as a leadership team. Those who were active, worked or led through other church groups or ministry teams. The relationship of the elders in leadership to the church as a whole should be addressed. Such a topic, however, was outside the scope of this project. Yet it does remain as a curious phenomena within the church. Although nominated by the church as such, local elders may not always be significant church leaders as a group.

Two of the four elders continued on their own to seek additional resources about church growth and postmodernism. They asked for additional resource recommendations from me, as well as searching for information on their own. A listing of bibliographical

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materials was provided informally to those who requested it. One elder in particular repeatedly searched the Internet for ideas and sources.

**Personal Ministries Committee Awareness of Postmodern Issues**

At the same time that the local elders were reading and in discussion of postmodernism and its relationship to the church, the Personal Ministries Committee was presented with reading selections as well. Each member of the committee was given a copy of Brian McLaren’s book, *More Ready Than You Realize*. As a group, these committee members seemed to get more into the issues presented than did the elders’ group. And they appeared more open to what the implications might suggest for ministry changes at Wausau. With this group, it was easier to share concepts of growth, cultural shifts, Adventist traditional methods,¹ and other issues related to the ministries of the church. They seemed to understand the struggles of the ministry and growth of the church locally and as a whole.

This group was also exposed to Richardson’s book, *Evangelism Outside the Box*, but it was not supplied for them. Several did purchase the book on their own and, at the committee meetings in the fall of 2003, shared what they had learned. Most of the committee members caught on quickly to the basic issues of postmodernism and the changing culture.

At times the Personal Ministries group met two to three times a month to discuss the development of the ministries for the church. Each sensed it was crucial for them to work through the issues right now for it seemed to them that the church was poised for a

¹ Understood to mean traditional Adventist local church organization and traditional evangelism including a four-week public crusade which is still practiced in Wisconsin.
great transition. I was sure that to some it felt that no progress was being made through those many meetings in the fall of 2003, but this group did and still is the major change leadership group that basically helped re-set the general ministry tone of the Wausau Church.

In the spring of 2004, the Personal Ministries Committee changed its name. It was felt that the name Personal Ministries Committee suffered from “bad press” of a sorts, and really did not reflect the work the present committee was doing, nor what they perceived as their ministry for the church. To give a newer, fresher start, the name Cross Ministries was chosen.

During one of the adult Sabbath School periods that spring, the committee arranged with the Wausau Daily Herald\(^1\) to get more than fifty Saturday morning newspapers. One of the committee members dressed up as a newspaper boy, and came in carrying all the papers, calling out, “Get your paper, here!” He handed all the adult Sabbath School members present a newspaper. I then asked the members to look at page one of the paper. I led them through each page of the paper looking for potential ministry opportunities in the community. Soon Sabbath School members could see that on every page of the newspaper, opportunities for community involvement and Christian service for the church were present.

The Personal Ministries leader then introduced the new name for the committee to the Sabbath School members and why the change was being made. He suggested to the Sabbath School members that this name change marked a turning of ministry focus of the committee for the church. He then invited all of them to participate and learn about how

\(^1\) The Wausau Daily Herald is the daily, local newspaper for the Wausau community.
the church might address the issues of the changing culture in Wausau.

In the summer of 2004 the pastor provided the Cross Ministries Committee a copy of the Markham Woods Seventh-day Adventist Church\(^\text{1}\) document on their philosophy of ministry. Each committee member was presented a personal copy and invited to go home and read it carefully.\(^\text{2}\) Although not acted upon until the fall of 2004 and winter of 2005, this document helped committee members to think of the local church (within an Adventist context) in a different way. The Markham Woods document helped to focus the group on what was essential for the church and its work.

Following the basic outline of the Markham Woods document, the Cross Ministries Committee developed its own version or philosophy document. The committee organized an informational afternoon discussion time for the whole congregation in the early spring of 2005. These coordinated small-group discussions met in various church members' homes and were led by committee members. Each focused on the concepts of what the Wausau Church philosophy might be. Each participant was presented with a draft of the concepts of the document for discussion. After many months of discussion and careful review, a final document was presented to a Wausau Church business meeting and voted in the spring of 2005.\(^\text{3}\)

A crucial step was taken by this group in the fall of 2004 when it saw that the Cross Ministries Committee needed to expand and broaden its ministry scope. Although anyone who wished to attend the committee meetings was welcome, the members sought

\(^{1}\)Markham Woods Seventh-day Adventist Church is located in Longwood, FL. Markham Woods Church has been developing materials on postmodernism, as well as other local church ministry programs.

\(^{2}\)The Markham Woods document was also given to the four elders. The issues raised in the document were not discussed together as a group.

\(^{3}\)See copy of document in Appendix B.
to broaden the ministry by inclusion of the Sabbath School departments, the worship leadership team, and the elders. Representatives of each of these groups soon were active participants on the Cross Ministries Committee. The inclusion of these other leaders led to the united coordination of the different departments or ministries within the church. Soon a unity of purpose and ministry mission began to formulate a united church family.

Throughout the change process, this group has really been in the lead to understand and take innovative ministry steps. Without conflict or turf battles, this group has provided a laity-led structure for change and ministry excitement within the church.

Reorganization of the Worship Service

In the summer of 2003 I initiated an ongoing process of change to the worship service. Wausau had been following a rather traditional worship liturgy as might be found in the vast majority of Adventist churches across the North America. With the presence in the Wausau Church of the four generational groups and their own individual preferences, worship service elements or liturgy changes had to be considered with each generation's preferences noted. The worship changes were not all done at once. Every month or so, when the pastor was present to lead the worship, some new element was added or previous element modified.

Such worship element changes might include the congregational singing of a gospel or praise chorus in response to the message of the day or some other part of the liturgy. On occasion, the prayer time was altered to be more inclusive by having people come forward and kneel at the front¹ while the main prayer was given. Another change was when I would move off the platform while singing the morning hymn and offer an

¹ Called in some churches “The Garden of Prayer.”
invocation prayer “within” the congregation creating a sense of being present with the worshipers.

The worship service took on a new, fresher feel in the Fall of 2003 when a consistent praise team was formed to lead the congregation in twelve to fifteen minutes of singing. Those twelve to fifteen minutes of singing included three to five praise-type choruses followed by a praise hymn from the SDA Church Hymnal. At first, the words of praise choruses were printed in the bulletin, but later the words for both the choruses and hymns were projected via PowerPoint\(^1\) on a screen. These changes seemed to find excellent acceptance among the four generational groups.

In January 2004, the church was forced to move its location and found the members at Mountain of the Lord Lutheran Church (MOTL) willing to let the congregation meet there for worship on Saturday mornings. The Lutheran Church provided a greater opportunity for the development and use of computer-generated visual worship presentations. While at MOTL, the congregation purchased an electronic-type keyboard which provided a wide variety of instrumental sounds. Although some of the Builders were somewhat resistant to the presence of this new instrument at first, soon everyone appreciated the new inclusion of the Clavinova\(^2\) instrument and the other elements into the worship service. The process of change for worship was carefully done in order to provide something familiar or appreciated to each of the four generational groups. The continued use of the church organ with the Clavinova seemed to help Builders sense their own inclusion within the altered worship service format, and they

\(^{1}\) Computer software program from Microsoft.  

\(^{2}\) A musical instrument manufactured by Yamaha.
seemed open to the necessity of ministering to all generational groups.

Probably the changes made in the worship service to a more personal and contemporary feel became the most visible and experiential part of the ministry change. A positive, creative worship experience has had a profound impact on the entire church program and outreach to the community. While the current worship service atmosphere might appear tame to some, it still offered a significant change to the Wausau Church. Members seem proud of what Wausau Church now offers and do talk to their friends about the good things that are happening there. Yet, the worship service is still in a continued process of evolving, and other changes may need to be made in the future to sustain growth and increase worshipers’ participation.

Sermon Presentation Changes.

Closely tied to the entire worship service experience is the sermon presentation itself. With the availability of the use of computer-generated visual presentations, the pastor’s sermons transitioned from mainly auditory format to auditory–visual format. As my sermons were presented, colorful “slides” were projected on the sanctuary projection screen. Included in the visual sermon presentation slides would be the Scriptures referred to in the message, as well as various sermon theme points, quotations, and other observations.

Also, I endeavored to use more of the narrative style in preaching in order to bring along or raise the biblical understanding of the listeners. Because of a wide diversity of the level of the congregation’s understanding of Scripture and of the church history, the narrative style was used to help fill knowledge level gaps. I assumed that there would be those attending on any given Saturday morning who would have little or no knowledge of
Scripture or its historical context. I understood that in the postmodern culture, such assumptions were valid.

On the weeks I did not speak at the Wausau Church, the local elders were assigned to preach. Following my example, two of the four elders began experimenting with the use of PowerPoint in presentation of their sermons by the spring of 2005. It is difficult, however, in a multi-church district to keep a consistent pulpit ministry week by week. The assistance of the elders who are trying to use visual aids in their sermons is much appreciated.

There is one other sermon presentation element that was employed over the project period. I frequently used the sermon as an opportunity to present biblical themes on outreach, acceptance, forgiveness, compassion, and grace. On numerous occasions, I wove into sermons how those themes and the impact of the postmodern world were affecting society and the church. I shared with the congregation how the culture may be transitioning from modernity to postmodernity, and how that transition may affect the church’s effectiveness in ministry. Although individual members may not be able to clearly define the difference between modernity and postmodernity, most would likely verbalize their sense that society around them is changing and that the church wishes to minister in the new realities.

Changing the Church’s Name

The idea of changing the church’s name was mainly a product of urgency from the Boomers within the church family. The Buster group seemed open to a name change as well. Yet, it was mainly a Boomer driven change. In the summer of 2004, the process of changing the church’s name began in earnest. Time-driven primarily by the desire to
have a new name settled by the date the congregation moved to its new facility at 6300 Bittersweet Road, a process was designed to bring the idea before the congregation for discussion and a vote.

Changing the church’s name was perhaps the most controversial issue of the entire change process. Opposition to a name change came from basically two groups. The first and largest group to object were those who might be classified as belonging to the Builders generation.\(^1\) Some voiced their fear that the church was moving once again to a more liberal position, and would soon be abandoning the denomination entirely. One older member suggested the name\(^2\) was “God given,” and to change the name was tantamount to “sinning against God’s direct command.” Others felt that changing the name was simply an expression of certain members’ personal embarrassment at being a Seventh-day Adventist.

A second group that voiced opposition to the name change might be identified as the fundamentalists. Although fundamentalists occupy a high percentage of the Builders generational group, a few can also be found in the Boomers as well. Within Wausau Church, none seemed to be in the Busters or Bridgers generational groups. Perhaps a division exists within the congregation that is not so much liberal or conservative, but between those who have a fundamentalist worldview and those who have a more evangelical worldview. Research into this possibility was outside the scope of this project. But it should be noted that if such groupings do exist, they might have a profound effect on the decision-making process of the church family.

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\(^1\) A discussion of the Builders’ attitudes towards institutions is discussed in chapter 3.

\(^2\) Wausau Seventh-day Adventist Church.
Through a process of several church business meetings, the name The Shepherd’s House, An Adventist Community of Love was finally agreed upon with a vast majority supporting the name change. It is not possible to really ascertain during the time span of the project the effect of this name change on the community, or the church family for that matter. Yet, informal comments seem to suggest that people genuinely like the new name, and are happy to share the church name where they attend with others. It is believed that the new name for the church is more community friendly and will be more inviting to the Boomers, Busters, and Bridgers. After the vote, the congregational conflict over the name change quickly disappeared, and genuine acceptance of the new name seems to have been accomplished.

Congregation Attitude Change

Another key element in the process of addressing the issues the church faced with postmodernism is the change in the general attitude of the congregation as a whole. This element is almost impossible to measure, but people who now attend say, “Things are different here now.” A change in attitude, of course, is ongoing. Yet, most observers would probably say that a positive, expectant attitude now marks the church family.

Congregational attitude change could be categorized in at least two areas. The first is the change from an inward focus upon the church to a more outward focus on the community as a whole. Although the process of attitude change in this area is nowhere near complete, substantial strides have been accomplished.

This is perhaps the hardest area for the church family as a whole to grasp. For years it appears that the attitude had been for the community to come to the church and to
join in with what the church was already doing.\textsuperscript{1} Prior to the project beginning, there was virtually no contact by the church with the community at all. Perhaps small congregations tend to focus on themselves to survive. Perhaps the members then felt they were active in the community by having worship services each Sabbath open and available to anyone who wanted to attend. Yet, to have a congregation grasp that it is the church who needs to leave the building and to go out and find a way to join Christ in meeting the needs of the surrounding community can be difficult. In informal conversations with other Christians in the community, the Adventist Church was either not known to exist or a non-player in community support service ministries.

My church family educational process, as seen in my recommendation of various books, articles, sermon themes, private conversations, and discussions in various church committees, continually focused on reaching outside the church walls. I stressed that “church” is not the building, it is the people. The physical building is only part of the vehicle in which the church does ministry to the community. I believe that use of the pulpit to acquaint the congregation with the postmodern world and their needs is particularly appropriate. Frequent verbalizations of the concepts for the congregation in a biblical setting endeavored to give credibility to the new concepts of ministry. I believe that the church will always need to be reminded and proactively plan for outreach to the community in order to remain relevant.

A second area of attitude change would be to speak of and believe positive things about the Wausau Church. I encouraged members to lay aside negative historical issues, whether they be personal strained relationships or conflicts over group decisions made, and now move on to a new day. My wife, Michele, and I modeled positive talk at

\textsuperscript{1} See McNeal, 11.
meetings and in casual discussions with church members. Others also saw the necessity of positive attitudes, and soon that feeling spread.

For some, positive talk and attitudes seem not to be part of their Adventist experience or upbringing. Perhaps they had years of unresolved anger at members, church leaders or the established denominational institutions as a whole. Perhaps they had been burned on previously tried and then failed programs. But as this particular program project became more successful\(^1\) and as the church moved into a sustained growth cycle, the naysayers lost their “pulpits.” Soon the doubting members were vastly outnumbered by happy, excited church members who were eager to come to church each week and to participate in any way they could. It is somewhat hard to launch a convincing argument about how it will not work when attendance at worship is doubling. So, a positive attitude is believed to be a key element in the success of the program.

Change in Organizational Process

In order to increase the percentage of active participants in the ministry, changes in the Nominating Committee process were made. I believe that the traditional nominating committee process may actually decrease rather than increase the participation level or percentage of active leadership within the church by the members. For years the Wausau Church has followed the traditional method of nominating church members as outlined in the denominational church manual to fill the various offices and positions in the church. It was observed that the traditional nominating committee process may have run its effectiveness course in Wausau. A change in the number of

\(^1\) Success indicators included greater weekly attendance at worship services, increase in baptisms, and higher percentage of member participation in the ministries of the church.
positions to be filled by the nominating committee was initiated in the late spring and early summer of 2004. Less than half of the positions filled by the nominating committee in 2003 were even asked by the committee in 2004. This was by choice. As a result, actually more people took individual responsibility and became active in the various ministries of the church. Not every single office of 2003 was purposely filled the following year. Yet the church seemed to function better than before. A higher percentage of member participation in ministry was achieved. Evidently the unfilled office positions left open by the committee were, in fact, not needed for the functioning of the church.

Another factor appears to be a clear indication of the postmodern influence of the church at this time: Without the nominating committee selecting everyone who is to serve during the “church” year, the issue of church authority (“Who’s in charge?”) moved more from the elected leader to the group of volunteers gathered at any given event or ministry. The element of inclusiveness was then fostered. Everyone was welcome to lend a hand and thanked for taking the initiative to do so. People worked together smoothly and happily. People took responsibility and ownership of the church and its ministries. People did not have to be asked or told to participate or do some ministry function. They just did it. Perhaps this change in organizational structure makes the church more open to the leading and influence of the Holy Spirit on the true body of Christ.

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1 Such as Religious Liberty Secretary, Health Ministry Secretary, Personal Ministries Secretary, etc.

2 July 1 to June 30.
Program Elements Initiated for Bridgers

The program directed towards the Busters and Bridgers was divided into two parts. I initiated the first program components in the middle of the summer of 2003 towards the Bridgers. In retrospect, this appears to have been a good directional choice. Specific program elements for Busters were not initiated that early. The above listed change elements that applied to the church in general, however, evidently were of benefit to the Busters even though they were not specifically targeted during those early months of the project. Therefore, inadvertently, those program elements for the general church ministered directly to the Busters without extra initial or immediate project emphasis. The Busters within the church became active supporters of the church changes. The Bridgers, however, did not seem to benefit as significantly for the general church program elements.

For the purpose of defining this section of the project’s program, Bridgers should be understood to mean those between the ages of seventeen and twenty-five. Programs or ministries for this particular age group were non-existent prior to the initiation of the project.

Friday Night Meetings

The first element to be organized for Bridgers was starting informal gatherings on Friday nights. These gatherings were called Face2Face and met bi-weekly. They were all held at our home, creating a less formal church program feel. They were all funded personally by my wife and me.

Face2Face is a unique social/spiritual gathering for a few hours on Friday evenings. It always includes refreshments or snacks, a casual atmosphere, opportunities
to meet new people, and an hour or so of inclusive\(^1\) spiritual emphasis. Bridgers were invited publicly to attend through notices in the bulletin, PowerPoint slides on the screen, and during the announcement period prior to the worship service. They were also invited personally with phone calls, notices mailed to their residences, or personally in conversations. Half of the Bridgers involved with Face2Face do not attend the Wausau Church.

During the time period of the project's implementation, foreign students\(^2\) came to Wausau to attend the Northcentral Technical College (NTC) for two years. Among the eighteen or so international students attending NTC, four were Seventh-day Adventist young men. Two were from Haiti and two were from the Dominican Republic. Those from Haiti spoke French, and those from the Dominican Republic spoke Spanish. These young men lacked transportation to Face2Face, so I went and picked them up so they could attend. Soon, they were inviting some of the other NTC international students to come to Face2Face as well.

Face2Face soon grew from four to six attendees to include about twenty-five to thirty Bridgers. During the project's time span, a third of the group was made up of the NTC students. Acceptance of the international participants was good from the other Wausau area Face2Face group attendees. A lot of good-natured social interaction took place on those Friday nights as the international students practiced their English language skills and shared their unique cultural heritage. On any given Friday evening, half of the group might consist of individuals from very different faith backgrounds. Those

\(^1\) Bridgers from different faith backgrounds attend Face2Face.

\(^2\) All of the participating international students were from the Americas.
differences in faith backgrounds seemed to not be of any concern to the Bridgers. The
Bridgers who were Seventh-day Adventists seemed to mix very well with those with no
particular faith-based background, with the evangelical participants, as well as those from
a Roman Catholic background.

I usually presented a spiritual theme on basic Christianity and practical, personal
faith at these Face2Face sessions.\(^1\) Topics on Christian dating, prayer, and basic
Christian values were shared. Participation levels in the discussion varied from time to
time. But generally, everyone openly talked and shared their thoughts and beliefs
without fear of judgment or condemnation. All faith views were accepted. As their
English improved, the international students more actively talked and shared their own
spiritual experiences with the group. Such inner group action seemed to have a positive
effect on the relationships within the group.

Face2Face also provided a place to include special friends. A few of the Bridgers
were casually dating others attending Face2Face. A few of the Adventist young people
were seriously dating non-Adventists. Face2Face became a safe place for those
Adventist youth to bring their non-Adventist special friends. All were welcomed. Two
such mixed-faith marriages took place within the group. Interesting to note that each of
these two couples attends the church on a semi-regular basis.

The Face2Face group also included two young single mothers. It was surprising
for me to see how open and accepting of these two young women the group was. The
group seemed comfortable with the presence of these mothers who had given birth to a

\(^1\) See Appendix C for a partial list of topics presented.
child without the benefit of marriage. It appeared that there was no negative judgment of these women.

Bridger leadership within the Face2Face group did not materialize during the project’s time period. This may have seriously hampered its effectiveness overall. Perhaps the unique mix of the group (Wausau area permanent residence with the international students) thwarted its development. So, in the late Spring of 2005, Face2Face did not meet as regularly. As summer neared my wife and I began Face2Face again, and started it meeting on a regular basis.

Other Social Events

During the project’s duration, other social events took place directed towards the Bridgers. My wife and I opened our home on Saturday nights for what the group would call “game night.” Such social events provided other opportunities for the Bridgers to socialize and “hang out” with us. This was an important part of the project in that it provided an opportunity for friendship evangelism. It was surprising to me how well attended these game nights at our home were. The Bridger group suggested more such gatherings during the project’s time span.

Other social events for the Bridgers included celebration of engagements, marriages, baby showers, and graduations. These social events might have been held at our home or in an area restaurant. At times, my wife and I would take various individuals to dinner for relationship building, personal problem solving, or counseling.
Program Elements Initiated for Busters

As mentioned above, any program elements that happened to benefit Busters were generally the changes that took place in the church as a whole. Renewed worship services, expansion of ministries, additional Sabbath School divisions for children, and other elements all contributed to the benefits of Busters. The Buster project program elements were designed for the age span of those over twenty-six years of age, yet born after 1964. It should be noted that this group often included others who might be married or engaged to one within the Buster grouping.

Ministries for the Busters’ Children

Perhaps the most significant element of the project for the Busters was the improved ministries for their children. The previous three Sabbath School departments of (1) Junior/Youth, (2) Primary, and (3) Kindergarten/Cradle Roll were divided into five separate divisions. Almost like magic, more and more children came to participate. Busters stepped up and provided excellent leadership for these new or expanded departments. Even while using the MOTL, the Busters took their own initiative and improved these children’s Sabbath School divisions. Now, in the new facility on Bittersweet Road, the new Sabbath School division rooms are already overcrowded, and division leaders are looking for more space.

Such overcrowding is wonderful to see, yet I recognize that if this element of church building restraint is not addressed soon, it could lead to a stagnation of growth. Within two weeks of the grand opening of the church, a Buster circulated his idea of

1 May 14, 2005.
where and how the church building could be expanded. In his plan, all new and enlarged children’s division classrooms were envisioned.

As the growth of the church started to take place, Busters also began to expand the Pathfinder and Adventure Clubs. These organizations for children had remained very small. But as the church attendance grew, Buster leaders encouraged other Busters to enroll their children in these two organizations. These two organizations are fulfilling a Buster need to have the church provide ministry opportunities and programs for their children.

Ministry/Social Gatherings for Busters

In the late fall of 2005 and early winter of 2005, I worked with two Buster couples to start a ministry to meet some of the social needs of the Busters. These two couples quickly organized their first social. They chose a local restaurant and invited other Busters to attend. Such invitations were made in church via the bulletin and announcements, but also personal contacts were made. Lists of non-attending Adventist Busters who resided in the area were provided to the two organizing couples.

Throughout the winter and spring of 2005, these popular social gatherings at area restaurants took place. These events gave wonderful opportunities for those Busters with non-Adventist spouses to bring their mates to a non-threatening “church”-sponsored event. As a result of these social evenings out, a couple of the non-Adventist spouses have begun to attend church regularly. My wife and I, although not Busters, do regularly attend these Buster events. It is still early in development, but these social events for the Busters seem to be providing great opportunities for evangelism.
Bible Chat Class

Although originally designed for anyone interested, the Bible Chat Class (previously known at the Pastor’s Class) became a ministry primarily attended by Busters. While I am away at the other two churches in the district, Busters lead the class on basic Bible issues and themes. Soon, a few of the non-Adventist Busters who attended the social events, described above, began attending the Bible Chat Class. The class itself is rather free-flowing, allowing those attending to ask questions or make comments on issues that they are interested in on that particular day. It is rather amazing how the discussion tends to focus on what the Bible can offer for today’s issues and how to know Jesus personally.

Chapter Summary

The effectiveness of the project seems to reflect the combined elements of all those program elements listed above. Yet, there is a real sense within the congregation that it was the Holy Spirit who has and is leading in the growth of the church at this time. Perhaps if asked, the church family would say that they know that it has been God’s hand in the moving to a new location, the change in ministries, the difference in attitudes, and the increase in attendance.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The project time parameter ran from June 2003 to the end of May 2005. Over this two-year period, the program described in chapter 4 was developed and initiated. The following summaries, conclusions, and recommendations flow from the results of the project during that time frame. It should be noted, however, that almost all of the elements of the project continued past May of 2005, and that they are still being modified and/or initiated as part of the growth and ministry development of the church.

**Project Survey Process and Summary**

The Survey Format and Observations of the Survey Process

At the conclusion of the project time period from June 2003 to May 2005, a small, oral survey was conducted by the pastor of twenty young adults who had had exposure to at least some of the elements of the project as listed in chapter 4. The sample was controlled in order to solicit the opinions from a wide variety of individuals and not focus only on those who had had the most active participation throughout the project time period.

The purpose of the survey and the size of the sample were designed to glean what those twenty young adults, who had had exposure to the project elements, might be thinking concerning the church by the end of May 2005. Particularly what they might be
thinking in regard to its ministry and effectiveness. The survey process also endeavored to understand any impact or effect of the postmodern culture on those who were involved in the project. Thus, a wide variety of questions were used. Some questions were more revealing than others as to the thinking of those young adults sampled.

Caution should be given in drawing specific conclusions from the answers given in the survey for several reasons. First, those who gave their responses were giving them directly to the pastor in a one-on-one setting. Some may have wished to place a “spin” on their answers for fear the pastor might think poorly of them if they were really telling him what they actually thought. Although the potential of such a shading of responses certainly existed, the young adults who participated in the survey process seemed to be fairly open, honest, and felt relaxed in my presence. Such “spinning” to provide “appropriate answers” for my ears may not have been as major a factor because of the nature of the questions asked and the comfort level I have with each participant.

Second, the survey questions may have been interpreted by each participant in his or her own way, and through whatever biases or experiences they may bring to the interview. I tried to avoid defining the meaning of the questions or the purpose behind why they were worded or asked as they were. It is certainly possible that some of the answers given would then seem to be irrelevant to the direction of the question. Yet, I did not try to influence the given answer or make corrections as the participants responded.

Third, the answers given by the participants were not recorded electronically, but written out by hand during the interview by me. I made every effort to record the comments as accurately as possible. Therefore, in some of the responses given during the
interviews, the answers were simply one or two words, and not fully developed sentences.

Fourth, as I listened to the responses, at times it became necessary to add or repeat a question or phrase in a slightly different manner for clarification. And I did encourage individuals that their answers were just fine, and at times asked them if they had any further comments. Such factors are reflected in the survey responses.

Fifth, the size of the survey sample may lend itself to a wide discrepancy of solid statistical conclusions. Twenty respondents are not a large enough sample for solid statistical analysis. The size of the sample, however, does help give general trends among the young adults involved in the project, and does give some possible indications of trends as reflected in their lives. Rather than a quantitative analysis, the survey sample does provide an opportunity for a quality analysis, and does give some information on the effectiveness of the project. And, of course, those surveyed did give their responses and their opinions to the survey as it was presented to them. I would then suggest that the responses do reflect their conclusions or observations in their answers. Therefore, their responses would have value for them as they reflect their perceptions and thoughts about the elements of the project.

Sixth, the survey itself is somewhat a problem in that it is an attempt to use a tool of modernity to seek responses to postmodernity. Such a process is fraught with problems and possible false conclusions. Knowing the survey tool does follow a modernity method should be taken into account when reflecting on the responses given.

The summary that follows concerning the survey will not cover each question that was asked. It will pick a few relevant questions and responses that most indicate the
issues raised in this project. Those issues concerning the postmodern cultural influence, the local church ministry changes that were initiated, and the personal responses to the project elements from this particular age group.

**Purposes of the Survey**

The survey endeavored to address several issues. Therefore, the survey was structured to solicit answers to these general questions in various ways.

1. What are the important relationship systems that these young adults have and how might they relate to the church family itself? Do those relationship systems reach across generational groupings within the church, and do they perceive God as part of the relationship network?

2. From where do they derive their belief system that guides their lives? Is the church the main source for the acceptance of their personal beliefs? Is there an effect of the postmodern culture, as discussed in chapter 3, upon their values and belief systems?

3. Do they view their religious faith as "true," and do they view other religious traditions of faith as "true" as well? Has the postmodern influence of tolerance or acceptance of divergent faith traditions as all true and equally valid had an impact on these young adults?

4. Is there any ambivalence in their minds as to what "sin" is? Has the idea of sin turned away from a Biblical grounded source to one's own personal interpretation? Has postmodern philosophy affected their concept of sin?

5. Do these young adults believe that participation in the local church is important to their own spiritual life? Or is the church and its service mostly unimportant to their own spiritual journey?
6. If any have stopped attending the Adventist Church and now have returned, what factors were present to bring about their return?

7. Has there been a shifting in the traditional Adventist standards within the sample group as suggested true of the young adults in the *Valuegenesis* research data?¹

8. In relationship to the local Adventist church, what elements are involved in their participation or lack thereof? Have there been changes at the Wausau Church that have helped increase their participation?

9. What is the level of maturity of faith among these young adults as indicated in their personal spiritual life?

**Summary of the Survey Responses as They Relate to the Project**

Out of the list of purposes and the responses given to the survey, a number of factors or summary issues might be formulated. It is not crucial to analyze the responses to each question, but to glean from them what responses or trends verbalized by those surveyed might indicate.

**Relationships and Commitments**

The first major section in the survey endeavored to illicit responses to how these young adults worked or established their relationship within a context of their spiritual values. Their beliefs, value systems, methods of addressing life-issue problems, etc., were asked in a variety of the questions and statements.²

What became clear is that first and foremost in the minds of these young adults

¹ Gillespie and Donalue, *Valuegenesis Ten Years Later: A Study of Two Generations.*

² See Appendix A and questions in the Relationship and Commitment section.
was the relationship they had with their immediate family. The survey did not try to
define the difference between the interviewee and their parents, or (if they were married)
between the interviewee and their spouse. Several, however, did indicate that even as
adults they would consult their parents when facing serious life-changing decisions.
They also indicated that these relationships were primary in being the main source for
their personal beliefs, values and attitudes.

An apparent secondary influence on their beliefs, values, attitudes and major
decision-making processes was what might be referred to as the "spiritual influences."
Those spiritual influences included the information gleaned from Scripture, seeking God
through prayer, and their church family relationships.

Although these two influences were most frequently stated, it was really of no
surprise for it would seem age appropriate, even for young adults, to still see their family
as the most important major influencing factor in their lives. What church leadership
needs to recognize is that even though the spiritual influences were listed in a secondary
position of importance, they really cannot be completely disconnected from the primary
answer given of the family. Without a doubt, the spiritual influences may have already
been within the family as the system of beliefs upon which decisions and relationship
were built.

When asked what makes them feel most uneasy or anxious about the future,1 the
family and its safety were again frequently mentioned. These answers do not necessarily
indicate any strong postmodern cultural influence, but do speak volumes about what
those who participated in the survey do value. Planning for the church may wish to take

1 Listed as Question 9 under the Relationships and Commitments section of Appendix A.
into consideration those family ties and influence for evangelism and personal spiritual growth.

The potential of the influence of postmodern thought may be seen in a few of the questions in the Relationship and Commitment section of the survey. When asked to describe their beliefs or values that most guide their lives, a wide variety of answers were given. The more “established” or longer church attending young adults tended to answer these type of questions with a more biblical or spiritual response. Those who were relatively new or had not been so active in their participation in the church until recently tended to have more a secular or personal response. From this latter group, such answers as “Always having a positive attitude,” or “honesty, integrity and belief in my work,” might be indicating the influence of postmodern culture. Perhaps this latter group perceived the world by trusting the inner self as the source for guiding one’s life.

Yet when asked about what relationships or groups are most important as support for one’s values, the family is again mentioned as primary. Only in a secondary way is the church family seen as a support group for their values or beliefs. This is most curious for it may indicate a lack of a stable, long-term confidence in the support from their church family or of their own personal values. They may sense that the church has a different set of values from their own, and therefore, do not see the church as a support system from their own beliefs. Perhaps longevity of active participation in the church and comfort with the “new feel” of the Wausau Church might help raise the importance of the support for their beliefs from the church. But the survey seems to indicate a disconnect between what the young adults value and what they perceive the church
values. It is not clear if they see the difference between those value systems or if they see it as a denominational issue.

When asked about how they go about making an important decision, the family and personal prayer were frequently mentioned. It is noteworthy to see that seeking guidance from the counsel of the church family or from the church’s teachings was not mentioned. Could these responses indicate a serious disconnect of the young adult’s actual life experiences and the level or depth of his or her relationship to the church? Although no direct survey questions addressed that specific concern, the possibility of just such disconnect or separation of influence does give raise to a disturbing concern. The gathered survey responses do not provide adequate information to ascertain whether such a disconnect is in fact true.

Religion

Almost all the respondents indicated that they saw themselves as religious people. And they thought of themselves as having a religious outlook that was “true.” But there was division in the group as to whether or not other religious traditions were also true even though they may be totally opposite to one’s own beliefs. Almost a third of those surveyed felt that other religious traditions were also true or generally true. Another third felt that only their own faith was really true. A tentative conclusion might be drawn, however, that the postmodern influence of valuing all belief structures as somewhat equal in their possession of truth has had some impact.

It was not revealed in the responses to the survey, but there might have been just a sense that some of these participants were uncomfortable in “judging” negatively someone else’s beliefs. Perhaps they believed that political correctness indicated that it
was not something they should do. Or maybe the respondents were not fully cognizant of the implications of their answers. Whatever the case, the divergent views on the truthfulness or rightness of other religious traditions were interesting to see in the responses. This may indicate the influence of postmodern though in their responses.

Another possible postmodern cultural influence might be seen in the responses to the question about what sin is. Although several did respond that “sin is transgression of God’s law,” there were others who never saw sin as a factor in relationship to God or his holy law. Again, it is difficult to know for certain if this is a direct influence of postmodernity, but it does suggest that for many the concept of sin is more a personal, inner belief of what is right or wrong, and how one violates that personal values structure.

Such might have some merit if that individual was internalizing God’s principles of godly living. It would be difficult to draw too many conclusions from the sample responses, but what was shared by some of those surveyed would open the possibility that right and wrong was somewhat relative and open to one’s personal beliefs.

Near the beginning of the survey, a question was asked as to whether there were some values that all or most people ought to hold as “true.” Overwhelmingly, the respondents thought that there was indeed some values that were to be held by everyone. The survey did not develop this line of question further in defining what the respondents perceived those values to be. Yet when the question of sin was asked, there seemed to be some room for divergence of what sin is and how it applies. Perhaps their perception of what personal values are individually and any corresponding relationship to the concept of sin did not connect. Perhaps the two concepts were not understood by the respondents to be in any type of relationship to one another. And, if identified as being inconsistent,
the respondents might modify their answers to resolve any perceived lapses. The survey process does not resolve those issues.

**Those Having an Adventist Background**

Participants who had a Seventh-day Adventist background were asked to respond to a series of commonly understood Adventist behavioral standards. The standards listed in the survey closely reflected those used in the *Valuegenesis* project and the ten-year follow-up study. Among the respondents, continued strong support was evident for certain Adventist lifestyle standards. Refraining from the use of alcohol, tobacco, recreational drugs, and not participating in gambling were firmly held by the majority of those in the survey sample. When asked about the behavior lifestyle standards of refraining from the wearing of jewelry, dancing, listening to rock music, and attending movies in a theater, a real shifting away from these traditionally held standards can be seen. This shifting reflects national trends and indicates that those who participated in the project survey are not convinced of their value or importance in their lives. Most likely these standards will not hold in the near future of the Wausau Church.

When asked what would keep them from attending the local Adventist church, a variety of responses were given. Yet, in the responses a common thread ran through a good number of answers. The idea of being *judged poorly* by members of the church

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1 See discussion of Valuegenesis research project in chapter 3. Also see Gillespie and Donahue, *Valuegenesis: Ten Years Later*, and Roger Dudley, *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories for a 10-Year Study*.

2 Perhaps there is a connection with this slippage in holding to these four particular Adventist standards and the level of acceptance of the writings of Ellen White in the minds of those surveyed. Neither the project nor the survey addressed this issue, but nonetheless the idea that there may be a connection is a curious one.

3 See Table 7 in Dudley, *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church*, 40.
was mentioned in various forms and ways. Perhaps the responses that if the church was "unfriendly" might be another way of sensing that the individual was being judged poorly by what they perceive as the attitude of the church family. A lack of open acceptance, the feeling of being judged, or the sensing of an unfriendly atmosphere might be put together to understand a trend. When looking at the responses in that fashion, clearly these respondents are concerned about the critical attitude that may come from the local church towards them. This factor may indicate to church leadership that it should be on guard of any perceived negative judgments coming from the church to the young adult. The church may need to be aware of these potential perceptions.

Later on in the survey, when asked about what changes they had noticed in the Wausau Church in the last two years (the time period of the project), many responded that they noticed the change within the church to a more non-judgmental and accepting atmosphere. Evidently, they were feeling comfortable attending the church.

The level of comfort and acceptance for those who were surveyed overshadowed the doctrinal concerns. Although some did mention that they would leave if the church left "the truth," the majority verbalized the acceptance and non-judgmental atmosphere as a major factor in their church participation or attendance. Perhaps the church’s response to the shifting on the young adults’ acceptance of the four Adventist behavioral standards, that Dudley identified as failing to be assimilated in the younger generations, was a factor from the answers given.

The survey also indicated the preference for a contemporary/praise worship format. The change in worship format, from a traditional hymn-type liturgy to

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1 See Appendix A, section entitled Adventist Background Interview Questions, question 15.
contemporary praise-type liturgy, was seen in the respondents as a positive change at the Wausau Church. The additional time for singing and the creation of a praise-type atmosphere in the weekly worship experience evidently had helped give a new fresher feel to the church and has drawn more young adults to participate.

When asked about their level of Christian service or personal ministry-type projects these twenty young adults might have been doing, the level of activity was low. Some had gone on a mission excursion to another culture, but by and large the participation level of young adults in the life of the community around them was weak. This is also characteristic of the church family as a whole.

One final question that is particularly noteworthy and that has to do with the question of what are the major factors in securing one’s personal salvation. When given the statement, “If I want to go to heaven, it is important that I carefully follow God’s Holy Law for it’s a vital key to salvation,” 55 percent indicated that statement was true. Such a works-oriented thinking reflects the understanding of so many other members within the Adventist church.¹ As the pastor, I recognize the relationship between the law-oriented views and the problem of feeling condemned by their fellow church members. Such feelings might also be carried over into their personal relationship with God. Steps are being taken to help these young adults, as well as the church family as a whole, to enter and understand a grace-oriented life in Christ.

Although other survey questions do help to formulate a picture of what these surveyed young adults think, the above mentioned questions do give the essence of their responses. Therefore, we might conclude from the survey that the young adults are

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¹ Dudley, Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church, 58.
generally happy with the changes that were made to the ministry program of the Wausau Church, do wish to participate in greater numbers, and do bring with them some postmodern influences into the church as might the general population of which this church wishes to minister.

**Young Adult Participation at the Conclusion of the Project**

The following are the general observations about the membership records, attendance, and participation levels of the church family at Wausau in the late spring of 2005. Included in those observations is the specific information concerning those born after 1964. Such observations and data should be considered for future planning by the church at the completion of the project. It should be understood that just because this two-year span of the project for the purpose of the dissertation ended in June of 2005, the successful elements initiated would hopefully continue on for years to come.

Several ways of evaluating the church status in June of 2005 could be done. To help arrive at an objective understanding as possible with the available or known information, more than one statistical instrument was used. It should be understood that none of the available instruments provide a perfect evaluation of the church, but each does help to give a clearer understanding when taken together. Of course, each instrument has recognizable limitations, but even with these limitations they are workable to a certain extent as tools to assist in the evaluation process.

The first method employed was to simply check the official church membership records. From the church clerk’s records, the Wausau Church membership had suffered

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1 Official membership records are held at the Wisconsin Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. They are also available to the local church through the local church clerk, Jody Marsh. The numbers reflect Jody Marsh’s clerk’s report as confirmed with the Wisconsin Conference Church Records Office.
an almost eighteen-year decline beginning in January 1985. But as the project began in June of 2003, a sharp membership increase occurred. See figure 1.

As of June 2005, the book membership of the Wausau Church\(^1\) stood at 118. This is what the book membership was in January of 1985. The 118 is also an increase in membership of 24 individuals since the project started in June 2003. Church leaders on the local and conference level should be pleased with this change from years of declining membership to a period of consistent growth.

![Wausau Membership Graph](image)

**Figure 1.** Wausau Church membership 20-year span.

Such data, gathered from the clerk's official records, give us an indication as to the number who were recognized to be a baptized Seventh-day Adventists and members

\(^1\) As established by the local and Wisconsin Conference clerk's membership records.
of the Wausau Church. Although the church membership records can be a valuable tool for evaluating the church and its kingdom growth, as mentioned in chapter 2, it does not indicate those who are actually active in their attendance. It is very possible to have one's name on the church membership records, in good and regular standing, and live in another part of the world making attendance and participation locally impossible.

The attending individuals who are actually participating locally within the Wausau Church may not be official members of the church (such as un-baptized children of members, spouses of members, etc.). The process of using the membership record evaluation for the project then would not be able to indicate the number of those actually attending (members or not) who may consider themselves as part of the church family. The book membership record tool then would fail to give perhaps a more realistic or accurate indication of what was happening at the Wausau Church.

The project, therefore, attempted to gather additional types of information which might lead to a greater sense of the level of activity, and provide another method of evaluation. The June 2003 and the June 2005 Wausau Church Directories\textsuperscript{1} were reviewed as possible sources for providing additional information.

**Comparing the Listings in the Church Directories**

Reviewing and evaluating the names listed in the church directory can be very helpful in getting information about who actually associates themselves with the Wausau Church. For years, Jody Marsh, the Wausau Church clerk, has prepared a directory of

\textsuperscript{1}The local church clerk prepares the church directory and includes the names of baptized members, children living at home who may or may not be baptized members, individuals or families that attend regularly, and those members who may still have their membership at Wausau but have moved out of the area and are no longer attending the church.
not only the baptized book members, but also of non-baptized children of members and frequent attendees who are not members of the Wausau Church. Such a listing became a valuable resource for a more accurate representation of who is associated with the church than the listing of the official book membership.

In June 2003, the church directory indicated that 125 individuals were associated directly with the Wausau Church. At that time the official membership was 94. But in June 2005, the church directory indicated a total of 185 names that would be considered as associated with the local church. This, of course, is more names than found on the church membership official records, and indicates an increase of an additional 60 names over the 2003 church directory listing. As might be expected, closer evaluation of each of the two directories does indicate that many of those names listed are indeed the children of members living at home or on their own in the local area. The evaluation of each of the two church directories then suggests that the church family is indeed larger than what appears on the official book membership records. This might not be unexpected.

Of the 185 listed in the 2005 church directory, 149 could be considered regular attendees.\(^1\) That would mean that approximately 80.5 percent of those who could attend\(^2\) actually do at the time the project concludes. In the summer of 2003, that same comparison was approximately 61.6 percent. The actual record of weekly attendance indicates that somewhere between 90 to 115 attended the worship service on any given Sabbath morning by the late spring of 2005. That would mean that, as the project comes

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\(^1\) Regular attendee at worship services would mean one to two times each month.

\(^2\) They live within reasonable commuting range of the church.
to an end, on any given Sabbath between 76 percent to 97 percent of the 118 who could possibly attend would be present. Such would not be an accurate conclusion, however, since it does not take into account non-baptized members or those whose names appear on the church directory listing who are children of members. But, if compared to those who were considered to attend regularly (the 149), 57 percent to 77 percent would be present for worship on any given Sabbath. That would provide a more realistic view of what was indeed happening in attendance at the church for worship.

In table 3 the four generational groups (as highlighted in this dissertation project) are shown, plus children under 17. This table compares the potential attendees to be present at the worship service as listed in the two church directories. What is of particular note is the shifting percentage of attendees to the younger three generational groupings (Busters, Bridgers and Children under 17). This indication should be viewed as positive information for church leaders locally as well as at the conference level. Such a shifting would lead one to conclude that the younger participants are coming to church in greater numbers than before the project began.

Table 3. Potential Attendees from Church Directory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential Attendees</th>
<th>June 2003</th>
<th>June 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Builders</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boomers</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busters</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridgers</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>125</strong></td>
<td><strong>185</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Yet, this table (Table 3) of potential attendees for worship does have its drawback. The listing is only of "potential" attendees. The names listed are evaluated as being able to drive to the church for any given worship service. But that does not mean they are regular attendees. So, the evaluation of the project from the church directory source needs to go further.

Before moving, however, to another way of looking at the information provided by the church directories, we should note the specific change in the young adults area of the potential attendees. A closer look at the listing of the names indicates that there are 66 (Busters and Bridgers taken together) who might be classified as young adults (17-41)\(^1\) listed in the directory. That would suggest that as of spring 2005, these young adults occupy almost 35.7 percent of the names listed in the church directory. When compared with the directory created in the summer of 2003, the Busters and Bridgers occupied 28.8 percent of the congregational names listed. That would indicate that in the two-year period between directories an increase of almost 24 percent can be seen among the Busters and Bridgers. The greatest increase is seen in the Busters' generational group from 15.2 percent in 2003 to 25.4 percent in 2005 as a percentage of the whole congregation. But what is most amazing is that this is an incredible increase of almost 66 percent over the two-year period. Busters more than doubled their representation at the church. All of the five groups as they appear in Table 4 indicate a significant increase. But the Busters and their children offer the most significant change.

Another process or method of evaluating the information provided from the two church directories is to look for those who actually do attend at least one to two times per

\(^1\) Indicates the project parameters to include those born after 1964.
month. Although making such judgments is a bit subjective, it does give a fairly accurate
count of who actually does attend from those listed. From the church directory names it
appears that in June of 2003, 77 individuals attended the church at least once to twice a
month. In June of 2005, 149 individuals attended the church at least once to twice a
month.

In Table 4, it is clear that in all the generational groupings significant growth in
attendance did occur. As the project unfolded, some were concerned that the Builders
might drop out as attempts were made to reach to younger individuals in the program or
ministry changes at the church. Although a few Builders were lost to natural causes
(such as death, moved out of the area, etc.) these seniors actually experienced a healthy
growth in numbers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active/Regular Attendees</th>
<th>June 2003</th>
<th>June 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Builders</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boomers</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busters</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridgers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>77</strong></td>
<td><strong>149</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are at least three statistical comparisons that stand out from the table. The
table indicates that Busters increased their attendance from 11 in 2003 to 39 in 2005.
This provides a significant increase in attendance for this group and may validate certain
elements of the project that were designed to reach out to this particular group.
Table 4 also indicates a very significant growth in the children’s group. The church directories indicate that the new attending Busters did bring their children to church as well. There is a tie, then, between the attendance of the Busters and the attendance of the children. Such is not a surprise.

The third statistical comparison that stands out from the church is the Bridgers. The church directory comparisons indicate that this group grew from 6 to 11 in attendance at church. What this statistic does not show is the attendance at the Face2Face ministry events which are directly aimed at this generational group. I evaluate Face2Face below, but what can be gathered here is that although Bridgers did indeed show significant growth, they are not attending church in the numbers anywhere near what Busters are. The on-site church program may need to be made to react to these Bridgers to turn a more positive attendance record.

Regarding young adults only, the church directory lists 66 names who potentially could attend the worship service. But of those 66, 50 could be considered as regular attendees at worship. This gives several ways of calculating the percentages for evaluation. When comparing the 50 attending to the 66 young adults listed in the directory, 75.7 percent appear to be active in their attendance at the worship service. When the 50 young adults are compared to the 149 from all the generational groups who are considered to be active in their attendance at the worship service, 33.5 percent of that possible group attend. This marks an increase in the percentage of young adults in 2003 to 2005 from 22 percent to 33.5 percent.

One more comparison from the church directories should be made. In Monte Sahlin’s *Adventist Congregations Today: New Evidence for Equipping Healthy*
Churches, he indicates that generally the Adventist Church in North America is “graying,” meaning that the church is becoming a church of mostly Builders and Boomers. In June of 2003, the Builders and Boomers made up 54.6 percent of those who were worshiping regularly at the Wausau Church. Sahlin’s “graying” evaluation would be true of the Wausau Church in 2003.

But the 2005 church directory indicates that the “graying” trend has been significantly reversed. Today, Builders and Boomers occupy only 36.9 percent of those actively attending worship. The question many Builders and Boomers asked in June of 2003, “Where are all our young people?” could be answered in June of 2005, “They’re back in church.” See table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generational Shift</th>
<th>June 2003</th>
<th>June 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Those Born Before '64</td>
<td>54.6%</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those Born After '64</td>
<td>45.4%</td>
<td>63.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It appears that the project programs, for whatever reasons, did increase not only the number of young adult participants, but also the percentage of their generational groups within the church when compared to all the groups together.

Another process that might be used to glean an understanding of the information in the church directory is to consider who is active. That is, who goes beyond simply attending church once or twice a month, and actually takes a leadership or support role to assist the church in its ministries? For the sake of the project’s objectives, it will be
considered that anyone who teaches a class, participates in music, collects the offering, does the treasurer's work, etc., would be considered active beyond attendance. See table 6.

Table 6. Shift of Generational Groups Active in Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active in Leadership</th>
<th>June 2003</th>
<th>June 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Builders</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boomers</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busters</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridgers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 presents a comparison between the two church directory listings, those who have been active in some sort of leadership role or ministry support role that is beyond attending the worship services. When comparing the two directories, several statistics again stand out for observation. The Builders' leadership/support role within the church has remained the same. It appears that when a leader or support personnel was lost in this group, someone else in that age group stepped up and took their place.

Within the Boomers group, an increase in leadership/support is seen. This seems to reflect the increase in attendance from this group in general. Boomers continue to actively participate in the church leadership and support roles.

The Busters show the most remarkable change. As their numbers increased, so did their participation. Although not indicated from the church directory, Busters have
been more active in the Sabbath School children's divisions, Pathfinders and Adventure Clubs, social activities for their generational group or their children.

But what the table does indicate is that it is the Builders and the Boomers who are still carrying the bulk of the leadership roles where decisions are most likely to be made – the church board. It would be better if more leadership and support ministry roles were developed among the Busters, Bridgers, and even the children groups.

**Evaluation Through Financial Records**

Review of the financial records of the Wausau Church over the period of the project reveals an increase in giving to not only the local church building program, but towards tithe, Adventist World budget, Wisconsin Conference budget, and local church budget. This, of course, is of great encouragement to the local church leadership, as well as to the leadership of the Wisconsin Conference.

But what is difficult for the purposes of this project is to discover what factors of the financial growth of the church are directly related to the elements of the project. The construction of the new church building during the same time period made the giving patterns and increases unique, so no comparable period in the recent past would be applicable. Perhaps the tithe would reflect an indication in the increased giving pattern, but even that would be hard to verify without going into the individual giving patterns of the members. That is something that I, as the pastor, have elected not to do.

The local church treasurer has commented to the church board that he has seen significant increases in giving (approximately 27%) each year of the last two years when all giving is taken as a whole. Therefore, the financial picture of the church during that
period of time will have to remain at that somewhat subjective means of evaluation and the specifics will not be included in the dissertation project.

**Face2Face**

The Face2Face ministry was designed specifically for those between the ages of 17 and 25 (the Bridgers). It was an introductory, off-church campus, social/spiritual events which took place in my home on Friday evenings or in the public parks.

My wife and I led this group. I kept the list of the participants. Face2Face has a list of 29 individuals between the ages of 17 and 25. In order to be listed, the individual had to fill out a request form to receive mailings and announcements concerning Face2Face. Of the 29, 19 would be considered regular in their attendance at any given event. Not all 19 would show up at one time, however. A group of 7 to 12 was the usual gathering at my home.

Within the Face2Face group, 14 of the 29 were Seventh-day Adventists and were members of one of the three district churches. Those 14 represented 48 percent of the Face2Face group. Of the 14 Adventists, only 10 were members of the Wausau Church. The remaining group of 15 were either members of other faith communities or were not attending church anywhere to my knowledge.

Face2Face had a significant representation from the international students who attended NorthCentral Technical College (NTC). Of the 29, 6 of the regular participants were from other countries and attend NTC. Four of the international (NTC) students were Seventh-day Adventists. These international students often represented 50 to 60 percent of the Face2Face group gathered at any particular event.

The international students brought an interesting mix to the Face2Face ministry.
Of the four Adventist international students at the Wausau Church, none spoke English very well upon their arrival in the US.¹ For the first few months of Face2Face, a lot of the interaction concerned language issues between those who had permanent residence in Wisconsin and the international students. As the international students tried to understand English, the US nationals enjoyed sharing words, meanings, and exhibited patience with the U.S. visitors.

At first, the American attendees who came to Face2Face endeavored to include the international students into their social outings. They all went out bowling once. My wife and I did not attend these impromptu social gatherings, but it became apparent that cultural differences showed themselves immediately. All the international Adventist NTC students were single males. Being invited out to go bowling and have some pizza seemed to be interpreted by them as opportunities for “dating” American young women. Such was not the intent of the American young women at Face2Face. Although nothing was said directly, it appears that socializing with the international students was soon reserved by the American young adults to Face2Face functions only.

The group dynamic changed when these four international students began to invite others in their particular international student program at NTC to Face2Face. Soon, three of the international Adventist young men were bringing non-Adventist international NTC students to Face2Face. And in most cases, those invited international students were the girlfriends of the international Adventist young men.

My wife and I were pleased to welcome all the international students to the Face2Face events and to church. But their presence did affect the dynamics of the group.

¹ Two students were from Haiti and spoke French, two students were from the Dominican Republic and spoke Spanish.
In a positive sense, it gave opportunity for the rather isolated Wausau area youth to experience people, views, and the language of another culture. Such interaction could be of benefit to all, for exchanging ideas across diverse culture breeds understanding, knowledge, and compassion. For that, the presence of the international students at Face2Face was much appreciated.

The dynamics of the Face2Face group was affected in other ways, however, by the presence of the international students. None of the international students had any personal transportation. This required that someone had to pick them up and transport them to all events. The differences in cultural attitudes about keeping or confirming appointments became immediately apparent, and often the American culture would get frustrated at the international culture for those differences when appointments were not kept or communication of intentions was not forthcoming. Such incidents were minor, but did highlight that different cultures were side by side.

Other dynamics of the Face2Face group with the international students included the inability of the group to develop its own leadership. Continuous attempts were made by my wife and I to develop leadership among the Face2Face participants, but to no avail. It is hard to know exactly why such a problem could not be resolved, but perhaps it had to do with the cross-cultural nature of the group.

It may be possible that potential leaders were not comfortable to step forward because: (1) they were not sure how to relate to the mix of difference cultures, (2) they sensed they did not have the personal resources to contribute significantly to the group’s success, (3) they were too involved with other matters in their life to take on this additional responsibility, or (4) other personal reasons. There was also the possibility
that, as yet, no leaders existed who were in a position to lead in that particular mix of young adults who were active in Face2Face.

Whatever the reason for the lack of developed leadership, it does appear that Face2Face was appreciated by the group, and they enjoyed coming and participating at the pastor's house, interacting with my wife and me, and with the format of the program provided. Face2Face is really not seen as a specific project of the Wausau Church. My wife and I conduct it for the greater Wausau area. Therefore, we fund and manage the program almost exclusively. That continues to still be the case at the conclusion of the project. No immediate plans are being developed for the district of churches to take ownership of the Face2Face ministry.

Project Conclusions

The following are the project conclusions drawn from the current literature, the impact of the project elements, the project data gathered, and my personal observations.

1. The project did discover many possible causal effects on the lack of attendance of young adults (those 17 or older yet born after 1964) within the Wausau Church. Those elements of the church that were impacting the young adults the most, tended towards programming generally aimed at those born before 1946, church leadership resting almost exclusively in the hands of the Builders and Boomers, lack of adequate facilities for the needs of young adults and their children, and a traditional worship service that

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1 Such is reflected in the literature. See Whitesel and Hunter, 23.
failed to inspire young adults in their spiritual growth. Such a finding is consistent with the literature.¹

2. The project did highlight the fact that postmodernism is not as much a part of the culture in Wausau as may be found in other more metropolitan areas of the Western World. Yet, its presence is certainly noticeable in the attitudes of the young adults within and outside the church. The acceptance of diversity of world and religious views, the search for personal meaning of life, and meaningful personal experiences in worship indicated the effect of postmodern cultural influence in the minds of the young adults in the project. But also the use of technology in all aspects of their lives, and the resistance to the old institutional structures were also evident in their thinking. Such behavior patterns are consistent with the literature descriptive of Busters² and Bridgers.³ Often such postmodern views are raised by these young adults in both casual discussions and in more formal Bible discussion settings.

3. The project’s evaluation that young adults in the Wausau area, who were choosing not to be part of the church, could be encouraged to participate in the life of the church was correct. The results in the more than significant increase in participation of the Busters and Bridgers give verification to those assumptions. The development of a clear plan at the Wausau Church did reflect the suggestions made in the literature and was effective in increasing participation of the Busters and Bridgers.⁴

¹ See full discussion in McIntosh, One Church, Four Generations: Understanding and Reaching All Ages in Your Church.

² See Celek and Zander, 91-92.

³ See McIntosh, 17.

⁴ See Whitesel and Hunter, 34.
4. The project’s plan to educate the leadership to the issues the church was facing through the use of current books, articles, and formal discussions greatly increased their awareness of what could and should be done to stop the attendance and membership decline of the previous eighteen years. Perhaps this was one of the most significant elements of the project that kept the Wausau Church leadership and membership informed and part of the change process. This process was somewhat consistent with current literature.¹

5. Initiating Face2Face for Bridgers at the very start of the project created an atmosphere that my wife and I were intentional about involving the church in young adult ministries. Face2Face was not voted by any church board or any business meeting. It was just done as a part of my personal ministry outreach to the young adults. It was, however, an area of the church where the membership already recognized the need, but did not seem to know how to reverse the trend. For the first time in over two decades, a ministry to this vital group of young adults was happening. Immediately a positive response happened from those who participated in the Face2Face program. Such would indicate their need to have something for this segment of the Bridger group that ministered to their spiritual needs. The inner personal relationship with the pastor, the pastor’s wife and those involved with Face2Face was consistent with the suggestions and opinions in the literature.²

6. The project was successful in empowering people to develop their own ministries and to open the way for more volunteers and participation from anyone who

¹ See Kotter, 17-32.
² See Mueller, 243-246.
wished to share their gifts in ministry. This empowering is particularly noticeable in the increase of Busters in leadership and support ministry roles in the last two years.\(^1\) The use of the New Ministry process\(^2\) encouraged members to go ahead and develop their own ministries for Christ as they sensed he was leading them. This freeing or releasing of ministry to the individual seemed to inspire and encourage individuals to a newer level of greater passion of service. Such empowerment is consistent with the suggestions of the literature.\(^3\)

7. The project was successful in transitioning the worship service from a traditional format to a more “blended worship” style that seemed to be accepted by all generational groups. The introduction of PowerPoint presentations of the praise songs, Scriptures, and sermon messages was accepted as a good thing and helpful in raising the interest and participation levels of the congregation on Sabbath mornings. Creating a more personal, experiential worship atmosphere appeared to lift the mood of all the worshipers attending any service. It was surprising to me that the change in worship style was accomplished with very little criticism and negativity. Such may reflect the literature from R. Wuthnow which highlights the shifting from “dwellers” to “seekers.” That transition within the Wausau congregation may be indicated by this shifting from one to another.\(^4\)

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\(^2\) The New Ministry development program is a part of CROSS ministries and initiated at the start of the project.

\(^3\) See Kitchens, 27-30.

\(^4\) See Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950's.*
8. Because of the changes in the atmosphere in worship, there is little doubt that the Busters became more active in church and rapidly increased their attendance at worship. Unlike the Bridgers, the Busters needed little, if any, leadership development. Given opportunity and a little pastoral encouragement, the Busters quickly developed networks and relationships that solidified their place in the church. Soon, Busters were active in leadership roles in the children's divisions, the school, and in various new ministries. The change in worship service then had a direct impact on the significant increase in participation of the Busters which led to greater ministry involvement. The project's program elements led to the change in participation levels of this group more significantly than any other group to date.

9. In the winter and spring of 2005, the growing Busters group developed its own social/evangelistic-type program which included non-Adventists. It is self-sustaining and enthusiastically attended. It seems that the social/evangelistic needs of the Busters followed up on the heels of their growth and enthusiasm at the changes they discovered at the Wausau Church during the project. Busters needed little pastoral or church family support to seek additional avenues of ministry. The totality of the project elements evidently created the atmosphere where Busters could flourish. Such a development with the Busters themselves would be consistent with the literature.

10. Although a Pathfinder Club and an Adventurer Club did exist prior to the project, after the other project elements got going, renewed enthusiasm and participation

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1 Hillside Christian School which operates as a 1-8-grade elementary school on the church campus.


3 The Pathfinder Club and Adventure Club are similar to Boy & Girl Scouts. Pathfinders and Adventures are a coed, Christian (Adventist) organization for elementary-aged youth.
affected each of these groups in a positive manner. These two groups, still developing, grew in numbers of individuals participating and in the quality of the programs offered. Immediate and rewarding success was theirs at Conference-wide fairs and competitions. This result was not part of any particular literature suggestion, but perhaps suggests the old axiom—"rising tide lifts all ships." I would conclude, however, that there is power in Pathfinders not only for those participating directly in the ministry, but for both the general church congregation and those looking forward to participating from the children within the church.¹

11. The construction of the new building was a significant, but not a dominate factor in the project. It gave the church the needed floor space to develop new ministries, increased Sabbath School division rooms, more intimate worship center, and more noticeable community awareness than the previous location. The literature reviewed did not address the building of the new church in conjunction with the project time span. Yet, its presence in the project did have some effect to a greater or lesser degree. The building project did make it possible for the church family to meet felt needs both during and after its occupancy. Working together towards a common goal pulled a wide diversity of the makeup of the church family to embrace the building construction as one group.

12. Closely associated with the building construction was the addition of lighted crosses on two sides of the facility. The inclusion of the crosses actually was an expression of the changes within the congregation from an Adventist traditional makeup to a more evangelical mix. The crosses became a point of congregational expression to

¹ See Barry Gane, Building Youth Ministry: A Foundational Guide (La Sierra, CA: La Sierra University Press, 1997).
the community that indeed this Adventist church was truly Christian, and that Jesus was loved here. Without the project progressing as it did, that probably would not have happened. Such would be consistent with the literature.\textsuperscript{1}

13. The changing of the name of the church from the Wausau Seventh-day Adventist Church to The Shepherd's House: An Adventist Community of Love appears to have been a very positive step. It appears that the new name only confirms for the Boomer generation, and those generations below it, that their church is now new, fresh, and open. The initial idea of change was met with objections from some of the Builders in the congregation, but the voting of the change did indicate the shifting of the congregational view. Quickly, the acceptance of the new name transpired. I am told that there is now a pride in telling others where they worship, and what it is all about. Such a development also follows the general trend in the literature among postmodern Adventists.\textsuperscript{2}

14. The preparation of the philosophy of ministry brochure was at times a daunting task, but within the last few weeks of the project coming to a conclusion, it has definitely set a tone and a way of introducing people to the church as it now is. It also helped to clarify to the church family how we are going to operate and what our ministry is to be about. Although just a few weeks in existence, it seems that it will be an important element in the project's effectiveness into the future. Such was in keeping as outlined in the literature of change.\textsuperscript{3}

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\textsuperscript{1} See Bruinsma, 20.

\textsuperscript{2} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{3} See the eight change steps as listed by Kotter.
15. The project was inadvertently helped by the almost year-long rental of the Mountain of the Lord Lutheran Church while the Wausau Church was under construction. Members were weekly exposed to a church where many different worship banners were displayed, where they could see the open sharing of the various ministries to the community, and the participation of the Lutherans in non-traditional activities. It provided opportunities for the Wausau Church family to see the possibilities of divergent ministries. Such inspired the church to actively think and do activities in other ways. Such finding of new ways of ministry and activities is reflective of the literature.

16. Perhaps the most important element and that of the greatest change was the collective attitude of the congregation. Congregational energy can be witnessed through the church’s varieties of ministries and worship. Members are now demonstrating a positive desire to connect people with Christ. Not enough can be said about the importance of this one critical part of the project. The change from the feeling of helplessness in the presence of steady decline in attendance and membership to one of a sense that God is definitely leading us now – is the most important and crucial element of the entire process. Many doubted that it would happen. Some felt that the pastor’s vision of what it could be was merely wishful thinking. But as more and more people came and liked what was happening, attitudes changed. Such an attitude change was reflective

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1 Reflective of literature. See Bruinsma, 20.


3 See Ayers, 28-29.
of the literature. There is a sense here in Wausau that this church is being led by the Holy Spirit, and the evidence of such is apparent every day.

**Recommendations**

The following are the recommendations for the church leadership and the Wausau church family as a whole that I have gathered from the project’s progress and information gleaned.

**Recommendations to the Wausau Church**

1. I, and all the Wausau Church family, recognize that what has happened so far in the rapid growth in attendance and participation is indeed the work of the Holy Spirit moving through his people as we have become willing to follow. It is the intent of the leadership and church family to surrender the ministries and membership to the leadership of Christ and the Holy Spirit every day. It is recommended that the pastor and leaders of the Wausau Church consistently seek through prayer and study the leadership of the Holy Spirit in looking for guidance to the future steps in ministry.

2. I, and many of the Wausau Church family, understand that this is only the beginning of the change process of adapting ministries to the changing world culture now upon us. To assume that the church has “changed enough” would be contrary to what the literature is stating and would almost certainly lead to a stopping of the growth at the present level. It is recommended that the church leadership continue to keep abreast of social change factors and current literature on the topic of postmodern cultural trends.

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1 See Celek and Zander, 101-105.
3. It is recommended that the church leadership participate in North American worship and music conferences (within and outside the Adventist denomination) by sending delegates to glean ideas and obtain resources that might assist in the development of effective worship elements for the local church as well as continued enhancement of present worship services as created after June 2003.

4. It is recommended that the church leadership participate in North American pastor/laitry ministry conferences (within and outside the Adventist denomination) by sending delegates to glean ideas and obtain resources that might assist in the development of additional ministries in the church as well as continued enhancement of present ministry elements.

5. The ministry for the Bridger age group did not expand as was hoped. Now that the gym/fellowship hall has been completed, recreational and social fellowship programming should be developed to target the ages of 17-25. Committed church leadership and Bridger leadership development are needed to help expand this crucial area of the church. It is recommended that the church family seek individuals who would be committed and gifted in this important area.

6. It is recommended that development of church community involvement projects and ministries be initiated as soon as possible. Invitations to various faith-based community projects that are currently operating in the greater Wausau area should be given to enhance the awareness of the congregation to the needs of the community as a whole. Participation in community-wide, faith-based programs should be a regular occurrence at the Wausau Church.
7. It is recommended that the pastor and his elders preach a series of sermon messages clearly outlining what a grace-oriented life in Christ is and how it stands in contrast to a law-oriented life. Some type of evaluation instrument should be utilized by the church leadership to assess the effectiveness of the series and whether the congregation is understanding what a grace orientation is personally to them in their spiritual walk.

8. It is recommended that the church family assist in the teaching and practice of a grace orientation to all church attendees, Sabbath School divisions, and the many ministries of the church. A constant monitoring of the continued emphasis on grace in Christ should occur.

9. It is recommended that the church not only practice the ministry of cultural relevance, but endeavor to continue to educate the membership to the importance of understanding postmodernism and its impact on the community. When cultural issues arise, careful instruction or education of the issues involved should be highlighted so all may understand their impact on the function or ministries of the church.

10. It is recommended that the church leadership recognize that size or growth changes in attendance have implications in ministry programming. The church leadership needs to be proactive and not reactive in planning for ministry changes as the growing attendance demands. Great care needs to be taken to prevent a serious plateau effect because of a lack of planning or foresight.

11. It is recommended that the church leadership develop a more structured process for assimilation of seekers of Christ into the church family and into the faith.
Small home groups,\(^1\) classes at the church, website inner-active studies, and the like would help in assisting individuals to come to an understanding of the life in Jesus. These additional avenues or tracks for entrance into the life of the church and into deeper spiritual growth are needed as soon as possible.

**Recommendations to Denominational/Conference Administration**

1. It is recommended that local conference administration assist in the education of local church leadership personnel in becoming aware of the issues of postmodernism, the possible conflicts between the generations within the local church, the possible changes to pastoral church leadership, and how evangelism might be shifted to reach the postmodern culture. Perhaps sponsoring conference-wide seminars where postmodernism and its impact on the church could be initiated.

2. It is recommended that the conference, union, and division administration take a proactive approach into what the postmodern cultural shift may have upon the financial viability of the local church, various levels of the conference structure, and the worldwide mission of the denomination. Perhaps the North American Division of the church may need to develop new financial policies to reflect the shifting cultural giving patterns of the postmodern church members. It is recommended that all levels of church organization that are affected by the influence of postmodernism seek ways to survive with financial viability for the foreseeable future.

3. It is recommended that denominational leadership continue to look at the growing opportunities for evangelism through the usage of the Internet. It is recommended that the denomination assist conferences and local churches in how to use

\(^1\) Sometimes called Home Bible Fellowships.
the internet more effectively in assisting evangelism, community awareness, and community involvement.

4. It is recommended that denominational leadership assist the local church and local church pastors in the use of the Internet and other electronic media in communication and organizational structure to help all levels to access resources and information. For example, Web-conferencing may be utilized to assist in lay education from seminars to local church officer education.

5. It is recommended that denominational/conference leadership become conversant on the issues of postmodernism, the effect of the cultural shift on the local church, and the emergence of a new type of church that is taking place across the U.S.

**Recommendations for Future Research or Review**

1. It is recommended that future research be done specifically related to the Buster generation and their children in relationship to their needs and wants from the local church. Perhaps study could be given to how postmodernism might affect the parental influence on the children of Busters as they participate in the life of the local church. This project found the strong influence of the family among the Busters. With such a strong Buster priority, what and how could the local church capitalize on this need?

2. It is recommended that future research be done specifically related to the Bridger generation and their needs as might be affecting their participation in the local church. Perhaps study could be given to Bridgers' ability to absorb multiple sources of information at once, and how that might relate to the worship service. Is it possible to have a multi-sensory worship service and still meet the needs of the four generational
groups within a typical local congregation? Is having separate worship services the only answer to meet the diversity of cultural needs?

3. It is recommended that future research be done into the effect that personal, short-term\(^1\) mission excursions (domestic or foreign) might have upon those born after 1964 in relationship to their participation in the life of the local church. Would personal involvement in out-of-culture mission projects be a positive influence and tend to draw participants in those mission excursions into active participation in the life and ministry of the local church?

\(^1\) Two weeks to a month.
APPENDIX A

QUESTIONS USED AND RESPONSES GIVEN IN PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

Number of surveys in sample: 20

Demographical Information

1. Age range: 21 - 40 Males: 6 Female: 14
3. Last educational level you finished? H.S.:1 Some college:9
   4-Year Degree: 6 Graduate School: 4
5. Personal cell phone: Yes: 16
6. Baptized member of a church? Yes: 19 No: 1
   Seventh-day Adventist: 18
   AH – St. Joseph Catholic Church, but I now attend the Shepherd’s House
7. How often do you attend church? Regularly: 19
   RI – A few times a year
8. Country of origin? USA: 18 Canada: 2
9. Consider Wausau and the surrounding community home: Yes: 19
10. Any religious information or spiritual guidance accessed from the Internet:
    No: 14 Research of religious topics or for music: 6
    MO – I get songs of Jesus and I signed up for spiritual messages that are sent to me each
day. H0 – I get a daily devotional off the Internet.
11. Do you watch or listen to 3ABN Satellite Radio or TV?
    Yes- No- 20/20

1 The listing of the identity of the surveys has been coded to hide the identity of the participants or
    their responses.

190
Relationships and Commitments:

1. At present, what relationships seem most important to your life? 18 out of 20 respondents indicated that their immediate “family” was the most important relationship in their lives. 2 respondents suggested “God” as their most important relationship.

2. What experiences have affirmed your sense of meaning in life? What experiences have shaken or disturbed your sense of meaning?

EA (Age 29) Having children.
RI (Age 25) Oh, a new birth in my family. It really upsets me when someone I know gets killed senselessly.
ER (Age 32) We had a miscarriage and that really made me think about life in a new way.
AS (Age 23) After high school I thought I was on top of the world and then made some really poor decisions. I took advantage of my parents. But now, my parents have helped me to get back on the right path.
OR (Age 31) Our house burned completely to the ground, and then I would say the uncertainty or discouragement about work.
OA (Age 30) The signs of the times. Hearing about some horrible event like 9-11. It shakes me when I hear of deaths or unfortunate events that happen to members of my family.
JA (Age 38) Don’t really have an answer for that.
CA (Age 38) Having children
HO (Age 30) 9-11 shook me a lot. It really did.
OO (Age 27) Getting married and having a baby. But having my husband called up to serve in Iraq bothers me right now.
TO (Age 28) Not sure what I would say.
RU (Age 24) Don’t know.
UR (Age 34) Just relating to my husband and affirmed and shaken me at times.
SC (Age 36) Going through my divorce for the last year and a half. That has really shaken me and what life is about.
CE (Age 35) No answer
IG (Age 37) No answer given

3. Can you describe the beliefs and values or attitudes that are most important in guiding your own life?

EA – The Bible truths and I have learned to be the truth.
RI – Being a good person. Being respectful, honest, and living with integrity.
ER – In Christ. That’s my main focus. My beliefs are in Christ.
AS – Honesty. My personal integrity. My belief in my work.
MO – Always have a positive attitude
OR – I believe I have a responsibility to my children in helping them develop a relationship with Jesus. And I want them to grow up to be basic decent people.
OA – To behave in an ethical manner. Integrity, honesty, not compromising your own belief regardless of the pressure.
JA – Being true to yourself, and have a relationship to Jesus
CA – God and the Bible
HO – Personal relationship with Christ based on the scriptures.
OO – Having financial stability or management of my funds. Then trust in family and having God be part of the family.
TO – God and family and Christian values
RU – I don’t have any. I just live my life day by day
DB – Family, faith
UR – Truly the belief that God will not give me more than I can handle.
LR – My beliefs that guide me are the ones I have as I daily walk with the Lord.
SC – Honesty, and kindness to others
CE – Believe in God that He is in control here on earth.
IG – My Christian beliefs and moral values

4. Do you feel that some approaches to life are more “true” or right than others? Are there some beliefs or values that all or most people ought to hold and act on?

19/20 said Yes to the first question.
20/20 said Yes to the second question.

RI – Everyone should have equal respect and be tolerant of others view about life and religion.

5. What relationships or groups are most important as support for your values and beliefs?

5 responded that their values & beliefs were supported by their family.
6 responded that their values & beliefs were supported first by their family then their church.
4 responded that their values & beliefs were supported by family first, then their friends.
3 responded that their values & beliefs were supported by their church family
1 responded that their values & beliefs were supported by other Christian women

6. When you have an important decision or choice to make regarding your life, how do you go about deciding?

EA – I discuss it first with my husband and then less frequently I will pray about it.
RI – I tend to think first how it will impact others and I ask my family and friends.
ER – I pray about it. Then I talk about it with someone older and wiser.
AS – I make a decision on what I think I should happen and then I talk to my parents.
MO – I do “pros” and “cons” list. I then pray about it. Depends how serious, of course.
OR – First through prayer, then I research it as much as I can. After that, I ask my family then friends.
OA – Prayer and then discuss it with my dad.
JA – Weight the advantages and disadvantages, talk to spouse and then pray.
CA - I pray first and then talk with my husband.

HO - I pray and then discuss it with people I am close to.

OO - I talk to my husband, then my family. Then I might pray about it.

TO - Pray about it then ask my family and friends.

RU - Important decisions are sometimes just jumped into.

DB - Discuss it with my husband, and then I have personal prayer about it.

UR - Talk with my girlfriends and then pray.

LR - Prayer and then I seek advice from friends and family. Then I pray again. And then weigh the "pros" and "cons."

SC - I pray about it.

CE - I pray for wisdom and then discuss it with the people who are important to me. Then I try to sense my inner feelings of what I should do.

IG - I talk to my wife, pray about it, and then weigh the consequences.

7. Is there a “plan” for human lives? Are we affected by power beyond human control?

19/20 said yes, there is a plan for human lives.

JA - There is a plan, but we ultimately decide. I decide my own future.

RU - I don’t concern myself with higher beings as far as who’s around me. I just see what's happening around me and live with it.

8. When life seems most discouraging and hopeless, what holds you up or renews your hope?

EA - My family

RI - God

ER - I read Bible texts and then my family.

AS - Myself.

MO - God loves me no matter what I do.

OR - It is encouraging to me to look back and see just how God has actually been leading me even through the harsh rough times.

OA - I find the will to survive, then underneath I rely on God.

JA - I know God has a plan for me. I am following it as best I know.

CA - Jesus

HO - My belief in God

OO - I just keep thinking that there is heaven out there for me

TO - Just relying on God

RU - I just make a 180 degree change to see what that will do.

DB - There is a plan. If we could see things as God sees it, we would not choose it any other way.

UR - The birthing of new life

LR - I read my Bible and pray.

SC - Well, I think to myself that tomorrow has got to be better. But I really believe that God knows just how much I can take.

CE - That what we are going through is only temporary and better things will be coming.
IG – My faith is what gets me through

9. When you think about the future, what makes you feel most anxious or uneasy?

EA – Any suffering that may come to my children.
RI – That something bad or unexpected will happen. That’s my biggest fear.
ER – Terrorism. End of time things.
AS – My career makes me most anxious.
MO – My sisters not believing in any religion, or they’re not really serious about.
OR – For my children’s safety and salvation
OA – The fate of my children
JA – I worry that the United States can’t defeat terrorism. And I’m not sure my kids won’t have the same things I have in life.
CA – Unknown things. I fear being separated from my family.
HO – The end times as they relate to prophecy
CO – That my husband would have the same values as I would.
TO – Certain people in my family and what they are doing
RU – I don’t know what the future holds, but it’s either going to get better or worse. No in between. I do worry about not knowing if I’m living the life as I should.
HD – I worry about the future of my children – their personal safety. I am not worried about things like the war.
UR – I am uneasy about the future in general and I think it will look a lot different that what we have always expected it to be like.
LR – Watching my children getting thrown into it.
SC – Being alone.
CE – The unknown. And maybe people who haven’t yet made a decision about their own salvation.
IG – Personal finances and how I can take care of myself and my wife.

10. Some people believe that we will always have poor people among us, and that in general life rewards people according to their efforts. What are your feelings about this?

EA – No, I don’t think that is true. Things just happen to people sometimes for no reason.
RI – I don’t believe that’s true. Unfortunately things do happen as a product of our environment.
ER – Don’t know
AS – I believe 98% of poverty cases are by choice. The other 2% are by circumstances.
MO – I don’t think that’s true. It’s part of life and things just happen for a reason that God knows. He has a plan.
OR – For the most part, I think that’s true. But everyone has trials for reasons we don’t know or can explain. God is working in all of us.
OA – Don’t necessarily agree. People are often victims of circumstances.
JA – Mostly true.
CA – Life doesn’t always reward us according to our efforts. We will always have the poor among us.
HO – We will always have the poor among us. Reward is not necessarily because of personal effort.
OO – Some people are poor even when they make a good effort. It’s just the hand they’ve been dealt.
TO – The poor will get their reward in heaven
RU – I just believe the poor will always be poor.
BD – We will always have the poor, but life doesn’t always reward according to our efforts.
UR – I agree with the statement in general, but some people just have a harder road to hoe than others. Even when they are working as hard as they can, they don’t succeed.
LR – Some truth, but not infallible. Many of the poor aren’t of their own making.
SC – I agree with the first part, but not the second. Sometimes things happen to people that aren’t their fault.
CE – I agree to a certain degree, but there will always be circumstances that people just can’t help.
IG – There is something to that in general, but not always. There are times when people don’t get what they deserve or earn.

11. Do you feel that human life on this planet will go on indefinitely, or do you think it is about to end?

18/20 said they thought it was about to end.

OA – It will end. Not sure the day or the hour. No one knows for sure.
UR – I don’t think we know.
SC – I hope it ends soon, but don’t see it happening right away.

Religion:

1. Do you consider yourself a religious person?

Yes- 18 No- 1 Somewhat- 1

MO – There is more that I could do, but for my age group, I try.

2. Do you feel that your religious outlook is “true”?

Yes- 19 No-

MO – Not necessarily

Are religious traditions other than your own “true”?

Yes- 7 No-5 Somewhat or perhaps-6

EA – What we are doing is right, and some of what others believe is right too.
AS – I’ve been taught that we are right and others are wrong. But we have no proof that ours is true.
MO – Any religion that loves God and believes He exists is true.
JA – I don’t think others who don’t follow the Bible are true.
CA – Christian traditions have some truth.
TO – Some have wrong views. I know that.
RU – You can’t exactly judge.
CE – I guess it’s in the eye of the beholder. It probably is true to them. But ultimately, Christianity is the only true religion.

3. If you pray, what do you think is going on when you pray?

EA – I think God is listening and He is preparing to do what is best for me.
RI – That God is listening to me.
ER – I know He is listening to me
AS – Sometimes I want things to come out my way and sometimes the answers scare me.
MO – That God is listening. That His holy angels are there with me and that He is working on it.
OR – Communication.
OA – Depends on the effort of the prayer. “Canned prayers” are not effective. Meaningful prayer leads to God listening.
JA – Not really sure. I think God is bring me closer to what He wants to have happen.
CA – I’m being heard, and Jesus is praying with me.
HO – You’re speaking to God and listening to Him.
CO – Kind of like a telephone conversation. Sometimes He answers. Sometimes He just seem to ponder it.
TO – The angels bring the information to God.
AH – Just me having a simple conversation with God.
DB – I think the Holy Spirit is interceding for me. I sometimes wonder what kind of groans God has when he hears what I am asking or praying about.
UR – I don’t know. I feel a peace, so there is something going on.
LR – I think the Lord is so close He hears me before I speak them to Him.
SC – I think He (God) is listening, but that He doesn’t always agree with what I am asking Him to do.
CE – My mind is focused on things of heaven and I have a different mind set as I pray.
IG – I imagine that God is hearing my prayers. I don’t really know how it is done, but I believe He does listen to what I am saying.

4. What is sin (or sins)?

EA – When you do something against what you know God would not want you to do.
RI – Anytime you do something that would disappoint God or be wrong towards other people.
ER – Doing opposite of what God wants me to do. Breaking His commandments.
AS – A betrayal or deception. The world is full of it.
MO – When you disobey what God says, and do what you know is wrong.
OR – Willfully going against what you’ve been convicted is wrong.
JA – Breaking the law. But I am more flexible as I have gotten older.
CA – Going against what God wants.
HO – Direct disregard or disobedience to something you know is wrong.
OO – Doing what you know is wrong.
TO – Anything that disobeys the commandments
AH – Anything you do that you know is wrong, especially if you’ve done it purposely.
RU – Thing you believe yourself that are not right. Things you think are wrong or wicked.
DB – Anything that separates me from God.
UR – Being without moral values. Being of the world. Not being true to your conscious.
LR – Transgressions
SC – Transgression of the Law
CE – Transgression of the Law and separation from God.
IG – Transgression of God’s Law.

5. What is your image (or idea) of mature faith?

EA – Somebody who is very well versed in the Bible and has a strong relationship with God.
RI – When every decision or act is driven or done with God in mind.
ER – When you have been through trials and still able to stand firm.
AS – My parents, the way they believe.
MO – Going to church, giving Bible studies. Making everyday a day of devotion.
OR – Someone who constantly has peace no matter what come their way.
OA – No sure that exists on earth.
JA – When they accept God’s plan for themselves.
CA – Someone who completely trusts God and doesn’t worry about a thing.
HO – Reaching outward and having a more sense of ministry.
OO – When you do and live for God, and you’re proud to show it.
TO – Following your religious beliefs the best you can.
AH – Someone who is living their lives as close to God and as best they can.
RU – Knowing and believing in full without doubt or worries. Knowing that God can make the choices in your life.
DB – Someone who is at peace and doesn’t matter what may happen. Someone who can praise God through anything.
UR – When you become at peace and you know who you are. Accepting the gift of salvation without remorse.
LR – One that isn’t living on “mother’s milk,” but someone who digs deep and isn’t afraid to face controversial issues and struggles in belief and faith.
SC – Someone who has been through really tough times and yet still stands firm for the faith.
CE – Something that under any circumstances that he understands that God has the plan in His mind. God is in control.
IG – Someone who is stable and consistent their faith
6. Do feel that attendance and participation in a local church is important for your own personal spiritual life?

Yes - 18  No - 1  
RI - Important, but not necessary.

7. If you ever came back to the church after being out of it for a time, or become active after a period of inactivity, what were the main reasons for your recommitment?

UR - I wanted my children to learn the culture of Adventism. I would always try an Adventist church first because of my cultural upbringing as an Adventist.
LR - It was after I hit rock bottom. I had a serious crisis in my life.

Adventist Background Interview Questions:

1. How important is it to you to live according to these Adventist standards?

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<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
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<td>TV on Sabbath</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2. When you think of the Adventist Church, are you personally embarrassed about being a Seventh-day Adventist?

Not at all - 13  
A little embarrassed - 5  
Very embarrassed -  
Don’t know - 1  
Doesn’t apply - 1

OR - Not embarrassed about The Shepherd’s House, but of some of the view Adventists have held historically expressed.

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OA – I'm the type of person who doesn't share a lot about themselves, so at times I am a little embarrassed to say I'm an Adventist.

3. Some within the church may see Adventist Standards or even doctrinal positions of faith different than you. How do you view these other Adventists who hold different positions on issues than you?

   EA – I guess I really don't have an opinion. They can do what is necessary for them to do and what they believe is right for them.
   ER – We all have our opinions.
   AS – They're entitled to their own beliefs.
   OR – It depends. I consider myself liberal in some things and conservative in others. So it's hard to make a judgment like that.
   OA – I really don't have an answer for that.
   JA – We can have a wide variety of beliefs. Most people are now more liberal than before.
   CA – Wouldn't know what to say to that. I think they just have a different view.
   HO – I think they are more conservative than I am.
   OO – They are just in a different place in their studies than I am.
   TO – I don’t think they are wrong. They just see things different.
   RU – I don’t practice any type of doctrine.
   DB – Lots of labels could be applied. It would depend on the views they held.
   LR – If it causes your brother to stumble you should consider your actions very carefully.
   SC – They are either more liberal than I am or more conservative. It’s their viewpoint and that’s okay.
   CE – I may look at them either as liberal or conservative. It's not an issue, really.
   IG – I picture that everyone is at a different place or stage in their own personal walk. I have no problem with people seeing things different that I do.

4. If you could say the one thing that would keep you from attending the local Adventist Church, what would it be?

   EA – I guess if they told me I couldn’t come.
   RI – Fear of not being about to measure up to other’s standards. Being judged.
   ER – Maybe if my pastor was gay or was way off on what God wanted.
   AS – Nothing really.
   MO – The hypocrites judging people.
   OR – If the church began preaching something not Biblical or totally off the wall.
   OA – Change in doctrine, and then feeling unwelcome.
   JA – I don’t know.
   CA – Not much. Can’t think of anything.
   OO – If there wasn’t a Christian family where we were all doing our own thing.
   HO – Lack of tolerance for other people.
   AH – Unfriendly people. If I felt unwelcome, I definitely would not go.
   RU – The thing that turns me off more than anything is people over-welcoming me. I just want to be left alone.
   DB – If I felt my children were being damaged.
UR – Judgmental attitude. I hate the holier-than-thou attitude or a self-righteous attitude of people.
LR – If they ever went back to the attitude they had during the 70’s of such criticism and judgmental attitudes.
SC – Time constraints.
CE – Apathy among the other people attending the church. If there was a lack of excitement of what is going on. If the church was too set in its ways and too rigid in its ways.
IG – Feeling of not being accepted

5. Have or did have close friends near of their own age who also attended the same church:
   Yes: 15  No: 4
   Those friendships are still on going: Yes: 13  No: 3

6. Have or did have good friendship with church members who are not of their age group:
   Yes: 18  No: 2  Younger: 11  Older: 18

7. Preference for various worship service styles-
   Traditional hymns and careful liturgy- 5
   Gospel hymns and testimonies- 2
   Contemporary Christian music and praise choruses- 14
   Christian rock music- 1
   Other-

8. Preference for various worship service elements-
   Would enjoy more time for prayer together- 4
   Would enjoy more time for singing- 11
   Would enjoy some time to express one’s self in the arts- 3

9. Would there be a better time for you to attend a worship service other than on Saturday mornings at 11 A.M.?  Yes: 5  No: 14

   RI – Yes, during the week and during the evening.
   JA – In the afternoon on Sabbath
   HO – Saturday at 4 PM
   RU – Maybe earlier. Depends on my work schedule.
   LR – Friday night would be better for me.

10. Consider the most important element or part of the worship service-
    Congregational prayer- 2
    Congregational singing- 12
    Offering-
The sermon- 9
Other-

11. Any time spend during your week in Bible reading- 11/19
   In personal prayer- 18/19
   In giving Christian service to others- 7/19

12. Would you say the following statement is – “Very true, somewhat true, usually
    not true, not true at all” (“If I want to go to heaven, it is important that I carefully
    follow God’s holy law for it’s a vital key to salvation.)

    Very true- 11
    Somewhat true- 3
    Usually not true-
    Not true at all- 6

    ER – Not the main thing. You must believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior.
    DB – Only reason we get to heaven is through Christ’s gift of salvation.

13. Have you ever taken a “mission” or service excursion into another culture as a
    volunteer? Yes: 6        No: 12

    EA – I went to Mexico during high school.
    ER – I went to Mexico my senior year of high school.
    AS – I went to Belize my senior year of high school.
    MO – I went while I was in high school
    OR – Yes, built a church in Mexico
    DB – Not as an adult, but I was in the mission field with my parents overseas.
    CE – in November of 2003 in Dominican Republic

14. Do you volunteer your services to help those in need?

    Yes: 10      No: 9

    RI – Helping with friends and family who are having a rough time.
    MO – I did, but not much now.
    OR – I volunteer to help those who are moving or need something done around their
    house when they are not able.
    CA – I visit with people in their homes and volunteer at the school by teaching music.
    HO – I give some time in helping at Big Brothers and Big Sisters.
    UR – Generally I volunteer to help my neighbors who are sick. I sometimes secretly
    donate clothes to those in need around me.

15. Some would say that the Wausau Church has gone through a lot of change in the
    last two years.
What would you say? Yes: 16   No:
Do you think that has been positive?   Yes: 16   No:
What changes have you particularly noticed?

EA – I like the more contemporary music and singing. And there are a lot of new faces now coming to church. I think that’s great.
ER – The music at worship, and trying to do more mission work in the community. And of course, the new building.
AS – There is a totally new atmosphere and make up of the church. The pastor has helped us be more welcoming and not so restrictive. It is comfortable to come now.
MO – Of course, the building of the church, but also there are a lot of new people and a lot of young people too.
JA – We are now more accepting of people and their differences, and our worship services are more exciting.
OO – I hear a lot about being more involved in our community.
TO – I see a lot more people at the services, and I like the use of the projection screen.
RU – Less criticism and less finger pointing.
DB – In our worship style, and in our people mix.
UR – I have noticed the transitioning to a more open and more contemporary attitude and feel. The church is a lot more open to different people now.
LR – More participation from the congregation during worship. It is a lot more exciting and less people are nodding off asleep.
SC – The worship style has become more liberal and the whole church is a lot more accepting of people.
CE – Seems like they have changed quite a bit. People seem to want to be involved and participate in all kinds of activities.
IG – The change in the order of service and moving to a more contemporary music format. And the training of the leaders, like the greeters, seem to show a consistency of purpose letting people know what they are to do.

16. Rate participation level now as compared to two years ago?

More then than now-  2
More now than then- 6
The same- 8
Not really participating- 1
Does not apply- 3
APPENDIX B

THE SHEPHERD’S HOUSE INFORMATIONAL BROCHURE

The Shepherd’s House – it’s a good family to belong to

Joyfully lifting up Jesus!

The Mission

The mission of The Shepherd’s House is to provide a place where people come to love Jesus, know who He is, and what He’s about.

A place of refuge

The Shepherd’s House seeks to be a place of refuge. It’s a safe house for the spiritually battered. A place of refuge from the storms of life. A place where past errors are laid to rest. A place where hope is born and where new life begins.

The Shepherd’s House is not a fraternity for the perfect. It’s a place for those seeking soul shelter and growth. Our goal is to accept people where they are on their spiritual journey by providing an environment where less than perfect people can be confident of love, acceptance and forgiveness.

Christ’s example

We believe that God has given The Shepherd’s House congregation a ministry of hope, of grace, of salvation – not a message of condemnation. John 3:17 states: “God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

As a congregation we want to be God’s instruments for healing and restoring – whether for our own lives or that of others. We want to be able to say: “The . . . Lord has anointed [us] to preach good news to the poor; He has sent [us] to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness the prisoners, . . . to comfort all who mourn and provide for those who grieve . . . to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair” (Isaiah 61:1-3).

Many people have seen the Christian life as anything but enjoyable. They’ve seen it as drudgery that must be endured if we want to avoid hell and win heaven. Jesus had a different view. He said, “I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10). We

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1 The following brochure was adapted from a similar brochure developed by the Markham Woods Seventh-day Adventist Church. The adaptation of the Markham Woods brochure was done with permission.
believe that God wants life to be vibrant and rewarding here and now. He wants our joy to be complete (1 John 1:4). That’s the kind of spiritual experience we want at The Shepherd’s House.

Wounded healers

As much as we’re committed to these concepts, we fall short of achieving our goal. We understand that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Whether newcomers or long-time members, whether leaders or followers, wherever people may be on their spiritual journey, we recognize we are sinners who are trying to get our act together. Yet we believe that God uses frail and faltering humans to minister to others.

Our church isn’t just for the spiritual down-and-out. It’s also for those who have already experienced God working in their lives. It’s a wellness center where those concerned about spiritual health come to work out. It’s a classroom for spiritual instruction. It’s a forum where spiritual ideas are expressed. It’s a practicum, where spiritual theory is applied. It’s a place where people seek to become all that God has in mind for them to be.

Servant leaders

At The Shepherd’s House we believe in service to others. We recognize everyone has been given different talents, skills and spiritual gifts. We encourage all to use those gifts for the enhancement of our community of love.

In our everyday world we may have a lot or a little social status. To a great degree, the titles pains and privileges of our everyday world disappear in the context of The Shepherd’s House spiritual community.

Our focus is on two great principles: First, we’re all hopelessly lost sinners without Christ. Second, because of what Christ has done for us, we’ve been declared righteous, with entitlement to eternal life. Given these two facts, all other lines of demarcation pale into insignificance.

Everyone welcome

Everyone is welcome at The Shepherd’s House. If you’re a long-time, baptized, active Seventh-day Adventist, you’re welcome. If you’re not a Seventh-day Adventist but feel blessed by fellowshipping with us, you’re welcome. If you lead out in a major ministry of the church, you’re welcome. If you attend only occasionally you’re welcome. Our goal is to minister at whatever level and to whatever degree you feel a need.

We offer a standing invitation, however, for everyone to become deeply involved in the life and ministry of the congregation. We believe “he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed” (Proverbs 11:25). We believe spiritual healing and growth are enhanced by spiritual exercise. We believe a greater blessing is found in giving than in just receiving. We believe God gave us spiritual gifts to be used for the benefit of others.

Because we’re dependent on volunteers for all our ministries, helpers are definitely needed all the time. We want the motivation for service to spring from a willing heart.

We want you to look forward to coming to church. We appreciate the kind of pressures that many people face. We know the demands of family and work. We understand how crises arise that can overwhelm. We want you to participate in a manner appropriate to where your life is presently, and be assured, you’re welcome.
Christ culture

The goal of the Shepherd’s House is to create a spiritual community that may include people of different races, ethnic backgrounds, socioeconomic status, educational levels, ages, personalities and perspectives, because we’re all children of Christ.

That is in keeping with the Apostle Paul’s assertion in Galatians 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

The Bible does not deny our group or individual differences. It simply says that the Christ culture transcends all other delineations. We aren’t first and foremost Anglo or African-American, Hispanic or Asian, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, young or old, male or female, liberal or conservative. These are all secondary to the spiritual culture experienced by believers united in Christ.

This fellowship of believers, the Christ culture, is the ultimate definer. The Christ culture is the power that allows us to rise above all barriers and is the bond that allows us to have unity in the absence of uniformity. It is the unifying culture of Christ that is all-inclusive and all encompassing.

The Christ culture focuses on love, forgiveness and acceptance inspiring us to want to become all that God has in mind for us to be.

Making people comfortable

Our passion for the feelings and sensitivities of others means that we avoid some practices that may be commonplace. For example, we’re sympathetic toward the desire for anonymity on the part of some people. We don’t pressure visitors to sign a guest book. They may, if they choose, hand in an information card from the pew racks. Even that is totally of their own choosing.

Recognizing that extroverts love to meet strangers but that introverts are often intimidated by such encounters, we normally don’t take time during our service to invite everyone in the congregation to shake hands with someone else. The true extrovert will naturally do it on their own whenever and wherever they meet friends or strangers. We don’t want the true introvert to feel forced to wait in the halls until the “safe time” when the handshaking is over.

We want to make everyone feel welcome. We place signs in our halls. We include phone numbers, addresses and directions in the bulletin when advertising activities. We seek to use terminology that everyone will understand. We frequently put Bible passages up on the screen so everyone can easily follow along.

The message we try to convey is that The Shepherd’s House isn’t just for Seventh-day Adventists or just for the spiritually mature, or just for people “in the know.” It’s for everyone who’s seeking spiritual nurture and fellowship.

Outreach all the time

The Shepherd’s House congregation is totally committed to outreach. In fact, every activity the church runs is viewed as outreach.

The congregation is encouraged to invite family, friends, neighbors, acquaintances to every aspect of our church program – worship services, social events, children’s programs, youth activities, Vacation Bible School, etc. As individuals and as a congregation we seek to make each person feel a part of our spiritual community.

We believe that the single most important aspect of any outreach is friendship.
At The Shepherd’s House, we strive to make every day visitors’ day. Members are always encouraged to invite visitors. Visitors are always welcome. The program planners always assume that visitors will be present.

The Shepherd’s House is blessed with a growing number of children and youth so they’re a high outreach priority. The church runs a wide range of spiritual, social and recreational activities for children and youth.

Our outreach is by no means limited to what goes on at the church. The congregation engages in and supports a variety of activities that are best described as “disinterested benevolence.” Whether local or in another country, these activities include providing food for those in need, stepping forward when disaster strikes, providing both material and labor to build churches, assisting with medical ministries, and children’s programs. We do these things simply because a need exists and we’re in the position to help.

The Shepherd’s House

Mission: The mission of The Shepherd’s House is to provide a place where people come to love Jesus, know who He is, and what He’s about.

Philosophy: As Jesus took the initiative in seeking the lost our church accepts the responsibility to actively seek out those in need. Our church family is not a fraternity for the perfect but a support group for those needing growth. Our purpose is to accept people where they are on their spiritual journey, providing an environment where less-than-perfect people can be confident of love, acceptance and forgiveness in a spiritual family.

Jesus offered more than acceptance. He offers us a changed life. Thus our purpose is to encourage, instruct and nurture those within our sphere of influence so that each of us can become all that God has in mind for us to be.

Our Purposes

1. Provide worship experiences that glorify God uniting our hearts with His.
2. Foster a sense of fellowship and belonging.
3. Create an environment where diversity becomes a means of mutual enrichment rather than a barrier between individuals.
4. Provide ministries for specific ages, needs, and interest groups.
5. Provide spiritual nurture through prayer and caring ministry.
6. Make training and outreach opportunities available.
7. Ensure the financial viability of The Shepherd’s House.
9. Support the global mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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A no-put down zone

Our goal is to help people with different life experiences, different personalities and different viewpoints as they move forward on their spiritual journey. We recognize that not everyone will arrive at the same spiritual understandings, and not everyone will travel at the same speed. Tolerance and acceptance is a crucial characteristic of the fellowship at The Shepherd’s House family.

We believe zealously pushing personal viewpoints, whether liberal, conservative, or middle-of-the-road, is counter-productive. We welcome forthrightness. We expect diversity of opinions. We want to “create an environment where diversity becomes a means of mutual enrichment rather than a barrier between individuals.”

Ellen White, one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and certainly its most influential thought leader, advocated teaching people to be “thinkers and not mere reflectors of other men’s thoughts.” In the spirit of her admonition, we seek to foster open discussion at The Shepherd’s House. We want all to feel free to express themselves, certain that they’ll be treated with respect, even by those who disagree.

Our Spiritual Heritage

We are proud to be Seventh-day Adventists and recognize that God has given a special task to this denomination — and to our congregation — at a special time in earth’s history. We believe that every congregation that uplifts Christ is part of God’s plan for the evangelizing of the world. Seventh-day Adventists do not have a monopoly on spiritual insight, salvation or virtue. We recognize that the spiritual insights that Seventh-day Adventists hold as truth, were not only discovered by Adventist spiritual leaders, but also spiritual leaders of other faith movements throughout Christian history.

If people wish to ridicule and demean other denominations and belief systems, they should be forewarned that these types of comments are not welcome at The Shepherd’s House. We recognize the validity of other denominational Christian experiences and welcome the opportunity to dialogue together.

Our goal is to retain the spirit that our early Adventist Pioneers, and others, have exhibited. We want to equip those attending for decision-making; we do not want them to merely memorize a list of decisions already made. We want our members to ask questions and not settle for glib answers. We want our church to foster spiritual discovery. Truth can always bear investigation.

To borrow from the words of Ellen White, we wish to “keep to the affirmative of truth.” If we focus on the positive — the Bible, Jesus, salvation, grace, hope, and service — the negative, for the most part, will take care of itself.

Our sermons are based on the scriptures. We believe the Bible is God’s Word and should be our rule of faith and practice. We believe that the Bible, though written millennia ago, is as relevant today as when it was written. We seek to discover how the Bible sheds light on the questions of every-day life.

Let the Spirit Lead

Our congregation welcomes the spiritually hurting, the angry, the cynical, the doubters, the free thinkers, the free spirits, the uncommitted, those who may have been burned by other religious experiences and have all but given up on organized religion, and those who have never been exposed to religion.
There are others who come into our fellowship who have had only minimal exposure to spiritual things. They do not know religious jargon. They certainly do not know anything about Adventist standards and traditions. They just know they have a need, and they are trying to fill it, and they are checking out the new church at 6300 Bittersweet Road to see if we have answers.

The members of The Shepherd’s House believe in letting the Spirit guide the individual conscience on issues where the Bible lays down broad guidelines, but does not provide specific directives. We are not going to say: “When you learn to dress in what we consider an appropriate fashion, we will be more than happy to engage in spiritual discussion.” Rather, we open our arms, welcome them and encourage them to become actively involved in some form of ministry.

While The Shepherd’s House members support the biblical principle of simplicity and stewardship, when it comes to the practical applications of these principles, some might not draw the line in the same place that Seventh-day Adventist tradition has.

Our philosophy, in general, is that it is the job of the church to promote the principles outlined in scripture. But it is not our job to prescribe every practical application of those principles. That is the work of the individual conscience, guided by God’s Spirit.

Harmony with nature

The same busy rush of life that robs us of adequate time for God, family, and community also estranges us from nature. Yet nature is God’s handiwork, a demonstration of His power, a revelation of His love, a gift to be enjoyed.

Through a variety of activities the church encourages people to more fully appreciate and be blessed by God’s “second book.” We have an active Pathfinder (grades 5-12) and Adventurer (grades 1-4) program for youth and children. We seek to capitalize on our lovely hillside setting by planning for a variety of outdoor ministry opportunities, which may include, but are not limited to, an outdoor chapel, a nature trail, and a secluded picnic area.

At the personal level, we advocate a healthful diet, adequate exercise and sufficient rest. We promote balanced living. We seek not to judge others on the basis of how perfectly they perform. We let people grow at their own pace, according to their own convictions, as the Spirit leads.

Preserving our identity

The Shepherd’s House is unique, and those who attend often sense the uniqueness. In fact, many prefer it to anything they have experienced elsewhere.

The Shepherd’s House congregation colors outside the lines at times. The departures from tradition are rarely by chance and are never a sign of anarchy. They are part of a carefully thought-through and comprehensive philosophy that continues to be developed and refined.

In keeping with the candor that characterizes The Shepherd’s House, we want every potential member to know why we do what we do. We readily acknowledge that in some respects we are different from many Seventh-day Adventist congregations. We cherish our denominational connection and heritage and we are excited about the niche we are carving out for ourselves. Evidently, our unique approach has positively impacted many who otherwise would never be reached. We feel privileged to be part of such a ministry, and we open our doors to all who would like to share The Shepherd’s House experience with us.

*All scriptural quotations are from the New International Version (NIV).*
Invitation

- If you like what you have read in this brochure...
- If you like our Biblical, Christ-centered worship...
- If you like the congregation’s willingness to let people make their own spiritual decisions...
- If you like a service-oriented congregation...
- If you like a congregation that targets its ministry toward spiritual growth...
- If you like a congregation that realizes that “God isn’t finished with us yet…”
- If you enjoy fellowshipping with us...

Consider making [The Shepherd’s House] your church family. It’s a good family to belong to.

The Shepherd’s House
An Adventist Community of Love

6300 Bittersweet Road
Wausau, WI 54401

Tel (715) 241-7722

www.shepherdshousewausau.com
APPENDIX C

FACE2FACE FRIDAY NIGHT TOPIC LIST

The following is a partial listing of the topics that were presented by the pastor or his wife on Friday evenings to the Face2Face group to those in the Bridger age bracket.

**General Christian Lifestyle Topics:**

**Is It Really Possible to Connect with God?**
Can I personally connect with God?

**Connection in Community**
What does *fellowship* mean in Christ?

**Connecting with God’s Family**
How can I survive the conflicts within the church family?

**Connecting with God in Worship**
How can I become a great worshipper of God?

**Voices from the Church**
Random internet postings of the struggles of young adults with the church and God.

**Truth Verses Values**
Does anyone seriously believe in moral absolutes anymore?

**A Quick Look at the Faith Chapter**
How did these people get their names in Hebrews 11?

**When Tragedy Strikes**
How can we cope when serious tragedy comes our way?

**When No One is Looking**
Do we lead double lives? What’s the harm if we do?
Growing Deeper in Christ
What does a deeper life in Christ mean?

The Body of Christ
How can I be part of Christ’s family?

Agree/Disagree
Free discussion on a number of controversial topics that Christians face

Dating and Intimate Relationship Topics:

The Five Stages of Dating

How We are Different
How men and women differ socially and emotionally

Should We Live Together?

Intimacy – How Close?

How to Date Fair?

Please, Not too Serious!
When you just want to be friends
APPENDIX D

Ministry Assessment for
Antigo, Merrill, Moon and Wausau
Seventh-day Adventist Churches
June-September, 2003
By
William Bossert, Pastor

ANTIGO:
Approximate weekly worship attendance: 32

Asset Elements for Ministry-
• Building structure is well maintained and presentable, and there are no needed building expansion issues. There is strong congregation pride in their church facilities.
• Although the church is not readily visible, it does have a directional sign on one of the main streets marking the area of the church, and it is located “in town.”
• No outstanding church debt or other financial problems face the congregation.
• Attendance/membership is slowly slipping as family members grow up and move away or stop attending.
• A wonderful held elder. A man of compassion, vision, and caring for ministry.
• A small group of ministry working women.

Elements of Concern or Challenges for Ministry-
• Antigo church, like the other three in the district, is almost totally disconnected from the life and needs of the community around them. Impact as a church family on the community at large is almost totally non-existent. This needs to be addressed and corrected.
• The Antigo church and Adventists as a denomination are not well known in the community. This is a concern for their long-term presence as a church there in the community.
• Half or more of the Antigo membership is made up of one family. This creates an interesting dynamic. The church becomes an extension of the family networking system. The “family” tends to sit all on one side of the church while the rest sit on the other. Close to half of the family members are very sporadic in attendance and participation, and their attachment to the church may rest on family relationships rather than spiritual ties.
• A very few lead out at the church every week, while for many others participation is limited to attendance only.
• There is a comfort with the lay-back atmosphere of the church activities and ministries.
• The church family wants interesting programs brought to the church to attend and enjoy. No real desire among the majority of attending members for working a program for mission outreach.
• The reality of farming demands directly effect the ministries and schedule of the church.

Opportunities for Added Ministries-
• Member suggested—“High School Bible Bowl” and TV Programming from Three Angels Broadcast Network (3ABN)
• Some wish for a health ministry although Antigo’s church doesn’t have a strong representation of medically trained professionals.
• Vision session scheduled for November 7-8.

MERRILL:
Approximate Weekly Worship Attendance: 20-27

Asset Elements for Ministry-
• Building structure is well maintained and presentable, and there are no needed building expansion issues. There is congregational pride in their church facilities.
• Church is located prominently on a busy street corner, and is “in town.”
• No outstanding church debt or other financial problems face the congregation.
• Membership is facing a steady decline.

Elements of Concern or Challenges for Ministry-
• Merrill church, like the other three churches in the district, is almost totally disconnected from the life and needs of the community around them. Impact as a church family on the community at large is almost totally non-existent. This needs to be addressed and corrected.
• The Merrill church and Adventists as a denomination, are not well known in the community. This is of concern for their long-term presence there as a church family. Other local churches are teaching erroneous facts about Adventists and our teachings.
• Merrill church is mostly made up of those who are over the age of 65. Although some are active retirees, they tend to focus on the functioning details of keeping the church going, and arguing over items of minor importance; rather than seeing the vast ministry needs around them. For example, great concern and discussion took place over how the local elders were to be listed in the bulletin and by what title. But when discussion moved to ministry mission ideas, they seemed a bit clueless. They consensus seemed to be, however, that something should be done.
• Merrill church is concerned that they are dying as a congregation. They remember when there were 150 active members. Now they see preciously few young people (none between the ages of 18-40) and don’t know where they are or how to minister to them.
• The pastor senses that some of the members look to 3ABN to be the evangelistic thrust to the community. There is a belief that since they watch it many others must watch it or would watch it if they had it available. There seems to be little recognition that 3ABN’s audience is almost exclusively Adventists over the age of 55.
• The church follows it well established routines each week. Any alterations to the routines are carefully discussed and considered before any action is taken. There has been some talk of changing the order of service and the response songs sung each week. The last change to the order of service and responses songs was over 11 years ago.
• Because of the number of people attending and the difficulty in coming to a shared workable vision, the church is under-programmed.
• Many of the church members perceive themselves as the pre-nursing home church.

Opportunities for Added Ministries-

• Opportunities for ministry are everywhere in Merrill. Since many in the congregation are retired, they have free time to enter into various ministries. After school programs for struggling students from the middle school across the street could be coordinated. An active seniors club could be done for the town. Supporting the local volunteer organizations for the hungry or homeless could be done to acquaint the community with Adventists.
• If the church wishes to grow, it needs to add additional programs to its ministry.
• Talk of having a visioning session is being discussed.

MOON:
Worship Attendance: 5-7 (Rarely any visitors)

Asset Elements for Ministry-

• The building structure is reasonably well maintained and presentable, and there are no needed expansion issues. There is congregational pride in their facilities.
• No outstanding church debt or other financial problems face the congregation.
• Moon offers lots of room in seating capacity and parking for additional attendance at church. Currently only three parking slots are used.
• Membership is facing closure. Discussions have been about such a closure and process.
• Moon has the media ability for satellite downlinks for 3ABN and regularly watches Doug Batchelor for Sabbath School and church when the pastor is not present to preach.

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1 The Moon Church formally closed in the Winter of 2005, and the property has subsequently been sold.
Elements of Concern or Challenges for Ministry-
- Moon church appears to be totally disconnected from the life and needs of the community around them. Impact as a church family on the community at large is non-existent. At this time, there doesn’t seem to a way to correct this within the church family itself.
- The Moon church is not well known in the community. The location of the church in Moon does not contribute to its presence in the Mosinee Community for it is located 5 miles out of town on a dirt road.
- Moon membership has lost the key to the front door of the church. But no need to panic, members enter the church through the basement side door and make their way upstairs. The front door is only unlocked from the inside when a guest comes.
- The pastor senses that Moon members look for 3ABN to be the evangelistic thrust to the community. There is the belief that since they watch it many others must watch it or would watch it if they had it available. There seems to be little recognition that 3ABN's audience is almost exclusively Adventist who are 55 or older.
- There are really only two members (a husband and wife) that are capable for willing for ministry within the Moon community.
- A couple of the leading Moon members are espousing some religious theories that are not really consistent with Adventist theology, but they are having little or no effect on others. The two, however, seem eager to learn what the pastor thinks and seem to accept that reasoning.

Opportunities for Added Ministry-
- The pastor senses that from a couple of the members that they believe the town of Mosinee has soundly rejected the “Light of the Three Angel’s Messages,” and therefore it is pretty pointless to try to evangelize the community. Nevertheless, some efforts to hand out “warning” pieces of literature and other tracts are done by these same members on a random basis.
- The pastor believes that Mosinee is a town that could support a church. But it would need to be replanted “in town,” and have a re-visioning of what the ministry of the church should and could be.

WAUSAU:
Approximate Worship Attendance: 85+ ¹

Asset Elements for Ministry-
- The present building structure is reasonably well maintained and presentable.
- The planning of the new church facility has been a challenge and a great blessing to the church family. It has reawakened the awareness of the church for ministry and effectiveness in the community.

¹ This is about a 35 percent increase since June 1st.
- The new church facility is in a semi-rural setting but is considered by the community to still be "in town." Future development of the land surrounding the church will most likely take place within the next 2-5 years.
- No outstanding church debt or other financial problems face the congregation at this time, but the cost of the new church facility will affect the church family for several years to come as the building is completed.
- The church family is very enthusiastic about the new building. There is an upbeat spirit and sense that the Lord is leading us to greater effectiveness and growth in Wausau.
- Wausau has an excellent school under the capable leadership of its principal. It appears that the school will continue to grow, and the new school facility (as part of the new church) can only help that growth.
- Membership is growing. Hopes are to double church attendance in the next 24 months.
- Strong, capable, and committed leadership is within the church family and is on many levels.

Elements of Concern or Challenges to Ministry-
- The thousand and one details about the transition to and building on the new church site
- The financial commitment required for the completion of the building. The monies received from the State settlement will not cover all the cost of the new church. We're more than doubling the floor space in the new church.
- Wausau church, like the other three churches in our district, is almost totally disconnected from the life and needs of the community around them. Impact as a church family on the community at large is almost totally non-existent. This needs to be and is being addressed and corrected.
- The Wausau church and Adventists as a denomination, are not well known in the community. This is of concern for they have had a long-term presence there. Other local churches are teaching erroneous facts about Adventists and our teachings.
- Wausau church as quite a number of young adults (ages 18-30) who are not attending church. Many of them say they still have a relationship with God, but feel the church is too boring. The church is addressing this issue with added programming for this age specific group.

Opportunities for Added Ministries-
- Wausau's ministry programming is improving and growing. Members seem to sense that we can, should, and will do more to expand the ministry of the church. The addition of a prayer ministry, Bible study classes, adult Sabbath School class, and young adults outreach are just examples of this change.
- Wausau would be open to creative evangelic presentations of the message for the community which would reach the emerging generations of young adults.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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VITA

William S. Bossert graduated from Pacific Union College with a major in theology and a minor in history in 1970. He remained at Pacific Union College for an additional year and earned a Seventh-day Adventist Secondary Teaching Certificate in 1971. In 1976 Bossert graduated from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University with a Master's of Divinity degree.

Bossert has pastored churches in Central California Conference, Oregon Conference, Southeastern California Conference, Southern New England Conference and currently serves a three-church district in the Wisconsin Conference.

He is married and has four grown children.