New Member Retention Strategy for the Makoko Church

Yoseph Nyambega Otieno
Andrews University

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ABSTRACT

NEW MEMBER RETENTION STRATEGY
FOR THE MAKOKO CHURCH

by

Yoseph Nyambega Otieno

Adviser: Bruce L. Bauer
Title: NEW MEMBER RETENTION STRATEGY FOR THE MAKOKO CHURCH

Name of researcher: Yoseph Nyambega Otieno

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Bruce L. Bauer, DMiss

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Problem

The effort made by the Makoko Seventh-day Adventist Church to fulfill the great commission (Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16) through public evangelism is challenged by the constant exodus of newly baptized converts out of the church. The emigration of new members out of the church has a compound effect on the church; it denies the church the opportunity to disciple new converts and discourages church members from continuing to fund public evangelisms as they are considered a waste of resources. When people accept Jesus they also receive eternal life, but when they leave the church they risk forfeiting the gift of eternal life and they become harder to win back. Loss of new members also causes membership records to contain more members than are actually present. The local conference uses the inflated membership records to set unreachable goals for the church
that cause stress for the pastor and discourage the church members.

Method

The Bible, Ellen White, and modern scholars were consulted to better understand how to retain new members and to develop a retention strategy. A questionnaire for former members and focus group interview questions were developed and implemented to discover what former and current church members and district pastors say is the cause of new members’ exodus out of the church. A workshop to involve stakeholder participation in the development and implementation of the strategy for new members using Logical Analysis Approach was conducted. After the process of strategy development, a pilot evangelistic meeting was conducted at the Zanzibar company of the Makoko church, the results were monitored, evaluated, and reported on.

Results

The implementation of the new member retention project at the Makoko church has created an awareness of how to retain new members and has equipped the members with the means of combating the problem. After one year of project implementation, new member retention was improved from 42.4% to 86.8%.

Conclusion

The church members have come to realize that if the principles found in the Bible, the writings of Ellen White, and in other Christian authors are followed many more new members can be retained and new member losses significantly reduced.
Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

NEW MEMBER RETENTION STRATEGY
FOR THE MAKOKO CHURCH

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

by
Yoseph Nyambega Otieno
October 2014
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APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

Adviser,
Bruce L. Bauer

Director, DMin Program
Skip Bell

Wagner Kuhn
Dean, SDA Theological Seminary
Jiří Moskala

David Penno
Date approved
Dedicated to God
The Father, The Son, and
The Holy Spirit. It is By
Your Providence This
Has Taken Place.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Humanity’s very survival depends on the salvation attained by Jesus Christ on the cross. Before Jesus died He declared, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16, NKJV). To help people believe in Him, after His death Jesus commissioned His disciples, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:19-20). To make disciples is not an easy task; it is an arduous, risky, and costly venture, both in terms of finance and human resources.

Despite the difficulty involved in making disciples, the Makoko Seventh-day Adventist church members have a desire to obey Jesus’ commission; they are willing to sacrifice their meager resources and give of their time to conduct public meetings to bring people to Christ every year (see Table 2, p. 104). Public meetings in Makoko still produce a good number of new converts for the church. For example, from 2005 to 2010, a total of 212 new members were baptized into the church, most of them as a result of evangelistic meetings.
The Problem

Even though the Makoko Church appears to succeed in bringing new members into the church through public meetings, however, that apparent success in witnessing is marred by the exodus of the newly baptized converts out of the church. The same record from 2005 to 2010 shows that of the 212 baptized during those five years, only 90 (42.4%) still attend church services; 122 (57.6%) have either apostatized or the church has lost contact with them and no longer knows their whereabouts. This situation of new member loss is challenging and worrying.

The loss of new members denies the Makoko Church the opportunity of either making “disciples,” of the new converts or teaching “them to observe all things” (Matt 28:19-20) that Jesus commanded. New members who wander away become the hardest to win back to the church. As they return to their former secular ways of living, they give the church a bad reputation since society still considers them to be Seventh-day Adventist church members. Ellen G. White wrote,

After individuals have been converted to the truth, they need to be looked after. The zeal of many ministers seems to fail as soon as a measure of success attends their efforts. They do not realize that these newly converted ones need nursing,--watchful attention, help, and encouragement. These should not be left alone, a prey to Satan's most powerful temptations; they need to be educated in regard to their duties, to be kindly dealt with, to be led along, and to be visited and prayed with. These souls need the meat apportioned to every man in due season. No wonder that some become discouraged, linger by the way, and are left for wolves to devour. Satan is upon the track of all. He sends his agents forth to gather back to his ranks the souls he has lost. There should be more fathers and mothers to take these babes in the truth to their hearts, and to encourage them and pray for them, that their faith be not confused. (1946, p. 351)

Purpose of the Project

It is therefore the task of this project to develop and implement a strategy to
increase new member retention in the Makoko Church.

**Justification of the Project**

New member apostasy or loss not only challenges the Makoko Church, but also the global church. From 18-20 November 2013, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists convened a Summit on Nurture and Retention (Ng, 2013, slide. 1) out of deep concern for new member loss. Therefore, the problem is a worldwide concern.

Several reasons justify a new member retention project. The project improves the church’s ability to lead more people to Christ and ultimately to eternal life. It helps new members stay in the church, become deeply committed disciples, and remain long enough to be taught all things Christ commanded, without returning to their former hopeless ways of living.

New member retention interventions ensure a better use of the church’s resources, both human and financial, if new converts stay in the church. This would in turn encourage church members to continue with their witnessing efforts, because it is productive and fulfilling. Furthermore, keeping new members protects the church’s reputation, for when apostate new members return to their former ways of living, they tarnish the good name of the church, and make it harder for others to join the church.

When new converts join the church, the church secretary immediately updates the church membership record, however, when people leave, there is great hesitancy to remove their names from the church records. This causes church membership records to contain many more church members than those actually present. Then the local conference uses that inflated number to set yearly goals that are unreachable, stressful for the pastor, and discouraging for the church members.
Delimitations

The difficulty in retaining new members joining the church from various outreach avenues is a serious concern for the church. However, this project focuses more on how to retain new members joining the church from public evangelistic meetings in Makoko.

Although the focus and locale of the New Member Retention Strategy for the Makoko Church project is the Makoko Seventh-day Adventist Church, in order to provide a fuller view of new member retention challenges the research data for the project is not confined to the Makoko church alone.

Significance of the Project

The significance of this project is manifold; it is educational and practical. In the process of the research I hope to gain a better understanding of why new members leave the church from the perspective of those who were once Seventh-day Adventist church members, from the perspective of current church members, and from a literature review. The information gained will help church leaders and laity improve new member retention.

During the implementation of the pilot project, the Makoko Church leaders and laity will participate in identifying the weak areas in their new member care practices. This knowledge will hopefully improve new member retention in the church.

It is also my hope that the strategy developed will be of help not only for the Makoko Church, but also will improve new member retention in the Mara Conference, Tanzania, in the East Central Africa Division.

In the following sections I will give a brief outline of some of the things that have shaped me as a person. It is through the grace of God, in His Son Jesus Christ whose
patience and guidance have developed some gifts in me that enable me to do ministry. As a human being my background, weaknesses, and strength affect me as I embark on this project.

**Personal Basis for Ministry**

**Introduction**

God calls people to work for and with Him to save those who have not yet accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. He calls not only ministers of the gospel, but also doctors, chaplains, nurses, colporteurs, Bible workers, and other consecrated laymen of varied talents and occupation (White, 1911, pp. 158-159). The success of the one called depends on some basic fundamental premises upon which the person’s life is built. Culture, history, experience, and worldview play a significant role in how one fulfills the call. It is crucial that one be sentient of the factors that form a personal basis for the ministry. Among the most important information one needs to have are self-awareness, background, specific personal assessments, and relational issues (J. Dybdahl, personal communication, 2012) that stand as a foundation for responding to and implementing God’s call to the ministry.

**Self-Awareness and Self Knowledge**

Self-awareness and self-evaluation are vital and biblical as a basis for ministry. Reggie McNeal, director of leadership development for the South Carolina Baptist Convention, defines self-awareness as “the leader’s intentional quest for self-understanding” (McNeal, 2006, p. 11). It involves knowing one’s background, understanding the motive behind one’s actions, being acquainted with how I interrelate
with others, and being cognizant of how I sustain my emotional, physical, and spiritual condition (p. 10).

It is crucial that I become familiar with my concealed addictions or habits that may produce inconsistencies or undercut my relational effectiveness with others. The Bible is replete with stories of leaders who had deep self-knowledge that serve as an example. Jesus had a profound self-knowledge of Himself. He knew He was both the Son of God and Son of Man (John 10:36; Luke 22:70; Matt 8:20). He knew He was sinless (John 8:46). He was fully aware of what His mission was, that He came to save the lost (Matt 18:11), and that when that mission was accomplished, He was going back to His Father (John 20:17). This self-awareness focused His mission and allowed for successful completion of that mission.

Paul is another biblical leader who had a deep knowledge of himself. In his autobiography in Phil 3, he reveals his ethnic origin (“Hebrew of the Hebrew”), his legalistic, pharisaical training, and his compulsive zeal that led him to blindly persecute Christians. He developed a clear goal: “To know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his suffering, becoming like him in his death and so somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Phil 3:4-11). At the end of his ministry, Paul gave an amazing evaluation of his work. “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing” (2 Tim 4:7-8). The efficacy of Paul’s achievements is self-evident (McNeal, 2006, pp. 12-13).

Ellen White states that self-knowledge saves a person from temptations and sins,
and prevents defeat. Self-awareness makes it possible to overcome sin by the power of God (White, 1911, p. 276). “It leads to humility and trust in God” (White, 1943, p. 67). Self-understanding leads to humility that opens the heart so God can work on the mind to develop and discipline the character (p. 419). A lack of self-examination and knowledge puts one in a great danger of not watching in prayer (White, 1995, p. 24).

The examples from these two biblical leaders and the information from Ellen White’s writings reveal the importance of self-knowledge in leadership. What follows is the story of my life and the factors that laid a foundation for my ministry.

General Background

I am a Tanzanian and the fourth born of my parents. I belong to the Luo ethnic group whose habitat stretches along Lake Nyanza (Victoria) from Siaya district in Kenya to Rorya district in Tanzania. In 1934 my paternal grandparents migrated from Kanyada, Kenya, to Kamageta, Rorya, Tanzania. The Luo people have numerous clans with dissimilar cultural beliefs. Non-Christian Luos practice animistic beliefs which differ from one place to another. I grew up among the Kamageta Luo people; therefore, the cultural life and beliefs that surrounded my young early days are those of the Kamageta people.

My paternal family line had an animistic worldview. For example, I remember one day my father and his friend were travelling to Kanyada to visit his relatives. They walked on foot for six hours, when suddenly two small animals known as Ogwang’ in Luo crossed the road. They took that as a bad omen, discontinued their journey, and came back home at dusk. The Christian influence of my mother encouraged my father to attend church intermittently but he never became a serious Christian.
I received my Adventist faith from my mother who was a second generation Adventist. Occasionally my mother read Bible passages for me when I was between three to five years old. I especially enjoyed the readings from the book of Job. We used to walk to church, leaving as early as the first cock-crow (that was how we reckoned time) or in early morning darkness to attend a week of spiritual emphasis or midweek prayer at the Roche Church which was about 3 miles (5 km) away.

My mother’s tithing practice influenced me from childhood. We lived as subsistence farmers, and were poor in material possessions. But during the harvest time, my mother would pile millet, sorghum, and other crop produce beside the wall, telling us that that was the Lord’s tithe. Sometimes we would take eggs or chickens for our tithe to the Wednesday midweek worship. These offerings were sold to those attending the worship. The Missionary Volunteer (MV) society increased my interest in the Word of God. I was also a choir member, singing bass. An elderly friend, Mathias Obuombe Nguru, played an unforgettable role that helped keep me close to the Lord when I was teenager. Mathias influenced me to read the writings of Ellen G. White even when my understanding of the English language was very poor. I remember praying to the Lord to enable me to understand English so that I could read those spiritual books. He answered my prayers, and called me to the ministry.

Subplots

There are many factors or subplots that shape us as individuals. Below I mention five that have influence my life.
Culture

Culture stands for the totality of human life and activity in a society. It includes all the “stream of the human family and human experience. Language, race, geography, demography and economic status” (McNeal, 2000, p. 73). It also consists of the world we live in and people’s values. As indicated above, I was born and raised in a mixed culture of Christian (Seventh-day Adventist) and animistic Luo. I speak Luo as my mother tongue, Kiswahili, the Tanzanian national language, and English. My fluency in these three languages has made it easy for me to minister among most communities in Tanzania.

Luos are deeply religious. Every act and event is interpreted religiously. Animism regulated ceremonies connected with birth, initiation, marriage, burial, planting, harvesting, travel, politics, and all other social activities. People interpreted events thought to mean something in life. A sign of a rainbow circling the sun, or the moon would be taken as an omen pointing to an elderly man’s (tho jaduong’), or woman’s (tho dayo) death respectively. Bird cries, like an owl (tula) are always associated with night runners. There are many other rituals connected with animistic customs and beliefs. For example, if one saw a praying mantis (nyaporaum), that person was required to offer flour and milk as a sacrifice. If a human corpse (kitundu mar ng’a motho) was carried across the village, people could not go to their farms the next day. Since my mother took her Adventist faith seriously, and my father respected the faith of his wife, we did not have any animistic practices in our home. However, there are some obscure rituals that one might find oneself involved in unknowingly. For example, an elderly Luo might hold a party and invite neighbors without telling them he is sacrificing to his ancestors. It was
from this background that the Lord called me into ministry.

Call

My call to the ministry came gradually, and not with some fantastic divine event. It appears from what my mother says that my call started earlier than I can remember. When I was borne my parents had only one child, the first born, two others had died. As my mother read the story of Joseph in the book of Genesis, she was so much impressed with the story that she prayed to God to give her a male child. She promised she would name that child Joseph and give him for God’s work. I was born following that prayer. True to her promise she named me Joseph, I later changed it to Yoseph. I grew up as a normal child facing challenges in my community as other children do. Sometimes I joined my teenage friends in Luo social activities, some were not good for a Christian. But the Word of God started ringing a bell early in my young life to come to Christ.

The Bible and the writings of Ellen White had a strong influence in my life. Programs at my local church at Roche also played a significant role in my spiritual growth. We had strong Missionary Volunteer (MV) programs, youth classes, and a choir. All church programs contributed in encouraging me to serve God, even though worldly music, games, and business was very attractive to my young mind.

Missionary work was dear to my heart. When I was in form one at the Ihungo Secondary School in Bukoba, Tanzania, I started working as a part-time literature evangelist. Immediately after my form six graduation, I was asked to lead a group of literature evangelists to open the work at Muleba, an unentered area. By the grace of God we planted a church in Muleba, which is now a district, and we also strengthened a few church companies that had been started by indigenous converts who had returned to their
home villages after becoming Adventists in other places. It was because of that work that the church recognized my call and promised to send me to college.

The Tanzania Union sponsored me through my undergraduate and graduate (MA) degrees. After my undergraduate graduation I was employed as a district leader, conference chaplain, and ADRA co-ordinator in the Mara Conference. Then I received a call to the South Nyanza Conference to work as the Ministerial Secretary, Church Ministry Director, and the Education Director. For seven years I served as the Tanzania Union Stewardship and Church Development Director. Currently I am serving the church as the Conference Communication and Voice of Prophecy Director. In the next section I will survey the culture which informed my childhood.

**Community**

Reggae McNeal posits that leaders are made by community, in community (2000, p. 115). My community of trusted friends consists of my God and my Savior Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit with whom I commune daily. I enjoy the community of my family, and a few other people who provide my circle of trusted friends who are free to point out my short comings and encourage me in difficult situations. I do not presently have a strong network or study group to encourage my professional development, but will commit to start one in the future.

**Communion**

Prayer, study of the Bible, and the writings of Ellen G. White are the most important ways of communing with my Father in Heaven. Family worship and prayers also provide daily communion with God. Morning devotions with other workers give me
an opportunity to read and share the Word of God with others. I fast when I feel a need for special communion with God, but my fasting is not regimented, only practiced as the need arises or when I want to be closer to God. I do pray many times a day, but due to a busy schedule I lack quality time with God for meditation and solitude (Dybdahl, 2008, pp. 92-99). The Doctor of Ministry courses have strengthened and enriched my spiritual life. I thank the Lord for the classes.

**Commonplace**

Commonplace is where the minister of the gospel is called to minister. When interacting with the so called common people, I put myself into their situation because I was there. I was nothing, and my Father in heaven in His kindness gave me a place to serve His people. I like to help the poor and needy. I strive to relate to all kinds of people in all walks of life (McNeal, 2000, pp. 175-186).

**Specific Personal Assessment**

**Conversion and Assurance of Salvation**

An assurance of salvation is very important to me personally, but it has taken me many years of struggle with self-doubt and fear to have a sense of assurance of salvation. Spending time with God in secret prayer and reading His Word has given me that assurance of salvation. The thought that our God is not a liar and He means what He promises have given new meaning to John 3:16. Isa 1:16-18 has taken on a new meaning in my life. I am happy and praise the Lord for His salvation through Jesus Christ.
Time and Resources

Time and resources are very important in life. Success in whatever we do, whether physical or spiritual, depends on our management of time and resources. I have much to do but do not seem to have enough time for everything. Many times I do not have family time. The book *Margin* has given good practical suggestions that I am determined to practice. I will prune activity branches, learn to say no, and be willing to do less while doing things well (Swenson, 2004, pp. 122-128). The advice I received in *Margin* has given me some fresh suggestions to take into consideration. Especially helpful were the suggestions about redefining needs, investing, and providing margin for family devotions (Swenson, 2004, pp. 141-146).

Spiritual Path

Christian Schwarz’s, *The Trinitarian Compass* (Dybdahl, 2012) reveals various paths through which people come closer to God. His explanations are good, even though the methods fall short because some people commune with God through multiple ways. On his compass I identify more with people who are Scripture-driven and who find fulfillment in sharing the Word of God. When I read the Word of God, I hear a still, small voice talking to me and practically helping me in many of my spiritual challenges. Sometimes when I read the Bible carefully or the writings of Ellen G. White, I feel like the Lord is directly talking to me. When I go out to teach or preach the Word of God, I see His mighty power in saving souls and this gives me joy.

Spiritual Stages

People respond to the Gospel differently, some through a “chaotic, antisocial
stage,” “the formal institutional stage,” “the skeptical, individualization stage,” and “the communal mystical stage” (Dybdahl, 2008, p. 127). This difference in response leads to different levels of spiritual growth in different people. Scott Peck gives four stages of spiritual development. He calls stage one the “chaotic, antisocial stage.” This is a stage in which adults are seen as antisocial because their center of concern is themselves. They do not care about the wellbeing of others and are less concerned with spiritual things. They are adult children spiritually and even socially. Even if they try to hide by pretending to be orderly, the truth will later come out (p. 127).

The second stage Peck calls a “social institutional stage.” When a “chaotic antisocial” person begins to grow spiritually, the person normally converts but not completely. That person often joins the church and loves its institutions, living at the “social institutional stage.” Such a person serves God externally. In young people this is the stage where many start staying at home. They are not content with simple answers and they become disillusioned with the inconsistencies in the institution, they enter “the skeptical, individualization stage.” All these various transitions need mature Christians to guide people until they reach “the communal mystical stage” where they now commune with God and love the church from inside. The spiritual journey needs prayer, patience, and love. People need space and time to grow and adjust (Dybdahl, 2008, p. 127).

**Spiritual Life and Plans**

My spiritual devotional life, as noted above, finds fulfillment in prayer, reading the Word of God, and sharing it with others. My prayer life is not structured during specific times, but is a natural spontaneous response to God. I pray any time of the day wherever I am and whenever I feel prompted to pray. This is because, as a conference
departmental director, I itinerate most of the time; it is difficult to find a private place for prayer while visiting churches. Sometimes I do pray without any prompting. I do get up and pray at night. Most of the time I have prayer time during lunch times when we break from work.

**Worldview**

Worldview is “the deep underlying, usually unconscious concept structures of a people or culture that is the source for their values, beliefs and actions” (Dybdahl, 2008, p. 101). My worldview is a Christian, Adventist orientation. I grew up in a mixed worldview of Luo and Adventism; my Luo worldview died in Christ. I remain only with the basic human relational Luo worldview values that have no conflict with the Word of God, for example, respect for the elderly, and other Luo good manners and etiquette.

**Temperament (MBTI)**

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator shows that I am an ENTJ (Dybdahl, 2012, Class notes). I am more of an extrovert than introvert, more intuitive than sensing, more thinking than feeling. My mode of living is externally focused. I am fulfilled by engaging people in the outer world. On the list of traits ascribed to ENTJs, there are traits with which I can easily identify myself, and others that I do not notice in me unless they are hidden from my realization.

I highly value knowledge and this has driven me to buy many books, even those that are not of my area of calling. My plans tend to focus more on the future, investing for the future than the present and this leads me to turn theories into plans. My communication ability is excellent. I am more of a teacher than a preacher when I
conduct public evangelism meetings, and my preaching sessions in the church are lessons that tend to inform in depth rather than excite feelings.

Leadership is also prominent with an ENTJ. I have not been in the upper cluster of leadership, as known in the Adventist organization. But I have served in various leadership responsibilities. While I was in secondary school I served as prefect for four years. I was a literature evangelist group leader for a group of literature evangelists who pioneered the Adventist message in Muleba, Tanzania, for two years. I have been a district leader, and a departmental director. I am self-confident and decisive.

ENTJs have weaknesses that I can identify with and that need genuine attention and prayer to overcome. Sometimes my drive for performance and faithfulness to the organization makes me feel bad when things are not done according to the policy of the organization. I have little tolerance for corrupt practices and nepotism. I like fair treatment of all people irrespective of color or regional origin. It is my prayer that the weakness of an ENTJ type should not overpower me and make me a stumbling block in my personal spiritual growth, and to others. However, I have seen remarkable changes by God’s grace in many areas of my weakness and I strongly believe that our God is able to deal positively with my weak points.

**Damage Factor**

People pass through life with many challenges and some become bitter. However, I do not have anything that I consider as damage that looms large on the horizon of my memory. The incidents and events I have passed through are many, and if I would hang on to them in my memory, some of them could cause deep emotional feelings. Our Savior, the loving Jesus, said, “and when you stand praying, if you hold anything against
anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins (Mark 11:22). I hold nothing against other people. I no longer consider things done to me in the past as a damage factor in my life.

Assessments in Relation to Others

**Spiritual Gifts**

Spiritual gifts are listed in the Pauline writings, in the book of Rom 12:6-8, 1 Cor 12:4-11; 27-31, and Eph 4:11-12. They are qualities our Savior gives individual members of His church to empower them to do His work in a manner that would be impossible without this special empowerment. The four clusters of giftedness I have been given are nurturing, outreaching, witnessing, and organizing (Dick & Dick, 2001, p. 29).

The gift that was number one in the spiritual Gifts Inventory Score Sheet was prophecy (69), followed by shepherding and miracles (64), then healing, evangelism, and exhortation (60). According to the Dicks’ definition, the gift of prophecy enables the possessor to speak the Word of God clearly and faithfully. Shepherding enables servants of God to guide and look after other Christians in the faith (Dick & Dick, 2001, pp. 41-42). These gifts are the most prominent, and according to Dicks’ interpretation of the gifts, they reflect what I do in ministry.

**Leadership/Interaction Styles**

There are four Leadership/Interaction Styles, which are good for varied functions in situations of job performance. These styles are leaders who are directors, dreamers, pleasers, and thinkers (2001, pp. 65-68). The description of each leadership style indicates that I am a director. I am a task-oriented person aiming to go get good results.
For this to happen I tend to stick to decisions and calendar schedules (Dick & Dick, 2001, p. 58). There are areas in my life as a director that I need to self-evaluate and by the grace of God make necessary changes.

**Task Type Preference**

Dick and Dick explain that Task Type Preference is a tool developed to enable an understanding of the nature of team work, where one may better function in fulfilling “the work for which we are equipped” (p. 87) as a result of self-evaluation and knowledge. I score higher (6) on Task Type A, and then followed with Task Type B (4). Task Type C takes third place (2). It appears I need assistance with task type D as my score there was 0. Task Type A are people who enjoy engaging in a project to its successful completion. These are people who would take pains to plan, organize, implement, and evaluate (p. 90) what has been accomplished. I enjoy planning and implementing public evangelistic meetings, nurturing new members, and starting new churches.

Since the evaluation shows that I have strong elements of Task Type B also, sometimes I may engage in “hands-on work,” when an emergency demands it. Sometimes I may get involved in brainstorming for new projects. I previously enjoyed thinking about what needed to be done to solve existing problems in the congregation or how to approach entering new areas with the Gospel. According to this assessment, Task Type B people are in need of help from others to fulfill Task Type D, which seems to care more about fellowship than accomplishing what is at hand. But it is intriguing that this is not the experience of my life. In work situations I find myself fellowshipping with people easily, though sometimes I may forgo fellowship to accomplish a task.
Missiological Implications

Personal knowledge and understanding are indispensable for a successful ministry. The apostle Paul’s advice to the Corinthians, “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves” (2 Cor 13:5), was a call for self-examination leading to self-knowledge. So far, my personal basis for ministry has taken the reader through my life journey, beginning with my self-awareness, my life history, culture that informs my worldview, my call to the ministry, and my experience and practice in ministry. Other areas covered are my conversion assurance, worldview, temperament, leadership style, spiritual gifts, damage factor, and task type. The application of the discovery made above to improve my life and ministry is the goal of taking this program.

The following section discusses how this knowledge will be applied. However, it is important to take into account that factors in the field may change or improve the propositions delineated below.

My formative childhood years in a rural village among the Luo ethnic group acquainted me with ordinary life situations and the beliefs of rural animistic people and Christian folk in an African village setting. Traveling through regions and villages in Tanzania, one gets a feeling that there are similarities to the social and economic development throughout the country. The level of economic difference is marginal in many areas, except among the ethnic groups whose lives still depend on hunting and gathering food in the forest (for example the Sandawe). It is culture, and religious beliefs that differ from one place to another.

In the Mara region where the Makoko Church is located, there are more than 20 ethnic groups identified linguistically. However, three of these groups seem to be
dominant: the Wajita, Wakuria, and Luo. The Wakuria group branches into about 20 smaller groups that speak different dialects. Even though the Mara people express and practice their beliefs differently, the underlying fear that drives their religious practices is the same. They seek to know the riddles of everyday life, reasons for diseases, physical ailments, business failure, divorce, wayward children, how to pacify troubled thoughts supposedly coming from a dead ancestor and other similar problems (Hierbert, Shaw, & Titenou, 1999, p. 133).

My childhood experiences help me in understanding the struggles people go through and the worldviews that underlie their belief systems. Listening to the conversations of people, observing their life, seeing the symbols of religious beliefs they wear, and who they consult at times of crisis give me insight into the animistic beliefs and practices prevailing among the people. Christians, whether new, or old converts seek answers to these questions, and my background will help me to address their questions with biblical teachings that are understandable and helpful.

Tanzania has more than 120 ethnic groups, each one speaking its own language. But Kiswahili, which is the national language, and English the academic language, unites the country. I especially speak Luo, Kiswahili, and English. These languages enable me to communicate with almost all people groups in Tanzania. Knowledge of these languages has proved an important tool for evangelism and church work throughout the country.

My call to the gospel ministry is the most important part of my life which overrides every other. The story my mother told me has ingrained in my mind that God intended me to be His servant for life. The ministry, therefore, is not employment but a
lifelong dedication to God. And since the gospel mission is God’s mission, done in human context, and not like a business transaction, the knowledge of and relationship with God is the most important thing for its success. Communion with God is developed through an intimate communication with God in prayer and Bible study.

I see myself making an effort to create space for both prayer and Bible study to develop these gifts that were identified in me. I will have more prayer for the unentered communities and people groups. I see more time dedicated to prayer and Bible study, and to listen more carefully to the working of the Holy Spirit in my life. It will be a prayer life that will model the apostolic church that pled with God (Acts 4:29-30) to do miracles in the name of Christ to rouse people to seek and accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

Through reading the book Margin (Swenson, 2004), I discovered that I lack margin in my life. I therefore see myself creating margin in every area of my life and work. This will create room for a meaningful, spiritual family, and work life that improves productivity. As the Myers Briggs personality test revealed, I am more of an ENTJ temperament. ENTJs interact with the world externally, are project driven, and always want to accomplish a task. It is therefore easy to overwork. The creation of margin will help me control my work schedule and give me rest and time for other important matters. This will improve the quality of my life and ministry.

**Overview of the Project**

This chapter has discussed the project proposal and my personal basis for the ministry. Chapter 2 will develop a theological foundation for the retention of new converts in the Makoko Church. Chapter 3 will cover Tanzania which is the context of
the project; the methodology and strategy of the project will be delineated in Chapter 4, and Chapter 5 will implement, monitor, assess, and report the outcome of the project.
CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL BASIS FOR NEW MEMBER RETENTION

Introduction

Chapter 1 presented the project proposal. In addition, Chapter 1 showed the writer’s personal basis for the ministry. In this chapter the reader is introduced to the theological foundation of new member retention in the Bible, the writings of Ellen G. White, and other Christian scholars.

The church, across denominational boundaries, is seriously challenged by the issue of new convert retention and assimilation. The challenges of retention in the postmodern church seem unique in that the church is operating in a geographical milieu known as a global village. Challenges experienced in one part of the world are easily and speedily exported through the communication super-highway to other parts of the globe. Cultures interact and influence each other in unprecedented alacrity. Owing to this interaction of cultures, the challenges of new member retention offer many similarities.

Be it in Africa or America, churches are struggling with the issue of loss of members. The ratio of new converts joining the church to those leaving is of grave concern. Tanner (2005, p. 1) observes that despite the church’s vigorous activities, “the church in America is losing influence and adherents faster than any other major institution in the nation.” Rainer (n.d. para. 2), who is the president of Rainer research,
also disclosed that “70% of young adults between ages 18 and 22” dropped out of the First Baptist Church.

Among Seventh-day Adventists, out of 5 million new members baptized between 2000 and 2005, 1.4 million walked out. That was 28% of all the members baptized in that five year period (Kellner, 2009, pp. 16-19). Skip Bell (1986, pp. 8-10, 29), professor at Andrews University, wrote that 30% of the 3,595 Seventh-day Adventist church members in Cleveland, Ohio, do not attend church. Bell says, if that number is added to those dropped from church membership the total would be 2,000, which equals a 55.6% loss.

Coming home to the Makoko Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mara Conference, Tanzania, where the case study for this research is located, between 2004-2013 the statistical report reveals that 13 people were baptized in September 2004. In May 2005, 42 people were dropped from church membership for apostasy. The church lost 346% compared to those who joined! From May 2005 to August 2011 the statistical reports show a total baptism of 86 people. On 1 May 2013 Makoko had a total of 683 church members. The church board conducted a census on 1 June 2013 and dropped 247 members, or 36% of the total membership. The reason; no one knows where they are. They are lost! It is therefore an undisputable fact that the church is faced with a serious retention and assimilation problem. If the trend is allowed to continue, in the long run, it will have serious consequences for the church.

Despite the church’s trouble with keeping new converts, retention of new members in the church remains the number one priority. It is a salvation issue. If converts leave the church, shake off Jesus’ Lordship, and return to their former lifestyle, they may
be forever lost. Since salvation is Jesus’ business, it is safe to say that in His Word that we can find the best strategies for retention. This chapter will discuss a biblical, theological foundation for retention.

**The Meaning of Retention**

The word retention is a noun form of the word “retain” which the *Random House Dictionary* (2001, p. 1052) defines as “to keep possession,” “to continue to hold or have,” “to hold in place or position.” The noun retention, therefore, means, “The act of retaining or the state of being retained,” “the power to retain or for retaining” (p. 1052). Retention theology therefore studies the Word of God and other theological writings to determine how best the church can keep, hold in place, or retain new converts baptized from public evangelism and other outreach avenues.

The foundation and importance of retention theology is rooted in the very nature of God and His redemptive activity among people on planet earth. God is love (1 John 4:8, 16, NIV). In response to Moses plea, “Please, show me your glory” (Exod 33:18, NKJV), God passed before Moses and proclaimed;

> The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilt unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation. (Exod 34:6-7, NIV)

In this passage the strength of words analogous to love supersedes the punishment which the LORD metes to those who deliberately choose to reject His invitation of love. The use of words has “compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin over against “yet does not leave the guilt unpunished” proves God’s willing readiness to show
His love is much greater than His obligation to show anger and punish. God limits punishment to three to four generations but extends His love to “a thousand generations” (Exod 20:6).

These words have deep meaning. They express God’s character and attitude of love towards His people at a time of their shameful rebellion against Him (Exod 32-33). Among the words He used, the word ‘compassion’ is key in retention theology. God tells Moses He is a “compassionate” God. The word compassionate is an adjective of the noun compassion. Random House Webster’s College Dictionary (2001, p. 249) defines compassion as “a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for someone stuck by misfortune, accompanied by a desire to alleviate the suffering.” The Hebrew word for compassionate is racham. Strong (1996, p. 249) shows that racham occurs in the Authorized Version 32 times as “mercy,” 80 times as “compassion,” 3 times as “pity,” 1 time as “love,” and 1 time as “merciful.” Racham is the love a mother has for her child (Isa 49:15).

The Greek word for compassion is σπλαγχνίζομαι (Balz & Schneider, 1990, p. 265). Strong (1996, p. 4698) translates σπλαγχνον 11 times as “bowels,” nine times as “inward affection” and one time as “tender mercy.” Wuest gives the insight that among the Greeks the bowels were regarded as a seat of violent passions of anger and love. But for the Orientals, like the Hebrews, the bowels were the seat of “tenderer affections of kindness, benevolence and compassion” (1994, pp. 33-44). Therefore, to be compassionate is to have mercy, to pity, and show love to another even at a time that person does not deserve to be loved. Ludgate states that “word χάρις (grace) contains the idea of kindness which bestows upon one what he has not deserved” the gracious God bestows His unmerited favor on those who have no claim whatsoever on it” (1961, p. 19).
The theme of compassionate love, love full of pity, was prominent in Jesus’ ministry on earth. The Gospel writers portray Jesus as a model of love, full of compassion. Matthew wrote, “When He saw the crowds, he had compassion for them” (Matt 9:6); “He had compassion on them and healed their sick” (Matt 14:14). On one occasion Jesus told His disciples, “I have compassion on the multitude because they have now been with me three days and have nothing to eat” (Mark 8:2). He had compassion on the widow of Nain and said to her, “Do not weep.” He then raised her dead son (Luke 7:13). Paul writes, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort” (2 Cor 1:3). It is this love, full of compassion, that is the basis of God’s redemptive mission.

On account of this deep, compassionate love God has for human beings, when Adam deliberately sinned against Him (Gen 3:1-7), He was moved with compassionate love to save the first couple. The Hebrew word for sin is chatta’th, which means “to fall short,” “to miss a mark,” “to do wrong,” “to offend,” “to be culpable.” Sin is “any deviation from [the] known will of God, either of neglect to do what he has specifically commanded or doing what He has specifically forbidden” (Horn, 1960, p. 1018).

The Bible says the “wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). Because of their sin Adam and Eve deserved death and annihilation, never to live again. This would have been justice on their intentional, willful disobedience against the known will of God (Gen 2:16). If it was in America, Adam and Eve’s sin would have earned them the electric chair or a lethal injection; in Iraq or Tanzania, it would mean being hung by the neck until death. Yet God’s compassionate love moved Him to save, not to kill. God chose to instantly put into operation a pre-arranged plan of redemption emanating from His
compassionate love (Acts 2:23; 4:28; 1 Cor 2:7; Col 1:26; 1 Pet 1:18-20; Rev 13:8, NKJV) a program, through which a repenting sinner might have a second chance of being pardoned, cleansed, and accepted back into God’s family.

It is because of this compassionate plan of redemption that retention becomes important. When a repenting sinner is saved, redeemed, bought back to God by the pardoning love of God through the death of Jesus Christ, that saved sinner should be retained in continued relationship with God in the community of faith.

The project of saving sinners is difficult, dangerous, and costly. It is beyond monetary value. Saving sinners cost God the life of His only begotten son (John 3:16; 15:13). If one of us would have bought anything at the cost of our son, we would not have suffered that loss easily. The apostle Paul, who had experienced the cost and danger (Acts 17; 19; 2 Cor 11:21-28) involved in bringing people to Christ, warned the Ephesian church elders at Miletus, “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers” (Acts 20:28).

The word watch is taken from the Greek word προσέχετε the present active imperative of προσέχω. Προσέχω is translated as “turning or holding one’s mind to someone or something,” “to give heed to, or pay attention to,” “watch out for,” “be on your guard,” “occupy,” “devote yourself to” (Friberg, Friberg, & Miller, 2000, p. 333) depending on the use. The word overseer in Greek is ἐπισκόπος translated as “one who watches over the welfare of others,” “guardian,” “keeper” (p. 167). Basically, Paul is charging those who watch over the welfare of the church members in Ephesus: Hold your minds on the members, watch for them, be on your guard, and devote yourselves to them. This vigilant care is the only way new members can be retained.
Paul gave this advice to the Ephesian church elders because he had suffered in evangelizing the gentiles to bring them to Jesus. Paul received 195 lashes from the Jews. He was beaten with rods, stoned, shipwrecked, went without food, constantly faced danger of bandits and robbers (2 Cor 11:21-28), and ultimately suffered martyrdom. Calling a sinner to Christ is expensive. So even if we do not exactly go through Paul’s experience, it would be wasteful and a great loss of time and means to consciously tolerate seeing those called at such cost leave the church. The church therefore, must be a knowledgeable community that is aware of the techniques of retaining new converts, and not allow anything that would by ignorance or negligence in her permit an exodus of the new converts out of the church. It is important then, to study the Bible to glean the strategies used in the Old and the New Testaments to retain new converts.

**Retention in the Old Testament**

The OT is replete with God’s activity to keep His people from apostasy and rebellion. God dealt with retention issues with individuals (Abraham), and at the corporate level (Israel), which as a chosen people were a theocratic nation responsible to God (Gen 4:1-7; Gen 6-8; Exod 19:5-6; Deut 10:14-17; 1 Kgs 8:32). There are other examples of the retention of the gentiles who had converted to worship Israel’s God, for example, Rahab and Ruth.

**Retention of Individuals**

God created Adam and Eve with the intention of retaining them as a family in a loving fellowship with Him forever. He gave them a tree that would perpetuate their life (Gen 2:9) if they would remain obedient to Him. To keep Adam faithful, God gave him
clear instructions. He commanded Adam not to eat “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen 2:16), making it crystal clear that disobeying that command would result in death. The condition for a relationship between God and Adam was clear and simple. God provided Adam and Eve with knowledge and freedom of choice to obey or not to obey Him. It is important therefore that new converts, who start a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, should be clearly taught the specifics of that relationship.

God visited Adam and Eve in Eden (Gen 3:8-10). Adam and Eve, in their innocence and holiness, joyfully welcomed the approach of their Creator (White, 1958, p. 57). Before temptation God warned Adam and Eve of the impending danger. White again informs us that just before the temptation of Adam and Eve, “God assembled the angelic host to take measures to avert the threatened evil. It was decided in Heavens’ council for angels to visit Eden and warn Adam that he was in danger from the foe. Accordingly, two angels sped on their way to visit our first parents” (White, 1961, p. 39). These visits were God’s retention measures to keep Adam and Eve safe from apostasy.

The fall of Adam and Eve interrupted God’s plan; however, God implemented a pre-mediated retention plan that would restore Adam and Eve. God declared enmity between the serpent, Satan, and its seed and the seed of the woman, Christ, who would eventually “crush” the serpent’s head (Gen 3:15) to redeem the family of Adam. From this point on, the OT reveals God’s intervention activities aimed at keeping the human race from apostasy so that those who chose to accept the plan of salvation could remain in relationship with Him. Yet God’s intervention did not remove the possibility of rebellion on the part of humanity even among those who accepted His salvific provision. This necessitated consistent retention measures on God’s part to ensure that those who
choose God’s redemptive offer were not arbitrarily overwhelmed by Satan’s deceptions, but kept safe in the community of their fellow believers.

The story of Cain’s murder of his brother Abel (Gen 4:2-16) gives a window into God’s retention methods. God was not happy to lose Cain in rebellion. He personally warned him against the heinous act of murder that Cain was about to commit; but Cain ignored the warning, chose to rebel anyway and killed his younger brother Abel. God’s warning was a retention measure meant to keep him from apostasy. This same method was used in Genesis to warn the world through Noah of the impending flood that would affect the surface of the whole globe. God instructed Noah how to construct a ship to preserve the antediluvian people from extinction. The obedient family of Noah was preserved from the flood (Gen 7:1; 8:15-19).

The calling of an individual or a people group and separating them from their heathen compatriots is another retention method God used in the OT. Abram was called by God to leave his native land and his people of Ur of the Chaldeans. Ur’s culture was not conducive to Abram’s spiritual growth. Baadsgaard, Monge, Cox, and Zettler (2011, pp. 27-42) for example, reported on the archaeological excavation Sir Leonard Woolley conducted at the Royal Cemetery of Ur between 1920 and 1930. The excavation revealed the appalling custom of human sacrifice among the inhabitants of Ur. Important people were buried with human attendants; some graves held over 70 people! The influence of such culture would frustrate God’s retention of Abram in a stable obedient relationship to Him. Therefore, God commanded Abram to leave Ur for a place He would show him (Gen 12:1-5). “In order that God might qualify him for his great work as a keeper of the sacred oracles, Abram must be separated from the associations of his early life. The
influence of kindred and friends would interfere with training which the Lord purposed to give His servant” (White, 1958, p. 126). The call removed him far from “his family ties and even his father’s house, never to return to those of his own blood and race” (Nichol, 1978a, vol. 1, p. 293). The important point in Abram’s calling is that there should be a clear change and separation from the convert’s previous worldview and cultural practices even of his agnatic relations if those practices go contrary to the teachings of God’s Word.

Retention of a Community of People

The calling of Israel from Egypt and their establishment as a theocratic nation in Canaan gives us a purview of God’s retention of a community. Israel was God’s peculiar nation. As Abram was called from Ur, the Israelites were called from among the idolatrous Egyptians after living with them for some 400 years (Exod 12:30, 41; Gal 3:17). God gave them the land of Canaan. But before they took possession of the land, He required the total annihilation of the Canaanites. It would serve no purpose to take the Israelites from one system of idolatry and plant them among another idolatrous people (Deut 7:1-6).

Seven Canaanite nations, larger and stronger than Israel, were destroyed. These nations were children of God by creation, but their worldview, culture, and religious practices were rebellious and contrary to God’s will. Like the people of Ur, they offered human sacrifices to their gods. In his article “Philo of Alexandria and the Conquest of Canaan,” Berthelot quoted Philo of Alexandria: “The Canaanites were to be destroyed because of their abominable religious practices, which included child sacrifice, an act so cruel that it could only be performed by inhuman people who deserved death” (Berthelot,
2007, pp. 50-55). Philo further marvels that the Canaanites became “so savage in nature as to bring themselves to do in peace to their nearest and dearest what they would not do in wartime to their enemies in the field or to the objects of their implacable hatred” (pp. 50-55). For this reason Israel was not allowed to mingle with them. If they did, the LORD said, those nations would “turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD’s anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you” (Deut 7:4).

Israel’s later history reveals that their deportation to Babylon resulted from practicing Canaanite idolatry. Ellen White observes, “In his study of the causes leading to the Babylonish captivity, Ezra had learned that Israel’s apostasy was largely traceable to their mingling with heathen nations. He had seen that if they had obeyed God’s command to keep separate from the nations surrounding them, they would have been spared many sad and humiliating experiences” (White, 1917, p. 620). Simply put, if Israel would live intermingled with Canaanites, this would render their faithfulness to God impossible. Therefore, God was willing to kill rebellious Canaanites, destroy their system and articles of worship to prepare an environment in which keeping Israel faithful to Him would be less challenging. Our God is willing to take drastic measures to save and preserve His people from apostasy. Total separation of God’s people from their former system of beliefs, worship, and allegiance is paramount if one is to maintain faithfulness to God. Likewise today new converts need to detach themselves from their former beliefs, culture, and worship if they are to remain faithful to God.

The establishment of Israel as God’s theocratic nation (Gen 19:4-6) in Canaan created retention challenges throughout their history. God was very specific in outlining
the conditions that would keep His relationship with them robust. Israel was to be blessed if they would “fully obey the voice of the Lord their God” and “carefully follow all His commands” that Moses gave them. God would “set them high above all the nations of the earth” (Deut 28:1). However, Israel proved unfaithful time after time. The biblical record shows numerous backslidings and rebellions against God.

They followed the practices of other nations (2 Kgs 16:7-9), worshiped idols, sacrificed their children, and practiced divination and sorcery (2 Kgs 16:11-12, 17). These practices made God angry with them (2 Kgs 16:18). Prophets bitterly lamented Israel’s disobedience and rebellion against God as they delivered God’s warning to Israel (see Isa 1:1-4; Dan 9:5-6; Neh 1:6-7). The patience of God with Israel is beyond human understanding. The question is, What methods did God use to retain Israel as His people from the time they left Egypt, about 1450 B.C. (O’Connell, 1985, p. 289) and AD 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed? (Green, McKnight, & Marshall, 1992, p. 174). A survey of God’s dealing with Israel in the OT reveals a retention model adapted to diverse situations in different eras of Israel’s existence, which only a divine intelligence could design to preserve a people to Himself.

The first measure is that when God calls people to himself, He provides for their physical needs. Adam and Eve were provided with food and a beautiful garden home immediately after their creation (Gen 2:8-9, 15-17). The same provision was given to Israel when God liberated Israel from Egypt under Moses’ leadership. He supplied food, water, and gave a cloud to lead and protect them from the heat of the sun and provide warmth in the chilly desert at night (Exod 16; 17:1-7; 13:21-22; Ps 78:14). Miraculously, their clothes and shoes did not wear out (Deut 1:3; 8:2; 29:5). A promise of continued
material blessing was given to Israel on condition of obedience to God (Deut 28:1-14).

These steps are very important not only in keeping people in relationship with God, but also in the church. The church should be concerned about the material condition of the new converts. The church leadership and laity should address the physical needs of the new converts just as the Israelites assisted the poor by leaving some harvest for them in the farm (see also Isa 58; Matt 25:31-46). It is hard to retain people who have no food and shelter. Even if the church is not going to provide material things to every convert, the church can organize seminars that may help poor new members with strategies to address their economic and budgeting challenges. Church members may help in a job search for new members. Any measure that may improve the new convert’s situation is important. In Tanzania, where almost everyone has access to a piece of land, the church can organize seminars on improved peasant farming and small business projects.

God gave Israel the law, the five books of Moses (White, 1958, p. 304), but, the Ten Commandments He personally declared to Israel. The law is also called truth (Ps 119:142). Truth (law) preserves a people. The first command was a retention law. It banned them from worshiping other gods (Exod 20:3). They were to be a peculiar people to God (Exod 19:5; Deut 14:2; Ps 145:4). The laws caused them to stand apart as a wise and understanding nation, different from all other people in the world (Deut 4:6). The psalmist says the law is “perfect, converting the soul” and makes people wise (Ps 19:7). When Israel apostatized, Jehoshaphat sent officials, Ben-Hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah, with some Levites, who went throughout Judah teaching the people the book of the Law. As a result, the fear of the Lord fell on the surrounding kingdoms because Israel was back with God (2 Chr 17:7-10). When Israel was keen in
teaching and observing the Law, the nation feared the Lord. Studying God’s law played a crucial role in keeping people from apostatizing. Therefore, in the OT, teaching the Word of God was indispensable to spiritual growth and establishing new converts.

The organization of a serious worship program, that develops a relationship of the individual with God was another retention method instituted by God to preserve Israel to Himself. God instructed Moses, “have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them” (Exod 25:8). “The sanctuary provided a visible center for the worship of the one true God, and was thus a bulwark against the worship of the many gods of the heathen. It brought God near to His people and made His presence among them real. This too was a protection against idolatry” (Nichol, 1978b, vol. 1, p. 635). Daily, weekly, and yearly services at the sanctuary and through other worship programs incessantly pointed the people to God (Lev 16; Num 4:16; 28:24). All male Israelites were commanded to yearly present themselves three times per year before the Lord at the sanctuary for worship (Exod 23:17; Deut 16:16). These festive occasions gave a chance for meeting friends and family members and wielded a crucial “unifying influence and were thus a vitally important part of national life,” uniting “the people together in the knowledge and service of God” (Nichol, 1978c, vol. 1, p. 628).

Worshiping God is important to keep people from backsliding and apostasy. People who are slack in worship activities eventually leave the church. Worship occasions offer social interaction to cement relationships and love among church members. Worship gives a chance to encourage one another and make members feel valued. The Israel of God today needs to make worship interesting and meaningful.
Bible-based worship, unadulterated with modern excesses, is crucial for keeping converts in the church.

God’s care for His people is outlined in Ezek 34:4-6. God expected the shepherds, the leaders of His people, to “strengthen the weak,” “heal the sick,” and “bind up the injured.” He further requires them to bring “back the strays,” “search for the lost,” and lead them back kindly. The people should not be led “harshly” and “brutally” as that kind of leadership will scatter them and drive them to wild animals, the false teachers (see also Acts 20:29-31). The message from these verses is clear and is applicable to the church today as it was then.

God expects leaders to be concerned with the wellbeing of the people they lead. Pastors should know the conditions and challenges facing their flock. They are required to know the emotional, physical, and spiritual challenges facing those they lead. Discord and infighting in the church should be addressed before some members are pushed out of the church. Teaching and giving well-balanced instruction on various aspects of life, both spiritual and physical to the members is important in solving their problems (Brown & Driver, 2000, p. 304; Balz & Schneider, 1993, vol. 1, pp.110-211).

Prayer for the sick and encouragement or assisting them to seek medical help is important. God is willing to cooperate with His people when they pray for the sick (Exod 15:22-26; 32:29; Blue, 1984, p. 84; Hughes & Laney, 2001, p. 37). The examples of Elijah, Josiah, and Hezekiah helping Israel come back to God are worth imitating (1 Kgs 17-18; 2 Kgs 18-19; 22-23). These individuals worked hard to keep Israel close to God. Likewise today, keeping or retaining church members in the church will not happen by chance. It will only happen by devoted, resolute, tireless effort of the leaders.
Some OT retention measures appeared very severe, but since the all-wise God used those methods we need to pay close attention to them. God patiently used many soft, loving methods to lead his people and keep them in a relationship with Him. But when these methods were ignored, He used severe punitive measures to remove the obstinate and disobedient ones from among the people. God allowed pestilence, an opening in the earth to swallow apostates, fire to burn careless priests, famine, subjugation by foreign nations, and stoning (Num 14:37; 16:21-34, 35; 2 Sam 21:1; 1 Kgs 17-18; Judg 2; 2 Kgs 17:7-23; 24:15-25; Lev 20:2; Num 23, 24:15-25). These punishments were meant to warn and keep good people from being influenced by rebellion (Deut 21:21). Deportation and exile were allowed when almost the whole nation became corrupt. Isaiah reveals that through deportation, the Lord preserved a remnant for Israel (Isa 1:9).

Sometimes it is important to jealously guard the church and its administration from corrupting, polluting influences of those who seem not to be concerned about the fear of the Lord and the welfare of the church. Removing determined trouble makers, corrupt and apostate people, who live contrary to the revealed Word of God from church membership and leadership is essential. God holds leaders responsible if known sins are not dealt with (General Conference, 2010, p. 58). Willful sin and sustained apostasy bring a displeasure from God and the withdrawal of His blessings from His people (Josh 6-7; Mal 2:5-5). Sometimes, with a sorry and heavy heart, the church has to recognize by committee action the decision of those who decide to separate themselves from the communion of God’s people by their disobedience to biblical teaching. Their names should be removed from membership. But, they should be worked with to encourage them to come back to the church. This is a retention measure.
Retention of Foreigners

The last retention measure I would like to consider in the OT is the retention of non-Israelites who converted to their religion. The OT mentions foreigners who were allowed to live among the Israelites. God made provisions for them in the law. They were to be treated equally with the local people (Lev 19:33-34). Both Israelites and foreigners were circumcised, offered sacrifice, and participated in the Passover and other festivals (Lev 17:8; 22:18; Exod 12:43; Ezek 44:9; Deut 16:11, 12). Sabbath laws applied to both natives and foreigners (Exod 20:10). God forbade the Israelites to mistreat foreigners. Aliens living in Israel suffered the same penalties as natives (Lev 24:16). The law generously provided material help for the poor aliens during the harvest in Israel (Deut 24:19-22).

Some of these aliens and sojourners held high positions in the government and army and gave great service to the nation. Rahab the harlot of Jericho and Ruth the Moabitess accepted the God of Israel (Josh 2:11). Rahab is counted among the heroines of faith (Heb 11:31). Both Rahab and Ruth were great grandmothers of King David, and therefore ancestors of Jesus the Lord (Matt 1:5). The story of Ruth especially displays the interplay of the assimilation process, following the written law of God on how to treat foreigners. It was a retention procedure par excellence.

Ittai the Gittite, thought to be a Philistine native of Gath (Achtemeier, 1985, p. 439), was appointed by David to lead a third of his trusted army. Ittai successfully participated in the quelling of Absalom’s revolt (2 Sam 18:2-12).

The retention of foreigners among the Israelites has a lesson for us today. God gave strict laws about foreigners. These rejected the idea of racism, nepotism, favoritism,
tribalism, and all other isms that trouble the church today. New members should be treated with love, irrespective of their color, ethnic group, or nationality of origin. Following biblical guidelines, new converts should be given an opportunity to serve and participate fully in the furthering of the kingdom of God.

In summary, the OT theology of retention outlines a blueprint for keeping members in the church. The principles God gave Israel to keep them from apostasy are still relevant for the church today. God cared for the physical well-being of His people in the OT and He still does the same with His church.

God’s instructions on how to relate to the sojourners and aliens who accepted the worship of the God of Israel are still pertinent and should be applied by the church today to effectively improve the retention of new converts. Tribalism, nationalism, and racism are not tolerated in God’s instruction on how Israelites should live with converted foreigners. He implored Israel to love sojourners as themselves. Converted aliens were given trusted responsibilities in Israel. We should follow the same method. We should engage new converts in witnessing. Those who prove to be capable should be given positions of trust in the church. But, it is crucial that the church should not be indifferent to those who are not loyal to the church’s teachings and standards. They should be tenderly helped. If they persist in a lifestyle that dishonors God and the church, they should be disciplined to remove the frown of God against the church. God’s retention activities show great concern, love, and protection for His people. The OT retention methods have been in use to this day. The methods are easily adaptable in the prevailing social, economic, political, and technological advancement of the society. The OT retention methods were spiritual, logical, practical, and divine.
Retention in the New Testament

Jesus’ Retention Methods

Just as Abram, by faith, responded to God’s call (Gen 12:1-5; Heb 11:6-10), the disciples of Jesus undoubtedly accepted His call. Jesus did not provide convincing reasons why they should follow Him (Matt 4:18-22, 9:9; Mark 1:17, 2:14; John 1:43). Only Simon Peter and Andrew his brother received a short explanation, “I will make you fishers of men” (Matt 4:19). These men came from diverse walks of life. Their life occupations were as varied as their temperaments. Peter, Andrew, James, and John were fishermen (Matt 4:18-22). Matthew was a publican, a tax-collector (Matt 9:9; Mark 2:14). Simon the Zealot, was a freedom fighter (Matt 10:4; Mark 3:18; Ellwel & Beitzel, 2001, p. 1321) and Judas Iscariot was a treasurer, maybe an accountant (John 12:6, 13:29). Other disciples’ occupations are not mentioned. Peter was impetuous (White, 1911, p. 539); John was proud, self-assertive, and ambitious for honor (p. 539). Thomas doubted information until proven (John 20:24-29). Judas Iscariot was more concerned with money than with His Savior (John 12:6, 13:29). Despite the disciples’ background and character, Jesus managed to retain eleven out of twelve in His initial group, which was a 91.66% retention record. The question is, how did Jesus manage to retain all His disciples except one? By studying how Jesus lived and worked with His disciples we may gain knowledge of His retention methods.

Jesus dedicated His life to do the will of God (John 4:34, 6:38, 17:4). He consulted His Father in prayer concerning every major undertaking and relied on God to sustain His work (Matt 4:2; 14:19-20; Luke 6:12-13; John 11:41-44). Before Jesus called His disciples, He prayed all night (Luke 6:12-13). He depended on God to draw people to
Him through the influence of the Holy Spirit (John 6:37, 39, 44). One time Jesus said He came from heaven to do His Father’s will, not His will (John 6:38; 4:34). Jesus even claimed that His food was to do God’s will (John 4:34). This tells us that Jesus’ method was one of total dependence on God. Our Savior’s method teaches dependence on God as the best way in evangelism and retention. In the gospel undertaking, sincere prayer to God to lead and sustain the entire discipling process is crucial. It appears that converts who can be retained are those who are drawn by the Holy Spirit to Jesus. It would therefore be very difficult for the church to nonchalantly engage in evangelism to achieve some set goals, without serious heartfelt prayer for the conversion and retention of sinners in the church.

**Visitation**

Jesus stayed close to His converts (disciples). He visited them and accepted their hospitality (Matt 9:15-17; Mark 1:29, 2:15-17, 3:20; John 12:2). In his visitation program he broke the norm and prevalent worldview of the Jews. Jesus visited Levi and feasted with the hated tax collectors, the friends of Levi (Mark 2:15-17), an act which provoked complaints from the teachers of the law and the Pharisees. This shows that Jesus valued His converts regardless of their social background and position in society. He showed no favoritism. Jesus cared for the well-being of His disciples. He fed them when they were hungry (Matt 14:13-21, 15:32-38), and healed their sick relatives (Mark 1:30-31; Matt 15:29-31; Luke 5:18-26).

It is very surprising how Jesus, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the King of heaven and earth stooped so low to show His unparalleled love for His disciples. He made a fire and roasted fish beside the lake for His disciples’ breakfast! (John 21:9-14).
Jesus not only deeply loved His disciples, but also treated them as a family (Mark 3:34; Luke 8:20-21). He helped pay a tax for Peter (Matt 17:27). No one would like to leave such a loving leader.

It is rewarding to follow Jesus examples in relating to the new converts in the church. To love new converts, know their concerns, and as far as possible address their problems, anxieties, and challenges, these things will make it more likely for them to feel valued and remain in the church.

Teaching

Teaching was one of the most important methods Jesus used to retain His disciples. The Savior consistently taught His disciples the principles of holy living. His lessons covered all areas of life and the mission His disciples were to fulfill. He consistently taught them the Word of God. When they did not understand the lesson of the day, He patiently explained at home the meaning of what He taught. Sometimes He inquired of them, “Have you understood all these things?” They responded “Yes” (Matt 13:51). He wanted His disciples to know that what he taught them was important. He taught in the temple and in the synagogues (Mark 14:49, 19:47; John 7:4). He taught in the cities, villages, beside the lake, at a well, and in private homes (Matt 11:1; Luke 13:22; Mark 4:1, 6:34). He taught the ways of God correctly and refuted erroneous teachings (Matt 22:16, 15:9; 23; Mark 7:7). He did not care about other peoples’ opinions. His teaching infuriated the Pharisees and led to His death (Mark 12:14; Luke 20:21).

Jesus stated in His prayer that reception of the Word of God sanctifies life (John 17:17). In His profound prayer for the preservation of His disciples Jesus told His Father,
“I have given them your Word.” After the resurrection Jesus continued to give His disciples instruction through the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:3). Actually, Jesus declared that those who obey His teachings are the ones who are His disciples and friends (Matt 7:21-23, 24-27, 13:36, 51; John 15:14). The Word of God is what preserves and retains converts.

Evangelists and pastors need to carefully and patiently have Bible studies with new converts. If new converts are well taught they will develop their relationship with Jesus. Bible studies should be Christ-centered as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But it is also extremely crucial that teachings should be adapted to address issues raised by the cultures of the converts and their religious backgrounds. The safety of the converts should be taken into consideration; especially converts from Islam (Bauer & Osindo, 2013).

A push for goal-oriented baptisms fails to notice these important steps, and as a result such outreach programs produce shallow, uncommitted converts in two to three weeks. This needs to change. Today’s teachers should follow Jesus’ example. They should teach and explain the Word both at church and at home. New converts need closer supervision to understand their newfound faith so it may be rooted in the Word within their culture.

Community

Jesus organized His disciples as a fellowship community in a small group. His beloved disciple John said, “If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another” (1 John 1:7). Jesus’ philosophy for that community was love, love that was practical. He taught them, “By this all men will know that you are my
disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35). The disciples lived as a community. They worked together, prayed together, and consulted together (John 21:2-3; Acts 1:12-14, 12:1-19, 15:1-35).

It is rewarding to organize a church into a fellowship of small groups of caring members. When new converts join the church, they can be easily absorbed into these groups. The group will be a refuge where new converts will find shoulders to cry on during times of discouragement and trial, as they start their new life in the church. It is easy to identify the needs of new converts and cooperate with the church to address them.

Persecution

The Son of God prepared His converts to face life as disciples. He prepared them for rejection by society and the possibility of martyrdom (Matt 10:34-39; Mark 13:9-11, 12-13, 10:28-31). A convert’s former religion or denomination may become an enemy. Jesus himself was relentlessly persecuted by the Jewish religionists (Mark 10:32-34; 14:2). Jesus allowed His disciples to witness His arrest and murder (Matt 46:27-58; Mark 14:43, 53-15:47; 15:1, 3; Luke 22:47-55; John 18:2-18).

New converts should not be allowed to indulge in the thought that joining the church is an easy road. They should be made to understand all that their conversion to become children of God may mean. It may mean a new life of joy, peace, and prosperity. But on the other hand it may mean rejection, loss of job, persecution, suffering, and even death. Discipleship demands total commitment. It demands leaving everything that would separate a new convert from the Savior (Mark 8:34-37). Careful instructions that cover all challenging situations in the Christian life prepare new converts to face the Christian walk and remain faithful.
Community Service

Jesus Christ is God. He is the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace of Isa 9:6. It was Christ who led Israel through the wilderness. He personally spoke the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. Jesus gave instructions to Israel through the prophets that became the law (Nichol, 1978d, vol. 1, p. 1117; White, 1958, p. 516). When Jesus came to save humanity, He used the retention principles he had previously given to Israel.

In the parable of the sheep and goats (Matt 25:31-46), Jesus emphasized the principle of member care that was overlooked by the shepherds of His people Israel in Ezek 34:1-16, where He emphasized the importance of feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, sheltering the homeless, dressing the naked, caring for the sick, and visiting the inmates. These are common needs for all people whether old members or new converts. A church that is serious about retaining new members needs to put these principles of community service into practice. This does not mean the church should be operated like a charity organization, but each individual member should manifest concern and care for the needs of the new members.

Delegated Responsibility

Jesus gave His disciples responsibilities and engaged them in evangelism. They prepared a boat pulpit for Jesus which He used to address the crowd (Mark 3:9). He assigned them to arrange the multitude and distribute food that He miraculously made (Matt 14:19, 15:36; Mark 8:6). He sent them to prepare a place to eat the Passover (Luke 22:8-13). He gave them opportunity to practice their evangelistic skills, understanding their shortcomings (Matt 10:5-40; Luke 10:1-16, 20). When they did something wrong,
failed, or revealed lack of faith, He rebuked them gently and showed them the reason for their failure after hearing their report. For example, when they happily reported how evil spirits obey them, He told them they should not be happy for that, but for the good news that their names are written in heaven. He taught them a lesson of humility after Zebedee’s wife requested top positions for her sons. He did not disown Peter who denied Him (Matt 17:14-21; 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45; Luke 22:61).

Jesus did not rush His disciple’s spiritual maturity, but bore long with them allowing them time to learn and grow. Even today the church needs to bear long with struggling new converts and give them time to mature in the Lord. Some churches are apt to discipline and even remove new converts from membership even before they understand the teachings of the Word of God as taught by the church. The modern church needs to learn to give new converts time to learn while actively helping them. Old members need to nurture new convert’s growing faith like a tender plant.

**Prayer**

Preservation of the disciples was a chief burden of Jesus’ heart. He deeply agonized in prayer with His Father to protect the disciples. He prayed, “Holy Father, protect them by the power of Your name” (John 17:11). Jesus revealed that He managed to retain or keep His disciples by God’s name. He pleaded with His Father to protect His disciples from the evil one (John 17:16). Here another retention strategy is disclosed. This strategy succeeded and we need to take it seriously. We too must plead sincerely with God to keep the new converts who join the church. I do not remember any program conducted in the church to pray to God with fasting to keep new converts who have joined the church. More often than not, if there is any prayer after public evangelism it is
to thank God for bringing new converts into the church. Jesus’ method was to pray intensely for those who are in the church. His method of taking care of those He called is a model for retention of new converts in all ages. Jesus’ method of keeping converts cannot be compared to any other method. His method can only be adopted to fit the modern church without tampering with the principles. His is the best retention method.

**Retention in the Book of Acts and Other Apostolic Letters**

The book of Acts and other epistles are records of practical application of the teachings and actions of Jesus through His disciples. It is as if they were responding to Christ’s statement, “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (John 13:15). Although that statement was directly linked to foot washing, it had far reaching implication. It is therefore rewarding to study how the apostles applied Christ’s teachings and life examples. They transformed their experience with Jesus into techniques adapted to evangelize people of varied people groups, cultures, and nationalities, in different geographical localities.

Applying Christ’s teachings resulted in retaining converts and establishing strong churches all over Palestine, Asia Minor, and Macedonia. The apostles’ catchword was Jesus. Everything they did was about Jesus. Jesus’ life, teachings, actions, promises. His commands formed the foundation of their teaching and operations.

**The Apostles’ Prayer**

Jesus Christ, the apostles’ master and teacher, intensely prayed for the retention of His disciples. He told Peter, “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back
strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:32-32). Jesus prayed to His Father to protect his
disciples from the evil one. He pleaded with the Father to sanctify them through the truth,
and keep them united (John 17:13-23).

The apostles emulated their Master and used prayer to keep new converts in the
church. Their writings are full of prayers for the converts and requests for prayers to be
made (1 Thess 5:25; 1 Cor 1:11; 2 Thess 3:1). Paul’s letters reveal unceasing prayer for
the individual converts (2 Tim 1:3; Phil 4-6), and for the churches (Rom 1:8-9; 2 Cor
13:9; Eph 1:15-18). James asked the believers not only to pray for one another but also to
pray for wisdom and for the sick (Jas 1:5; 5:13-16). Paul asked the Thessalonians to pray
without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17).

Prayer, therefore, should be considered by the church today as vital in bringing
and keeping new converts in the church. The church needs to pray not only for the
conversion of sinners, but also for the converted sinners to remain converted and grow
into adulthood in the church through God’s grace in Jesus.

**Teaching as an Apostolic Retention Method**

Like Jesus, the apostles used teaching as a vital method of keeping the new
members added to the church. Luke wrote that the believers “devoted themselves to the
apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42). “Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to
house” the apostles “never stopped teaching and proclaiming that Jesus is the Christ”
(Acts 5:42). It was reported to the temple authorities that the men they had put in prison
were teaching the people in the temple courts (25).

The effect of apostolic teaching was so strong that the high priest said of the
apostles “you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching” (Acts 5:28). The men from
Cyprus and Cyrene started a Christian church in Antioch. Barnabas was sent to them. When he arrived “he encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts” (Acts 11:23). Barnabas brought Paul from Tarsus and together they taught in Antioch for one full year strengthening the believers and winning new converts (vv. 25-26).

During their first missionary journey, after establishing a church in Titus Justus’ house in Corinth, Paul remained there for one year and six months teaching the Word of God. Jesus approved his work, spoke to him one night, and encouraged him to continue teaching. The Lord urged him, “keep on speaking,” “do not be silent,” said Jesus, for “I am with you” (Acts 18:7-10). To the Colossians Paul said, “We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me” (Col 1:28-29).

The apostles taught the Word of God with confidence (Acts 28:31). As their master had enraged the leaders, their teachings enraged the Pharisees (Acts 4:18, 5:28) and led martyrdom of some of them (Acts 6:8-7:1-60, 12:1-2). Paul commanded Timothy and Titus to teach and refute those teaching erroneous doctrines, such as the teaching of Balaam and the Nicolaitans, because those teachings ruin members (1 Tim 4:11, 6:2; Titus 1:11; Heb 13:9). It is evident that teaching was crucial in retaining old and new members in the church. That is why when Paul listed the qualifications of church elders he included the ability to teach as one of the requirements for their election to office (1 Tim 3:2).

The importance of teaching in establishing new members firmly in the church today cannot be overemphasized. Ministers at the local churches should make it a priority
to prepare teachers who are able to teach. Baptismal class teachers and Sabbath School teachers should be competent people, full of the Holy Spirit, whose teaching can inform and transform lives and have an impact on retaining new members. The apostles followed both the OT and methods of Jesus, and their work succeeded.

**Love and Encouragement**

Love and encouragement surface in the writings of Paul as a method of retention in the NT. *Random House Dictionary* defines “courage” as “the quality of mind or spirit that enables a person to face difficulty, danger, pain, etc., without fear; bravery” (2001, p. 284). To encourage is to “inspire with courage, spirit, or confidence” (p. 405). Encouragement, therefore, is lifting up a person’s confidence, making him more determined to achieve the goal set before him. Christian encouragement has its source in the Holy Scriptures (Rom 15:4).

The apostles loved their converts. They spent a great deal of time with them until they were sure the members were encouraged and united in love. Writing to the believers in Thessalonica Paul reminded them that when they lived among them, they were gentle “like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us” (1 Thess 2:6-8).

Paul carefully articulated deep, affectionate words aimed to produce a feeling of endearment between the apostles and the believers. He emphasized that “we dealt with each one of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting, and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you to his kingdom of glory” (1 Thess 2:10-12). To the Colossians Paul wrote that his aim was that “they may be encouraged in
heart and united in love” which could enable them to “know the mystery of God” which is “Christ” (Col 2:2).

John and Peter placed a tremendous emphasis on the importance of living in love (1 Pet 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 23, 4:7, 11-12; 2 John 1:5). A believer’s faith should encourage one another (Rom 1:12). The idle, the fainthearted, and the weak should be patiently encouraged (1 Thess 5:14). The believers should encourage one another not to neglect meeting together (Heb 10:25).

The theme of encouragement and love is very important in retaining not only the new members, but also the old members, who for various reasons, begin to tire of the Christian journey. There is less and less encouragement in the churches today. Instead of encouragement, there seems to be more complaining about the shortcomings of the members. It is important to kindly urge members to grow in Christ and fulfill the duties of their calling, but to do so in an encouraging loving manner. Christ our Savior and His apostles used more encouragement than chastisement in their approach to help the disciples grow. We need to follow that example.

**Visitation**

The apostles had a dynamic visitation program as a strategy to strengthen believers and increase retention. Peter visited the saints in Lydda, where he miraculously healed Aeneas. The saints in Joppa called Peter, and he resurrected Tabitha (Acts 9:32, 36-43). Paul and Barnabas established churches in Asia Minor and Macedonia on their first missionary journey (Acts 13-14). After the council of Jerusalem, “Paul said to Barnabas, ‘Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we have preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing” (15:36). Paul and Silas “went through
Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches (v. 41). Even after they were cruelly beaten at Philippi, they left the jail and encouraged the converts in Lydia’s house (Acts 16:41).

During Paul’s third missionary journey, he set out from Antioch on foot, traveling from place to place throughout Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples (Acts 18:23). These verses reveal Paul’s mindset with reference to the welfare of the new believers. They put priority on visiting new believers, irrespective of any threatening circumstance. They had vivid memories of the events of their first missionary journey, when those believers were converted, yet they visited.

In Pisidian Antioch the Jews were jealous of Paul’s teaching and “talked abusively of what he said and stirred up persecution” (Acts 13:45, 50). There was a plot to kill Paul and Barnabas at Iconium, but they were tipped-off and fled to Derbe and Lystra (Acts 14:5-6). At Lystra Paul was stoned and dragged outside of the city for dead (vv. 19-20). It is reasonable to think that disciples converted from such backgrounds could easily become discouraged and backslide. Paul did right to be mindful of those converts. Paul and Silas risked their lives returning to the very places where they had narrowly escaped death to visit and strengthen the new converts.

Paul stayed at Ephesus for two years and three months, teaching at the synagogue and in the lecture hall of Tyrrannus. In his farewell speech to the Ephesian church elders at Miletus, he reported that he taught publicly and house to house (Acts 20:20). Visitation was a strategy that helped to retain new converts in the church. The modern church needs to revisit this time-proven technique. The pastors and elders should intentionally plan visitation to boost new member retention. Since visitation was Jesus’ and the apostles’ method of retention, it should also be ours.
Fellowship and Community Service

Fellowship and community service among the believers was another strategy used by the disciples to cement love among the believers and therefore assisted in retention. Luke reports that “believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to breaking of bread and to prayer.” They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people” (Acts 2:42-47). This fellowship of genuine love produced unity among the believers making them “one in heart and mind” (4:32).

Those who had land and houses sold them and brought the proceeds to the apostles, who distributed the income according to the needs of each individual. As the result “there were no needy persons among them” (Acts 4:32-36). Tabitha, a convert at Joppa made clothes for the widows and orphans (9:39). Service became so important that when it appeared not to be done properly in Jerusalem there were complaints from the Greek converts. As a result the office of deacon was created to address the problem (6:1-7).

This loving fellowship and community service among the believers was introduced by the apostles in the mission fields. Ellen White wrote a touching approbation of the believer’s fellowship during the apostolic period saying:

Every Christian saw in his brother the divine similitude of benevolence and love. One interest prevailed. One object swallowed up all others. All hearts beat in harmony. The only ambition of the believers was to reveal the likeness of Christ's character, and to labor for the enlargement of His kingdom. (White, 1900, p. 120)

A fellowship akin to that of the time of the apostles is needed to support new believers who join the church today. True, loving fellowship is precious to both new and old church members. The church may not reproduce exactly what happened in the
apostolic era, but we need to have in place a clear mechanism to fellowship with new believers and support them in the churches they join. The Dorcas Society does something similar but lacks resources to replicate what happened then. It takes the Holy Spirit in a willing heart to provide care for the new converts who join the church. We need to allow the Holy Spirit to clean our selfish heart and initiate apostolic fellowship.

Rebuke

To protect the converts against the encroachment of duplicity and hypocrisy the apostles sternly rebuked, punished, and urged separation from obstinate offenders. They stood firm against deception, heresy, and inappropriate living among the members to eradicate and block such sinful examples and erroneous teachings from infiltrating the church and spoiling the old and new converts. For instance, Ananias and Sapphira met their death for lying to the apostles (Acts 5:1-11). That event was analogous to punishing willful offenders in the Old Testament (see Lev 24:23; Num 15:32).

Paul urged the Corinthian church to expel a sexually immoral brother from membership. He said, “Shouldn’t you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this?” “Hand this man over to Satan so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord” (1 Cor 5:1-6). The reason for this stern action is revealed in the same passage. “Don’t you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?” (1 Cor 5:6). The yeast of sin, whether in the form of ideas articulated, teachings, actions of omission or commission against the known will of God, if tolerated, can spoil the whole church. The apostles were firm and had one voice to protect the church against flawed doctrines. Paul even pronounced a curse against people teaching misleading doctrines (Gal 1:8-9).
The apostle John did not lament when such erroneous teachers left the church, but called them the antichrist (1 John 2:19). The apostles took heresy seriously and fearlessly rebuked their postulators and commanded church leaders to do the same (1 Tim 4:11, 6:2; Titus 1:11; Heb 13:9). Jesus commended such a stand against heretics (Rev 2:3). Paul admonished the church not to associate with immoral, idle, and greedy people (1 Cor 5:11; 2 Thess 3:6-14). But, Paul’s loving heart is shown seeking the reinstatement of the fornicator at Corinth if he repented (2 Cor 2:7-11). He advised that the idlers in Thessalonica should not be counted as enemies (2 Thess 3:15).

We can safely say that the apostles were stern and concerned with protecting and retaining church members. We need the same earnestness to protect new converts in Adventist churches today. Church leadership at all levels should be alert to follow examples given us by our Savior Jesus Christ and his apostles, to stand firm against encroaching errors that stealthily penetrate the church. There should not be respect of persons who come with erroneous teachings that would affect the church.

To summarize, it is clear that the apostles used Jesus’ method as their method of evangelism and retention of members. Apostles utilized teaching ministry to preserve converts. They taught the relationship with Jesus and rejected erroneous heresy. They emphasized love among the believers. They developed love by fellowship and social services among the needy. Visitation was important to the early apostolic church. They visited churches and members house to house. Apostles used language of encouragement to give converts hope and a sense of dependence on God. They unashamedly rebuked false teachers. It will greatly pay if we would emulate their methods of retention.
Retention in Ellen G. White’s Writings

Ellen G. White’s literature has abundant information on how to retain new converts who join the church. Her methods are biblical and have in-depth explanations of what to do to retain new members. It is surprising how the methods of retention gleaned from the Bible and her writings converge and agree, despite the generational distance that separates the church of the OT, NT, and her days. The similarity of ideas reveals that they are drawn from the same source of divine inspiration. Like the biblical approach of caring for new members, these methods transcend geographical boundaries, epochal barriers, and cultures. They have the touch of divine origin.

Preparing New Converts to Join the Church

On introducing people to Christ, Ellen G. White writes that the focus of the preacher, or the Bible instructor should be on introducing people to God through Jesus Christ and not to the church. The minister himself must have “the spirit and the power of the message of truth in his own heart” (White, 1948a, vol. 4, p. 447), for if he does not, “no direct appeals are made to those souls that are trembling in the balance” (p. 447). It is the action of the Spirit of God that brings convicted converts to stay in the church.

The message to be presented to the people should be salvation as it is in Jesus Christ, not church doctrines. Church doctrines are important but need to be presented in a way that they point to Jesus. Sinners should see their need of the pardoning love of God through Jesus. That is what will make their conversion real and lasting. It is the Spirit of Jesus who brings transformation into the heart (White, 1915, p. 155). It is essential therefore, that ministers of the Word should themselves be converted men and women able to be used by God to bring people into the church.
Ellen White advocates follow-up of the interest created either as a result of Bible study or preaching, as the foundation of holding new converts in the church. A person who receives a new message often becomes startled (White, 1946, p. 334). It is therefore vital to present the same message several times to fasten its distinctive points in the interested person’s mind (p. 334). If follow-up is not done immediately, the force of truth may wane, and may sometimes be replaced with erroneous ideas from false teachers. Modern technology can be used to improve what Ellen G. White is proposing here. The use of technology such as mobile phones, Skype, E-mail, and text messages can make it easy for us to do more follow-up than in the days of Ellen G. White.

Teaching Ministry

White joins the OT, Jesus, and the apostles in emphasizing the importance of teaching new converts. She says new converts should be “instructed by faithful teachers of God’s word, that they may increase in knowledge and love of the truth, and may grow to the full stature of men and women in Christ Jesus” (White, 1946, p. 337). Teachers of the Word should hold Bible readings in the homes of the new converts and those showing interest should be invited to accept Christ and join the church. These instructions should be given carefully, kindly, and tenderly, touching various lines of work entrusted to the church by God (White, 1948b, vol. 5, p. 338).

Teachers are to unite with the Holy Spirit who will give force to the lessons they offer, give understanding to the recipients, and stamp the information in their memory. In the churches there should be less sermonizing and more teaching that leads to intelligent knowledge of and development of a relationship between the believer and Christ. White strongly suggests that some preaching sessions on Sabbath should be turned into teaching
times instead. Teaching leads to more understanding of the Word than sermonizing. Teaching builds a wall of protection around the believers against the superstition of Satan (White, 1948c, vol. 6, p. 348).

Preparation of New Members Before Baptism

White urged that new converts should be thoroughly prepared before baptism. She says, “Salvation is not to be baptized, not to have our names upon the church books, not to preach the truth. But it is a living union with Jesus Christ, to be renewed in heart” (White 1946, p. 319). Therefore, the pastor is supposed to hold meetings with new believers, educating them on what conversion means. Conversion demands a “change of heart, thoughts and purposes.” “Evil habits must be given up” (White, 1948b, vol. 5, p. 95). Sins and evil traits of character must be fought and victory won through the grace of Jesus, by prayer, obedience, and practice. Before baptism there must be a careful investigation into the experience of the candidates (p. 95).

The church is not to judge the motives of the candidates, but “great care should be exercised in accepting members into the church; for Satan has his specious devices through which he purposes to crowd false brethren into the church, through which he can work more successfully to weaken the cause of God” (White, 1946, p. 313). “God would be better pleased to have six thoroughly converted to the truth than to have sixty make a profession and yet not be truly converted” (p. 320).

These serious steps and warnings given by the servant of God are largely overlooked by the church today. It appears the church has a stronger propensity to emphasize numerical growth than qualitative growth. Hasty evangelistic meetings are the order of the day, two to three weeks of meetings at the most. During these meetings,
baptisms are done in haste. After one or two weeks of meetings, new converts are baptized. Before baptisms they take baptismal vows which they know little about.

Sometimes evangelistic meetings are done by foreign volunteers who have no time to learn the local challenges of the new converts. And since they hunger for the report of the number of people baptized to take home with them, they make hasty baptisms of unprepared candidates. Within a few months, when the euphoria of the meetings is over, many of those baptized are out of the church. This is even worse among the local preachers. Evangelistic meeting conducted by kind people from abroad are a rare phenomenon. It is the local preachers whose hurried baptisms have more impact on the church. This needs to be addressed within the local conferences.

New Converts Need Time to Grow

When new believers are integrated into the church they should be regarded as little children in the faith. Their instructors should kindly urge them to “walk in all humility of mind, distrustful of self, seeking wisdom from God of wisdom” (White, 1946, p. 341). The church needs to understand the difficulty of breaking loose from errors that have been taught from childhood.

There will be some discouraging obstacles for these spiritual babes to meet and overcome. Therefore, “forbearance and pity” should be shown to those coming out of darkness (White, 1946, p. 341). Ellen G. White’s observation is important. Sometimes new converts are treated harshly. They are expected to immediately reach maturity and overcome the defective traits of their character. Old church members need to remember that there are character challenges that they have battled for many years. New members, likewise, need time to grow. New converts are like new plants that should be watered,
weeded and tenderly cared for. With time, by the grace of God, they will be able to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit. Jesus will help them grow unto eternal life.

New Members and Assigned Responsibilities

Ellen White emphasizes the need of spiritual babes getting involved in reaching out for Christ without delay. Without working to win others, they will be spiritual dwarfs (1895, letter 61, pp. 6-7). Therefore, they should be given something to do in spiritual work to develop their love and root their dependence on God (White, 1892, letter 44, p. 3). Soul winners develop in spirituality and devotion (White, 1946, p. 354).

The integration of new converts into the church should not be thought of as completed until they grasp their responsibility in the church. New members are babes borne into the church. As they grow they should be made to realize that as part of the family they are responsible and have a share in the family duties. Just as children are trained by light tasks in the home, new members should be assigned light tasks in the church. They should be part of the church team and help in duties like bell ringing, cleaning the church, distributing literature, welcoming visitors, etc. New converts are to be “Christians who have a true sense of their responsibility, and will do their appointed work” (White, 1948a, vol. 4, pp. 398-399).

New Converts and Instruction on Tithing

In addition to general duties in the church and soul wining, new converts are to be instructed in returning faithful tithes and offerings. Financing the gospel ministry is a duty that all truly converted members should take seriously. If the minister disregards instructing new members on this important point, “he has left undone the most important
part of his work (White, 1940, p. 105). New members are to be instructed about all the duties Christ requires of His children in the church. New babes in the church should be tenderly and kindly cared for but should be introduced to the full duties of membership.

Dealing With Needy New Members

Needy new members are to be cared for in love and sympathy (White, 1946, pp. 352-353). Ellen G. White suggested that the poor in the mission field should not only receive physical help but also education in practical work. They should be helped to know cooking skills, care for the sick, housekeeping, making clothes, and other skills that would improve their lives (1952, p. 194).

Protecting New Converts from Splinter Groups

In Musoma, where the church I am conducting this research is located, there is a splinter group which swept many members from the church mostly from Mara Conference and a few other regions in the country. We praise God that many of those people who were deceived are back in the church.

The advice given in the writings of Ellen G. White is very important for the church. She writes that Satan constantly uses errors to cause apostasy in the church. Converts joining the church may encounter error and fanaticism. It is Satan’s studied effort to distract, annoy, and mislead people from Christ. New converts are Satan’s easy target. Splinter groups propagating erroneous teachings against the church are extant in all places. It is therefore vital that the church protect new believers. False teachers should be met and resisted by thus says the Lord. New converts, even the old ones should be taught to keep a firm hold on the Bible truth (1946, pp. 357-359).
Attractive Worship

New converts come from dissimilar backgrounds and experiences. Some are converted to Christ from deep paganism. Others are from among the educated and cultured classes. Sometimes among the converts are people who have separated themselves from so called mainline churches with impressive buildings and well-orchestrated liturgies. When these people join our church, they need to find a worship environment that reflects what we claim to be. Worship should be biblical, relevant, and helpful for all types of people to strengthen their relationship with God. Ellen G. White advocates interesting worship. She says, “Our meetings should be made intensely interesting” (White, 1948c, vol. 6, p. 609). Worship that is interesting should be well organized and should present messages that are well prepared. Sermons are not to be long drawn-out presentations. Long prayers should not be part of the worship service. Those conducting programs should be prompt and to the point to keep interest to the end. This kind of worship would fit all classes of people joining the church.

Books Recommended by Ellen White for Retention

Ellen G. White suggested some of her books that would be of help in establishing new believers in the church. These are *Patriarchs and Prophets,* and *The Great Controversy,* which she says would point to the dangers to be avoided by the new believer. Other books are *Desire of Ages,* again authored by herself, and *Daniel and Revelation* by Uriah Smith (White, 1946, p. 366). Her insights are practical and balanced. We need to give new converts proper attention to help establish them into the church family.
Retention in Modern Writers’ Literature

Church administrators, pastors, and church scholars have written numerous books and articles addressing new member retention. Their writings make an effort to identify why it is so difficult to retain new converts. They also suggest ways to curb the trend. Halversen sees a lack of training old church members to disciple and assimilate new converts as the major hindrance to new member retention (2000, pp. 14-15). Thayer adds weight to Halversen’s concern by emphasizing that old members fail to disciple new converts because, they themselves were not disciples (Thayer, 2010, p. 6-11).

After a focus group interview with leading retention pastors, Thayer wrote that some pastors branded some church members as “the difficult old members” (2010, p. 6) and another said, new converts “need protection from the saints” (p. 6). An assimilation essay, written for the Lutheran Cottonbelt Conference, observed that in the church, old members have both outer and inner circles of friends. It is easy to join the outer circle, but it takes considerable effort on the part of a new convert to penetrate the inner circle where the activities take place (Westra, 1998, para. 5).

These studies clearly delineate the importance of taking seriously the training of old members in preparation to receive new members before evangelistic meetings are conducted. Old members need to be ready to receive new converts into the social circles of the church.

Training Old Church Members in Retention

Evangelists are “obstetricians,” since they specialize in delivering spiritual babes into the church. But the church members are the “pediatricians” (Halversen, 2000, pp. 14-15). Their role is to cure spiritual illnesses and care for the spiritual infants born in
the church. Both obstetricians and pediatricians need instruction to do their job well. Before an evangelistic meeting is conducted, enough time, planning, and money should be allocated for a thorough training of the old members in retention techniques. Training sessions may be offered either in the form of special classes or sermons, a few weeks before the start of the meetings (Halversen, 2000, pp. 14-15).

Lectures and sermons should focus on how to relate to new converts. Old members need to realize the challenges, fears, failures, short comings, and unmet expectations, loss of friends or even families of the new members. In the first few months new members face these challenges. They need to be treated with care during this transition period. The training of the old members ought to prepare them to be encouragers rather than discouragers of the new converts. They should be positive about the church and its leaders. The old member’s center of attention should be to help new members develop Christian qualities. This will happen as they interact in a friendly manner with the new spiritual babes in the church (Halversen, 2000, pp. 14-15, 28).

Helping New Members Face Crises

New converts have challenges of their own. Mark Finley discusses the crises new converts face, such as the “crisis of discouragement” (1983, p. 8). This happens when new converts realize that habits and predispositions of their old nature still struggle to be in command. They may realize they are still irritable, use profane language, fail to keep the Sabbath, and have other shortcomings. These failures may deeply discourage them.

They may face a crisis of “integration” (p. 9) when they fail to make new friends. They feel lonely and start missing church services. Another crisis is a “crisis of life-style” (p. 9), which occurs when new converts fail to adjust their old lifestyle to the biblical
teaching espoused by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. If they join the church that is in conflict, the leader’s attitudes may discourage them. If these crises are not met, new converts may backslide and apostatize.

**Orientation for New Members**

New members need an orientation about Seventh-day Adventist jargon. They may wonder about the meaning of ADRA, Sabbath School, foot washing, AYI or Dorcas (Cress, 1993, p. 26). During post baptismal instructions, new converts should become knowledgeable about church language.

New converts come to church with deep longing for a relationship with God. They feel what Dybdahl calls a “hunger” (2008, p. 11) for a relationship with God. Teaching is the most crucial part of satisfying this hunger and establishing them in the church. Charles Westra agrees with this when he writes, “From our first contact with a prospect to active membership and beyond our focus is hearing and growing in God’s word” (1998, para. 13)

The church needs to prepare and intentionally put in place carefully planned pre-baptism and post-baptism training materials, for new converts. These should cover areas of challenges they may face. A new convert’s most important training should cement their relationship with God through Jesus Christ. The best way to achieve this is to present church doctrinal lessons in a Christ-centered manner. These lessons should not be presented just for the sake of head knowledge, but in relation to what God did for us in Christ Jesus.
Animism Should Be Addressed

In Tanzania and in other parts of the world where animistic religions are strong, training and teaching material should include adequate and careful treatment of cultural issues and beliefs. Animistic beliefs and practices control the lives of non-Christian folk to the extent that joining the church cannot be solved with a proof text in order to discard an animistic lifestyle. If new members are not carefully instructed, their worldview molded by the Word of God, they may end up living a split-level Christianity (Hiebert, Shaw, & Tienou, 1999, p. 15). Though baptized, the daily life may still include beliefs and practices contrary to Christianity. At times of crises, such members will often run for help outside the church to the traditional practitioners.

Fear of evil forces should be eradicated in the new convert’s beliefs if the person is to be established into church life. New members should be assured that Christ is the most powerful Savior and should rest assured of God’s protection. The training package should go beyond doctrines and include such important information such as Adventist history, traditions, culture, hope, and demands.

New Members Should Be Taught How to Pray

Teach new members how to communicate with God in prayer. An instructor should “talk about how we keep Sabbath, why we have schools and hospitals” (Cress, 1991). It is training that orients a new member into church life. With such knowledge it is likely that a new member would feel at home and love the church. The book *Hunger: Satisfying the Longing of Your Soul* (Dybdahl, 2008) would be very helpful in teaching and training new members the importance of worship and prayer. The same book would help new member know how to confess, repent, and meditate to develop a loving
relationship with God that would make them stable in the church.

Fellowship

Modern retention and assimilation writers join the Bible and Ellen G. White to emphasize the place of fellowship as important in retaining new members. Russell Burrill observes that a new convert’s retention in the church begins with the first person he gets in touch with in the church (2009, pp. 80-81). “A baby needs not only food but also the warmth, love and security of a family to which he really belongs” (Watson, 1976, p. 123). “The new Christian must now move his emotional center of gravity to the family of God: “This, essentially, is where I belong. This is my family” (p. 123).

Sometimes relatives of the new converts, old friends, and their old church acquaintances sever their relationship with new converts. There are cases where a convert is disowned by parents, chased away from home, experiences a marriage break up, loses a job, while converts from Islam often live under the threat of death. New converts in such situations always feel lonely and stressed. It is at this time that they need support of their brothers and sisters in the church.

Church members should welcome the new ones in their homes, deliberately seek to develop a friendship with them, and help them in their days of need and pain. Norma Sahlin suggests holding new member fellowship dinners, where new members may interact with many people and possibly develop friendships (1989, p. 17). At the dinner, church plans may be presented. Also new converts may be informed of the services they may benefit from the church, such as counseling, and family support (Westra, 1998, para. 25). Watson says the Greek word for fellowship, koinonia, means sharing of money and possessions with the fellow believer in need (Watson, 1976, p. 126).
Old members should make phone calls to new Christians, send cards to them, and invite them to join church functions. They could also visit their homes and pray with them and accept their hospitality. Your church needs to become a new home with a strong loving fellowship for new spiritual babes. Petermann wrote, “Members disappear from church rolls when no one cares enough to do something about it” (1985, para. 10). Fellowship is something that the church is able to do. When new converts actively participate in church fellowship it will be easy to notice their absence and make immediate follow-up before they disappear unnoticed.

Involving New Members in Church Work

Early involvement of new members in church mission and activities is fundamental to their spiritual growth and commitment to the Gospel Commission that will help them value the church and choose to stay there. Berg wrote, “Put That New Convert to Work” (1972). New members should become engaged in church work, depending on their knowledge of church teachings and maturity. Expert retention pastors interviewed by Thayer (2010, pp. 6-11) agreed that when new members are involved in some kind of ministry in the church they feel the church needs them. This helps them feel that the church belongs not only to the old members, but also to them.

New converts may start getting involved in activities like welfare programs, Dorcas, youth societies, ushering, bell ringing, church cleaning, participation in Sabbath School programs, and accompanying old members in Bible study outreach. New converts may distribute denominational literature in their neighborhoods and at their work places. The church should work hard to fan the new convert’s flame of enthusiasm to continue growing. Berg thinks that if new converts are not actively engaged in soul winning “the
living flame may soon become a dying ember” (1972, para. 9)

Small Groups

Small groups are viewed by modern retention scholars as of great help in retaining and assimilating new members into church life. When a new member joins a church with over 300 members, it is easy for the person to be unintentionally neglected. Petermann gives a brief imaginary example of a situation a new convert may face saying:

Imagine that you have been invited to a birthday party by some friends. When you arrive at your friends’ house, they invite you in, but after that no one there concerns himself with you at all. No one introduces you to strangers; no one says hello; no one even acknowledges that you exist. Obviously you wouldn’t enjoy yourself very much. In fact, if you were invited to that same house for a birthday party the next year, chances are you wouldn’t go. (1985, para. 1)

The scenario described by Petermann happens over and over again when a new member joins the church. They get lost among large congregations with no one to greet or talk to them.

Small groups help congregations to “grow in spiritual maturity and Christian friendship” (Petty, 2007, p. 2). They create a personal bond among the group that encourages new members to stay in the church. Small groups are not a new concept; perhaps old members do not recognize them. These groups include the choir, Adventist Men, Dorcas, Sabbath School classes, baptismal classes, prayer groups, and various youth societies. People who join these groups make strong lifetime church members who seldom leave the church.

The small groups discussed here are groups purposefully initiated to be composed of church members living in a certain area or street who come together for the purpose of strengthening each other, studying together, and encouraging one another. The rationale
for forming these groups is found in Heb 10:24-25 which says, “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Small groups should be started six months prior to an evangelistic meeting (Halversen, 2000, pp. 14-15). The location of the small groups should be scattered across the geographical area of the church. Group members may choose the days to meet that do not interfere with church programs or their activities. During evangelistic meetings the group members should be actively involved. If they notice visitors from their area, they need to introduce themselves to them and invite them to join their group. Those who join active groups are more inclined to have better fellowship and opportunities for Bible study and also for friendship and community outreach.

Small groups may be evangelistic, visitation, outreach or a social action group. When a new convert is actively engaged in church work through these types of groups, when that person prays and communes with God for the success of the group, his or her faith grows, the person values the church and will seldom backslide.

Guardians for New Converts

Guardianship is another way to give new converts assistance as they start church life. It is the procedure of assigning a responsible church member to connect with a new convert with a view to help the new members establish themselves in the new faith and church life. Dombrosky (1964) calls it a “buddy system,” and businessmen call it sponsorship (pp. 33-34). Giving a new convert a guardian helps the new member get closer attention from the church. A guardian encourages a new convert to attend church
activities and meetings. The new members learn the Adventist lifestyle by example from their guardians. The guardian may assist the new member with transportation to church. That person can help the church know the progress of the new member, know their concerns and challenges, if any, and channel those needs to the church if the guardian cannot solve them (Rudowski, 1986, pp. 14-15, 17).

**Summary and Conclusion**

**Retention in the OT**

The Old Testament reveals that God’s deep and compassionate love was the dynamic force influencing all His actions to keep His people to Himself. He visited and warned His people (Adam, Cain, antediluvians, etc.) of the impending danger of apostasy threatening them. God called people (Abram, Israel), separating them from heathen influences. He established a theocratic nation with an unequaled system of worship to bind those that belonged to Him in unbroken communion with Him and gave them the Law to guide their lives. He commanded that His people be taught and instructed concerning His law, commandments, and ordinances.

During times of adversity God was the master welfare director providing food and divinely stopping the wear and tear on clothes and shoes. God dealt firmly with determined, obstinate rebellion. He punished and killed rebellious people to restrict their influence from affecting others. It is important to note the fact that our heavenly Father commanded justice for both the Israelites and non-Israelites who believed in Him. The Old Testament retention methods seem to be the foundation on which later principles are based. If the church today would study these methods with deep interest much good would be accomplished in retaining new converts in the church.
Jesus’ Retention Methods

In the New Testament Jesus exemplifies the retention principles He delineated in the Old Testament. His compassionate love was seen in life, practices, and words. Jesus visited His disciples, healed people’s diseases, resurrected the dead, accepted hospitality from His converts, taught them, and formed a small group of twelve. He prepared them for hardship, provided for their needs, involved them in the ministry, and prayed for them. He gave them divine power to energize them in perfecting holiness and accomplishing the task He gave them. Jesus commanded His disciples to love one another because He himself loved them. He said they were not to be of this world. These methods kept 11 disciples out of 12, a great success.

Apostolic Retention Methods

The apostles copied their master Jesus Christ very closely. They loved and encouraged the converts, prayed for them, healed their sick, taught them, visited, and fellowshipped with them. They provided for the physical needs of the converts. The apostles were keen in protecting the new converts from heresy and sinful behaviors. They admonished the lazy and commanded obstinate sinners to be removed from the church. The apostles punished the hypocrites (Ananias and Sapphira). They wrote for the admonition and teaching of the church.

Retention in the Writings of Ellen G. White

The writings of Ellen G. White on new member retention are built on the OT, NT, and the inspiration she received from God. She advocated introducing new converts to God through Jesus Christ, not merely the doctrines of the church. She emphasized strong
follow-up programs for the converts. She called for the use of a custodian to help new converts, insisted on thorough teaching to the new members covering all areas of church doctrines including church finance. She felt that new members should immediately be involved in outreach programs. White insisted on protecting new members from error, and showing forbearance to them to give them an opportunity to grow. The worship environment should be improved, made interesting and appealing to the new members. She suggested a list of her books that could help new members be established in the church. The information in her writings puts in perspective the biblical instructions on how to disciple new members.

Scholars on Retention

Scholars writing on retention seem to reflect retention methods already outlined in the Bible and Ellen G. White’s writings. They insist on thorough planning of how to retain new members before evangelism, the formation of small groups to absorb new converts, training of old members in how to keep new converts, and preparing custodians or guardians who can help new members on a one-to-one basis. They advocate pre- and post-baptism Bible instruction and training for new members. When the new converts come to church they are to be welcomed by a fellowship meal, where some orientation is given them. Orientation is to cover important points in church culture and life. Church jargon specific to Seventh-day Adventists should be explained. The importance of follow-up and visitation is unanimously emphasized. Follow-up may be done using modern technology such as mobile phone, Skype, e-mail, or text messages. Worship should acknowledge cultural changes without contravening biblical principles. New members should be loved, assisted, and sympathetically allowed to grow
spiritually. New converts also need to be assisted through the transition from worldliness to becoming sons and daughters of God. Modern writers are firm on the point that new converts should immediately become involved in outreach programs.

People are called to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord and join the church community to be saved from sin and eternal death. The ultimate goal of salvation is eternal life. This can only be achieved if the converted individual is established in the faith and remains faithful to God through Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “But he who stands firm to the end will be saved” (Matt 24:13). The new member retention methods discussed in this chapter aim to help new Christians become mature Christians in the faith and “stand firm to the end.”

The theology of retention revealed how seriously God takes the issue of salvation. God is interested to keep those He calls through His Son Jesus Christ to grow in relationship with Him within the community of believers in the church. The church is found in a society which has its geography, history and culture. The next chapter is going to discuss the location of the Makoko Church in Tanzania.
CHAPTER 3

THE PROJECT CONTEXT ANALYSIS

Introduction

In Chapter 2, the theological rationale for developing a new member retention strategy was covered. Chapter 3 now surveys the context of New Member Retention Strategy for the Makoko Church. It covers the social, cultural, political, and religious backgrounds of Tanzania and the Mara Conference where the Makoko Church is located so as to provide background knowledge of the context of the project.

![Map of Tanzania](https://www.google.com/search?hl=en&site=imghp&tbm=isch)
Country Analysis

Geographic Description

The United Republic of Tanzania (Kiswahili Jamhuri ya Muungano wa Tanzania) is two countries in one. It was born out of the union of the two sovereign states of Tanganyika and Zanzibar on 26 April 1964 (Tanzania will be used instead of The United Republic of Tanzania). Tanzania is geographically located between longitude 29° and 41° east, and latitude 1° and 12° south, with an area of 945,203 km². Tanzania Mainland has an area of 943,649 km², and Tanzania Zanzibar (henceforth Zanzibar), an island in the India Ocean is 1,554 km². Marine water covers 64,300 km², and fresh water 58,000 km², making the total surface area of the country covered by water 122,300 km² (Tanzania Government Portal, n.d.).

Tanzania borders Kenya and Uganda to the north, Burundi and Rwanda to the north west, the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west, Zambia to the south west, and Malawi and Mozambique to the south of the country. A stretch of about 1435 km of Indian Ocean coastline separates the Kenyan border from its border with Mozambique (Griffiths, 2004, p. 35).

Physical Features

The country is blessed with physical features favorable in many ways. The north eastern part and south has plateaus and mountains ranges. Tourists like to visit Mount Kilimanjaro (5895 m), the highest snow-capped peak in tropical Africa, and the caldera Ngorongoro crater, both situated in the north. Mount Meru (4505 m), the fifth highest mountain in Africa, and an active volcanic mountain Oldonyo le Ngai, the “Mountain of God” in the Maasai language is also in the north. Other mountain ranges of various
shapes and sizes are found throughout the country.

Life is impossible without water, and God gave Tanzania enough of it. The distribution of surface water drainage is very good with big rivers like the Rufiji, Ruvuma, Wami, draining into the Indian Ocean; Kagera and Mara into Lake Victoria; and Malagarasi, into Lake Tanganyika. The most famous fresh water lakes are the second largest (Lake Victoria) and the second deepest (Lake Tanganyika) in the world. Lakes Victoria, Tanganyika, Malawi, and other smaller lakes provide fish that accounts for 30% of food in Tanzania (Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries Development, 2010, p. iv; Oldoinyo Lengai, n.d., para. 1).

National Parks and Game Reserves

People like to see animals, especially in their natural habitat. Tanzania is privileged with innumerable numbers of wild animals so that Toppenberg suggested that the country “was like a zoological garden. Right and left were thousands of zebras, hartebeests, wildebeests, and many other antelopes and gazelles, also ostriches, and other beasts and birds” (1916, p. 13). Tanzania has 16 national parks and game reserves. The most famous are the Serengeti, Ngorongoro Crater, Lake Manyara, Mikumi, and Tarangire. The Serengeti is famous for its wildebeest migration, and Ngorongoro Crater for its caldera (Bigambe, 2013, para. 1).

Animals are important for the economy, for adding to the natural beauty of the country, and for food. But for some ethnic groups, animals are used as totemic symbols and animists use animal parts like horns, skin, bones, blood, hooves, bird’s beaks, and feathers for witchcraft paraphernalia, protective charms, and amulets (Speak, 1864, p. 6).
Forests and Minerals

Tanzania mainland’s 34.6 million hectares are covered with forests and woodlands (Akida, & Bromley, n.d., p. 2). Forests are useful economically, religiously, and medicinally. Forests provide timber and firewood; while some plants and trees barks and leaves are used for medicine. Some communities like the Zigua protect sacred forests where they conduct sacrifices (Ylhäisi, 2006, p. 6).

Tanzania is rich in minerals. International conglomerates are rushing to Tanzania to grab the rich deposits of precious minerals like gold, diamond, tanzanite, iron, titanium, uranium, natural gas, and other minerals (p. 51). This is startling since this country is categorized as one of the poorest nations in the world.

History

Historical knowledge is vital in understanding how the interplay of social, political, economic, and religious forces of the past have shaped the present society and its cultural values. History is a medium of instruction that contributes to an understanding of the nation and plays a role in producing good citizens by informing people what happened in the past that needs to be retained and what needs changing (Sterns, 2008). The following section offers a short survey of pre-colonial, colonial, and present history of Tanzania.

Pre-Colonial Era

The pre-colonial history of Tanzania starts with the migration of people into the country. The LORD God commanded humanity to spread and fill the earth (Gen 1:28, KJV). God’s command did not fail (Isa 55:10-11), even though Kardulias and Hall (2006,
p. 1) view human migration as a human reaction to economic, political, social, and environmental changes, those are external agents helping to fulfil God’s command. And God’s command was fulfilled in Tanzania.

_Hunters and Plant Gatherers._ The hunters and wild plant food gatherers were, by conjecture, thought to be the first to arrive in the Mainland Tanzania about AD 1000 (Were & Wilson, 1977, p. 5). They spoke click languages akin to the Khoisan of Southern Africa. The Sandawe, Hadzabe, Qwadza, Asa, and Aramanic people of Singida and Dodoma regions are their remnant (Were & Wilson, 1977, p. 6; Itandala, 1997, p. 25). These groups resist changes in their lifestyle and their constant movement still makes retaining converts from such groups a challenge to the church (Marlowe, 2002, p. 11). A second group are the Caucasoid or the Cushites whose descendants are the Iraqw, Gorowa, Alawa, Burungi, Ngomvia, and Qwadza of the Mbulu, Babati and Dodoma districts. Their livelihood depends on agro-pastoralism (Were & Wilson, 1977, p. 5; Itandala, 1997, pp. 25-27).

_Bantu._ A third group and the largest were the agro-pastoralist Bantus thought to have originated from eastern Nigeria and Cameroon, passing through the Congo, and also coming from South Africa into Tanzania by about AD 1000. Bantu languages have some similar words (Were & Wilson, 1977, p. 5).

_Nilotics._ The last immigrants to Tanzania were the River Nilotes such as the Luo, who followed the river Nile into Uganda and finally reached the Rorya District in Tanzania. Another Nilotic group was the Plain Nilotes, the Maasai, and Waarusha who trekked through plains spreading from central Kenya to central Tanzania (Itandala, p. 24).

_Zanzibar._ Tanzania Zanzibar’s original residents were the Hadimu and the
Tumbatu, whose arrival on the island is thought to have occurred about AD 1000. Arab traders from Oman and Shirazi (Iran) settled among them and intermarried with them (Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar Website, 2013).

By the time of independence, Tanzania had 120 ethnic groups, with different languages, cultures, and religious beliefs. The mixture of these 120 local people enriches the cultural spectrum of the nation, but poses a challenge for new member retention as it is difficult to understand and address all the religious-cultural worldviews coming from all the groups.

**Colonial Period**

*Arabs.* The earliest contact Tanzania had with the outside world was between AD 630 and AD 1000. By 11th and 12th centuries, Arab traders, who had settled on the islands of Pemba, Zanzibar, and Kilwa, began to slowly impose colonial rule over the disorganized peaceful natives of Tanzania (Were & Wilson, 1972, p. 11; Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar, 2013).

Arabs made their history in Tanzania rancorous; they traded in human merchandise, destroyed societies, the economy, and local technology; they separated families and depopulated societies on the Tanzania Mainland and along the trade routes from Bagamoyo to the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. They hunted slaves as animals, forced them to carry heavy loads from as far as Democratic Republic of Congo to Bagamoyo for a distance of over 1,000 kilometers. What they carried as well as themselves were both auctioned at the slave auction. Adrian Wisnicki, (2012, p. 2) reports David Livingstone’s diary entry in 1871 when Livingstone witnessed Arab slave capture on a market day;
50 yards off two guns were fired and a general flight took place – shot after shot followed on the terrified fugitives – great numbers died – It is awful – terrible, a dreadful world this,’ writes Livingstone in despair as he witnesses the massacre. ‘As I write, shot after shot falls on the fugitives on the other side [of the river] who are wailing loudly over those they know are already slain – Oh let thy kingdom come.’

Arabs were overthrown by the Portuguese in 1503, but regained control of Pemba and Zanzibar in 1698 until those islands became part of the British protectorate in 1890. John Okello finally overthrew Arab rule on 12 January 1964.

Arabs are remembered for spreading Islam and introducing Kiswahili, the language which was a result of the accidental marriages of Bantu and Arabic. An old mosque at Kizimkazi built about 1007 attests to the early presence of Islam, a religion that claims 30% of Tanzanians (Lodhi, 1994).

Portuguese. The Portuguese came with superior fire power and broke Arab rule from 1503-1698. Vasco da Gama came to Zanzibar in 1499 and Ruy Ravascao in 1503. Ravascao forced Mafia and Zanzibar to pay tribute to Portugal until Omani Arabs ousted the Portuguese in 1698. The Portuguese introduced the Roman Catholic faith that failed in the Islands. They left no legacy behind (Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar, 2013; Were & Wilson, 1972, p. 23).

German Colonial Rule. History records that the German rule in Tanzania was the result of an interest by an individual German, Dr. Carl Peters. He was among the Germans who resented his country’s tardiness in acquiring colonial territories. He came to Tanzania in 1884 and made false treaties with the illiterate chiefs in areas near the coast, such as Usagara, Ungulu, Uzigua, and Ukami, who did not understand the language of the treaty. Peters presented those deceptive treaties to chancellor Otto Von Bismarck in 1885 as an African invitation to Germany to come, take their land, and rule
them. The German East Africa Company was quickly formed to manage German interests (Were & Wilson, 1977, pp. 162-163; Peters, 1917, pp. v-vii).

As the German colonial rule began in Tanzania on a deceptive ground, the natives resisted its introduction with a violent war. They fought defending their land with passion and blood from 1891-1898. Mkwawa, King of the Wahehe, and Zelewiski, the German army commander were both killed. Governor Liebert, the commander of German forces in German East Africa wrote, “In Bohemia and France I learnt about war in practice. For thirty years I have been continually engaged in the study of war and in the history of war in particular. But, what I experienced in Uhehe existed beyond the parameters of all that had existed previously, ‘It was truly African’” (Gewald, 2005, pp. 11-12). The war destroyed the economy, technology, and depopulated the natives just as slavery had done. The German victors put the losers under taxation and looted the country’s natural resources.

To weaken the natives, the Germans tactically replaced traditional rulers with the unknown akidas who taxed and judged the native cases. Compulsory labor on plantations, growing cash crops, was forced on the natives to earn the needed tax money. Those harsh measures filled the natives with bitterness and a resolution to obtain freedom (Svendsen & Tisen, 1969, p. 49).

Officially, German rule started on 1 April 1889, with the aim to benefit their motherland. But the harsh exploitative measures the Germans used against the natives created a determination to be free, and armed them to overthrow the colonial domination. The need for workers forced the colonists to minimally educate the Africans, which occurred concurrently with the introduction of compulsory cash crops to enable the
natives to pay taxes. Rubber, sisal, coffee, cotton, wax, and copal were new crops that became useful even after colonialism. Local products like simsim, rice, tobacco, sugar, groundnuts, hides, and skins also found their way to international markets. The need for transport led to the construction of some infrastructure (Calvert, 1917, pp. 18-19, 105).

Christian mission surpassed the German colonial government in providing modern education to the people. The government had 73 schools with 4,312 pupils. Protestants had 539 schools with 30,276 pupils, and Roman Catholic had 379 schools with 32,079 pupils. The curriculum was designed to produce the kind of workers the Germans needed, such as clerks, builders, carpenters, book printers, and domestic workers for their homes (pp. 101-102). To facilitate transport of goods and services, they built the central and northern railway network (p. 105).

During the German period the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s missionaries came from Germany in 1903. Those missionaries started mission stations, schools, and built infrastructure for the church work that was used even after they left. The church in Tanzania owes a lot to the Germans.

*British Occupation.* The British defeated the German forces in German East Africa in 1917. When the League of Nations met in Versailles in 1919, they gave German East Africa to the British to administer as a protectorate, not as a full colony. Britain renamed German East Africa Tanganyika, and officially started their rule on 1 March 1919 (Gewald, 2005, p. 21). German East Africa was a battleground where the British and allied forces met and fought the Germans. Thus Tanzania was the country most affected in East Africa by the First World War.

War reduced the little development achieved by Germany to rubble. The German
plantation system collapsed, people left their lands, international trade was disrupted, and the natives reverted to peasantry. Britain was not interested in developing Tanganyika as they knew their stay would be short. They only built the Tabora to Mwanza railway line (Republic of Tanzania National Website, 2013).

As a cheap way of running the government the British introduced ‘indirect rule.’ They gave power back to the traditional rulers to manage their own people under the supervision of a few colonial masters (Read, 2006, p. 5; Indirect rule, n.d.). They introduced the hated segregation and class system in Tanzania. Whites and blacks had separate schools, transport, residential quarters, playgrounds, and even hospitals. Africans adopted European names that were neither biblical nor meaningful in their languages. This introduction of a class system created in the natives a desire to be like the whites, seen as superior through education, so they adopted British culture. But however hard they tried to be like white people, in culture and education, they were still not recognized as equals. Britishness was not to be achieved through cultural change; British culture could only be supported by birth (Khapoya, 2009, p. 107).

British colonialism resulted in cultural and psychological confusion, which lingers to this day. Africans still prefer European names; the best residential places in the cities are called Uzunguni, from Mzungu, a Swahili name for whites. Churches with predominantly rich and educated people prefer to worship in English, which make it difficult for church members from various levels of society to fellowship together; therefore producing retention challenge (Jas 2:1-9).
Struggle for Independence and the New Government

Struggle for Independence

Colonial subjugation of the weak by the stronger nations is as old as history itself. Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Mede-Persians, Greeks, Romans, and other empires, conquered and ruled other peoples (Exod 1; 2 Sam 11; 2 Kgs 15:29; 2 Kgs 24; 2 Chr 36:23). They plundered the conquered (Ezra 5:14), destroyed societies, and looted whatever they laid their hands on (Dan 5:2, Judges). Pre-European African societies subjugated one another to create great empires like the Mandinka Empire of Samori Toure, and Chaka the Zulu. The only exception was that they did not loot natural resources to take to another continent (Webster, Boahen, & Idowu, 1969, p. 46; Eldredge, n.d., pp. 214-215).

It is interesting that the seminal reasons and strategy for the struggle against and the overthrow of the oppressors by the oppressed came from the oppressors. The colonists’ reasons and methods used to subjugate and exploit Africa’s resources developed the resolve in the Africans to gain back their independence. Anderson (1910, pp. 1-11) outlines some of the basic reasons for colonization from speeches made by Joseph Chamberlain, Winston Churchill, Theodore Roosevelt, and others when they visited British East Africa (modern Kenya and Uganda). Admiring the place they said the colony was a new home for whites, a place where they had a great future to raise future generations, a place of rich red soil, big lands for raising animals and crops for food, and export. The African colonies were viewed as a welcoming place where capitalists could build their industries.

To achieve those goals colonists took the best lands, and forced Africans to work
on their farms, creating bitterness and planting a desire to take back their land and lost independence. Racial segregation also created the desire to be like the segregators, while the minimal education offered to prepare servants opened the peoples’ eyes to the need to fight for independence. The colonists had superior weapons, so Tanzanians knew that an armed struggle would only delay independence. Therefore, a few wise educated people opted for seeking independence through political means (Calvert, 1917, p. 102).

The seed of political organization was started by the German educated *akida*, Martin Kayamba, who founded the Tanganyika Teritory African Civil Service Association (TTACSA) in March 1922. Ali Saidi a member of TTACSA and others formed Tanganyika African Association (TAA) in 1929, with a goal of having Africans in the Legislative council (Svendsen & Tisen, n.d., pp. 53, 55-56). On 7 July 1954 the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) was founded by Julius Kambarage Nyerere with the goal of uniting natives to claim independence, which they did.

The formation of that strong political party was driven by the measures that the British government enforced on the people. The world economic depression of 1929 made the colonial government force people to cultivate more crops, build terraces, and limit the number of cattle a family could own. Those measures united farmers behind a political movement to gain independence, and Nyerere seized that opportunity. On 9 December 1961 Tanzania obtained its independence (p. 56).

**Policies of the New Government**

To cement national unity, a “one party system of government” was introduced to avert tension and division caused by multi-party political competition (Klerruu, 1964, p. 5). In practice, a one-party state ensured the incumbent president many years of
unopposed elections. Another major move was the “Azimio la Arusha.” “The Arusha Declaration,” ushered Tanzania into socialism on 6 February 1967. Within 24 hours banks and other major economic infrastructures, industries, private schools, and big buildings were nationalized (Nyerere, 1977, p. 1). Land became state property, citizens were allowed to own as much land as they were able to utilize. Free education was given to all children and successful students were moved from one region to another to mix with others from various ethnic groups in an effort to destroy tribalism. Such socialistic policies helped to decrease tribalism and gave increased freedom to practice and propagate religion. Nyerere’s vision was “to ensure that in our country there is no injustice, intimidation, racial discrimination, corruption, oppression, and favoritism” (Chama cha Mapinduzi, 2005, p. 7).

Although the socialistic measures had some benefits, they damaged personal initiative, took Adventist mission schools, and caused the West to become unfriendly to Tanzania, resulting in a reduction of industrialization. On the other hand the use of Kiswahili, freedom of religion, free education for all, reduction of tribalism, and access to land gave people equal opportunities. The Kiswahili language became and is currently a tool for evangelism. Capitalism never died, it only took cover for a time and is now thriving in a multiparty democracy.

Tanzania played a major role in the liberation war in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Angola, and South Africa for Nyerere said, if any African country is yet colonized, Tanzania is not free. Refugees from Rwanda and Burundi found asylum in Tanzania, and the result of peace within the country, and its central position in East Africa, the Court of Africa, the East Africa Community, and the United Nations
International Tribunal for Rwanda are all located in Tanzania.

Social Context

Demography

Xie You (2000, 670) suggests that demography studies the “the size, territorial distribution, and composition of population, changes therein, and the components of such changes.” Demographic knowledge assists religious organizations to plan and strategize for the present and future work of the church using the limited resources available to distribute services and facilities.

The population census conducted on 26 August 2012 revealed that Tanzania had 44,928,923 people. This is an increase of 365.2% in 36 years from the first census in 1967 when there were 12.3 million people. Tanzania mainlanders were 43,625,354 people, or about 97.1%, and Tanzania Zanzibar 1,303,569 people, 2.9% of the total population. Males were 21,869,990 (44.67%) and female 23,058,933 (51.32%) living in 9,362,758 households with an average of 4.8 people each. The Tanzania mainland is sparsely populated with an average of 51 people per Km², compared to Tanzania Zanzibar with 530 people per Km² (National Bureau of Statistics, 2013, p. iii).

Children under the age of 15 years make up 44.1%, which places a lot of responsibility on the parents. The working age group, 15-64 years was 46.6%, among whom were unemployed students. The elderly over 60 years and above were 9.3%; they are a pleasant burden, as they have done their job and deserve our support.

Tanzania mainland’s population was 99% Africans, composed of 120 ethnic groups. The rest are citizens and residents of foreign origin. The census data lacks vital facts on religious and ethnic groups’ percentage since 1967. They are excluded for fear of
promoting tribalism and religious tensions (Legère, 2002, p. 162). Index Mundi (2013, para. 1), however, estimates Christians to be 30%, Moslem 35%, and animists 35%.

**People Groups**

At independence on 9 December 1961, there were 120 ethnic groups who lived together, spoke the same language, and shared a culture of their own. Those ethnic groups still exist but live without tribal tensions. Masella (2011, pp. 1, 2) agrees that a high level of “ethnic fractionalization” reduces economic investment and brews possible civil conflict. However, a middle and upper class have been emerging in the country. Some websites record Tanzanian millionaires who compete well with their counterparts in other countries (Ventures, 2012, para. 1-13). Zitto Kabwe, a member of parliament estimates that middle class Tanzanians represent 12% of the population (Kabwe, 2013, para. 1-12). The 2009 Household Budget Survey done in 2007 revealed that 83% of Tanzanians use kerosene, and 3% use firewood for lighting. Those who use charcoal for cooking were 22.7%, but 73.1% use firewood for cooking. Presently 81 and 86% have no access to, or cannot afford electricity or gas for lighting and cooking. A small percentage of (12%) Tanzanians have access to electricity (Ministry of Finance, 2010, p. 34). It seems the upper and middle classes are within the 12% bracket, the rest are low income earners.

**Young People and Sexual Behavior**

Our society bemoans the erosion of the sacred institution of marriage. Pre-marital sex was unwelcome among many ethnic groups in the Mara region where the Makoko church is situated. Luo girls (*nyako*) were expected to be married as virgins otherwise
they were a disgrace to the family (Shaw, n.d., p. 42; Mbuya, 1997, p. 13). Among the Wajita pre-marital pregnancy was a disgrace and catastrophic (efwa calo) to the family. A girl with a premarital pregnancy was strangled (abhamunyiga) by the traditional nurses who checked and discovered the pregnancy (Manyama, n.d., p. 178).

The disregard of the former social controls has encouraged promiscuity at a level unknown in the old society. The 2010 National Bureau of Statistics (2010, p. 97) surveyed sexual activity among various age groups in the country and discovered that among females 15-19 years old only 54.6 percent never had sexual intercourse. The percentage among males was 62.7, which was a little higher than females. In a meeting, a group of 56 unmarried young people between ages 12-25 were asked about their sexual experience and they all admitted to involvement in illicit pre-marital sex. Pre-marital sex promotes the HIV/AIDS pandemic and robs the church and the nation of potential human resources. This is a major issue that should be addressed.

**Seventh-day Adventists**

Seventh-day Adventists are found in all levels of Tanzanian social life. They hold positions in the government, parastatal organizations, and big businesses. The majority though, are rural peasants who are middle and lower income earners. Only a few members hold political positions. This may be a result of the apolitical stand of our church that discourages members from contesting political positions.

**Cultural Context**

A person exists as an individual but lives in a social web loaded with cultural and religious beliefs. The church, and especially its leadership, needs keen awareness of the
cultural forces behind a new member’s worldview to be able to retain them. One hundred and twenty ethnic people groups have shared cultural values that hold them together as a nation, but some cultural beliefs and values are unique to each ethnic group (Hiebert, 2009, p. 150).

**Tanzanian Common Cultural Traits**

Hiebert (2009, p. 18) defines culture as “partially integrated system of ideas, feelings, and values encoded in learned patterns of behavior, signs, products, rituals, beliefs, and world views shared by a community of people.” Tanzanian’s 120 people groups have diverse cultures even though they also share many cultural practices that distinguish them from the neighboring nations.

Kiswahili is a unifying language that is spoken by almost all Tanzanians. English is the second national, international, and business language, spoken mostly by educated people. Tanzanians’ are mostly bilingual speaking their mother tongue and Kiswahili.

When two people meet, they quickly size up who is older, the younger greet the elder, Shikamoo, the Kiswahili greeting word for someone aged, and the elder responds marahaba. The word ndugu (relative or comrade) is used to refer to fellow Tanzanians irrespective of their ethnic group. When Tanzanians find themselves abroad they may behave as if the other is a relative. Tanzanians love to help one another (kusaidiana), for example, a new person in the city may find a ready help for direction to the street he is going to. They find satisfaction in helping one another.

It is a sign of respect not to look straight into an elderly person’s eye. Westerners may misinterpret this Tanzanians behavior with its lack of eye contact as dishonesty. Among the Bantu ethnic groups women kneel when greeting men of older age. The
Wajita call this practice *okwifukama*. The practice of showing respect to a superior by kneeling or bowing is not unique to Africa as Ellen White wrote, “It is an Eastern custom to bow before a prince or other high dignitary and for children to bow before their parents” (White, 1911, p. 137).

Tanzanians love to share ideas and news with each other in their communities. Peasants work up to about ten o’clock and sometimes spend the rest of the day in leisure dialogues. The groups of unemployed folks in towns and cities may be seen in vijiweni, casual meeting places, talking for hours, discussing events such as football matches. These friendly meetings encourage idleness and burglary as people spend many hours unproductively.

*Ugali* (thick porridge), *wali* (cooked rice), and *matoke* (cooked banana) served with a variety of relishes such as fish, meat, legumes, and vegetables are the staple foods in Tanzania. The cooking style and table manners differ from one ethnic group to another. Hospitality, sharing food with unplanned visitors and passers-by, also differ from one group of people to another. But most ethnic groups in Tanzania are more than willing to welcome visitors and share food with them.

**Cultures Around Mara Conference**

The fear of death is universal; death is an enemy of humankind (1 Cor 15:26). The worldviews that informs how diseases, death, burial, and rituals that form part of the adjustment process after death vary from one society to another. Traditionally, in the Mara region where Makoko is located, death is always believed to be caused by “sorcery, witchcraft or magic” (Mbiti, 1996, p. 117). When a person is ailing or immediately after death the relatives consult an expert witchdoctor known as *ajuoga* (Luo), *omufumu*
(Wajita), or bafumu (Wasukuma) to find out who caused the death. Usually the culprits are near or distant relatives, or neighbors who had some quarrels with the deceased in the past. In the old days the suspected criminal was ostracized from the community. The clan elders direct the burial ritual customs out of fear that if burial is not properly done, the spirit of the dead might avenge the living. Faithful Christians know the dead cannot punish them and that truth has set them free from such customs and fear (Eccl 9:5; John 8:32). However, their stand is a cause of constant friction in the community.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Mara Conference

God ordained German Adventists to pioneer Adventism to Tanzania. When Louis Richard Conradi (1856-1939), European Division president, requested Governor Adolf Graf Von Götzen of the German East Africa in Berlin for permission to open a mission, permission was granted. German church members raised $3,000 to start the work. J. Ehlers and A. E. Enns were sent from Germany and arrived in Dar-es-Salaam on 12 November 1903. The first mission station was established at Mamba in the Pare Mountains, which they renamed Friedenstal, the village of peace. Within a year the Ehlers and Enns built a church, a school with 160 pupils, and opened two more mission stations (Michael Von Herff, 1991, p. 38; Plummer, 1907, pp. 4, 7).

Victoria Nyanza Missions

In May 1909 Raessler and Enns travelled from Friedenstal to Kisumu, Kenya. From Kisumu they sailed to Nyabangi, Musoma (now Mara Conference), and arrived on 2 June 1909 to start a mission station, which they named Victoria Nyanza. From Nyabangi they travelled on foot to find suitable places for missions and chose Busegwe
In a month’s time Enns and Raessler constructed residences and school buildings of sun-dried bricks, roofed with corrugated iron sheets at Busegwe. The Lord moved the hearts of young people who wanted to join the school to help them; in turn they gave them clothes for wages. The first converts, Philipo Kayanda and Yohana Mtarimbo were baptized on 2 December 1911 at Majita Bwasi church, which was also dedicated on the same day. The Lord blessed the mission in a remarkable way. During the workers’ meeting held at Majita Bwasi church, 25-29 December 1912, Victoria Nyanza mission had 20 missionaries, 15 native converts, 2 schools at Ikizu and Bukima with 1,214 pupils, and 10 stations (Conradi, 1913, pp. 12-13). At the meeting, the work was organized into three districts; Majita led by Ohme, Busegwe led by Persson, and Usukuma under the leadership of a worker who would come from Pare mission (Friedenstal) (Conradi, 1912, p. 13; Ohme, 1912, p. 74).

The dedication of those early missionaries is significant and constructive. A few missionaries started the work in Victoria Nyanza on 1 June 1909, among illiterate people who knew nothing about Jesus Christ. By the end of 1913 they reported 12 mission stations, 19 congregations, 176 members, 76 people in baptismal classes, and 30 native teachers teaching 2,565 pupils (Lugoe, n.d., p. 165).

**Effects of the First World War on Victoria Nyanza Missions**

The First World War was catastrophic to the Seventh-day Adventist missionary work in German East Africa. German East Africa was surrounded by countries colonized
by nations at war with Germany. Uganda and Kenya were under Britain; Congo Kinshasa under Belgium; Zambia and Malawi under Britain; Mozambique under Portugal, and the Island of Zanzibar under Britain. The allied forces came from all directions; the Tanzania mainland became a battleground.

The Seventh-day Adventist mission stations led by the Germans suffered heavy losses. The Victoria Nyanza Mission suffered more because it bordered British East Africa. Since Lake Victoria surrounded most of the Adventist missions, it provided easy access for the enemy soldiers and their war machines. At the beginning of the war on 8 November 1914 Franz Bornath of the Utimbaru mission and his wife were taken as prisoners of war to Kisumu, then to Nairobi, and ultimately sent to India. On 28 November 1914 Hugo Palm, a missionary at Kanyosingo, Shirati station, was shot dead by British forces. His cook Mr. Nyakame, who was an eye witness, said that after shooting him, the soldiers took his boots and ate the food prepared for him (Elineema, 1993, p. 63). The German government at Musoma took the Nyabangi, Busegwe, and Ikizu stations as security stations and hospitals, making them targets and battlegrounds, with many buildings destroyed. The German soldiers forced local Christians to be porters, which caused them to die like flies.

The missionaries’ communication and supply from their home country was cut, their stores confiscated, and the mission boat, The Harold, confiscated by the government for military use. Missionaries E. Dominick, Otto Wallath, Frederick Winter, and Drinhause joined the military. It is not clear whether it was a forced conscription or voluntary. They continued to support the mission with their military salary after deducting the tithe and necessary expenses (Höschele, cited in Lugoe, n.d., pp. 174-175).
The work of German missionaries came to a stop in 1917. They will be remembered for their dedication and love for the work of God. They worked with love and paid a heavy sacrifice for the gospel. In less than five years eleven missionaries, men, women and children died, their graves are in Majita Bwasi, Busegwe, Ikizu, and Kanadi.

After the War

The challenges of the First World War brought to the surface lessons of great importance for new member retention. The British took German East Africa and renamed it Tanganyika. They were extremely reluctant to allow the reopening of Seventh-day Adventist mission work, because Seventh-day Adventist missions in Tanganyika had a close relationship, and had received orders from the enemy, Germany. The church was considered an enemy of the British because four missionaries joined the German army. It took more than five years before permission was granted to reopen the work (Lugoe, n.d., pp. 160-161). It is therefore important for the church to be careful how it relates to the civil authorities for they can curtail the work of the church.

Permission was granted in 1922 to reopen Victoria Nyanza to be administered from British East Africa (Kenya). Elder Bartlett from British East Africa visited the Victoria Nyanza Mission and found it in a pathetic state. Stations like Shirati, Utimbaru, and Nyabange had been totally destroyed. Sizaki, Iramba, and Ikizu, had been looted, or natives had taken every piece of wood and corrugated iron from the buildings. Church members disappeared, but some came back after the stations were reopened.

At Itilima, Kanadi, Ntuzu, and Mwagala, where the natives had assisted the work before the war, the church was least affected, and continued to grow under local leadership (Bartlett, 1922, p. 1). This shows that when a new area is entered, it is crucial
to train committed local leadership for stronger retention of new members. The effects of the First World War revealed that the church that relies on foreign leadership may disappear during the time of crisis. Foreign missionaries need to develop strong local leadership that is capable of taking over when they leave.

Pioneer missionaries taught the spirit of perseverance, hard work, and love for God that defy circumstances. Bartlett and his team walked on foot visiting churches. From Iramba to Busegwe, they walked for two days; the next day they marched to Nyabange, Musoma, a one day journey. The following day they left for Majita with one hundred porters and walked for two days. From Majita they marched two days to Sizaki, two days to Ntuzu, two days to Kanadi and Itilima, two days to Mwagala and two days to Mwanza where they took a boat to Shirati (Barlett, 1922, pp. 1-2). The knowledge of the distances they covered leaves us in awe, for even with the use of a car on the rough roads that currently connect these districts it would take more than two days to visit all of them. That report should encourage the present generation to be much more active in visiting new members and encourage various groups.

**Mara Conference at Present**

From around 1922 the church experienced steady growth; some old stations were reopened and new ones started. New missionaries, mostly from England and natives from British East Africa, moved God’s work forward. The missionary families of Roy Matthews, A. H. Matthews, L. A. Watson, E. B. Phillips, and William Cuthbert replaced the Germans (Lugoe, n.d., p. 163). They reopened work at the Shirati, Utimbaru, Ntuzu, Busegwe, Majita, and other stations. The native missionaries from British East Africa who made the most impact on the spread of the gospel after the First World War were
James Odero, Luka Amayo, Jeremia Osogo, Naaman Opembi, Ephraim Nguru, and others who worked at Shirati and Utimbaru. R. H. Matthews led the work in Majita, Iramba, Ukerewe, and in Ukara, where he had a team of 17 native teachers, among them Anania Mola, Abraham Maradufu, Andrea Siti, and Daudi Mmanyi. After four years, 1922-1926 they had 600-700 pupils attending school at Majita. More missionaries joined the work as new places were opened (Lugoe, n.d., pp. 165, 170, 184).

In 1927 the Ikizu Secondary School and Teachers Training College were started to provide better education and primary school teachers for the church and the government. In 1933 Busegwe became the headquarters of the Tanganyika Mission Field, which became Tanganyika Union Mission in 1960. The mission was renamed Tanzania Union Mission when the union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar took the name Tanzania. On 4 December 2013 the union was split into the Northern Tanzania Union Conference and the Southern Tanzania Union Mission. At the time Tanganyika Union Mission was organized in 1960, the territory that is now Mara Conference had two field missions:

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fields</th>
<th>Churches</th>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>Ordained Ministers</th>
<th>Drop out Apostasy</th>
<th>Ratio Members to Pastor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Lake Field</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3,485</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majita Ukerewe Field</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3,586</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>42</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,071</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Taken from the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist’ Church Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research.
East Lake Field, and Majita Ukerewe Field. There were 72 churches, and 14,712 church members when Tanganyika Union Mission was organized. The territory that is now Mara Conference had 24 primary schools, one teacher’s training college, 42 churches, and 7,071 church members, which was more than 50% of the Union membership. It is baffling that there is no record of apostasies in the report.

**Background of the Makoko Church**

**History of Makoko Church**

The Makoko Seventh-day Adventist Church is situated in Musoma, the headquarters of the Mara Region. The first group of converts in the town were immigrants who came from various places, either seeking jobs or for business. That seminal group composed of church members who came from Majita such as Mr. Kornelio Magesa and his wife Hulda, Fares Nyangasi and his wife Nyabweke, Penina Mkaguru, and Eunike Nyabita were joined by converts from Kisumu, Kenya, for example, Fenehas Magoma Mukama and his wife Ludia, Fanuel Rugina and his wife Rahel Nyabweru. The leadership at the Busegwe Mission headquarters heard of the group and appointed *Mzee* (elder) Luyembe to lead the group. By then (1942) that small group worshipped in *Mzee* Luyembe’s house. As the number of members increased, Luyembe’s house became inadequate for worship so they appealed to the leadership of the Mennonite church to allow them to use their church. They worshipped in the Mennonite church from 1943 to 1954.

Evangelists Benjamin Tarita, *Mzee* Petro Mwasi, and a church elder from Busegwe, Yunus Isabuki, were sent to strengthen the company. The LORD increased their number until the Mennonite church became too small, so they asked to worship in
the town cinema hall but the smell of alcohol and cigarettes made worship uncomfortable. Later they again rented the new Mennonite church for 40 shillings per month. In 1957 Pastor Henry Lasbow baptized 3 Musoma members. In 1958 Pastor Fares Muganda conducted public evangelistic meetings and baptized 33 on 10 October 1958. Evangelist Wilson Nyagabona was appointed to take care of the new members and the church (1958). He was followed by evangelist Jocktan Kuyenga (1959) and Pastor Rutolyo Mabuba who led the church for seven years (1960-1967).

Rutolyo encouraged the church members to give money to build a permanent church, so they started collecting funds. However, the Tanganyika Mission Field decided to build that church by using a donation from pastor Davy, an American. The church and pastors’ house cost 61,550 shillings. The church was opened on 5 May 1963 and dedicated the same day; it had 105 church members (Katondo & Otieno, 1990, pp. 7-15).

The history of the church sometimes reveals practices that delay the development of self-reliance. It would have been more helpful for those early church members to build the church as they had determined. Although donors are good people, donation can decay a spirit of self-reliance and encourage a donor dependency syndrome. The church in Tanzania has made much progress in building local churches using local funds, in the absence of donations than when generous donations came from abroad.

**Mukendo District**

Pastor Mordicai Mundhe (1977-1984) had a vision to see the church grow both numerically and organizationally. He started a strong move to organize companies into churches. The Mukendo company was organized in 1980 under Mzee Ayubu Msonge. Other companies were Mwisenge, started on 15 November 1987, and Nyakato started on
22 November 1987. Mukendo was organized as a separate district on 15 November 1987. The new district had five companies Mwisenge, Iringo, Makoko, Buhare, and Mmahare (Katondo & Otieno, 1990, p. 16).

**Makoko Church**

The evangelistic initiative to start a church in Makoko came from the Mwisenge Church, which sponsored evangelistic meetings at Nyamiongo, Makoko, from 23 June 1996 to 6 July 1996. The preacher was Pastor Mukama Nyamajeje and 18 people dedicated their lives to Christ. Those 18 new members were joined by 30 old church members and 16 Sabbath school members who lived in the Makoko area to start a company. They worshiped in Emmanuel Chacha’s house for two weeks then moved to the Nyarigamba primary school. The new company formed a choir of 18 people. The decision to start a company and a choir were good retention measures.

Some Makoko members who worked in the government land office such as Mr. Thomas Inda, assisted the company in acquiring a plot of land for the church on 29 December 1996. The church members contributed funds and built a church in three years’ time. On 5 April 1998 the Makoko Seventh-day Adventist Church was organized by Mara Conference president, Pastor Daudi Kihogo. The new church continued to work hard and opened a company in Zanzibar, Nyamiyongo, on 6 July 2011, and Ziwani, on 29 November 2011, with the Makoko church members building two classrooms where pre-primary education was offered and later buying a plot of land to start a primary school. The Makoko Church is privileged to be close to the conference headquarters; for this they have more seminars than any other church in the conference.
Challenges

The history of the Makoko Church gives a picture of progressive achievements in church growth and in infrastructure development; however, this progress is hindered by many new members leaving the church either by backsliding, apostasy, or simply because the church does not know where the missing members are. A large percentage of new members baptized from typical two to three weeks evangelistic meetings seem to leave church or move away without the knowledge of the church. Also the number of people attending church is far below those on the membership records. Attendance at Bible study classes during Sabbath School is low, very low. Table 2 illustrates the situation.

Table 2 also presents the challenges facing the Makoko church. From 2005 to 2010 Makoko reported the baptism of 212 people. Those known to be presently attending church number 90 people. Of the original 212, 4 have apostatized, 29 no longer attend church, and there is no knowledge about 89. The record seems to indicate that there is a laxity in visiting church members. By May 2013 Makoko Church had 683 church members, but on 26 May 2013 the church board voted to remove 259 members whose whereabouts were unknown to the church. The church clerk’s records now have 451 church members.

Another surprise is found in the Sabbath School class attendance records. Even though the church now recognizes 451 members, the number of church members listed in the 17 Sabbath School class cards number only 149 individuals. Conversely, after painstaking follow up of Sabbath School attendances, I discovered that this is another area where there is poor record keeping. For example, in 2011 the records indicate an average of 32 people in all the classes but many come late and are not counted. In 2012
the average was 41 per week, but again many were not counted, therefore, part of the solution to better retention is better record keeping so the church knows the status of its members.

Table 2

*Number of Baptisms Compared to Still Attending Church*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Meeting Date</th>
<th>Members Baptized</th>
<th>Still Attend Church</th>
<th>Missing for Various Reasons</th>
<th>No One Knows About Them</th>
<th>% Attendance</th>
<th>% of Total Loss D + E + F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Apostasy</td>
<td>Lost</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Jan 2005</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 June 2005</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 July 2005</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 July 2006</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>80.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 July 2007</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Sept 2007</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>29 Mar 2008</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Aug 2008</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Feb 2009</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>66.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Mar 2009</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Aug 2009</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Sept 2009</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 April 2010</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>19 June 2010</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 July 2010</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>212</strong></td>
<td><strong>90</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
<td><strong>89</strong></td>
<td><strong>42.4</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Statistics gathered from the Makoko Seventh-day Adventist church clerk’s record.

The number of tithers also reflects a similar problem. Since 2008 church members who give tithe and offerings are only between 11% and 16% of the membership. This is shown in Table 3. The information suggests that the church is not doing well in nurturing church members. It seems to me that even though my project was focused on keeping new converts, there is a larger problem in the church. There is a problem of retaining and
Table 3

*Makoko Tithe and Offerings From 2008-2012*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Tithe</th>
<th>Combined mission offering</th>
<th>Church budget offering</th>
<th>Total offering</th>
<th>Church members</th>
<th>Tithe pay</th>
<th>% of Tithers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>9,153,898.01</td>
<td>3,552,549.62</td>
<td>12,405,724.59</td>
<td>25,112,172.22</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>9,525,331.45</td>
<td>4,108,943.69</td>
<td>16,993,232.94</td>
<td>30,627,509.08</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>14,697,241.40</td>
<td>7,629,350.84</td>
<td>13,906,825.41</td>
<td>36,233,717.65</td>
<td>586</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>21,861,429.80</td>
<td>7,736,745.52</td>
<td>19,734,091.48</td>
<td>49,332,266.90</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>28,906,927.03</td>
<td>8,905,803.99</td>
<td>21,035,649.40</td>
<td>58,848,380.42</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Statistics from the Makoko Seventh-day Adventist Church Treasurers report.

discipling all church members both old and new.

**Summary**

In Chapter 3 the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as begun by the missionaries has shown steady growth despite passing through turbulent periods which threatened the existence of the church. Our heavenly Father kept His church progressing until it was handed over by the missionaries to local leaders. However, the church is now experiencing retention and nurture problems that need a determined effort on the part of the leadership and laity to rescue the church from this problem.

Chapter 3 analyzed and presented the background of the project. Chapter 4 will present the methodology of the project, and in Chapter 5 the project is going to be implemented, monitored, evaluated, and final report given.
CHAPTER 4

A STRATEGY FOR NEW MEMBER RETENTION

Introduction

Chapter 3 covered the historic-politico-cultural milieu of Tanzania for the reader to be acquainted with the project background, and to enable other project owners to tailor their projects to individual locale. Also the information gathered in the previous chapter threw light on the choice of an approach for the project, which is the subject matter of this chapter.

As discussed in the previous chapters, retention of the new converts who join the church from varied social, economic, religious, and educational contexts demands concerted effort by the leadership, laity, and all other the stakeholders. However united the stakeholders are, if the retention problem is approached haphazardly, the desired result might not be achieved. To realize better results, a process is needed to direct the investigation into, and solutions of the problem. That process guides and maps out the research and the intervention process. It includes the collection of information and data to be analyzed to discover the reason for the problem and to lay out the plan and procedures to solve the identified problem (NORAD, 1999, p. 4). Among researchers, such a process is known as methodology.

Several research methodologies are used in social science studies, subject to the social problem investigated. Social science research mostly uses qualitative research
methodologies, as opposed to quantitative ones, even though quantitative data collection methods are useful. Examples of qualitative methodologies include *grounded theory*, which seeks to discover a theory through data collection and analysis, *phenomenology*, which describes events of life as they exist as part of human experience in the field, and *ethnography*, which investigates people and cultures (Hancock, 2002, pp. 4-6).

**Methodology**

For a new member retention project, a methodology is needed that can engage all the stakeholders in the target church including its laity and leadership (Grant Lewis Associates, n.d., p. 1). The approach should walk people through the process to help them understand the problem, to enable them to come up with a goal that would change the situation, and that reduce or stop the outflow of new members marching out of the church. The methodology should show how that goal can be achieved.

**Logical Framework Analysis**

Even though this new member retention project involves some social research methods, the methodology that will provide an opportunity for all the project’s stakeholders to participate in investigating the problem, strategize the solution, chart the action plan, date its implementation, and design its evaluation is the Logical Framework Approach (LFA). The LFA methodology is mostly used by non-governmental organizations that manage donated funds from various donor countries. It is not clear who developed the LFA; it appears that the United States of America military used it in the 1960s. In 1969 Leon J. Rosenberg, principal of Fry Consultants, adapted it for the use of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Since then the LFA
has become a vital tool in the hands of donor agencies (Bakewell & Garbutt, 2005, p. 1).

The LFA as a research methodology offers significant advantages over qualitative approaches. While qualitative methodologies seek to elucidate social phenomena to provide people with an explanation of why things happen the way they do (Hancock, 2002, p. 6), the LFA goes on to guide in proposing solution(s) for the problems caused by the social phenomena. It is an instrument which focuses objectively on the discovery of the problem, and unites the affected community and those interested to help seek ways out of the identified problem.

In the case of the New Member Retention Strategy for the Makoko Church project, the LFA instrument allows both the Makoko church leaders and laity to own the project by actively participating in various stages of the project life for a better success. Ortengren (2004, p. 3) mentions several advantages of the LFA, such as making clear the rationale for the project, gathering the needed information, and identifying the “key elements of a project.” It examines the project’s locale at the very beginning of the planning stage, and makes communication among the stakeholders easy for the smooth running of the project. Ortengren’s observations are also shared by Grant Lewis Associates (n.d., p. 1).

The World Bank (n.d., p. 13) and NORAD (1999, p. 4) noticed that when the LFA is used, it guides the systematic analysis of the internal interconnections of key essentials that comprise a well-connected project (p. 6). The World Bank (2000, p. 17) complements the LFA for defining the connections between the project and external factors (2000, p. 17). After the project is planned, the document produced becomes a frame of reference or a template which the project implementers and funders may refer to.
so they can direct the project to successful completion.

To enable the project leaders, donors, and stakeholders of this project to understand how the LFA is made and applied, a brief description of how it works and its essential elements is vital. The process starts with the stakeholders meeting to discuss in depth the problem that needs to be addressed and to make plans to combat the problem. The participants analyze the stakeholders and the problem itself, and set the overall goal (objective) they wish to achieve when the problem is solved. They propose the specific activities to achieve the goal, and state resources available for the project. They also suggest the clues that will show the project is on track (indicators or measurements), and envision risks. Difficulties or failures they may encounter in various stages of the project execution are identified. The analysis looks into risks that would be taken as a result of embarking on such a project. The planners detail assumptions that they may encounter as they execute the project (Ortengren, 2004, p. 7).

After the planning session is over, all the important points are considered by the interested parties for this project that included the Makoko church members and the researcher. The LFA methodology uses Logical Analysis Matrix (Logframe or LAM) to document and map the findings of the participatory analyses meetings. LAM is a table used by the LFA to map, and present project plan(s) and its components in a “clear, concise, logical, and systematic way” (Takyi, 2011; IAEA, 2010).

The LAM or Logframe is a table with 20 boxes. The left column of the table is a narrative summary of the project (overall objective or goal, specific objectives or purpose, expected results or outputs, and activities). The upper row of the table displays a summary of indicators, how to verify indicators, and assumptions that would help or
hinder the success of the project. The content of these boxes recaps the results of the planning sessions as summarized in Figure 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative Summary or Objective</th>
<th>Measurable indicators</th>
<th>Means of verification</th>
<th>Assumptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Objectives/ Goals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Objectives Purpose</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected Results Outputs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities (and processes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Logical framework matrix or logframe format. Taken from Jensen (2010, July), Bond: The logical framework approach: How to guide. Retrieved from http://www.dochas.ie/Shared/Files/4/BOND_logframe_Guide.pdf

The Basic Elements of the LAM Table

**Overall Objective**

The Overall Objective is the long-term, desired outcome (goal) or future achievement dream (long-term vision) that will take place as a result of the project. The Overall Objective is what will guide the policy formulation of the target group, and the direction of the project. Once completed it is a constructive opposite of the problem that the project aims to solve. In formulating the Overall Objective, analysis is done on the “focal problem” of the target group to determine the affected section of the group (Ortengren, 2004, p. 12; NORAD, 1999, p. 40). The overall objective is outside the control of the management team. The goal can be achieved if the projects’ stakeholders are united in purpose and are supported by the conditions (environment) that make implementation of the project successful and replicative.
**Specific Objective/Purpose**

The Specific Objectives (Purpose) of the project are what the project intends to do. They take into account the stakeholder’s image of the best situation that would be realized if the project is successful, and state the reason why the project is crucial for the target group. For instance, the specific objective of this project is to develop a new member retention strategy and implement it in 2013. It means both the Makoko Church and the researcher are aware of the new members apostasy, and would like the problem solved. The purpose should be “specific,” “measurable,” “attainable,” “realistic,” and, “time-bound” (BOND, 2010, p. 4; NORAD, 1999, p. 66). The purpose is a longed-for condition that is beyond the direct control of the stakeholders; it depends on the outcome of inputs that are precise and verifiable (p. 77).

**The Outputs (Expected Results)**

Outputs are the direct results of the activities done during the implementation of the project. Outputs may be in the form of change in attitude, environment, infrastructure, material gain, enhanced services, and so on. They are the expected outcomes that benefit the target group as a result of activities done within the project. However, outputs are outside the control of the project management. For example, we may train ten lay church leaders to conduct twenty retention seminars within three months, but after training them we cannot force them to conduct seminars. So what they do is out of our control.

**Activities**

The project activities are the means of eliminating the “focal problem” identified during the brainstorming session. They are clusters of tasks that should be carried out to
attain the expected results (Bond, 2010, p. 4). Tasks for achieving new member retention may include conducting seminars on the importance of love in the church, building a new church and demolishing the old grass-thatched one, improving choir performance in the church, and forming small groups and prayer bands. These activities are not an end in themselves but aim to achieve the overall goal of the project which is reducing new member apostasy to the most minimum level possible (NORAD, 1999, p. 68; Ortengren, 2004, p. 15). Activities are action statements to be done by the project participants within a given time. Resources are allocated for each activity. When activities are formulated attention is paid to culture, education, technology, and economy of the target group. Ignorance on these matters may hinder the project significantly (NORAD, 1999, pp. 68, 71; Ortengren, 2004, 15).

**Inputs**

Inputs are identified as raw resources that will be used in the execution of the project. Inputs can be either physical material such as bricks, hoes, tractors, spare parts, or they may be human resources like expatriates. In the new members retention project we need training seminar materials, trainers, premises where the seminar is conducted. To acquire inputs funds are needed. Inputs are resources put into operation to produce outputs to achieve the project goal (Ortengren, 2004, p. 15).

**Indicators**

Indicators are “quantitative and qualitative ways of measuring progress and whether project outputs, purpose and goal have been achieved” (Bond, 2003, p. 2). To set indicators of success and failure correctly, a thorough knowledge of the prior situation of
the project is important. It is when the situation is thoroughly known that the problem can
be indicated. Indicators are measures that show that progress has been made. They are
explicit, practical, and physical result of inputs and activities. A project aimed at
increasing new member retention may use as indicators of success the physical counting
of new members. Also verification can be done by checking attendance records at
communion service and Sabbath School classes. Progress indicators can be verified by
the stakeholders or external evaluators (Ortengren, 1999, p. 17).

**Means of Verification**

Means of verification are ways and methods of showing or proving the
availability and use of the inputs. They show that activities have taken place and outputs
have been realized. In the new member retention project, verification may be done by
showing names of the baptized people in church secretary’s record, attendance records,
baptismal certificate studs, and the new converts continued attendance at church
functions. It is not possible to provide means of verification for the conceptual sections of
the plan like the overall objectives of the project, as these are beyond the control of the
management and stakeholders (p. 17).

**Assumptions**

Assumptions are “conditions or factors” (World Bank, n.d., p. 60) which the
project leader decides not to put under their management concern as they are outside the
perimeter of their control. Assumptions are crucial for they can contribute to success or
failure of the project (p. 55). They are important factors on which the future long-run
sustainability of the project depends (Dearden, 2005, p. 22). The sustainability of the
Project impact is crucial to avoid a relapse into the problem (World Bank, p. 55; Dearden, 2005, p. 22). See Figure 3 for a typical logframe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project summary</th>
<th>Objectively Verifiable Indicators</th>
<th>Source and Means of Verification</th>
<th>Assumptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall Objective</strong>&lt;br&gt;Goal The shared vision the project contributes to</td>
<td>The extent of your contribution (verification not always possible)</td>
<td>How you will measure your contribution (verification not always possible)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specific Objectives</strong>&lt;br&gt;Purpose What you intend to change during project period</td>
<td>How you will know the intended change took place and is sustainable</td>
<td>How you will measure change (the basis for evaluation)</td>
<td>Assumptions about internal factors that need to be in place if project is to contribute to the goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expected Results</strong>&lt;br&gt;Outputs Tangible results of each activity to bring about change</td>
<td>How you will know the expected results of your project have been achieved</td>
<td>How you will measure results (to be done periodically)</td>
<td>Assumptions about external factors that may affect whether the project purpose is achieved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities (and processes)</strong> Groups of tasks needed to achieve each expected result</td>
<td>The means, inputs, and resources needed to carry out each task</td>
<td>Proof that each activity/task is completed (what needs to be regularly monitored)</td>
<td>Assumptions about external factors that may affect activities achieving the expected results.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3.* Typical logframe. Adapted from Jensen (2003, March), *Bond: Logical framework approach* (Guidance Notes No. 4). Retrieved 18 July 2011, from http://www.slideshare.net/rexcris/beginners-guide-to-logical-framework

**Disadvantages of Logframe**

Most of the advantages of the LFA methodology have been discussed above. However, it is vital that the stakeholders are made aware of the limitations one could encounter in the use of the LFA. Knowledge of these limitations will assist the management team in avoiding risks that may hinder project progress. The LFA is rigid in administration. It is not flexible. This rigidity can be overcome by regular reviews of the
project progress, adjusting parts that need modification. Irrespective of the disadvantages, the LFA advantages override the disadvantages.

**Gantt Chart**

After the project is planned and put in a logframe, the activity schedule is plotted on a Gantt chart. A Gantt chart is a bar chart that “provides a standard format for displaying a project schedule by listing project activities and their corresponding start and finish date in a calendar format” (Takyi, 2011; Schwalbe, 2007, p. 231). The Gantt chart is also known as a “Milestone Chart,” “Project Bar chart,” or “Activity Chart” (American Society for Quality, n.d., para. 1). The Gantt chart tracks the activity schedule; it displays what is to be done. When a particular activity is accomplished, it is colored in the chart so that it is easy to monitor tasks completed, tasks going on, and tasks that will be done in the next phase. With the help of the Gantt chart, the project management avoids missing, mixing, or overlapping activities (Gray & Larson, 2008, p. 422).

The Gantt chart has some weaknesses when used to manage huge projects with sub-contractors; it fails to display all the parts of the project in one chart. Also it does not show the volume of the work and the resources needed to complete the job. These weaknesses can be corrected by the use of other tools such as a “cost management tool, and formal project plan” (Bowen & McDonough, 2013; Jeffreys, 2009). The Gantt chart sample in Figure 4 acquaints the reader with its basic arrangement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

115
Overall Objective (Goal)

As discussed in Chapter 2, the overall objective of this project is to retain those who have accepted Jesus and joined a community of faith. At one point in time in Jesus’ ministry many of His followers “quit following him” (John 6:66, New English Translation). Jesus was so concerned that He asked the twelve disciples, “You don’t want to go away too, do you?” Jesus wants converts to stay in the church. This is why He said, “The person who endures to the end will be saved” (Matt 24:13). But the most important agent of retention, who should be recognized before the strategy is formulated and implemented, is the Owner of the Church, our Father in heaven, and Jesus who died for the salvation of all people. It is God alone, through His Holy Spirit, who is able to keep converts to Himself. Without Him we can do nothing (John 15:5; John 6:38, 44; 17:15). The best strategy is that which gives God first place and asks for His help and guidance.

Figure 4. Typical Gantt chart sample. Prepared by the researcher.
The goal of this project is to suggest ways the Makoko Church may employ to increase retention of new converts baptized from public evangelism and other outreach programs. The achievement of this objective can be realized when the Makoko Church adopts the strategy and uses it in its public evangelistic meetings. The strategy will be assessed successful if there is an increase in the numbers of new members retained. It is assumed that the project proposal will be accepted by the Mara Conference administrators, the district pastor, and the Makoko church leaders.

**Specific Objective or Purpose**

Specific objectives spell out what the *New Member Retention Strategy* project intends to do to achieve the goal (BOND, 2010, p. 4). The purpose of the project is to develop and implement a strategy to increase new member retention. A study (OT, NT, EGW, and modern scholars) will be carried out to discover how new members who joined God’s people were cared for in the past. The gleaned material from the study will inform the preparation of the training material for the project, and for future training of the local church leaders on retention.

Even though the study of the Bible, Ellen White’s writings, and what modern scholars have written may reveal methods used in the past to retain converts in a good relationship with God, getting personal information from former members who left the church is valuable in understanding why converts leave. Lay members will be trained to help collect survey information from former and re-baptized church members by the end of October 2011. Material collected from the study and survey will be used to prepare materials to train Makoko church leaders and lay members how to take care of new converts. Paul told the Ephesian church elders, “Watch out for yourselves and for all the
flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son” (Acts 20:28).

**Outputs or Expected Results**

Outputs are the direct results of the activities completed during the execution of the project. Output may be in the form of change in attitude, environment, infrastructure, material gain, enhanced capabilities, and services. These are the expected outcomes that benefit the target group as a result of activities done within the project. Outputs are within the control of the management (AusGuidelines, 2003, p. 16).

There will be several outputs in this project. The instruments of investigation will be developed by October 2011. Survey questionnaires and focus group questions will be written and administered. New member training materials will be prepared from Chapter 2 of this project and enriched with information from the surveys. Three Sabbath afternoon retention seminars will be conducted for the Makoko church leaders and lay members by December 2012.

The only way to ascertain that the overall goal has been achieved is to test the strategy in the field. After training, the Makoko church will plan a pilot evangelistic campaign in which the strategy will be implemented between February and March 2013. The success of the outputs will be seen in the seminar material prepared, list of church members trained, and the result of those retained from the pilot evangelistic campaign. It is assumed that leadership and laity will happily embrace the project.

**Activities**
The questionnaires and focus group questions will be prepared and administered. Study will be done on retention methods in the Bible, Ellen White, and modern scholars who have contributed to the area of new converts’ retention. A workshop seminar and a pilot evangelistic campaign will be conducted.

**Inputs**

Every project demands human and material resources for its success. Funds for buying paper, pencils, notebooks, and serving drinks during the workshop will be supplied by the researcher. The Makoko Church members are expected to contribute money to improve the appearance of the church building, add more pews in the church, and start to build the Zanzibar company church building where the pilot evangelistic campaign will be conducted. Mara Conference will support the Makoko Church with about 30% of the evangelistic campaign expense. Volunteers are expected to conduct surveys, enroll in the choir, prepare tents at the meeting site, and do all the evangelistic campaign logistics. A project such as this has many hidden expenses both financial and human. It is not possible to list all the inputs that will be incurred in the project.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

The monitoring of the newly baptized converts will be done on a quarterly basis. A new convert attendance register and head count will form the basis of the evaluation. By April 2014 an evaluation will be conducted on the impact of the project in the Makoko Church. Pastor Elias Swita, Ministerial Secretary of the Mara Conference, will be requested to carry out the evaluation. However, the adoption of the project by other churches is the long-term indicator of the success of the project (see Figure 5) and Gantt
chart (Figures 6 and 7) below showing the plan and activities of the project.

**Conclusion**

The importance of new member retention in the church cannot be overemphasized. It is expected that if this pilot project succeeds, it will positively contribute to retaining more new converts in the church. Other churches in Mara Conference, Northern Tanzania Union Conference, and other church organizations may adapt it to their local conditions and use it to retain new converts. Figure 5 presents the Logframe for the project, while Figure 6 and Figure 7 are the project Gantt charts.

The next chapter describes the implementation process, lists lessons learned, and makes recommendations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Measurable Indicators</th>
<th>Means of Verification</th>
<th>Important Assumptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals</strong></td>
<td>Makoko church has increased retention of new converts baptized from evangelistic meetings</td>
<td>Makoko church adopted the plan and model it by 2014</td>
<td>Mara Conference, Mwisenge district, and Makoko church support the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By 2nd quarter 2014</td>
<td>1. Increase of new members in the statistical report. 2. Church secretary’s report</td>
<td>Church leaders and members support the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50% of new member retained</td>
<td>Trained laity collected data, public evangelism conducted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>A strategy to increase new convert retention developed and implemented</td>
<td>By 2nd quarter 2014 50% of new member retained</td>
<td>Church leaders and members support the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outputs</strong></td>
<td>1. Survey instruments developed and administered</td>
<td>• Focus Group interviewed by September 2011</td>
<td>Church leadership informed and willing to invite participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Survey materials prepared</td>
<td>• 50 questionnaires administered by October 2011</td>
<td>Church members willing to train and apply the strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Participatory planning workshops conducted</td>
<td>• Training material developed by June 2012</td>
<td>Makoko Church ready to conduct pilot evangelistic meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Pilot evangelistic meetings planned and conducted</td>
<td>• Pre-baptismal class organized by March 2013</td>
<td>Church leadership support by baptismal classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Evaluation</td>
<td>• 15 members trained in converts retention by 2013</td>
<td>Churches members willing to finance evangelistic meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 50% new converts retained by 2014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>Measurable Indicators</td>
<td>Means of Verification</td>
<td>Important Assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
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<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACTIVITIES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Develop and administer questionnaire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Conduct focus group interview of 12 people</td>
<td>Inputs:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Study biblical retention principles</td>
<td>1. Practical materials</td>
<td>1. Conference supports the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Retention in E. G. White literature</td>
<td>2. Budget</td>
<td>2. Mwisenge district leader and Makoko church supports the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Prepare training materials</td>
<td>3. Human resource</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Retention seminar held in the church</td>
<td>1. Chapter two completed 2012</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Makoko church conducts evangelistic meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Monitoring and evaluation done quarterly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 5. New Member Retention Strategy for the Makoko Church project’s logical framework matrix.*
### Activities

#### Output 1 Tools developed and administered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 1.1</th>
<th>Focus Group interview 12 people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1.1</td>
<td>Prepare questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.2</td>
<td>Conduct interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.3</td>
<td>Analyze data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Activity 1.2 Develop and administer questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 1.2</th>
<th>Develop and administer questionnaire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1</td>
<td>Develop questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.2</td>
<td>Train five survey assistants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.3</td>
<td>Analyze questionnaire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Output 2 Training material developed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 2.1</th>
<th>Develop biblical retention principles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1</td>
<td>Retention in the Gospels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2</td>
<td>Retention in Pauline epistles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Activity 2.2 Retention in other literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 2.2</th>
<th>Retention in other literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1</td>
<td>Retention in EGW writings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2</td>
<td>Retention in theological writings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Activity 2.3 Produce training materials

#### Output 3 Retention workshops and seminars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 3.1</th>
<th>Retention planning workshop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3.2</td>
<td>Retention seminars</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Output 4 Makoko conducts evangelistic meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 4.1</th>
<th>Evangelistic meeting preparation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1</td>
<td>Church board meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2</td>
<td>Evangelistic meeting date selected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.3</td>
<td>Preacher selected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.4</td>
<td>Budget set</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Activity 4.2 Makoko conduct evangelistic meeting

#### Output 5 Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 5.1</th>
<th>Monitoring done quarterly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity 5.2</td>
<td>Reporting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Figure 6

Figure 6. New Member Retention Strategy for the Makoko Church, Gantt chart year 1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>INCHARGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Output 1 Instruments developed and administered</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1.1 Focus Group interview 12 people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.1 Prepare questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.2 Conduct interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.3 Analyze data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1.2 Develop and administer questionnaire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1 Develop questionnaire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.2 Train five assistants to conduct survey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.3 Analyze questionnaire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Output 2 Training material developed</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2.1 Develop retention principles in the Bible</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1 Retention in the Gospels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.1.2 Retention in Pauline epistles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2.2 Retention in other Christian literature</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 Retention in EGW writings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2 Retention study in current literature</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2.3 Produce training materials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Output 3 Retention workshops and seminars</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3.1 Retention planning workshop</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3.2 Retention seminars</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Output 4 Makoko conducts evangelistic meetings</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 4.1 Evangelistic meeting preparation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1 Church board meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.1.2 Evangelistic meeting date selected</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.1.3 Preacher selected</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.1.4 Budget set</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 4.2 Makoko conduct evangelistic meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Output 5 Monitoring, evaluation and reporting</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 5.1 Monitoring done quarterly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 5.2 Reporting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
A = Researcher; B = Research assistants; C = Church Elders; D = Conference Departmental

*Figure 7.* New Member Retention Strategy for the Makoko Church, Gantt chart year 2 and 3.
CHAPTER 5

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Chapter 4 charted out a five step strategy to reduce new member loss at the Makoko church. Those five-steps covered the development of the instruments of research, a study of the new member retention theology in the Bible, Ellen G. White’s writings, and the writings of modern theologians. This chapter describes the new member retention strategy as it was implemented, monitored, and evaluated over the last year (2013-2014).

During the summer of 2011 a preliminary study on new member retention was done, giving a purview on the scale of the new member retention problem. Additionally, the study gave me insights to structuring a questionnaire and focus group interview questions. Furthermore, a class on methodology introduced the importance of the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) as a methodology of choice for participatory planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of a project that aims to solve a significant problem (a LFA is described in Chapter 4).

The biblical basis for retention, is rooted in God’s compassionate love (Exod 32-33). God’s love is a deep love, *racham*, love that a parent has for a child (Isa 49:15; Ps 103:13). It was an inward affectionate love, *σπλαγχνόν*, which prompted God to give His
Son for the salvation of humanity (John 3:16). God’s love is revealed in His salvific activities, how He saves people, provides for their spiritual and physical needs to retain them to Himself (Exod 19:4). The study of the Old Testament and New Testament revealed that God used varied retention methods tailored to the situation to retain His people. He warned (Gen 2:16; 4:1-7; Jer 25:3-7), visited (Gen 3:8; Gen 18:1-5; Matt 9:15-17), fed (Gen 16; Mark 6:41-44), saved (Isa 37:36-38; Mark 4:39), and healed them (Matt 8:17; 9:27-31).

Ellen G. White’s writings on how to care for the new converts draw heavily on biblical source. Her inspired insights give a detailed explanation adapted to the church of her day and beyond, on the methods of retention. Likewise theological writings on new member retention suggest retention methods that converge with those gleaned from the Bible and Ellen G. White writings. They are only improved by the use of modern communication technology that enhances the keeping of new convert. The knowledge garnered from the study of the theological basis for the new member retention sharpened the execution of the intervention as reported below.

**Report of the Project Implementation**

The Makoko New Member Retention Project was not implemented sequentially, for some implementation processes overlapped. For example, research questionnaires, focus group interviews, as well as the study of a theological basis for new member retention were done in tandem.

In June 2011 a questionnaire with 22 questions (Appendix A, p. 142) and a focus group interview of 10 questions (Appendix A, p. 144) were developed and approved by the AUA Ethics Review Board (Appendix C, Letter 2, p. 161). My initial plan was to
conduct new a member retention research project in two churches in Musoma. The aim was to compare the result of the strategy from the two churches to help focus the strategy for future use. On August 3, 2011, permission was secured from the Mara Conference to conduct the Makoko New Member Retention study (Appendix C, Letter 3, p. 162). I also wrote a letter in the same month to the Musoma district pastors and church elders (Appendix C, Letter 4, p. 163) to convene a meeting of district pastors, church elders, church clerks, church treasurers, and personal ministry leaders to introduce the project to them. The meeting was also intended to identify churches that would adopt and conduct pilot public evangelism using the strategy. In addition, I requested them to bring the records of those baptized from public evangelism from 2005-2010 showing the number of those baptized as compared with how many of them were still attending church. That information was to provide a bigger picture of new member retention challenges in the Musoma churches bordering Makoko. Unfortunately, out of 17 churches in Musoma, only 6 managed to bring their evangelistic records.

Since four delegates were invited from each church, I expected attendance of 68 lay members, and 4 pastors, for a total of 72 people. The turnout was good, 56 local church leaders, and 4 district pastors attended, for an 83% attendance. The meeting chose two secretaries and asked me to be the chairman. Three items were considered in that meeting: the new member retention challenges, how to select research assistants, and the formation of a focus group panel.

The members were very enthusiastic to contribute what they thought were the reasons for new member loss, as this was a thorny problem in all the churches. Therefore, the meeting turned into a participatory workshop for two hours as they contributed freely
on the reasons for new members’ apostasy in their churches. They also suggested ways to combat the problem. It was interesting that most of the causes why new member leave the church as identified by the local church leaders were the same as those I gathered from the theologians writing about the topic. To avoid repetition, I will only consider those reasons that apply locally as the causes that are similar were discussed in Chapter 2.

I planned to employ five research assistants to administer questionnaires to former church members. However, those who attended the seminar thought it would be difficult for one person to find and interview ten former church members. I had 50 questionnaires. It was agreed that 50 attendees each be given a questionnaire, each one of them was committed to find one backslider and conduct an interview with the individual and return the form in two weeks’ time. Because of that decision, one hour of the meeting was used in giving them directions on how to administer the research questionnaires. Only 33 research assistants out of 50 returned the questionnaires. A few of them failed to find former church members willing to be interviewed, others did not report at all.

The Focus Group panel of 13 members was selected from among the lay leaders who attended the meeting. It was composed of three business persons, three teachers, one soldier, one agricultural officer, one peasant, one geologist, one health officer, and one accountant. One person did not disclose her work. Of those 13, 5 were female and 8 male, all of them lay church leaders and members representing diverse age groups. After the first focus group interview, I thought there was a need to have more than one interview to compare the answers to the first interview with those of the other focus groups, so I did one for ten pastors employed in the rural areas, one for a mixed group of two pastors, two church elders, six lay church members, and one former church member. The last focus
group interview was done with seven pastors, two working in Musoma town and five working in rural areas. In total I had four focus group interviews. These focus group interviews were done with the anticipation that the document would be of use beyond the Makoko Church. All those interviews were done properly in a favorable setting where the participants could freely express their views.


An analysis of baptisms and apostasies was done on the information from the six churches in Musoma between 2005 and 2010 to get the general picture of new member loss among the churches that border Makoko Church. Table 4 show the compilation of the public evangelistic meetings and their result from 2005 to 2010 from six churches in Musoma.

Table 4

*Summary of Baptisms and Loss of Members*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Public Meetings Conducted</th>
<th>Baptized</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Apostasy</th>
<th>Lost</th>
<th>% Present</th>
<th>% Apostasy</th>
<th>% Lost</th>
<th>Total Loss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iringo</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamnyonge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makoko</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mukendo</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mwisenge</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyasho</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>958</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Reported by the church clerks.
Table 4 shows that from 2005-2010, 42 public evangelistic meetings were conducted that resulted in 958 new converts for the six churches. But after five years, only 581 (61%) remained. Apostasy claimed 137 (14%) of them; no one knows where 240 (25%) of them are. The data also revealed that the greatest challenge the church faces is not apostasy, but keeping record of the members. Makoko Church, which is the focus of this research, recorded four apostasies of the 212 baptized, but there was simply no account for 118 new members, or 56% of the converts. Due to challenges in record keeping by the churches, opportunity for follow-up and nurture of new converts is lost. From that record I learned that the church has two fronts to fight in new member retention: combating apostasy, and improving how the record of new members is kept at the local church level.

**Former Members Questionnaire**

Of the 50 questionnaires sent to former members, only 33 were returned. The respondents filled them in carefully, few disclosed their names, and two former members decided to come back to the church after filling in the questionnaire. An analysis of the returned questionnaires (Appendix B, Tables A1-18, pp. 148-154) provided vital information in understanding the issue of new member retention.

The first question asked the age group of the former, members to ascertain the group that was more likely to leave the church. Of the 33 respondents interviewed, 14 were between 36 and 49 years (42.4%), 9 were between 26-35 years (27.3%), and 6 were between 50-64 years (6.1%). The most fragile age group seemed to be those between age 36 to 49 years, followed by young people 26-35 years, and 50-64 years. Only two (6.1%) were found in the age group between 16-25 and 66-74 years. When a public evangelism
is planned, special attention should be given to the more vulnerable age group.

Also of interest was the marital status of the former church members. Married new converts had the highest dropout rate: 19 of the 33, or 57%. This was higher than the number of divorced, single, or widows/widowers put together. That was also confirmed by their responses to the question, “Why did you leave the church?” Leading problem seemed to be marital; one said she left because of her husband’s problem, two had marriage problems, one because of polygamy. One man said he left because of his wife, and another man said he left because of his Muslim wife, and another left due to his wife’s sickness. Seven people (21%) said they left for marital problems. Marital issues were the number one cause of apostasy, followed by economic concerns. Therefore, vigilant attention should be given to married new members. Could it be that the church needs to train marriage counselors to help with church members’ marriage issues.

Church members’ personal witnessing brought more people to public meetings and conversion than any other means. Among the 33 former members, 13 (39.4%) attended the meeting because of an invitation of a church member, 6 (18.2%) were invited by a relative, and 4 (12.1%) by friends. Only 5 (15.2%) were born Adventists, and 5 (15.2%) said they responded to the message through loud speakers. It is evident that the church members’ contact with the unchurched or those who left the church was the most significant factor for people joining the church. Therefore, church members need to be fully involved in evangelistic efforts.

The duration of Bible study before baptism also has an impact on new members’ retention. The data revealed that 27 (82%) of 33 of the dropouts attended meetings either for less than a week, or not more than three weeks. Only four (12%) who attended more
than three weeks dropped out. When asked why they decided on baptism, 27 (81.8%) of 33 said they liked the teaching of the Word of God. The remaining six joined for some other reasons like choir, influence of a friend, parent’s advice, and need for immersion baptism. It appears that strong teaching from the Word of God connects people to God. Lack of strong biblical teaching in the church may lead to the departure of some members.

The issue of teaching new converts is a complex one. The best speakers are invited to conduct an evangelistic meeting; they give powerful messages. But immediately after the meetings are over, the church is not as careful in selecting good teachers of the Word. The messages become unimpressive to some of the new converts, and so they may leave.

After baptism, those new converts who continued with baptismal class had a better chance of staying in the church. Most of those who left attended a “Happiness Class” (51.5%), or an adult Sabbath School lesson class (39.5%). In the focus group interview which will be analyzed below, some suggested that the Happiness class where new members are taught is weak because it does not have a study guide or syllabus that guides or stresses the need to develop a relationship with Jesus or that builds on an understanding of church doctrines. Also since the Sabbath School Study Guide is designed for more mature members, new adherents often fail to cope with it. If new members straightway join these classes they may not mature in Bible knowledge, the lack of which may lead to their exodus from the church.

The church leaders need to give extra attention to the new members for at least three years. An analysis of the questionnaire revealed that 14 (42.4) of the 33 left after
attending church for two years, 9 (27.3%) after three years, and 7 (21.2%) after one year. Only two attended church less than two months. I believe further research that involves a larger number of participants would confirm that most of the new converts who leave the church do so before three years. If this is true, then it would be imperative for the church to restructure its baptismal class to take not less than two years. New members should stay in the baptismal class until the instructor is satisfied that the person is ready for baptism, and they should continue with further instruction after baptism. Prior to the 1980s when baptismal classes ran for two years, most of those baptized stayed in the church.

The Focus Group Interview

Four focus group interviews were conducted as explained above, but most of the responses about the problem of keeping new members were similar to those gleaned from the study of the theological foundation for retention. All focus group interviewees; pastors, local church leaders, and laity felt that there was lack of serious teaching given to new converts. They mentioned that good speakers are invited to conduct evangelistic meetings, new people accept the message they present, but when they come to church they find uninspiring speakers, so they get discouraged and leave.

Also, when new members join the Happiness Class, they are given unstructured lessons. The Happiness Class does not have a study guide as the baptismal class does. Those who study the Sabbath School Lessons often find the materials above their understanding. Sometimes Sabbath School Classes of six to eight members lack teachers, leaving new members to teach themselves, so many leave for lack of interest. Our system of special days for different groups in the church also contributes to a watering down of
the message. There is special day for children and a child may preach, a youth day a young person preaches, Adventist women’s day and a lady preaches, Adventist men’s day, and one of the men preaches. Speakers for these special days are selected without serious consideration of the ability to present meaningful sermons during the church service. Church members are left hungry for the Word and may stray to charismatic churches.

Poor record keeping was another hurdle faced by in new converts’ and was a concern for many contributors. The Makoko Church is especially weak in this area. The new member retention seminar emphasized the need to design a better baptismal record card and Sabbath School class attendance record that would include the members’ mobile phone numbers, their residence addresses, and the names of church members who know them or their relatives who would help trace them in the event they leave without asking for a transfer. Another concern was poor distribution of responsibilities; a few old members take all the church offices leaving them heaped with many responsibilities beyond their giftedness. New converts often have to be in the church for a long time before they are engaged in church work, which delays their contribution to the church and make them feel undervalued.

Every focus group discussion member expressed concern with money issues. They thought that there were too much fund raising in the church. That is true, for almost every Sabbath there are calls for funds apart from the normal tithe and offerings in Makoko Church. One Makoko church elder confirmed that a new member left because of frequent call for funds, and another left after being asked to buy a Sabbath School study guide. New members need careful instruction to understand the importance of tithe and
offerings before they are baptized. The church leaders should be advised on the need for a well-planned church budget to avoid disrupting worship by constant calls for money.

Another area of concern was that the evangelistic campaign budget does not include money for new members’ care program. When the budget is made, attention is only given to those items that will make the campaign successful, such as expenses for the preacher and choir, renting tents, and a public address system. Seldom is provision made for follow-up programs. The focus group members proposed setting a budget for strong follow-up of the new converts after public meetings.

It was also revealed that often the guardians assigned to new members do not help them very much. Some who were baptized not long ago said they never met with their guardians after the day they were baptized. So there is a need to improve the use of guardians. It was suggested that new converts should have input as to who they wanted to be their guardians. Guardians should report the progress the new converts are making to the church elders.

Pilot Evangelistic Campaign and the Results

The Makoko Church board voted to hold a pilot evangelistic campaign for the Zanzibar company in November 2012. But a fracas arose between Muslims and Pentecostals at Geita over the right to slaughter animals at the public abattoir. The Muslim hacked a Pentecostal pastor to death in November 2013, a week before the public meetings were to begin. In response, the government banned all religious public meetings for 30 days beginning 21 October 2012. As a result the meetings were postponed until 17 February, going until 9 March 2013.

Before the meetings began, new member retention seminars were conducted at the
Makoko Church and at the Zanzibar company, where the pilot evangelism was going to take place. That delay gave us an opportunity to fine tune our meetings to meet the intervention guidelines. A venue for the meeting in the center of the suburb of Zanzibar was offered gratis by a non-Seventh-day Adventist. Church members were organized into visitation teams to visit the Zanzibar community, get acquainted with the people, and invite them to attend the meetings. The visitation was particularly important as we found out that posters advertising the meetings were being removed by rival religious denominations. Support groups, such as ushers, prayer bands leaders, tent and platform teams, choir (we could not afford to invite a good choir), a doctor to give health talks, groups to follow-up those showing interest, and new member Bible class instructors were put in place.

The new member Bible class was especially important since one of the assumptions of the project was that the lack of good instruction contributes to the new members’ exodus from the church. The budget included money to purchase Bibles and other spiritual books to offer as gifts to the new members. Money was also provided for a welcome lunch after the baptism to provide an opportunity for old members to socialize with those baptized. A piece of land was identified and purchased so that after the public meetings fundraising could be started to build a church for the Zanzibar company. In total the financial cost for conducting the pilot public evangelism was Tsh 3,812,121 (US$ 2,290.93), excluding human and other material costs incurred.

The intervention ran smoothly, and the LORD brought 38 new members into the church through baptism on 16 March 2013. Our strategy was to conduct a new convert’s baptismal class for three months after the evangelistic campaign and, before the baptism
assign a lay person to visit each new convert, assign guardians, provide Bibles for those who had none, organize new converts into support groups, and encourage church members to be vigilant in loving and visiting those close to them. The names of the interests were to be carefully recorded and a roll call taken quarterly after their baptism, as a monitoring procedure.

**Lessons Learned**

After the meetings we organized a baptismal class for the new interests, but to my surprise the church elders started pressuring me to baptize them. They thought that if we did not baptize them, they would disappear. They desired a big baptismal record and did not want to risk losing some of the new interests. I pleaded with them to abide with the plan but they would not agree. At last we consulted the district pastor who knew of the plan. He also gave strong support to continue with the baptismal class, but the church elders became less supportive as time went by. It was obvious that if I insisted to continue with the class against their will, they would not co-operate in implementing the other retention plans. So we agreed to baptize the interests after one more week of daily study for two hours each day.

The church elders’ behavior revealed that in the local churches the need for a large baptism obviously overrides the need to retain new members. This shows that what is needed is not only a good strategy but also willingness to change. For a strategy for new member retention to succeed, it needs to be voted by the conference and implemented as a conference plan or else the local leaders will not accept this new way of doing things.

After the baptism the new members’ names were carefully recorded in the church
membership record. I also made a spreadsheet list of the new members for the church, the Zanzibar company leaders, and myself for monitoring purposes. Together with the church elders we checked the progress and presence of the new church members. Because of my busy itinerary I failed to take roll call between August and December, and when I resumed checking with the church elders, I was surprised that they were getting confused with the identity of two new members who had changed their names when they were baptized. Because of the confusion the elders thought that they were not baptized. I counterchecked the names in the membership record with the baptismal class record we had prior to baptism and found out the reason for the confusion. They knew them by their former names and could not harmonize those names with the ones in the church membership record. It was confirmed that those two members were present. This shows that it is important for church leaders not to confuse those who change their names after being baptized.

The new converts were organized into small groups, putting together those who live in the same area. Guardians were assigned to each one of them, and group leaders were asked to visit and encourage them. Towards the end of the year it was apparent that some guardians were not as committed as was expected. We lost track of two new members. This again highlights the importance of church leaders checking with the guardians to help them be serious with the responsibility committed to them. One couple who did not attend the baptismal class for one week disappeared within a month. All the efforts made to reclaim them were fruitless. Their early departure seems to emphasize the importance of delaying baptism until the excitement of the meetings is over. Longer baptismal classes give the church a better opportunity to baptize those whose love for
Christ encourages them to stay. Each member was provided with a new Bible which has helped most of them to grow in the faith. The monitoring process went well except between August and December. The last check-up was done on 10 May 2014.

On 23 May 2014 Pastor Elias Switta, the ministerial secretary of the conference, administered an evaluation questionnaire prepared by the researcher (Appendix A, p. 146) for the Makoko Church leaders and the Zanzibar company. He made a summary of his findings as found in Appendix B, Tables B1-13, pp. 155-159. Of the 38 new members who were baptized 33 (86.8%) are still present. The church does not know where two (5.3%) are, and three (7.9%) are reported to have left the church. But of these three, one appears to be struggling because the people he stays with banned him from attending church services.

In the evaluation form, participants thought the use of guardians and small groups were not effective. Only 21.4% strongly agreed that the guardians did their job, while 53.6% agreed; for a total of 75% approval. Responding to the question of whether they thought there had been improvement in new member care, only 17.9% strongly agreed, while 50% agreed; for an approval rate of 67.9%. About 10.7% disagreed, 7.1% strongly disagreed, and 14.3% did not indicate their opinion. The comments they wrote on the evaluation forms show that some of them confused evaluation of the project with the evaluation of the church performance. Some commented that the church needed to do more, or be more serious about keeping new members. In answer to the question whether they were happy with the results of the project, 60.7% strongly agreed, 28.6% agreed, for a total of 89.3% approval. Only 10.7% disagreed, and none strongly disagreed. The last question was more evaluative about whether they thought the project was successful or
not. According to 78.6%, it was successful, 7.1% said they did not know, and 14.3 said it was not successful. From the responses it was learned that more teaching on new member retention is needed. But in general, the project was successful. Table 5 gives a summary of New Member Retention Strategy for the Makoko Church.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid New members present</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>86.8</td>
<td>86.8</td>
<td>86.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New members absent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>92.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apostasy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Taken from the evaluation report.

If this strategy was to be repeated, greater emphasis should be placed on giving seminars to pastors and local church leaders on the importance of instructing new members in a baptismal class for not less than a year before baptism. Follow-up monitoring should be done on a weekly basis, not quarterly. I would suggest reformatting the baptismal class record books to give more detailed information. They should show the names, phone numbers, emails, relatives, physical address, and guardians. Close attention should be given to married people between the 25-49 years of age. A retention budget should also include funds to employ a lay person to nurture new converts.

**Future Impact**

“New Member Retention Strategy for the Makoko Church” was a pilot project but
it has improved retention of new converts in the Makoko Church from 42.4% to 86.8% in a year. It has sensitized Makoko church leaders on the value of deliberately planning a new member retention program. It is not an overstatement to conclude that the overall goal of the project has been achieved. Because of that success, the program should be used throughout the local conference, union, and even in the East Central Africa Division. Each entity may adapt it to fit the local situation, and if time allows, “New Member Retention Strategy for the Makoko Church” materials will be placed in a manual for wider use.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The “New Member Retention Strategy for the Makoko Church” project has given me a deeper understanding of the challenges a church faces in keeping new converts, and how those challenges can be addressed. The project has shown that it is possible to retain a higher percentage of new converts than we do now. After public evangelistic meeting, new members are assumed to continue attending church even when they have already left. The call by higher organizations to do better at retaining new members will only succeed if local conference and district leaders are equipped with the knowledge to battle the challenge, and if they are willing to teach the church members the importance of it. This project is a contribution towards that goal.

For this project to make a bigger impact on new member retention in local churches, conferences should budget funds for intensive retention training for pastors. The seminar should create an awareness of the seriousness of the new member loss and should take pastors through a step-by-step process to help them understand and implement a retention strategy in connection with every public evangelistic campaign.
The books *Evangelism* (White, 1946), and *Testimony Treasures* (White, 1949, p. 389.) are invaluable resources in guiding in new member retention. After the seminar, the conference should put a plan in place to make sure pastors train their members. But if the pastor is not gifted in doing that, conference personnel ought to help the local pastors.

There are areas of concern that need further research. For example, the question as to why new converts between the age group 25-49 are more likely to apostatize needs further investigation. We are duty bound to implement or improve pre-baptismal classes, follow-up, guardianship, church record keeping, and transfer of new members. An interesting study can also be done on how to stir the church up for new member retention.

It is important to re-emphasize that the teaching and preaching ministry of the church should be given to spiritual people who have a close relationship with God and are gifted in that area. Letting just anyone use the pulpit dilutes the message of the Word and causes church members to visit other denominations. Our preaching should be more about Christ and His salvific activities than on the church doctrines.

The words of E. E. Duncan are still true:

*Thoroughness cannot be overlooked or overemphasized. Akin to thoroughness is true heart conversion. Wholehearted conversion goes a long way toward eliminating our tragic loss through apostasies. Thoroughness in conversion must be accomplished through a complete presentation of the message from the platform, through the medium of the baptismal class, and of course by personal visitation, study, and prayer. Personal visitation and restudy of the doctrines will go a long way toward eliminating any remaining questions concerning any of the doctrines or wrong habits or former ideas pertaining to beliefs. This, to my way of thinking, is one of the most essential parts of preparing folks not only for baptism and entry into the church but also for a part in the eternal kingdom soon to come.* (1947, p. 20)
Summary List of Recommendations

To myself

1. To continue studying the subject and helping local churches to apply the strategy.

To Eastern Central Africa Division and Its Unions

1. A study should be made to discover the reasons why married new converts between ages of 25 and 49 leave the church.
   2. A vote should be taken to recommend to our theological training universities to include retention subject in their curriculum.
   3. A vote should be taken to recommend to the Unions that church membership, baptismal class, and Sabbath School class records should be improved to include physical address, phone numbers, Skype, email, and names of close relatives who may be contacted if the member is missing.

To the Local Conference

1. Local conference vote “New Member Retention Strategy for the Makoko Church” for the use in local churches.
   2. The local Conference set budget to train pastors in new member retention strategy.
   3. The local Conference should look into the possibility of training marriage counselors to help with church members marriages.
   4. The church should follow the Bible and Ellen White writings on tithing and
offerings to reduce unscriptural fundraising during worship services as they discourage church members.

6. Conference should educate district and church pastors to find ways of equipping members with farming and business knowledge to alleviate poverty among the church members to reduce allurement of the charismatic prosperity gospel.

7. Local conference should redesign reporting forms to reflect retention activities in the churches. Activities such as small group activities, fellowship groups should be included in the monthly report forms.

To the Local Church

1. New interest baptisms should be done only when the pastor is satisfied that candidates are properly instructed and ready for baptism.

2. The baptismal class should be continued even after baptism, and new member monitoring should continue for no less than three years.

3. Interest records, Sabbath School attendance records, and church membership records books should be redesigned to include: physical address, post office box number, phone numbers, email, Skype, names of relatives and friends who can be consulted to trace the person. Sabbath School attendance record should be taken at the end of the class and absentees looked after on a weekly basis. Church clerks should act on transfers promptly.

4. Local pastors and local church leaders need to identify church members of good standing and gifted in teaching and preaching to teach the Word of God, not allowing just any member to preach.

5. The local church pastors and lay church leaders should be serious about
setting up a retention budget whenever a public set retention budget whenever public evangelistic campaign is planned.

6. The use of guardians and small groups should be improved. When new members are assigned guardians, local church elders and pastor should have the list, and check with the guardian on the progress of the new members frequently.

7. The local conference and local church leadership should make deliberate efforts to teach Christian love and fellowship, modeled by the apostolic era. Neighboring church members should make a habit of forming prayer groups, visiting one another, having fellowship lunch meals together, assisting the needy members, and encouraging them in time of need.

8. After all the efforts have been made to reclaim the apostatizing member, that person’s name should be sadly removed from the record book as per church policy.
APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES

Questionnaire to Former Members

The purpose of this questionnaire is to discover from 50 individuals who were converts from previous evangelistic meetings, but have left the church. I will select 5 volunteers and train them how to use the questionnaire. They will interview the backsliders as follows:

Habari, my name is ________________________ I am working with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I am conducting a survey to gather some information from those who once worshiped with the Adventists.

If you would like to remain anonymous do not write your name. If you are willing to share your name with the researcher write it here __________________________

1. Please indicate what age group you belong to.
   - 16–25
   - 26–35
   - 36–49
   - 50–64
   - 65–74
   - 75 +

2. What is your marital status? Single □ Married□ Widow □ Divorced □

3. When did you first attend Adventist meetings? ______________________

4. Why did you start coming to the meetings?
   - I heard the preacher over the speakers
   - I was invited by a church member
   - I was invited by a relative
   - I was invited by a friend

5. How many days did you attend the meetings? Less than one week □
   - One week
   - Two weeks
   - Three weeks

6. Were people friendly to you? Yes □ No □

7. Were you baptized? Yes □ No □
8. How many days did you attend the meetings before your baptism?
   - Less than one week
   - One week
   - Two weeks
   - Three weeks

9. Did you take a vow before baptism raising your hands? 
   - Yes
   - No

10. Did you understand the words and meaning of the vow? 
    - Yes
    - No

11. Did you have the Bible before you were baptized? 
    - Yes
    - No

12. Why did you decide to be baptized?
    - My friend asked me
    - I liked and understood the teachings
    - I wanted baptism by immersion
    - I wanted to get a free Bible
    - Any other reason

13. How long did you attend the Adventist Church after the meetings were over?
    - One Sabbath
    - One Month
    - One year
    - Two years

14. Which group did you join during lesson study while attending church?
    - Lesson class
    - Baptismal class
    - Happiness class
    - Children’s class

15. How can you best describe the reaction of your family when you were baptised?
    - They were happy
    - They were unhappy
    - They were hostile
    - They persecuted me

16. How did the Adventist Church receive you?
    - Friendly
    - Very friendly
    - Less friendly
    - Not friendly

17. Did the church assign anyone to be your friend? 
    - Yes
    - No
18. Were you visited at home? By the pastor Yes ☐ No ☐
By church elders Yes ☐ No ☐
By deacons/ deaconesses Yes ☐ No ☐

19. Did you have any big problem when you were attending the church? Yes ☐ No ☐

20. Were you visited by the church officers or members? Yes ☐ No ☐

21. Why did you leave the Adventist church?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

22. How could we make it possible for you to come back?
________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your time. Please, if you have any other comments write them on a separate paper.

Focus Group Questionnaire

The Purpose of the Focus Group

The purpose of the focus group is to seek information about what the district pastors, church elders, other officers of the church, and ordinary members of the Musoma churches believe is the reason why so many newly baptized church members leave the church.

I will establish four focus groups of ten to twelve members selected randomly. The first group will consist of district pastors, elders, and other church officers. The second group will consist of young people in the church, male and female. The third group will consist of women of the church. And the last group will consist of male members of the church.

How the Focus Groups Will be Formed

In order to get a good combination of randomly selected groups representing all classes of people, I will call divers groups of people separately for groups two through four. For example, all office workers, who represent the educated class, will form one group. All business people will form another group. Farmers will form another group and so on. Then numbers will be given to each group. They will choose which number to represent them. If say, they choose number five, then all those who have number five will join the focus group.

Questions to Ask the Focus Groups

1. How many evangelistic meetings were conducted between 2005 and 2010 in
your church?

2. What preparations were made prior to evangelistic meetings for new member care?

3. What preparations were made after the meetings to receive and accommodate new converts?

4. What follow-up method was used to help new believers?

5. Do you think the evangelistic meetings in Musoma have been successful?

6. Are you happy with the results of these evangelistic meetings?

7. Are you satisfied with how new converts are discipled and integrated into the church?

8. What do you think is the reason so many new converts leave the church soon after baptism?

9. What can we do to improve our evangelistic meetings to retain more new converts?

10. What can we do to retain new converts in the church?

**Evaluation Questionnaire to Makoko Church Members**

**EVALUATION OF NEW MEMBER RETENTION**

**MAKOKO PROJECT**

**The background**

New Member Retention Makoko project was an intervention project designed to improve Makoko church’s ability to retain new members baptized from public evangelistic campaigns. The pilot intervention project was conducted at Zanzibar company of Makoko from February 17-March 09, 2013 by the collaboration of Makoko church, Mara Conference, and the researcher. This evaluation intends to get feedback from the key players of the success of the project in terms of their understanding of the aim of the project and the success of the venture in terms of the new members retained after one year. Please circle the letter you think correctly represent your opinion.

1. Was the planning of the strategy informative and helpful?
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
2. Was the intention of the project understood?
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

3. Were potential concerns identified and addressed?
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

4. Were all members involved in the care program of the new members?
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

5. Was new members’ baptismal class effective?
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

6. Should the church continue with baptism after 2 to 3 weeks of evangelistic campaign or put new converts into baptismal class for a longer period of time?
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

7. Do you think the use of guardians was well arranged?
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

8. Do you think organizing new members into small groups with the old members was of help to them?
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree
9. Is there improvement into the church’s commitment in taking care of the new members?
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

10. Would you plan to employ someone to make follow-up in the future evangelistic campaigns?
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

11. Were the guardians effective?
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

12. Were you happy with the result of the intervention?
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

13. The LORD in His kindness brought 38 new members into Makoko church by baptism. Since their baptism on 16th March 2013 in the last attendance check-up it was found that (this section is to be filled by the information for the church secretary)
   a. The number of members present  _________
   b. Those that have been transferred  _________
   c. Those that have moved to other places without transfer  _________
   d. Those whose whereabouts are not known  _________
   e. Those who have apostatized  _________

14. Do you consider the project
   a. Succeeded
   b. Failed
   c. I do not know

15. Do you have any recommendations that would help improve future retention of new members? Please list them below:
   a.___________________________________________________________
   b.___________________________________________________________
   c.___________________________________________________________
APPENDIX B

EVALUATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES

RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE TO FORMER MEMBERS

Table A1
Age Group of the Former Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
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<td>26-35</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
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<td>36-49</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>42.4</td>
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<td>50-64</td>
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<td>18.2</td>
<td>18.2</td>
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<td>65-74</td>
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Table A2
Marital Status of the Former Members

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<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>84.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widow</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A3
Who Invited Former Member to Seventh-day Adventist Meeting

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Who Invited</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invited by a friend</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invited by church member</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>51.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member by birth</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invited by relative</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>84.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loud speakers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100.0</td>
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### Table A4
Duration of stay of former member with Seventh-day Adventist Church

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>6</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than a week</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One month</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than one month</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One week</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three weeks</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two weeks</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

### Table A5
Friendliness of Church Members to Former Members

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
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<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>30</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Table A6
How Long Did You Attend Meetings Before Baptism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than one week</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three weeks</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than three weeks</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>60.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two weeks</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
### Table A7
The Number of Former Members Who had a Bible Before Baptism

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Frequency</th>
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<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
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<td>12</td>
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### Table A8
Why Former Members Decided to be Baptized

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
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<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choir</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My friend advised</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted immersion baptism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other reason</td>
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<td>3.0</td>
<td>15.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent's advice</td>
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<td>3.0</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I liked teaching</td>
<td>27</td>
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<td>81.8</td>
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<tr>
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### Table A9
Duration of your stay of the Former Member in the church

<table>
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<th>Duration of Stay</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attended one month after baptism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended one year after baptism</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended for two months</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended two years after baptism</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>72.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended more than two years</td>
<td>9</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table A10
Which Class Did You Attend After Baptism?
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baptismal class</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible study guide class</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness class</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
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</table>

Table A11
Was Your Family Happy that You had been Baptized?

<table>
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<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>78.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhappy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>21.2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
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Table A12
Were Church Members Friendly to You?

<table>
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<th>Status</th>
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<th>Percent</th>
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<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very friendly</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>57.6</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
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Table A13
Were You Given a Guardian?

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<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>63.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
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### Table A14
**Were You Visited at Home?**

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<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visited by deacon/deaconesses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visited by elder</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visited by elder and deacon/ess</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visited by Elder and Pastor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not visited</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visited by pastor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>78.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visited by Pr, Elder and Deacon/ess</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33</td>
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### Table A15
**Did Experience Problem Before You Left the Church?**

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<td>No</td>
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<td>42.4</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>19</td>
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<td>57.6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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### Table A16
**Were You Visited During Your Problem?**

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table A17
Why Did You Leave the Church?

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Reason</th>
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<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After school I moved</td>
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<td>3.0</td>
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<td>Apostasy</td>
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<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back my church</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back to church</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church far</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
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<td>3.0</td>
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<td>Devil possession</td>
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<td>Drink problem</td>
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<td>3.0</td>
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<td>Economic</td>
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<td>12.1</td>
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<td>3.0</td>
<td>51.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laziness</td>
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<td>3.0</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
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<td>6.1</td>
<td>60.6</td>
</tr>
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<td>Many reasons</td>
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<td>3.0</td>
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<td>Marriage pro</td>
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<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>69.7</td>
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<td>Members attitude</td>
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<td>3.0</td>
<td>72.7</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Cumulative Percent</td>
</tr>
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<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
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<td>3.0</td>
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<td>15.2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>45.5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX B

### EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

### Table B1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Was the Strategy Helpful to the Church?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
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<td>39.3</td>
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### Table B2

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<th>Percent</th>
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<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
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<td>50.0</td>
<td>92.9</td>
</tr>
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### Table B3

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<th>Percent</th>
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<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
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<td>60.7</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>60.7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
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<td>96.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer or Blank</td>
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<td>3.6</td>
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<td>28</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Table B4
**Were Church Members Involved in the Project?**

<table>
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<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
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<td>64.3</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>64.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
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<td>32.1</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>96.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
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<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
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### Table B5
**Was Baptismal Class Effective?**

<table>
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<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Valid</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>92.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>96.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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### Table B6
**Should New Interest Attend Baptismal Class Before Baptism?**

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Were Small Groups Effective?

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Was There Improved New Member Care?

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Table B13

Was the Project Successful?

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APPENDIX C

LETTERS

Letter 1

Recommendation from Mara Conference

May 31, 2011.
Adventist University of Africa
Admissions Office,
AUA Campus,
Nairobi

Dear Sir,

REF: RECOMMENDATION OF PASTOR YOSEPH OTIENO.

Kindly refer to the above subject.

I would like to introduce one Pastor Yoseph Otieno as one of the Departmental Directors in Mara Conference, Tanzania Union Mission.

He has been voted by the Mara Conference mid-year Executive Committee Action NO. MC/ 208/06/2011 as below:

VOTED: To recommend one Pr. Yoseph Otieno’s application to join Doctor of Ministry at Andrews University, AUA Campus, Nairobi, Kenya from June 1, 2011 through TUM Bursary Committee for acceptance and sponsorship.

Please, grant him any necessary assistance that he may need.

God bless you abundantly.

Pr. James Machage,
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY,
MARA CONFERENCE

Cc: President - MC
Treasurer -MC
Letter 2

Adventist University of Africa Ethics Review Board Approval

AUA ETHICS REVIEW BOARD

I, Joseph M. Otieno, a student of the AUA/Andrews DMin Program, do hereby submit to the Ethics Review Board my project dissertation proposal, together with the questionnaire/survey/interview schedule (choose one) I will use. I am hereby asking permission to go ahead with my research, with the full intention of collecting data in an ethical manner, without harm of any kind to those who will give me information.

Title of the project: A STRATEGY TO INCREASE NEW MEMBER RETENTION IN MUSOMA.

Place where the project will be carried out: MUSOMA, TANZANIA.

I agree to obtain the informed consent of the persons whom I will interview or survey. I will avoid causing any harm to these subjects. I also agree to maintain the confidentiality of those interviewed/surveyed. Finally, the information gathered will be used exclusively for my project dissertation. After my defense, I will destroy the collected data.

Signature of student: Bruce L. Bauer

Date: 23 June 2011

Signature of adviser:

Permission has been granted __________ denied.

For the ETHICS REVIEW BOARD of AUA

Signature: ______________________________________________________________________________________

Position: ______________________________________________________________________________________

Date: 23 JUL 2011

Adventist University of Africa
Private Bag Mt. Lebanon
00503 Nairobi, Kenya
Tel (254) 2066073960330
Location: Advent Hill, Magadi Road, Ongata Rongai
Email: vc@aua.adventist.org
WEB www.aua.adventist.org
Letter 3

Permission to Research from Mara Conference

MINUTES OF THE AVAILABLE OCMITTEE
HELD AT MAKOKO ON 3/08/2011

Pr. James Machage, Adoniah Manyama, Alfakad Mustaa, Mukama Nyamajeje
PRESEN
Mrs. Rebecca Swita, Charles Owenga, Stephen Manema, Dawa Ochupe,
Joseph Otieno

Whereas  Pr. Y. Otieno, Communication Director of Mara
Conference, Currently taking Doctoral studies at Andrews
University, Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya
Campus,

VOTED:  To allow Pr. Y. Otieno time and access to conduct research
in Musoma Church on “A strategy to Increase to conducted
for New Members Retention in Makoko”

REQUEST TO
CONDUCT
RESEARCH
Y
OTIENO
225

Elder Adoniah Manyama
Pro tem Secretary

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
MARA CONFERENCE

166
Pr. Yoseph N. Otieno  
Communication and PR Director  
Mara Conference  
P.O.Box 26  
Musoma.  
14 September, 2011

Wachungai wa Miataa ya Kamyonge, Mkendo, Mwisenge, na Nyakato  
Wazee wa Makanisa Miataa ya Kamyonge, Mkendo, Mwisenge, na Nyakato  
Seventh – day Adventist Churches  
Mara Conference  
Musoma.

Wapendwa katika Kristo,

YAH: MKAATI WA KWAITUNZA WANGOFU WAPYA KATIKA MIATAA YA MUSOMA (A STRATEGY TO INCREASE NEW MEMBERS RETENTION IN MUSOMA).

Wapendwa watumishi wa Mungu wetu. Swala la utunzaji wa waongoofu wapya, hasa wale wanaobatiza basa ya mahubiri ya hadhara ya waki mbili hadi tatu ni tungo tata katika kanisa letu duniani. Hivi karibuni Mara Conference illazimika kufanya sensa na kuwafuta wasihiriki wasiopungua elfuto tano!

Wote mtakubaliana nami kwamba hao wasihiriki wafupata kwa kazi ngumu ya kuanda mahubiri, mkutumia muda na mapato milio yapata kwa jasbo. Mjiyini zima wengine hata matumizi ya lazini ya kuonyesha upendo kwa Kristo. Wakati wa kuhubiri, mtarajia kwamba wasihiriki watakaaonezeza kanisa wazadumu na kushirikiana nanvi kusemeza ufalme wa Mungu. Lakini kwa bahati mbaya, wengi wanaasii na kutoka kanisa.

Mara nyingi agazi za jao za kanisa haziklo tiyari kukubali ufutaji wa wasihiriki hata kama walisasi muda mrefu. Hivyo kuwaingiza na kuwaandika katika kitabu cha kanisa ni rahisi lakini kukuwatoa ni viungo vana. Makanisa mengi yana idadi kubwa ya wasihiriki hewa, huku wakipewa goli kubwa na Conference kulingana na idadi ya wasihiriki walionao kitabuni ambao ni pamoja na hau wasihiriki hewa. Kwa sababu hivo, nilipojinga kusoma shahada ya uzamibu katika chuo chetu kikuu cha Andrews University, niliamua kufanya utafiti wa kina ni namna gani tunaaweza kuwaalea, na kujumuisha wasihiriki wapya na kuwasaidia wabaki makanishani mwitu.


Mwenzenu katika utumishi wa Yesu Kristo,

Pr. Yoseph N. Otieno

cc. 1. President – MC; 2. Secretary – MC; 3. Mhazini – MC; Education Director – MC.
Local Pastors Response to Attend the Meeting

Pr. Muso Steven Muso
District Leader,
Seventh-day Adventist Church,
Kammyonge District,
P. O. Box 301
Musoma.

17 September 2011

Dear Pastor Yoseph Otieno,

RE: NEW MEMBER RETENTION PROGRAM IN MUSOMA

I am happy to hear you want to conduct a program in new member retention. I will inform all those you mentioned in your letter and together we will attend the meeting on 25 September 2011 at 9 am. You are welcome to conduct this research in one of my churches.

Your fellow in the care of God’s flock,

Pr. Muso S. Muso

17-09-2011
Letter 5b

Local Pastors Response to Attend the Meeting

Pr. Jeremiah Gasaya
District Leader
Seventh-day Adventist Church.
Nyakato District
P. O. Box 1262
Musoma.

21 September 2011

Dear Joseph Otieno,

RE: MEETING ON 25th SEPTEMBER 2011

I have received your letter that asks us to attend the meeting on how to keep new convert This is a big problem in our churches, we are happy to join you if we can find a way to keep new members. I have informed my church officers and they are willing to come.

Yours in the LORD’s vineyard,

Jeremiah Gasaya

[Signature]

MCHUNGAJI WA MTAA
KUNISHA LA WAADVENTISTA YASEEATO
MTAA WA NYAKATO
S.L.P 1262 MUSOMA
Letter 5c

Local Pastors Response to Attend the Meeting

THE CHURCH SECRETARY
MAKOKO SDA CHURCH
P.O. BOX 1181
MUSOMA
01/02/2013

PR. YOSEPH OTIENO
COMMUNICATION DIRECTOR
MARA CONFERENCE OF SDA CHURCH
P.O. BOX 26
MUSOMA

UFS

DISTRICT PASTOR
MWISENGE DISTRICT
P.O. BOX
MUSOMA

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
MWISENGE DISTRICT PASTOR
P. O. Box 1068
MUSOMA

Dear Brother in Christ,

RE: INVITATION TO CONDUCT PUBLIC EVANGELISM

The above bolded topic is very important.

Makoko Seventh-day Adventist church invites you to conduct a public evangelistic meetings at her Zanzibar company from 17/02/2013 to 09/03/2013. We are sorry that this meeting was postponed following the government ban of public meeting last year.

May the LORD bless your preparations for the event.

Yours in the LORD’S vineyard,

KARANI WA KANISA
MAKOKO

Sospeter O Sonoko
MAKOKO CHURCH SECRETARY
May 29, 2014

Supervisor,
Doctor of Ministry class, (AUA cohort),
Andrews University.

RE: NEW MEMBER RETENTION MAKOKO PROJECT EVALUATION

Pastor Yoseph Otieno the candidate for a DMin doctoral at Andrews University (AUA campus) conducted a one year (March, 2013 – May, 2014) research project under the title “New Member Retention Makoko” in collaboration with members of Makoko SDA Church. The first three weeks (February 17, 2013 – March 09, 2013) were dedicated to an evangelistic campaign which resulted in bringing 38 souls to Christ. According to the project directives, they were to stay in the church for three months before baptism. However, leaders of the church demanded earlier baptism fearing that they would disappear if they were not to be baptized at the time of their conversion. Immediately after baptism, pastor Otieno affected pre-planned strategies to retain those newly baptized members. He modified the plan to meet with new converts for two hours daily for a week. Also a quarterly monitoring roll call was administered by the researcher. It is through this outcome, the evaluation here-under is based upon.

Being a member of Makoko SDA church, and the Ministry secretary of the conference, the researcher requested my assistance to evaluate the project at the end of it; an exercise that was done on May 25th, 2014. My evaluation looked into the two aspects of the project: 1. To check the actual number of those baptized present, and 2. To evaluate the awareness of the new member retention created by the strategy among the Makoko church members. Before that, he (researcher) prepared 28 questionnaires with 14 questions each. Having submitted them to me (the evaluator), I requested a team of 28 members to respond to the questions. Those 28 were composed of two (2) church elders of 2013, seven (7) members of the church board of 2013, and nineteen (19) members among those who were fully involved in the steering committee of the evangelistic campaign at the beginning of the project. Each member was requested to give his or her personal opinion in answering the questions to avoid one-sided mirror conclusion. The questionnaire demanded a pre-knowledge of respondents to the project that was about to close, for them to answer correctly. Each question was designed to allow freedom of response, whether to strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree.

At the end of the exercise, the collected and analyzed data revealed that, 33 (86.8%) new members out of 38 were still active and known to the old members of the church. But 2 (5.3%) out 38 not known, and 3 (7.9%) out of 38 had apostatized. When respondents were required to give their opinion if the project was successful, 22 (78.6%) out of 28 agreed that it was successful, while 2 (7.1%) said they did not know whether the project was successful or not, and only 4 (14.3%) thought had no ground to give their opinion.

On my opinion, the “New Member Retention Makoko project” is creditable. The fact that 33 members out of 38 are still in the church after a year since the project began, negates the popular practice whereby a half or more of new members leave the church after a year of their baptism. To cite one example, in August 16, 2008 the church added 18 new members through baptism, after a year, only 9 (50%) members were in the church (Makoko Church records, 2008).
I would like to commend Pastor Yoseph Otieno for choosing Makoko SDA church to be a piloting center for his research. It has been an eye opener to the Church, and the conference at large. I believe it will be useful to other churches in the Northern Tanzania Union Conference as well. If the plans and strategies laid down in this study could be followed faithfully, there will be significant reduction of new member loss. In brief, ‘New Member Retention Makoko project has been successful. I recommend it to be replicated for the use of our churches.’

Sincerely Yours,

Swissa Elias Stevens (MA, PTH)
MINISTERIAL SECRETARY
MARA CONFERENCE
REFERENCE LIST


Tanner, D. K. (2005) *From a visitor to minister: Designing a program for the*


VITA

Name: Yoseph Nyambega Otieno

Date of birth: January 1, 1958
Place of Birth: Tarime, Tanzania
Married: August 14, 1985

Education:


2000 – 2003 M.A. Pastoral Ministry, Solusi University, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

1986 – 1990 B.A. Theology, University of Eastern Africa (Baraton), Kenya

1985 – 1986 Tanzania Adventist Seminary and College, Arusha, Tanzania

Ordination:

December 19, 1992 Ordained to the Seventh-day Adventist Church Gospel Ministry

Experience:

2011 – Present Communication, Public Relations Director, Mara Conference, Tanzania Union

2007 – 2010 District Leader, Sirari District Mara Conference


2000 – 2003 Stewardship, Church Development, and Trust Services Director, Mara Conference

1994 – 2000 Stewardship, Church Development and Trust Services Director, Tanzania Union Mission

1992 – 1993 Church Ministries, Ministerial Secretary, and Education Director, South Nyanza Conference, Tanzania Union

1990 – 1991 District Leader, Bunda District, Chaplain and ADRA co-ordinator Mara Conference

1983 – 1985 Literature Evangelist, Mara-Kagera Field, Tanzania Union