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ABSTRACT

A NEW YOUTH DISCIPLING MODEL FOR THE
LOS ALTOS CHINESE SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH

by

John Kangho Ang

Adviser: John V. G. Matthews

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: A NEW YOUTH DISCIPLING MODEL FOR THE LOS ALTOS
CHINESE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Name of researcher: John Kangho Ang

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Date completed: April 2011

Problem

The Los Altos Chinese Seventh-day Adventist (LACSDA) church has not been able to effectively disciple and retain its American-born Chinese (ABC) members. Over the years, the LACSDA church has seen a gradual withdrawal of the ABC members from the church; most have either left the area to attend other Seventh-day Adventist churches, or have stopped attending church altogether. This attrition of membership was a serious problem for the LACSDA church and proper measures were needed if the trend was to be reversed.

Method

This research project led to the development and implementation of an innovative model of ministry that has relevance for the ABC members of the LACSDA church. The effectiveness of the ministry intervention was assessed by comparing the number of ABC members prior to, during, and after the implementation of the model. While questionnaires were used, the study was not a statistical research project. The statistical data were analyzed to give insights into the development and implementation of the New Youth Discipling Model. The data gathered was intended for the purpose of providing verifiable information that could be used in the construction of the model.

Results

The LACSDA church identified the reasons ABC members left the church and the underlying problems that led them to do so. The implementation of the New Youth Discipling Model provided a ministry of belonging, mutual support, and acceptance. The felt-needs of the ABC members were met through the ABC Ministry, the Multi-approach Ministry, and the Vision Church. Implementation of the vision and mission to nurture, teach, disciple, reach and retain ABC members at the LACSDA church led to more faithful and consistent attendance and an increase in the number of ABC members.

Conclusions

The New Youth Discipling Model proved to be a useful means to build a linguistically relevant, culturally sensitive, socially conscious, and spiritually dynamic church. It reached the generation of ABC members and assisted them to become mature Christians in God's kingdom. It provided opportunities where ABC

members could be trained, equipped, and inspired for involvement in the life and ministry of the LACSDA church.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

A NEW YOUTH DISCIPLING MODEL FOR THE
LOS ALTOS CHINESE SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH

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

by
John Kangho Ang

April 2011

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LOS ALTOS CHINESE SEVENTH-DAY
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

The background of the Chinese immigrant community, like that of every ethnic immigrant group in America, is unique. The American-born children of Chinese immigrants find themselves torn between loyalty to their immigrant family origins and the attractions of their adopted land and language. They are tossed between two or more different cultures with various ideological, philosophical, and religious systems. As they get older, they are increasingly attracted to tendencies in the American society towards secularism and materialism.

To reach out to this community, the “good news” must be preached and taught in such a way that it can be understood and received as a matter of ultimate concern by the children of foreign-born immigrants. In order for them to retain it and preserve its value, the “good news” has to be relevant and practical to their everyday life. As Paul Tillich, a prominent biblical scholar and minister explained, “The reason for the irrelevance of the Christian ministry in our time is that it has not learned to speak to the people of a largely secularized world in such a way that the message concerns us ultimately.”¹

¹Paul Tillich, “The Relevance of the Ministry in Our Time and Its Theological Foundation,” in *Making the Ministry Relevant*, ed. Hans Hoffman (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1960), 23.

In the context of the multicultural challenges facing the Chinese community in the USA and the added challenges of presenting a relevant Christian witness and gospel to the various sectors of this community, the following insights are important as a background to the study of the Los Altos Chinese Seventh-day Adventist (LACSDA) church and its mission:

1. It is Jesus' command to share and teach the "good news" to all peoples. The "good news" should therefore be extended to the ABC population in the United States before His second coming. ABC members also play an integral role in heralding and finishing the work of God, particularly in reaching out to their peers. This indicates that as ABC members grow in their relationships with Christ and are disciplined in the community of believers, they too can become a vital force in carrying out the great commission of Matthew 28:19.

2. The parents of ABC members would like to keep their children in the same culture and faith. Some parents are concerned that their children will leave the church and accept the ideologies and practices of the secular world when they grow up. They also desire to see their children keep the Chinese traditions and language. In the minds of Chinese-born adults, these religious and cultural goals can best be achieved by having their ABC children attend the LACSDA church. It has been the trend that ABC members initially attend the church with their parents during their early years, but stay away during high school years and onwards. This choice has greatly displeased and disappointed many parents. They want their children to be well-grounded in their religion during their youthful years so as to be equipped to lead the church when they become older and to have productive Christian lives in the broader community.

3. ABC members are both the present and the future pillars of Chinese Seventh-day Adventist churches. The contributions of ABC members in terms of energy and talents to the Church cannot be underestimated. They are a valuable force to empower the church life and to promote involvement in community service. Their eagerness to learn and willingness to serve should be commended and encouraged. According to the 2000 LACSDA Church Directory, there were 148 members on the books.² About 80 of them attended the church regularly. Seven out of the 80 members were non-Chinese members but they were very supportive of the church mission and work. Fifteen of the 80 members were ABC members who mainly spoke English in their daily lives. The church should make use of the opportunity to utilize the energy and talents of ABC members by equipping and training them to be future leaders. The implication is that these young people can assume the responsibility of passing the mission to future generations. A good biblical example for this expectation was the apostle Paul's writing to Timothy, advising him to "do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15, NIV). Timothy was faithfully serving Jesus Christ and he continued to spread the message of the Lord to many of his contemporaries in the early church era. Similarly, continuity and succession are of great importance to the existence of the LACSDA church, and young ABC members can, like Timothy, participate in ensuring that the goals and objectives of the church are met.

²*Los Altos Chinese Seventh-day Adventist Church Directory (2000), 2.*

Statement of the Problem

Since its inception in 1986, the Los Altos Chinese Seventh-day Adventist (LACSDA) church has been unable to effectively disciple and retain its American-born Chinese (ABC) members. Over the years, the LACSDA church has seen a gradual withdrawal of ABC members from the church; most have either left the area to attend other Seventh-day Adventist churches, or have stopped attending church altogether. This attrition of membership is a serious problem for the LACSDA church and proper measures are needed if the trend is to be reversed or the church will gradually die in foreseeable years to come.

Insufficient effort has been made to disciple and retain ABC members, with predictable membership decline. More aggressive efforts are needed to reverse this trend. Failure to address the problem will endanger the future of the LACSDA church. Likewise, other Chinese Seventh-day Adventist churches in North America will be at risk as first generation Chinese immigrant members gradually pass away with no successors to continue in church leadership.

Goal of the Project

The goal of this project was to propose an innovative model of ministry that has relevance to the ABC members of the LACSDA congregation, implement this model, and test it by comparing the number of ABC members prior to and during the implementation of the model. The intention of the goal was to ensure that the LACSDA church would retain its ABC members and that they would continue to attend the church and increase in number.

Statement of the Task

This study identifies and examines the reasons for the LACSDA church's inability to disciple and retain its ABC members. It examines how well the church is meeting the felt-needs of ABC members with regards to spiritual growth, cultural identity, linguistic issues, and faith development. The study identifies what this congregation must do to enhance its appeal, to minister effectively to its ABC members, and to understand why ABC members have moved to other Seventh-day Adventist churches or left the church altogether.

The traditional methods the church has used for ministering to its ABC members were scrutinized and assessed. The study analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of traditional pastoral care of ABC members. It demonstrated that major changes were indispensable and evaluated new methods of ministry and fellowship aimed at ABC members. Coupled with these changes, various creative approaches and programs were employed by the LACSDA church in order to disciple and retain its ABC members.

To reverse the attrition of ABC members, a strategic plan was discussed, formulated, implemented, and established as an ongoing project at the LACSDA church. In addition to the strategic plan, full support from the leadership of the church was crucial to ensure the success of the project.

The study first determined why ABC members have not felt comfortable enough to keep their membership in the LACSDA church and then examined the reasons for their departure. A strategic plan was developed, analyzed, and implemented. Finally, conclusions were drawn outlining how the new *modus operandi* has enabled the LACSDA church to disciple and retain its ABC members.

This model was to provide sound programs and approaches to develop the ABC members' potential. They would also undergo appropriate training and preparation so that they would continue to remain and serve the Lord at the LACSDA church. The following are strategies and processes that would lead to the achievement of the goal of the project:

1. Discover the factors that caused the ABC members either to leave the LACSDA congregation or to leave the church altogether.
2. Obtain constructive ideas and information from Chinese churches of other denominations.
3. Create strategic plans for discipling and retaining the ABC members.
4. Recruit and train selected ABC members to implement these strategic plans and programs.
5. Execute the programs and evaluate them in order to make on-going improvements.
6. Share any positive outcomes evident from the study with other Chinese Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Justification of the Project

After pastoring the LACSDA church for three years, I developed a conviction that something needed to be done for the ABC members or they might soon leave the church. Several informal discussions were held by church elders and ABC members after church services, but they failed to produce meaningful results or reforms. During a monthly church elders' meeting one Sabbath afternoon in 1999, significant depth of feeling was evoked among the elders during a discussion about the ABC members. Unanimity of

thought was apparent concerning the need for a ministry within the church to address the decline in ABC membership. The final recommendation from the elders' discussions was that a break with the traditional approach was necessary; new measures ought to be taken to disciple and retain the ABC members in the LACSDA church.

After careful observation within the Chinese Christian community at large, including attendance at twelve different Chinese churches of other Christian denominations and discussions with Chinese pastors and youth leaders from these churches, I discovered that many of them had a ministry that was specifically geared toward their ABC communities. Since most ABC members were young adults, each church had youth pastors or youth leaders ministering specifically to their needs. ABC membership in these congregations was proportionally much greater than that of the LACSDA congregation. This discovery supported a growing conviction of the need for a dedicated ministry among the ABC members of the LACSDA congregation before it was further weakened by member attrition.

Based on the ministry models of these Chinese churches of other denominations as well as a careful study of the biblical principles relating to intercultural mission, I came to believe that the LACSDA church could emulate what other Chinese churches were accomplishing in retaining their ABC members. The mission statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church articulates clearly the understanding that the denomination has a special message to deliver before the second advent of Jesus Christ.³ In order to carry out the great commission of Matthew 28:19 effectively, the LACSDA

³*Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (2000), s.v. "The Church."

church must share the good news of salvation with its surrounding communities and attempt to disciple and retain the members that it already has in the church. Therefore, the reasons for the LACSDA church's inability to disciple and retain its ABC members needed to be examined and the problems corrected.

Methodology

Theoretical Framework and Assessment

The theoretical framework of this project is established on the basic biblical principle that all humankind needs to receive the gospel and to perpetuate it. Particular application of this principle is made to the ABC members of the LACSDA church. There are essentially three methods utilized in the composition of this project: the descriptive, the analytical, and the evaluative. The project is descriptive in that it delineates the cultural, linguistic, and religious experience of ABC members as described in the content of relevant literature. It presents the ABC experience in the context of modern American society, and portrays the dilemmas and challenges that ABC members face in preserving the church. It also describes the strategies followed in order to disciple and retain this community within the gospel message and doctrinal teachings of the church. The conceptual framework includes a theological foundation that addresses spiritual nurture and growth in the context of ABC members. It emphasizes the importance of the transmission of the religious heritage to future generations.

The methodology is analytical and evaluative in that it compares the various strategies that are considered appropriate for the needs of the youth and young adults generally, and ABC members in particular. Assessment tools such as surveys, questionnaires, and interviews were administered to study the needs and desires of the

ABC members. They provided a systematic approach and diagnostic method to identify the factors that have led to the diminishing of ABC membership in the LACSDA church. The data gathered also offered insights to utilize in the ongoing implementation of the New Youth Discipling Model to disciple and retain the ABC members. The traditional way of ministering to the ABC membership was scrutinized and discussed, and innovative ways of approaching and ministering to ABCs were developed, initiated, and evaluated. While questionnaires and interviews were used, it should be noted that this study was not a statistical research project. The statistical data and interviews were analyzed to give insights into the development and implementation of the New Youth Discipling Model, not to test the impact of the model quantitatively.

Overview of the Project

Initially, the project focused on a brief socio-historical investigation of the immigration of Chinese people to the United States in the mid 1800s, particularly during the “Gold Rush” years in California. Some attention was given to the cultural, linguistic, and religious life that the Chinese immigrants brought to this country. The main focus was on the lives of the children of recent immigrants to the United States after the amendment of the Immigration Acts in 1965 and the manner in which these American born children of the immigrants coped with cultural, linguistic, and religious issues. Since most of the ABC members of the LACSDA church were born after the Immigration Acts in 1965, they are currently in their high school and college years and are at the critical age where they are likely to choose either to remain active in church or to leave the church. Because of the transitional time in their lives, a comprehensive

strategy to disciple and retain the ABC members in the context of the LACSDA church was also presented and discussed.

The Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White are the primary documents in this project. Other sources include books and journal articles by various authors and scholars. The Seventh-day Adventist Church's teachings about discipling and spreading the gospel to every individual and retaining those converts in the church also contribute to the development of the project.⁴

A review of the literature was undertaken to ascertain what work has been done in the specific area of church membership retention and to obtain appropriate information to guide the development of the project. A focused study was made to ensure that the materials gathered were useful and practical in helping to disciple and retain ABC members. There is a substantial body of literature that addresses issues of ethnic, language, and immigrant churches, but little attention has been given to the dwindling attendance of American-born Chinese members. There was in fact a dearth of research done on ABC members and their spiritual well-being in North America. Some research has been done on Asian Americans as a whole, but it tends to consider the American-born members of the Asian churches in the context of youth ministry, and not as a culturally unique group.

Since the ABC members are mostly youth and young adults, and thus relatively new to their faith, the LACSDA church leadership as a whole has the responsibility to assist and educate them in the faith. The implementation of the New Youth Discipling

⁴General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, "Our Name and Mission," http://www.adventist.org/world_church/name_mission/index.html.en (accessed September 30, 2002).

Model that catered to the felt-needs of the ABC members was an ongoing process.

Assessments were administered before, during, and after the implementation of the New Youth Discipling Model to evaluate its effectiveness and practicality. The model was modified based on the ongoing assessments to teach, nurture, disciple, and retain the ABC members.

Delimitations of the Project

The author of this study has deliberately delimited the scope of this project in order to focus his attention on a narrow field, the LACSDA church and its ABC membership. He is aware that, by limiting this project to a single denomination and congregation, he is ignoring many genuine missionary efforts carried out by other Chinese denominations. Because of the writer's identification with the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, this project implements a specific church ministry for ABC members and evaluates the program strategies from the perspective of Seventh-day Adventism.

This project must be understood as an ongoing experiment at the LACSDA church. The project results may take more time to be fully realized. For the purpose of this project, development of the plans and programs has been ongoing, prior to and during the writing of the project. Although the full implications of the plans and programs were not fully known to the LACSDA church at the time of initial implementation in 2000, it was deemed better to do something rather than nothing about the ABC attrition. As an instructional experiment, it should be evaluated and modified as needed so as to enhance its longer-term effectiveness.

Although statistical and interview data were gathered to inform decision-making,

the study was not a quantitative or qualitative research project, but focused on the design, implementation, and evaluation of a model for ministry. Overall evaluation of the model was not statistically based, but evaluated on the satisfaction expressed by ABC members and the growth of the ABC membership between 2000 and 2005.

Definition of Terms

There are various terms and acronyms not in general use either in the society or in the area of inquiry that have been defined to assist the reader.

ABC: American-born Chinese. These are normally children of first generation Chinese immigrants from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and other Southeast Asian countries. The acronym denotes the second or subsequent generations of Chinese-Americans. For the purpose of this project, ABC populations are those in high school and older (approximately 15 – 30 years of age.)

Acculturation: Acculturation is used to describe the results of contact between two or more different cultures; a new, composite culture emerges in which some existing cultural features are combined, some are lost, and new features are generated. It is the processes of change in artifacts, customs, and beliefs that result from the contact of two or more cultures.

Assimilation: Assimilation occurs when individuals consciously or unconsciously abandon their ethnic culture and adapt themselves to the culture of the host society. This is especially obvious in many second or subsequent generations of Chinese immigrants in the United States.

Bicultural: People who adopt or are familiar with two cultures. They normally fall between the culture of their country of origin and the adopted culture.

Bilingual: People who are fluent in two languages. In this project, bilingual means those that speak Chinese (Mandarin, Cantonese, or Taiwanese) and English.

Biological Growth: Church growth resulting from the adoption by children of the faith orientation of their parents.

Discipling and retaining: To facilitate the spiritual formation of members of the “body of Christ” (1 Cor 12) in any local congregation as they make their lifelong Christian journey. Discipling and retaining include, but are not limited to, education in terms of doctrine and belief; nurture in commitment and character growth; and development of gifts and fruits of the Spirit in practical Christian living, outreach, and evangelism. Discipling and retaining, therefore, involve whole person development across the lifespan in the knowing, being, and doing of a Christian life.

Ethnic: Pertaining to or characteristic of a people, especially a group sharing a common and distinctive culture, religion, language, or the like.

LACSDA: Los Altos Chinese Seventh-day Adventist church. The writer of the project is the pastor of this church. There were 148 members in the 2000 LACSDA church directory and about 80 of them regularly attended the church.

Nurturing: It is an intentional effort to help a person develop into a mature Christian. This is an educational and spiritual process to enable a person to reach his or her full potential. For the ABC members, it means special concern is given to them so that they can become grounded in the faith, doctrine, and life of the church.

OBC: Overseas-born Chinese. They are of Chinese ancestry and are normally born and educated either in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, or other Southeast Asian countries. They normally retain much of their indigenous culture, mores and religious

beliefs while residing in the United States.

SFCSDA: San Francisco Chinese Seventh-day Adventist church. This church was the mother church of the *LACSDA* church, and was the first Chinese Seventh-day Adventist church in the United States.

Structure of the Project

This project is organized into five chapters.

Chapter I introduces the study topic and the research procedures employed in this project. It presents the introduction, statement of the problem, statement of the task, goal of the project, justification for the project, overview of the project, definitions of special terms and acronyms, scope and delimitations, and methodology for the project. A focus is provided on the attrition of ABC members at the *LACSDA* church.

Chapter II provides the biblical basis for the conceptual framework of this project, supporting the argument that God desires all ethnic groups to receive His grace and salvation. It presents many scriptural verses and texts that identify the foundation supporting ethnic and intercultural mission. It not only covers the biblical basis for ethnic missions in both the Old and New Testaments, but also presents Ellen G. White's perspectives on ethnic missions.

Chapter III presents the profiles of the ABC members and the *LACSDA* church, including cultural and language factors. The ABC members are comprised of the second and subsequent generations of Chinese-American immigrants. Some relevant information about the experience of the original Chinese immigrants in the nineteenth century is also provided. The influx of the Chinese immigrants into the United States since 1965 has dramatically changed the face of Chinese Christian churches in the United

States. This chapter also provides the history of the LACSDA church when it first joined with the Los Altos Seventh-day Adventist church in 1986, giving the background of the church and the membership. The lack of understanding and consequent failure of the church leadership to minister to the needs of its ABC members is also described.

Reasons are presented why second generation Chinese Seventh-day Adventists require a different kind of ministry than first generation Chinese immigrants. The unique cultural practices, belief systems, and linguistic issues of the ABC members are discussed, as is their specific social and spiritual quest.

Chapter IV presents a New Youth Discipling Model. The ABC Council oversees the implementation of this model. The Council also provides the vision and mission statements to achieve its goals and objectives. The New Youth Discipling Model has three supporting ministries. They are the ABC Ministry, the Multi-Approach Ministry, and the Vision Church. These supporting ministries are developed specifically for the ABC members to disciple and retain them in the LACSDA church. They focus on applying innovative and creative alternatives to the traditional approaches that have proved ineffective. The New Youth Discipling Model was implemented to change the paradigm that did not yield positive outcomes. The challenges of implementing change in a traditional community are described and the importance of addressing the felt-needs of both the traditional and second generation cultures within the congregation is discussed.

Chapter V describes the implementation of the project, evaluates the New Youth Discipling Model, and provides a conclusion on the project. It outlines the conditions of the LACSDA church before, during, and after the implementation of the New Youth

Discipling Model. Surveys, questionnaires, and interviews were conducted to assess how the New Youth Discipling Model affirms the need for strategies that are culturally and linguistically relevant to the ABC members. The effectiveness of the New Youth Discipling Model is analyzed. Conclusions based on the evidence support the New Youth Discipling Model as a vital tool in discipling and retaining the ABC members of the LACSDA church.

Chapter VI summarizes the importance of biblical and inspirational guidance to carry out the gospel message to everyone including the ABC members of the LACSDA church. It provides conclusions of how the New Youth Discipling Model has greatly impacted the ABC members of the LACSDA church in a positive manner and how the number of ABC members has increased as a result of implementation of the model. This chapter also offers recommendations for future study and research to further enhance the effectiveness of doing ministry so that many more individuals, including ABC individuals, can be reached, retained, and disciplined for the Kingdom of God.

CHAPTER II

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHURCH MISSION FOR DISCIPLING AND RETAINING ALL PEOPLES

Introduction

The LACSDA church is a local congregation of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist denomination. The mission of the LACSDA congregation reflects that of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a whole, to proclaim to all peoples the gospel in the context of the three angel's messages of Revelation 14:6-12. This mission includes a mandate for witnessing to, winning, and discipling all ethnic groups on earth. Among the main goals of teaching the Bible are leading people to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, uniting them with His church, and nurturing them in preparation for His return.¹ These goals are critical to the spiritual mission of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination and thus the LACSDA church.

To be equipped to accomplish this mission, it is important for leaders and congregations to understand the biblical foundations for discipling individuals into the church and into the kingdom of God. The theological and sociological assumptions underlying this research project are essential for consideration in the praxis of mission in a pluralistic context.

¹General Conference, "Our Name and Mission."

Ethnic Mission and the Godhead

In all orthodox Christian theology, there is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in a unity of three co-eternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, omnipotent, and omnipresent.² An understanding of God's revealed goals for the church takes into account the revelation of the will of the Father, the lordship of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit. The purpose is to lead sinful human beings into the realization that God desires to reconcile with them and forgive their rebellion and transgressions. God also plans to give them eternal life in the world to come (Isa 66:22-23).

A theology of mission must begin and end with God, not human beings. It must include God's revelation of himself to human beings, the incarnation of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, the salvation he achieved through his sacrificial death and victorious resurrection, and the ultimate lordship of Christ over all creation (Matt 1:18-23, Rom 5:10-15, Col 1:15). According to the Bible, and specifically the New Testament, the most important story in the history of humankind is the story of Jesus, the Son of God, who was sent by God the Father to bring the message of salvation to the earth. Jesus Christ humbled himself and came down to this sinful earth as a human being and missionary. He lived as a human being and faithfully fulfilled the mission of God. He instructed His followers to go and make disciples of all nations by bringing the good news of salvation to them (Matt 28:19-20).

Before he left the earth, Jesus promised to send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, as the divine authority to guide His followers. One task of the Holy Spirit is to convert the

²Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), 3:285.

hearts of those individuals who are willing to be saved into God's kingdom (John 14:26). With the aid of the Holy Spirit, the apostles attracted and retained new converts. These apostles worked diligently in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, and "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The Origins of Ethnic Diversity: A Biblical Perspective

After Adam and Eve rebelled against God in the Garden of Eden and were consequently under threat of eternal death, God intervened to provide renewed hope of eternal life by instituting the plan of salvation for them and all their descendants. The mission to save humanity began immediately when God promised the first parents that the future Messiah would come to the world and defeat the devil (Gen 3:15). God used various approaches to bring humanity back into a relationship with Him. Genesis 4:3-7 indicates that both Cain and Abel, the first two sons of Adam and Eve, were given the opportunity to repent and turn to God by offering sacrificial lambs, a representation or type of the Messiah who would one day come in human flesh as the "Lamb of God" and die for all the people in the world to take away their sin (John 1:29).

The older son, Cain, refused to comply with this requirement but Abel, the younger son, was willing to obey God. Cain later murdered Abel and was severely punished for the murder (Gen 4:8, 11-13). He became a fugitive, running for his life (Gen 4:14-15), and moved to the land of Nod (Gen 4:16). As the population grew and the diaspora continued, the new settlements began to develop distinctive cultural identities (Gen 4:17-22). As more people inhabited the earth and rebellion surged, God's plan continued to unfold to save fallen humanity.

During Noah's time, God made a final decisive call in his mission to save

antediluvian human beings. If they did not respond to his call and refused the offer of refuge in the ark, they would drown in the flood (Gen 6:12-13).

Noah was righteous before God, and he was charged to continue the mission of inviting people into a relationship with God. God used the ark as a means for people to show obedience to him and gain salvation. However, despite Noah's attempts to persuade them, none except his own household was willing to abide by God's commands.

The people during Noah's era all spoke the same language (Gen 11:1). The descendants of Noah continued the rebellion against God by building the Tower of Babel and God responded by confusing their language (Gen 11:4-9). Thereafter, diverse languages and cultures became more distinct as the descendants of Noah spread apart and lived in communities that were isolated from each other. That was how ethnic, language, and cultural differences developed, and therefore the need of ethnic mission as God's people relate to other cultures.

Ethnic Mission in the Old Testament

Ethnic mission had already taken root during the Old Testament era. After Noah's descendants dispersed around the world, the mission to reach them with the plan of salvation remained a constant. In order to achieve this mission, God entrusted the nation of Israel with the responsibility of communicating His message of salvation to nations and peoples that had no knowledge of Him.

Ethnic Mission and the Israelite Sojourners

In Gen 12, God called Abram to leave his homeland without first telling him where to go. Abram became a sojourner by divine call: "Get thee out of thy country, and

from thy kindred and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee" (Gen 12:1). The purpose of the call was to make Abram the head of a new race of people chosen to be the vehicle by which God would reveal himself to the rest of the world. "In thee [Abram] shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen 12:3).

According to the book of Genesis, the name of Abram was later changed to Abraham to signify God had chosen him and wanted to make him fruitful, and the progenitor of many nations (Gen 17:5-6). God fulfilled His promise to Abraham by granting him a son named Isaac even though his wife was past her child-bearing age (Gen 21:1-3).

Isaac, the son of Abraham, was an alien in a foreign land. As an adult, he lived briefly among the Philistines before moving to Beersheba. (Gen 26:1-11). Like Isaac, his sons Jacob and Esau were also wanderers. Jacob sojourned for a time with Laban (Gen 31:3-7). Esau lived a nomadic life in Canaan (Gen 36:6-8). Abraham, before his death, reiterated God's promise to bless Israel by giving to Abraham's descendants the land in which Abraham had dwelt as an alien (Gen 28:1-4). In Gen 49, before Jacob died, he admonished his sons—the 12 patriarchs of the Israelite race—to continue their "sojourn" in many lands.

Through Jacob's sons, the promises to Abraham were passed on to the twelve tribes of Israel. Israel inherited the mantle given to Abraham, that he not only be the father of many nations but, more importantly, that he and his descendants would be a blessing to the nations. This "blessing" would be passed on as and if Israel fulfilled its calling to pass on the good news of God's salvation (see Zech 8:20-23).

Ethnic Mission and “Foreigners”

Before they inhabited the land God had promised to Abraham, the children of Israel became slaves in Egypt. Their slavery did not negate God’s promise to Abraham, and Moses was selected by God to lead them out of Egypt to enter Canaan as God’s chosen people. According to the laws of Moses, the head of the family was to recite and reenact the drama of Israel’s history as a reminder of their experience as slaves in Egypt and of their deliverance. The Israelites’ monotheistic faith, expressed in terms of family solidarity and positive religious practice, created a tremendous impression on the neighboring Gentile communities.³ One of the consequences was that a large number of Gentiles gradually became proselytes to the Jewish faith, having gained a knowledge of God through the example of faithful Israelites.⁴

During the Exodus, Moses allowed “strangers” to go with the Israelites to the Promised Land (Exod 12:38). In fact, Moses forbade the Israelites from oppressing the foreigners that traveled with them or lived among them, because the Israelites themselves had been foreigners in Egypt and they understood what it was like to be oppressed (Exod 23:9). These non-Israelites were admitted into the congregation and enjoyed considerable favor. Laws were established to provide for and protect them so that they might live peacefully with one another. They were permitted to glean the vineyards and harvest food (Lev 19:10; 23:22; Deut 24:19-21). The stories of Ruth and Rahab provide

³Wee-Hian Chua, “Evangelization of Whole Families,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, eds. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1981), 620-621.

⁴*Ibid.*, 624.

good examples of how foreigners were assimilated into the congregation of Israel (Ruth 1:16; Josh 6:25).

Scripture notes that by the time of King Solomon, there were 153,600 foreigners in the kingdom of Israel (2 Chr 2:17). One of the clearest passages in the Old Testament relating to attitudes toward foreigners was King Solomon's prayer for the aliens. During the Temple dedication ceremony, King Solomon prayed:

As for the foreigner, who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your great name, your mighty hand and your outstretched arm—when he comes and prays toward this temple, then hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name (2 Chr 6:32-33, NIV).

King Solomon's prayer demonstrated that he had compassion, not just for his own people but also for foreigners who came to a knowledge of God and lived and worshiped among the Israelites. King Solomon appeared to understand that although God chose Israel to be unique among the nations, He never disregarded the other nations. Israel was supposed to be "the minority called to serve the majority."⁵ They were separated for a special mission. Israel was to be the medium of God's self-revelation to the rest of the nations on the earth and the people from whom the Messiah would come. They were to be the carriers and broadcasters of a message of salvation for all the people in the world, regardless of their ethnicity.

⁵Johannes Verkuyl, *Break Down the Walls* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973), 40.

Ethnic Mission in the New Testament

Since creation, except during occasional cataclysmic events, there has been continual growth in the world population. As the number of human beings has increased, so have the wars, plagues, calamities, and conflicts that have divided people and nations. The Jews were scattered to many regions of the world as a result of sieges and suppressions by foreign powers. By the time of the Inter-Testamental Period, a huge chasm had been created between Jews and non-Jews.⁶ The Jews repeatedly failed to fulfill the mission that God had entrusted to them—to serve as ambassadors for God and agents of the salvation among the nations. Although Israel was supposed to be a “light to the Gentiles (Isa 49:6),” it eventually ceased to share God’s blessings, truth, gifts, and salvation with the surrounding nations.⁷ The Jews prided themselves on being God’s favored people. It was not until the first advent of Christ that the scenario was dramatically changed.

Ethnic Mission and Jesus

Jesus Christ “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Phil 2:7). He was in our midst, exemplified the character of God, and proclaimed the great message of salvation to all human beings, not just those of Jewish background.

Christ lived and worked among the common people and did not ignore those who were despised or forsaken; he cared for the poor, the sick, and the outcasts; He

⁶Verkuyl, *Break Down the Walls*, 42.

⁷Herbert J. Kane, *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987), 28.

manifested his love to all regardless of their background, culture, ethnicity or language; and he presented the principles of the kingdom of heaven through His words and actions. When asked what was the most important commandment, Jesus responded: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.” He also added, “And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Mark 12:30-31). These principles of God’s law apply for time and eternity, and stress the importance of loving God with our whole being and loving our neighbors as ourselves regardless of who they are.

Jesus was not exclusive in his attitudes and actions. He was unbiased by ethnicity or racial background. He mingled freely amongst those with whom He came in contact. He did not emphasize his differences with others when He ministered to them. He had a unique task to perform and a mission to accomplish for the world—to save them from sin and to provide them with everlasting life. Although Jesus was born of a Jewish mother, the New Testament states that most of Jesus’ public ministry was spent in the “Galilee of the Gentiles” (Matt 4:15). Gentiles were non-Jews, scorned by the Jews, and considered unclean and unworthy to receive any blessings from the God of Israel. Gentiles were often condemned by the Jews simply for not being part of the “Chosen People.”⁸ As a result, Jews and Gentiles were involuntarily segregated by their differences.

This was also true of the Samaritans, a particular ethno-religious community living in Samaria, whom the Jews frequently marginalized. Although the Samaritans had

⁸*Harpercollins Bible Dictionary* (2000), s.v. “Gentiles.”

Jewish ancestry, the Jews regarded them as foreigners.⁹ Despite the widespread animosity toward the Samaritans, Jesus often lovingly ministered to them, and though the Jews sought to avoid the Samaritans, Jesus was not deterred from preaching to them. In spite of the fact that Jews and Samaritans hated each other, Jesus communicated with the Samaritan woman at the well by offering her the gift of God that brought salvation (John 4:7-26).

Following the famous conversation with the Samaritan woman, Jesus remained in Samaria for two days. During that time, many Samaritans came to recognize him as the long awaited Messiah (John 4:39-42). On one occasion, Jesus healed ten lepers, one of whom was a Samaritan (Luke 17:11-19). On another occasion, when Samaritan villagers declined to extend hospitality to Jesus, he rebuked His disciples for suggesting that the Samaritans should be destroyed: “For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them” (Luke 9:56).

Jesus’ ministry went beyond Samaria. He also reached out to the Romans whom the Jews vilified as Gentiles and pagans of the worst order. He spoke directly to a Roman centurion whose faith He highly praised (Luke 7:1-10), and to two Roman officers, including Pilate, the governor of Palestine (John 18:33-38.) The gospel of Mark describes how Jesus’ teaching and healing ministry extended far beyond the confines of Galilee and Judea to Idumaea, Trans-Jordan, Tyre, and Sidon (Mark 3:7-8). Matthew describes Jesus’ fame as having spread throughout all Syria, with great crowds following Him from Galilee and the Decapolis (Matt 4:24-25.) No race or ethnic group was rejected in his ministry. All of them needed to hear and accept the gospel message in

⁹*Harpercollins Bible Dictionary* (2000), s.v. “Samaritans.”

order to be part of the kingdom of God.

Through the life and ministry of Christ on ethnic mission, one can learn that the gospel is for every individual in the world regardless of his or her ethnic or racial background. Before His ascension, Jesus instructed all believers in the great commission to share the message of salvation with the entire world (Matt 28:19). There are four verbs in the great commission: go, make disciples, baptize, and teach. This indicates that the gospel is not merely a theoretical message but practical instruction for every individual in the world. Every individual is entitled to accept the message of salvation, and every individual is under a mandate to share this message.

Ethnic Mission and Early Apostles

The Book of Acts begins with the outpouring of the promised Holy Spirit and the first proclamation of the gospel by the apostles in the absence of the earthly Jesus. This evangelism began in Jerusalem and spread throughout the Roman Empire and beyond (Acts 2:1-12). The message of God's saving grace was first shared with humanity right after Adam and Eve's rebellion against God when God said, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen 3:15). God later chose the nation of Israel to share the message of salvation with the surrounding nations. He appointed Israel to be "a kingdom of priests" (Exod 19:5-6). The nation was to function on behalf of the kingdom of God as a mediator between God and humankind. However, because of the Israelites' repeated rebellion against God and their pride in their status as the chosen people, their failure to take God's message to the other nations, their persecution of the prophets, and finally their rejection of Christ as the Messiah, the mantle of responsibility as God-appointed

ambassadors was withdrawn from the Jewish nation.

The gospel was increasingly proclaimed to the Gentiles through a small minority of Jews who accepted Jesus to be the Messiah and, with the growth of this new body of believers, the mantle of responsibility was passed to the new Gentile converts. The Gentiles, who soon outnumbered the Jews in the Christian community, became a mighty force to spread the gospel of salvation of Jesus Christ to the world. This came to pass as Jesus predicted before His ascension, “and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

The distinction between the Jewish Christians and the Gentiles first began to breakdown when the apostles faced persecution and harassment from the Jewish and Roman authorities. The Jewish Christians were very missionary-minded and they were passionate to share the message of Jesus with the Gentiles. For example, Philip, one of the apostles, went to Samaria where the response of the people was so encouraging that the church of Jerusalem sent Peter and John to pray for them (Acts 8:14-15). Luke, the author of Acts, says that “when they [Peter and John] had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans” (Acts 8:25). Although the early church had some lessons to learn about ethnic mission, these early Christian apostles and missionaries did not separate themselves from the Samaritans.

Peter’s visit with the Roman Centurion Cornelius also illustrates the breakdown of distinction between the Jews and Gentiles. Peter addressed a large gathering of people, saying to them, “Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew

to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean” (Acts 10:28). He continued, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35). Before Peter could complete his message, both the Jews and the Gentiles listening received the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44). God did not differentiate between the Jews and the Greeks; He accepted them all to be His children.

Peter learned the lesson of not calling any man common or unclean. He understood that God loves all people regardless of race, culture or language. In his first epistle, Peter proclaimed to all believers including non-Jews scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1 Pet 1: 1) that “ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pet 2:9-10). All believers are admonished to honor the privilege of being God’s elect through righteous living, sharing the gospel, and ministering to whomever desires knowledge of the Lord, whether Jew or Gentile (Gal 3:27-29).

Due to persecution in Israel, the early apostles went to Syrian Antioch and spread the Christian gospel among the cosmopolitan citizens of that city (Acts 11:19). From Syrian Antioch, Barnabas and Paul were sent by the congregation as cross-cultural missionaries to Cyprus, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and other cities of Asia Minor (Acts 14:1-25). The apostles went to Macedonia (Acts 16:9) and continued on as far as to Europe, where they evangelized the military center of Philippi, the seaport city of

Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Malta, and Rome (Acts 16:12; 17:1; 17:10).

Ethnic Mission and Paul

The apostle Paul came from a multicultural and multilingual background. He was a Jew born in Tarsus, a city known for its Greek culture. He spoke Greek, the common language of the eastern Mediterranean during that era. His education was under a famous teacher, Rabbi Gamaliel, in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3). The language of instruction was Hebrew, the mother tongue of the Jews in Jerusalem. Paul's Hebrew name was Saul, but after his conversion, he was given the Greek name, Paul. Since he lived in the land of Israel for many years, he almost certainly spoke Aramaic as well. He was born a Roman citizen and therefore probably also spoke Latin (Acts 22:25-29). Thus Paul was polylingual and cosmopolitan in his culture, giving him cultural and linguistic advantages that enabled him to carry out the great commission (Matt 28:19, 20) with knowledge and sensitivity.

According to Johannes Verkuyl, "Recent studies of Paul's life and work clearly show that he could employ Palestinian-Jewish concepts, Hellenistic-Jewish concepts, and Hellenistic-Gentile concepts, as the occasion required."¹⁰ Evidence for this is found, for example, in the epistle to the Corinthians. Paul boldly stated that he made himself a slave to everyone to convert as many as possible. To convert the Jews, he became like a Jew; to those under the law, he became like one under the law; to convert the weak, he became

¹⁰Johannes Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 113.

weak. He became all things to all men so that by every possible means, he might convert some (1 Cor 9:19-22).

Through his epistles, the apostle Paul advocated unity in the diversity of the early church. He compared the church or “body of Christ” to the parts of the human body, functioning together despite their differences (1 Cor 12:14-27). The church in apostolic times followed God’s instruction, manifesting unity in the midst of diversity. The church in Antioch, for example, was determined to work harmoniously with Jewish and non-Jewish members (Acts 11:20-21).

Paul worked with non-Jewish believers in advancing the gospel ministry. Aquila and Priscilla, for example, were the Apostle Paul’s trusted and valued co-workers in Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome (Acts 18:1-2, 18-19). Although the church in apostolic times might have had some ethnic conflicts (see Acts 15; Gal 2:11-13), the unity of the church across cultural, racial, and linguistic barriers was indisputable.

Finally, Paul admonishes the Galatians that they should not differentiate among themselves. He asked if the Gentiles have to be circumcised in order to become followers of Christ (Gal 6:13). The Jewish-Christian perspective was that the Gentile-Christians must first become Jews in order to be Christians. Paul asserted that all people, both Jews and Gentiles, are made righteous by faith with God through the sacrifice of Christ (Gal 2:16, 21). This, and not a person’s outward appearance or cultural attachments, is the sole basis for becoming a Christian.

Ethnic Mission and Ellen G. White

In addition to the Scriptures, God has used extra-biblical resources to admonish His people with regard to ethnic missions. The purpose of doing this is to alert believers

to the importance of ethnic missions and to encourage them in their responsibility to spread the gospel message, to reach out to unbelievers, and to disciple them in the church. Ellen G. White, through her ministry and writings in the nineteenth century, was able to instruct early Adventist believers on the importance of ethnic missions. She argued from a clear biblical perspective that all nations and ethnicities need to have a knowledge of the gospel before Christ's second advent.

Ethnic Mission and Ellen G. White's Concepts

All sinners must come to Christ to be forgiven and saved from the penalty of sin. The mission of the church is to help people come to Christ. According to White, a pioneer and respected leader of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, "the mission of the church is defined as saving perishing sinners."¹¹ White points out that the work to save souls is the "all-important work for time; it is to be far-reaching as eternity."¹² With regard to evangelistic activities among ethnic groups, White argued that there should be no distinction of race and no discrimination within the church. She believed that Jesus "laid the foundation for a religion by which Jews and Gentiles, black and white, free and bond, are linked together in one common brotherhood, recognized as equal in the sight of God."¹³

White, aware that non-believers came from many ethnic backgrounds and languages, exhorted Adventist missionaries to learn foreign languages so as to enhance

¹¹Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1978), 3:381.

¹²Ibid., 5:456.

¹³Ibid., 7:225.

their ability to take the message of Jesus to the whole world in support of the mission of the church. She knew the importance of ethnic mission and she urged “Adventists to develop [foreign] language missions.”¹⁴ She hoped that ethnic minorities could develop evangelistic strategies for their own people. She continued, “While the church is working among the inhabitants of various nations in distant lands, much must be done in behalf of the foreigners who have come to the shores of our own land.”¹⁵ As such, she stressed the importance of engaging in intercultural mission wherever the opportunity arose.

On one occasion, White reprimanded members of a white congregation who refused to let non-white members attend their church. She wrote:

You have no license from God to exclude the ‘colored people’ from places of worship. Treat them as Christ’s property, which they are, just as much as you want to be treated. They should not be prevented from membership in the church with the white brethren. Every effort should be made to wipe out the terrible wrong [slavery] which has been done them. At the same time, we must not carry things to extremes and run into fanaticism on this question.¹⁶

White did not encourage segregation in worship places. She was balanced on the matter of race, saying clearly that white believers had no advantage over non-whites in terms of finding salvation. All should be welcomed to the house of God for worship; prejudice and discrimination have no place in the church. Racial differences did not denote inferiority or superiority, but opportunities for witness, service, compassion, and love.

While White was clear that no race has an advantage before God, she also

¹⁴White, *Testimonies*, 8:36.

¹⁵Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1946), 569.

¹⁶Ellen G. White, *The Southern Work* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1976), 15.

advocated (even if reluctantly), that the work for whites and blacks be administered and conducted separately. White stated, “Let the colored people work chiefly for those of their own race. . . . The best thing will be to provide the colored people who accept the truth, with places of worship of their own, in which they can carry on their services by themselves. . . . Schools and sanitariums for colored people should be established.”¹⁷

The context that led her to advocate for the separation between the whites and the blacks was due to the prevailing prejudices, bigotry, and discrimination in some places against the blacks during her time.

According to Ronald Graybill, White’s first calls for separation came after white Adventists, working primarily with blacks in Mississippi river towns, faced looting, shooting, and burning mobs of other whites in the area.¹⁸ Ronald Graybill further stated that White’s acceptance of separation was “because of expediency, not because she approved racism. The circumstances at that time led her to provide seemingly contradictory counsel. Essentially, White’s counsel was a concession to a specific problem that she hoped would be temporary.”¹⁹ White advocated “temporary” separation to avoid riots and loss of lives that could jeopardize the mission of the church due to the

¹⁷White, *Testimonies*, 9:206, 207.

¹⁸Ronald D. Graybill, *Mission to Black America: The True Story of James Edson White and the Riverboat Morning Star* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1971), 144.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 145. Edson White tried to implement the comprehensive plans for the South proposed earlier by his mother, Ellen White. Having read some of his mother’s appeals, Edson responded by constructing a 70-foot steamboat, the *Morning Star*, and sailing it down the Mississippi River. Arriving in Vicksburg, Mississippi, January 10, 1895, Edson made the *Morning Star* a floating headquarters (complete with chapel and print shop) for publishing, evangelistic, educational, and agricultural work among blacks Mississippi. However, the political and economic conditions during that time led to prejudices, bigotry, and discrimination. Hence, Ellen White advocated “temporary” separation to avoid riots and loss of lives that could jeopardize the mission of the church.

political and economical conditions during that time. Referring to black believers who were to have their own churches, she said, “Let them understand that this plan is to be followed until the Lord shows us a better way.”²⁰ White never retreated from her position that all human beings are equal in creation and redemption. What she advocated at that time did not negate her position on racial equality.

Recognizing the perils of ethnic segregation in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, White passionately appealed to thirty leaders of the church on March 21, 1891 in connection with the General Conference Session in Battle Creek, Michigan.²¹ This appeal signaled a comprehensive call both to repentance and specific action by the leaders of the church. Leaders and laity were standing face to face with the unavoidable challenge of applying the claims of Christianity to the racially polarized United States. In her presentation, White proclaimed: “there has been much perplexity as to how our laborers in the South shall deal with the ‘color line.’ It was a question to some on how far to concede to the prevailing prejudice against the ‘colored people.’”²² White was very concerned about the segregations that happened, not just in the geographic regions, but also in the church. She provided ample admonitions and advice to the church on this matter.

Ethnic Mission and Ellen G. White’s Admonitions

Ellen White stated that, “The Lord has given us light concerning all such matters.

²⁰White, *Testimonies*, 9:207.

²¹Herbert Douglass, *Dramatic Prophecies of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2007), 45.

²²White, *The Southern Work*, 9.

There are principles laid down in His Word that should guide us in dealing with these perplexing questions. The Lord Jesus came to our world to save men and women of all nationalities. He died just as much for the ‘colored people’ as for the white race.”²³

White acknowledged that God wants to save all people regardless of their cultural or racial background. She also stated that church leaders need to be more open-minded in accepting and treating “colored people.”²⁴

According to Leslie Pollard, White “identifies the principles in Scripture that make the creation of a new culture of service, mission, and mutuality between the various racial and ethnic groups.”²⁵ She believed that there should be no distinctions between different ethnicities, and that they should not discriminate against one another. Both the blacks and whites must come to Christ to be saved and to inherit eternal life. They could then mutually encourage and support one another to do service and carry out the mission of the church for the sake of humanity.

White recognized that some members disliked the black people. She observed that “men may have both hereditary and cultivated prejudices, but when the love of Jesus fills the heart, and they become one with Christ, they will have the same spirit that He had.” She continued, “If a colored brother sits by their side, they will not be offended or despise him. They are journeying to the same heaven, and will be seated at the same table to eat bread in the kingdom of God. If Jesus is abiding in our hearts, we cannot

²³White, *The Southern Work*, 10.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Leslie Pollard, *Embracing Diversity: How to Understand and Reach People of All Cultures* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 112.

despise the colored man who has the same Savior abiding in his heart.”²⁶ White was very concerned about prejudices against the black people in the church. She believed that when un-Christian prejudices were broken down, more earnest effort could be put forth to do missionary work among the black people.

White emphasized that no race had an advantage over another in deserving the love of God. She asks, “If a red man, a Chinaman, or an African gives his heart to God, in obedience and faith, Jesus loves him none the less for his color. He will call him his well-beloved brother.”²⁷ God does not discriminate against human beings based on their race or favor one group of people over another. He provided grace and mercy to all peoples who were created in his own image. He loves all people equally, eternally, and unrelentingly, and because he loves them all, we need to do likewise by loving and accepting everyone into the house of God. No one can claim an advantage in the body of Christ just because he or she belongs to a certain ethnic, racial, cultural, or socioeconomic background.

The Biblical Concept for Discipleship

The roots of biblical discipleship go deep into the fertile soil of God’s calling. That calling is expressed in the pattern of divine initiative and human response that constitutes the heart of the biblical concept of covenant manifested in the recurrent promise, “And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God. . . .” (Exod 6:7). Discipleship is not one aspect of

²⁶White, *The Southern Work*, 14.

²⁷Ibid., 13.

Christian living among many; it is the totality of the transformation experience, the overarching framework under which all else falls in the Christian journey. God calls his people to represent him on the earth, to be with him, and to be transformed in personal character to be like him. That calling is at the heart of biblical discipleship, both in the Old and New Testaments.

Therefore, discipleship is best understood as a journey, a direction, and an orientation of one's life toward becoming like Christ. This can only be accomplished by following Christ. In *Following the Master*, Michael J. Wilkins asserts that disciples are people who are becoming like Jesus as they walk with him in the real world.²⁸ To be a disciple in the broadest sense is to be a follower or learner of Jesus Christ. James Montgomery Boice, in discussing discipleship, says: "True discipleship means forsaking everything to follow Christ."²⁹ It means to be fully committed to follow and learn from Christ in a life of self-denial and obedience to his Word.

Discipleship is about relationships. It is a call for every follower of God. Personal relationships with God in devotion and worship and relationship with other believers in one's community for purposes of mutual care and accountability are important components of discipleship. Greg Ogden, an expert in discipleship, states that intentionally walking "alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip, and

²⁸Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 41.

²⁹James Montgomery Boice, *Christ's Call to Discipleship* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 13.

challenge one another in love to grow toward maturity in Christ is crucial for discipleship.”³⁰

Old Testament Discipleship

The ideal of discipleship in the Old Testament is the covenant relationship between Israel and God. God called Abraham and promised him that his offspring would receive the blessings of the covenant relationship (Gen 13:15). God was creating a national community that would be his people. That calling was reiterated and confirmed in the exodus from Egypt and in the wilderness (Exod 13:21-22). No other person or god was to take a place of preeminence and thus, usurp God.

The ideal form of discipleship for Israel was the nation in covenantal relationship with God. That ideal is richly expressed in the prophets as they look ahead to the time when Israel would have the ultimate realization of that relationship. Isaiah expresses the personal nature of this relationship in the prophecies of the new covenant (Isa 30:20-21, 31:31-34). When giving the Law to Israel in the wilderness, God stressed his covenant intent: “And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.” (Lev 26:12). The nation was called to a relationship and obedience in which God was with his people.

The relationship established between God and Israel was a divine-human relationship that anticipated the relationship to which Jesus would call his followers. To fulfill the covenantal relationship means simply that God must be God, giving him

³⁰Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 130.

preeminence in all things. The abstract covenantal relationship with God finds concrete expression in “following God” and “walking in his ways.” When the nation fulfilled its commitment to the covenant it was said to be following God (e.g., Deut 4:1-14, 1 Sam 12:14) and walking in his ways (Deut 10:12-13). When the nation violated the covenant, it was said to be following the gods of the heathen and walking in their ways (Deut 6:14, Judges 2:10-13, Isa 65:2).

God’s purpose in this covenant relationship was always for Israel and Judah to be a blessing to the nations, and to transmit the heritage to others. God’s people were to be a source of blessing to all peoples of the earth (Gen 12:1-3). The objective of the covenant relationship was to give everyone on the face of the earth the opportunity to seek the Lord, to worship him, and to have a personal relationship with him so that they might obtain the blessings of God Almighty (Zech 8:18-23).

New Testament Discipleship

The Old Testament theme of God with his people finds explicit fulfillment in the New Testament with Jesus. The promise of a coming Davidic Messiah is intertwined with the promise that God himself would be with his people. The significance of Matthew’s interpretation of the meaning of Jesus’ name, “Immanuel,” therefore, cannot be overstated: “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” (Matt 1:23). In Jesus, God has come to be with his people, to fulfill the deepest meaning of the covenant relationship of God with his people as Master, Lord, and Savior.

During Jesus’ earthly ministry, and during the days of the early church, the term used most frequently to designate one of Jesus’ followers was “disciple.” A disciple is

someone who is a learner or follower of a teacher or master. To be a disciple in the broadest sense is to be a follower or learner of Jesus Christ. In the narrower sense used by Christ in his ministry, it means to be fully committed to follow and learn from Him in a life of self-denial and obedience to His Word (Matt 10:38-39, 16:24). A primary goal of discipleship is becoming like Jesus (Luke 6:40). Discipleship involves both becoming a disciple and being a disciple. Discussing the importance of discipleship, James Samra states that “the focus is on the entrance into the process (evangelism), but most often the focus is on growing in the process (ministry); it includes both teaching and life transformation.”³¹ Therefore, discipleship is a following after the Lord, especially initiated at the call of Christ for salvation but continuing throughout the person’s life experience. It is the process of becoming like Christ.

C. Peter Wagner, a leader in the church growth movement, declares that “a person is not a disciple just because he has been born in a Christian country or in many cases, even if he is a church member. . . . The basic meaning of disciple in the New Testament is equivalent to a true, born-again Christian. . . . Making disciples is the right goal of evangelism and missions according to the Great Commission.”³² Jesus did not command His followers to merely share the gospel. He also commanded them to make disciples. Followers of Christ are to do far more than communicate the facts of salvation through Christ. They are to come alongside new believers and help them learn to live for Christ. Through his Great Commission, Jesus focuses attention on the importance of discipleship

³¹James Samra, “A Biblical View of Discipleship,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 160 (April-June 2003): 220.

³²C. Peter Wagner, *Stop the World, I Want to Get On* (Glendale, CA: Regal, 1974), 79.

until the time of his return, and declares the responsibility of disciples toward the world: they are to make disciples of all the nations (Matt 28:16-20).

Jesus has commanded his disciples to reproduce themselves in others. He has called them to make disciples. J. Dwight Pentecost asserts that “a true disciple is one who has a love for the person of Christ, confidence in the Word of Christ, and is completely committed to Christ in service and obedience.”³³ The Great Commission imperative, “make disciples” of all nations, is to make converts out of non-Christians. It stresses conversion as the beginning point of becoming a disciple. To “make disciples” is to proclaim the gospel message among those who have not yet received forgiveness of sins. The command finds verbal fulfillment in the activities of the early church as they went from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, to the ends of the earth proclaiming the message of Jesus, making disciples, and teaching them to observe what Jesus had commanded them to do. Jesus concludes the commission with the crucial element of discipleship, the presence of the Master: “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt 28:20). Those obeying the command and those responding are comforted by the awareness that the risen Jesus will continue to fashion all his disciples.

Implications for the LACSDA Church

Unlike the Israelites of the Old Testament who inherit Canaan, the Chinese immigrants did not have a divine prerogative to journey to the United States. They came mainly for material gains and survival purposes. Many arrived as indentured servants during the California Gold Rush and did not plan to stay permanently. The bulk of

³³J. Dwight Pentecost, *Design for Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1971), 20.

Chinese immigrants came later as a cheap source of labor to work on the railroads, in mines and in other industries.³⁴ The Israelites, being the chosen people of God, were given the “promised land” after spending forty years wandering homelessly in the wilderness (Exod 3:17; Num 14:33). They were often reminded of their own origins as strangers in foreign lands (Lev 19:34; Exod 22:21; 23:9). Despite their disobedience and ungratefulness, God continued to care for and bless them. In the same way, the Chinese immigrants were considered “strangers” when they first came to the United States, and in the same way, God cared for them and blessed them with the gospel message so that they would know Him through the many Christians who had immigrated from European countries to the New World.

Ethnic Mission for Chinese Immigrants

Although the early Chinese immigrants were not “missionaries” with a mission to share the divine message in foreign lands, they could be recipients of this message. Like the Israelites, the Chinese needed an experiential knowledge of God. When the Israelites arrived at the border of the “promised land,” they were told by Moses to remember their pilgrim beginnings (Lev 19:34; Deut 5:15; 10:19). In the same manner, the Chinese immigrants who have become Christians and their descendants—including ABC members—should remember that it was by God’s grace and provision that they were able to come to a new land where they could learn about Him and become His children. As settlers in a new land, they were blessed, and now they have the opportunity and

³⁴Library of Congress, “Chinese Immigrants to the United States,” <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/features/timeline/riseind/chinimms/chinimms.html> (accessed October 5, 2002).

responsibility to be God's agents in blessings others regardless of their socioeconomic, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds. The LACSDA church is one of the agencies through which the Chinese Adventists in the USA can propagate the gospel message and be a blessing to others.

God has influenced many in the LACSDA church, including the ABC members, to become "salt" and "light" (Matt 5:13-16) to those within their circle of influence. The LACSDA church members should not keep the Good News of salvation to themselves. The members, including the ABC members, should have a strong faith in the Lord and share the message of God's saving grace with all people regardless of their ethnic or cultural backgrounds.

Ethnic Mission of ABC Members

The mission of the LACSDA church is to see many people drawn to the kingdom of God. The mandate, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt 28:19), must constantly drive the efforts of the LACSDA church, and the ABC members should ideally have a passion to support this mission. The LACSDA church may learn many lessons about ethnic mission from Jesus and the apostles, the believers of the early church, and Ellen White. The church leadership needs to devise appropriate strategies to reach out to "unchurched" individuals and at the same time provide proper discipling, nurturing and caring in order to retain members in the church. In addition, the church must continue to disciple and train existing ABC members to be well equipped and prepared to serve the Lord.

Deuteronomy 6 directs believers to "teach" and "observe," "so that you, your

children and their children after them may fear the Lord . . . as long as you live by keeping his decrees and commands” (Deut 6:1,2 NIV). This command is for all believers, including those who have “third culture” children, that is, children who are not fully a part of the host culture, or fully a part of their parents’ culture, but who have a “third” distinctive culture of their own. The term “third culture” was coined by anthropologist and sociologist Ruth Hill Useem in the 1960s.³⁵ Useem described the unique characteristics of American children who spent a significant portion of their childhood years outside of the U.S. and who came to be called “third culture kids.” This “third culture” demands from adults, leaders, and teachers a willingness to learn and to adapt in order to fulfill the mandate to teach their children and their children’s children. This is a challenge for the LACSDA church.

The LACSDA church may not be able to be “all things to all men” (1 Cor 9:22), but it can certainly be a bridge to disseminate the message of the gospel by utilizing its cultural and linguistic advantages for ministry among minority groups, particularly ABC individuals. One of the positive resources that LACSDA church members possess is that many of them are bicultural and bilingual or trilingual. This advantage may be employed appropriately for the sake of drawing people into the kingdom of God. The church should make use of its own people and the tools that it already possesses. Language schools, cultural centers, daycare programs and other means of helping individuals, particularly ABC members, should be given foremost attention by the LACSDA congregation.

³⁵Ruth Hill Useem, *A Third Culture Kid Biography: Studies in Third Cultures*, 2nd ed. (N.p., 1999), 1.

Ethnic Mission and Discipleship of ABC Members

Jesus called twelve men to come and follow him. He promised that he would make them “fishers of men.” The call of the LACSDA church and the ABC members was to live out a mission focused on discipling ABC individuals who had or had not come to a knowledge of Jesus. Discipleship involves being unreservedly committed to Christ. It is lived out in the context of a relationship with God and one’s fellows. Understanding this is key to growing as a disciple and discipling others. The process of discipleship in a multicultural setting is to value and appreciate the differences people bring to the process and celebrate God-ordained uniqueness in ethnic mission. Discipleship involves following a great leader—Jesus Christ. It means ABC members would need to have a personal relationship with him and care for both believers and non-believers by accepting his grace, witnessing to his divinity, emulating his life, inculcating his values, and passing on his teachings.

Summary

Seventh-day Adventists distinguish themselves with the threefold message of Revelation 14:6-12. They have definitive plans to finish their work among “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (Revelation 14:6). In order to accomplish the biblical mandate, they must develop discipling programs and evangelistic strategies that are appropriate for every background, culture, and language. The LACSDA church is part of the worldwide church and it has a unique role to play in proclaiming the message of Revelation 14:6-12, particularly to the Chinese population of the United States. One of the LACSDA church’s primary focuses is to share the gospel with Chinese-speaking

people, but it also has another important role to play—to disciple and retain the children of the Chinese-speaking members.

The Old Testament provides a solid theological basis for ethnic missions. God’s plans for the human race encompass all nations and peoples. He chose Abraham’s descendants to bless all the people in the world. Even though Israel as a nation frequently failed to develop intentional missions to other nations, God continued to use individuals and families as witnesses to those who were not “children of Abraham.” Through Moses, God was able to show His compassion and grace to all who were willing to come to Him, including the Gentiles. Moses provided instructions concerning strangers and pilgrims who lived among the Israelites.

The New Testament offers examples of how ethnic mission plays a vital role in developing a mindset conducive to spreading the gospel. While on earth, Jesus Himself amply demonstrated how to minister to minorities. In the great commission, Jesus instructed His followers to carry the message of salvation to every part of the earth. The Book of Acts shows how the early believers obeyed God in this respect. God used apostles and evangelists, teachers and prophets, individuals and families, to proclaim the Good News. The local church was the center of discipling and evangelistic activities. In his epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul provided instructions to the newly formed churches in regard to unity in diversity (1 Cor 12:12, 13, 27). He traveled widely, providing encouragement and guidance on how to minister, disciple, and equip both Jews and Gentiles. The work of the Holy Spirit during Paul’s time also made it possible for the church to maintain its unity amid enormous diversity.

Ellen White provided insight regarding ethnic mission in the modern era. She

emphasized that racial harmony is a matter of both the head and the heart, intellect and human understanding. She contradicted popular scientific notions by appealing to Scripture as the authoritative source for handling interracial relationships. The principles that she applied to the Seventh-day Adventist Church of the nineteenth century are the same principles that must be applied in the present. All who are willing are invited by Christ to help complete the mission, and the mission is to take the gospel to all people. Racial differences do not signify inferiority or superiority, but are opportunities for witness, service, and love.

While by no means excluding opportunities to proclaim the gospel to all nations, the LACSDA church members can make use of their awareness and abilities as a minority people in the USA to implement the guidelines given by God through mission to reach out to the “strangers in the land.” Being a church that represents an ethnic minority in the USA, the LACSDA congregation has the privilege of fulfilling a special mission within the context of the broader biblical mandate.

In order for the LACSDA church to effectively disciple and retain its ABC members as mandated by the great commission, a break from traditional strategies and status quo behaviors is crucial. The ABC members could be a select agency in God’s plan for reaching the “third culture” children. The ABCs themselves form a unique third culture group as they seek to make sense of the new host culture and the culture of their parents. This gives them the experience, ability, and opportunity to minister meaningfully to other third culture individuals.

The LACSDA church has a solid theological basis from the biblical teachings of the Old and New Testaments, and from White’s writings. There is a task it is duty-bound

to fulfill, and it must seek by all means to fulfill that task. The ultimate purpose of this project was first to enhance the LACSDA church's ability to disciple and retain its members and then to train its own leaders, particularly from among the ABC group, to develop a new youth outreach ministry in order to fulfill the mission set for it by Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER III

THE LACSDA CHURCH AND THE ABC MEMBERS

Early Chinese Immigrants

The first significant influx of Chinese immigrants to America began in the 19th century. Unlike many European immigrants who came in groups, the Chinese often found themselves alone and ostracized by exclusion laws. They were considered heathen and were subjected to widespread persecution and violence. Contemporary author Robert Wilson recorded that many nineteenth-century Americans considered the Chinese to be unacceptable, hence, the legal prohibition of Chinese immigration to America in 1882.¹ Consequently, the influx of Chinese immigrants was vehemently curtailed and very few of them were allowed to come to America.

Before the legal prohibition of Chinese immigration in the late-nineteenth century, many Chinese immigrants came to “Gold Mountain (金山),” as they called America in the Chinese language, to join the “Gold Rush” that began in 1849 at Sutter’s Mill, Sacramento, California. However, as the supply of gold diminished, the Chinese continued coming to work at other jobs. They comprised a significant part of the labor force that laid the economic foundation of the American West. Chinese immigrants lived throughout the region, laboring in agriculture, mining, industry and in various other

¹Robert Wilson, “The Chinese Immigrants,” *Harper's Weekly Magazine*, February 1882, 35.

capacities in low paying jobs. They also contributed significantly to the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad, which united the continent geographically.²

In spite of their undisputed role in the development of the American West, the Chinese immigrants suffered exploitation and discrimination. They were generally paid less than other workers and often forced to work under abysmal conditions. White workers viewed them as economic competitors and racial inferiors. This negativity stimulated the passage of discriminatory laws and the commission of widespread acts of violence against the Chinese immigrants. According to John Higham, “No variety of anti-European sentiment has ever approached the violent extremes to which anti-Chinese agitation went in the 1870s and 1880s.”³

Under the racist slogan, “Chinese must go!” a movement emerged that worked assiduously to deprive Chinese immigrants of any means of making a living in the general economy. The movement’s goal was to drive the Chinese out of the country. This hostility hindered efforts by Chinese immigrants to become American citizens. It forced them to flee to “Chinatowns” on the coasts, where they found safety and support. In these ghettos, among other Chinese immigrants, they managed to eke out meager existences. However, they were isolated from the rest of the population, making it difficult if not impossible to integrate into mainstream society. They were considered outcast and unacceptable and, to add insult to injury, they were criticized for their alleged

²Wilson, “The Chinese Immigrants,” 37.

³John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New York: Atheneum, 1963), 25.

inability to assimilate.⁴ They seldom mingled with other immigrants, and often they did not speak English. They tended to live in isolated settlements, and were generally considered inferior to other immigrant groups. Popular sentiment suggested that they should leave the USA and return to China.

A New Wave of Chinese Immigration

After China became an ally of the United States during World War II, the exclusion laws became an embarrassment to the US Government and were repealed by the Magnuson Act in 1943. This bill made it possible for Chinese immigrants to become naturalized citizens and established an annual quota of 105 new immigrants. While the bill ended the injustice of the exclusion act(s), the damage to the Chinese community was already significant.⁵ Marginalized and despised by society, many Chinese were low-skilled and low-paid workers. Religious priorities had gradually been overshadowed by the need to make a living and Christianity had made only minor inroads into the Chinese community.

Before the Magnuson Act in 1943, the Chinese population in America had declined significantly. The worst effect of this decline was the undermining of the family unit, which is generally felt to be of utmost importance in Chinese society. Chinese men were forced to live lonely bachelor lives in the almost all-male society of the “Chinatown.” Meanwhile, most wives and children remained in China, supported by

⁴Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 30.

⁵Library of Congress, “Chinese: An Introduction,” <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/features/immig/chinese.html> (accessed May 3, 2003).

remittances from the United States, but rarely seeing their husbands and fathers.⁶ Such separations made it difficult to maintain strong family ties. Some families were in disarray and social problems had begun to take root. Although few Chinese children had yet been born in America, the problems of their disrupted lifestyles were negatively affecting their performances in school and professional life. Concurrently, little attention and effort were given to evangelize these immigrants and their ABC children. Their numbers were not significant enough to receive the attention of the culturally and racially American churches. Thus, almost no Chinese churches were available to meet the spiritual quests and social needs of the Chinese immigrant community and their ABC offspring. Evangelism was limited, and support for those who did accept Christianity was minimal.

As the annual quota of 105 immigrants indicates, America's immigration policy was particularly restrictive and discriminatory against Chinese and other Asians. Equality in immigration only came with the enactment of the Immigration Act of 1965 which repealed the quota system based on national origins that had been established by the Magnuson Act of 1943.⁷ As a result of this change, a dramatic increase in the number of Chinese immigrants led to a boom in the ABC population.

Development of Chinese Christianity in America

The history of Chinese Christianity in America is almost as long as that of

⁶Library of Congress, "Chinese: An Introduction."

⁷Library of Congress, "American Memory," <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/ammemhome.html> (accessed May 3, 2003).

Chinese immigration.⁸ However, unlike European immigrants who transplanted their Protestantism and Catholicism to the New World, earlier Chinese Christian churches were missions started by American denominations.⁹ Since the 1970s, new Chinese immigrants have established hundreds of churches by themselves. Most Chinese churches were still missions aided and supervised by American denominations. However, despite language, cultural, social and economic hardships, some of these Chinese mission churches gained financial and leadership independence within the denominations, and some Chinese Christians formed a few nondenominational independent churches.¹⁰ These churches would normally develop into organizational independent churches that provided community services and cultural centers to attract more converts.

According to S. J. Lee, the 1970s reflect the beginning of a new era for Chinese-American churches in the United States. With more Chinese immigrants and the establishment of more Chinese churches, Chinese Christians became more articulate, seeking adequate expression for a spiritual experience in a language which was inherited from Buddhist and Confucian literature.¹¹ This meant that Chinese Christianity was not necessarily merely based exclusively on western cultural beliefs. Chinese literature could

⁸Fenggang Yang and Helen Rose Ebaugh, "Religion and Ethnicity among New Immigrants: The Impact of Majority/Minority Status in Home and Host Countries," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41 (2001): 367-78.

⁹Shing Lau Yuet, *Chinese Churches in America* (San Francisco: The Convention of Chinese Christian Churches, 1933); 45.

¹⁰Ibid., 46.

¹¹Stacey J. Lee, *Unraveling the "Model Minority" Stereotype: Listening to Asian American Youth* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2004), 35.

also contribute to Christian literature, adding variety to the dominant western cultural perspectives of mainstream Christianity.

In many Chinese churches, a majority of immigrant members are adult converts from non-Christian family backgrounds. Becoming Christian and American does not mean that these Chinese immigrants are giving up their Chinese identity. While maintaining the universalism of the Christian faith or the inclusiveness of all peoples within the faith, these Chinese Christians also claim their Chinese cultural heritage.¹² They have made efforts to differentiate Chinese nonreligious traditions from religious ones and selectively preserve nonreligious traditional values, rituals, and symbols. For example, they celebrate the Chinese New Year, but without making offerings to the ancestors. Many accept and praise some Confucian values and philosophical Taoist notions, but reject religious Taoism and Buddhism. Meanwhile, the church helps ABC children to maintain a Chinese cultural identity while facilitating their selective assimilation into American society.¹³

The Chinese language school is a common feature of contemporary Chinese Christian churches in the United States. In many metropolitan areas, it was often a Chinese Christian church that started the first Chinese language school.¹⁴ The Chinese church develops a generally favorable atmosphere for ABC children to learn the Chinese

¹²Karl Fung, *The Dragon Pilgrims: A Historical Study of a Chinese-American Church* (San Diego, CA: Providence Price, 1989), 52.

¹³Ibid., 53.

¹⁴Fenggang Yang, "Why Conservative Ethnic Churches Are Growing: The Case of Chinese Protestant Churches in the United States," *Center for Immigration Research Working Paper Series* (Houston, TX: University of Houston, 1997).

language and traditional values that are perceived as compatible with their evangelical Christian beliefs. These beliefs include respecting parents, older people, and those in authority; preserving harmonious relationships; and being humble about oneself in communicating with others. The Chinese language school is one of the avenues to share Christianity with the Chinese community.

The Rise of ABC Children

The Chinese have immigrated to the United States in significant numbers, taking particular advantage of the immigration policy's emphasis on family reunification. With ample education and job opportunities, the flow of Chinese immigrants has not ceased and they have become the biggest Asian immigrant group in the United States.¹⁵ With the influx of Chinese immigrants in the 1980s and 1990s, many ABC children were born.

These children would receive an education in a country where the Judeo-Christian influence was strong. They would associate with their peers who were also American-born. It was natural for these children to adopt the culture of the country in which they lived and their mindset and lifestyle tended to diverge from that of their immigrant parents. They were unlikely to perpetuate their parents' belief systems or cultural practices. In fact, conflicts and clashes frequently occurred due to differences between the second-generation Chinese and their immigrant parents.¹⁶ At the same time, ABC children remained under the influence of their Chinese heritage and often developed a "third culture" identity distinct from both their parents and their American peers. "Third

¹⁵Library of Congress, "American Memory."

¹⁶Valerie O. Pang and Lily O. Cheng, *Struggling to Be Heard: The Unmet Needs of Asian Pacific American Children* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998).

culture” is used to describe the fusion of multiple cultures. The ABC children were neither fully a part of the host culture nor fully a part of their parents’ culture. They also preferred to speak the English language.

ABC children gradually became the target of Christian missionary endeavor. Evangelical church groups as well as the Seventh-day Adventist Church took a particular interest in evangelizing the Chinese. These churches used a variety of approaches to reach out to Chinese immigrants and their ABC children, including church schools, daycare centers, clinics, and community programs. As a result, a significant number of ABC young people were converted and joined the church. In the case of the LACSDA church, the effort to evangelize ABC children paid off and some of these individuals are still members of the church.

When the Chinese immigrants settled down and established families, their needs and expectations were different from those of their ABC children who, because they were locally born and raised, no longer had much affection for their parents’ home country. Having grown up with a culture and language that were different from that of their parents, they were also unlikely to respond to ministry in the way their parents had: one kind of ministry did not fit the needs of the various segments in the congregations.

In addition, due to the differences in language and culture, the Chinese-speaking members might not be the best individuals to minister to their ABC children who spoke mostly English. The language divide has been a key issue faced by the LACSDA church over the years. The church has not been able to disciple and retain its ABC members effectively without a special ministry specifically geared to them and specifically

designed to recognize the cultural divide between these ABC children and their immigrant parents.

ABC Members in Chinese Churches

When the number of Chinese Christians increased as a result of immigration and conversion, they built churches as houses of worship to perpetuate their Christian faith within the Chinese community. Since the enactment of the Immigration Act of 1965, numerous Chinese churches of various denominations have been established and many buildings erected to accommodate the Chinese believers. Chinese churches normally have their own unique characteristics, such as oriental architecture and decorations. These churches also served as a bridge to connect the new Chinese converts with the Chinese American community. Some of the churches catered not only to the spiritual needs but also to the physical, academic, emotional, and social needs of the first generation Chinese immigrant church members and their children. The ethnic Chinese church became one of the main driving forces to perpetuate faith in Jesus Christ to the Chinese-speaking immigrants and their ABC children.

The first generation immigrant church members normally used either Mandarin, Cantonese, or both as the language of communication in the church services and ministries. Mandarin is the official language in China and the lingua franca of many overseas Chinese. Cantonese is also widely spoken in many metropolitan cities. Members would often integrate their own cultures into the church programs and celebrations. Although this manner of worship suited the Chinese immigrants, it was unappealing to their ABC children.

The Struggles of ABC Members

The second generation or “American-born Chinese” mindset and lifestyle were different from those of their parents. They no longer had strong cultural or linguistic attachments to China. They were educated in the English language and their peers spoke English. Their primary language was no longer Chinese. Their cultural understanding, lifestyle practice, and spoken language were normally at variance with that of their parents. They essentially lived in a “different world” from that of their parents and were mockingly labeled “bananas” by the first generation Chinese immigrants, because of the fact that they were “white” inside and “yellow” outside. ABC children often faced numerous challenges with their immigrant parents.

The following account records the struggles of Frank Chin, an American-educated ABC individual who relates his own experiences to those of his father, who was a Chinese immigrant.

I identify with my father. My father tried, in his own way, he tried as hard as I am to make it in his terms in this country. Yeah, I think he failed and I think he thinks he has failed. But in his eyes I am irresponsible. I am fooling around and I am an insult to him.

We live in different worlds. And when my world comes in contact with his we just destroy each other. I look at the way he tunes the television set, it's all wrong. The people look like they are dead. They come on looking dingy, gray, the color of Roquefort cheese. But that is the way he sees the world. And he lives in Chinatown, so it is in Chinatown, his world. And he can't see that it is partly my world, too. So you know, I will never have his respect. And I could win a Nobel prize, you know, and prove that my writing has been worthwhile and he will say, “you dress like a bum.” And then I see that I have broken the guy's heart. So I feel bad about that.¹⁷

This internal struggle of being an ABC touches the identity, self-image, and self-

¹⁷Victor Gordon and Brett DeBary Nee, *Longtime California: A Documentary Study of an American Chinatown* (New York: Pantheon Books, Random House, 1973), 388.

worth of an individual, and is inseparably tied to culture, language and behavior. Church leaders who are ministering to ABC members must come to terms with this reality. The mindset and needs of the Chinese immigrants are in many respects different from those of their ABC children. Frank Chin finds himself torn between loyalty to his immigrant family origin and the attractions of the new adopted culture and language. He is tossed between two different cultures and languages. Proper measures and planning need to be undertaken to deal with these issues in order to prevent ABC members of the LACSDA church from experiencing similar struggles to Frank Chin.

The Los Altos Seventh-day Adventist Church (LASDA Church)

The Los Altos Seventh-day Adventist church (LASDA church) was located in the south bay of the Greater San Francisco Bay Area in the state of California at the heart of the Silicon Valley. The church campus is about forty-five minutes drive from the city of San Francisco. Construction of the buildings began in 1968, but the master plan of the campus never materialized due to lack of funding. The campus of over nine acres is wooded and hilly, and has a creek that runs across it. It is a beautiful and quiet area of the city of Los Altos. Although the campus is fairly large, there is limited space for construction and there are only three buildings.

The LASDA church was a constituent congregation of the Central California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. When many computer-related industries flourished in the 1980s, the demand for more industrial sites and housing spaces became apparent in Silicon Valley. As a result, home prices skyrocketed in the surrounding cities, including Los Altos. Due to the high cost of living, the two main Seventh-day Adventist institutions in Silicon Valley, the Central California Conference of Seventh-

day Adventists and the Pacific Press Publishing House were relocated to other areas. When the institutions moved, so did their employees and their families. As a result, the church membership of several area churches shrank, and some were on the verge of closing.

One such church was the Los Altos congregation, where attendance had dropped to about two dozen members. The church could no longer sustain a full time pastor. At this time, some Chinese Seventh-day Adventists liaised with the church pastor and several church elders who welcomed the Chinese members into the congregation and agreed to accommodate them in using the church facilities.

The History of the LACSDA Church

In 1986, the Los Altos Seventh-day Adventist church was officially renamed and established as the LACSDA church. The name now reflected the ethnic membership of the congregation. Some of the original members of the LACSDA church were splinter groups of the San Francisco Chinese Seventh-day Adventist church (SFCSDA church). Having had disagreements with some SFCSDA church members, they decided to move out of the SFCSDA church. Several members wanted a new church because they lived too far away to commute to the SFCSDA church. These individuals regularly met and planned to start a new Chinese Seventh-day Adventist church on the southern side of the San Francisco Bay Area. Most of these initial members were first generation Chinese immigrants who also brought their ABC children to church. With the founding of the LACSDA church, they hoped to be able to provide spiritual nourishment for themselves and their children.

The historical roots of the LACSDA church can be traced back to 1984, two years

before it took over the Los Altos Seventh-day Adventist church. About a dozen Chinese Seventh-day Adventists started a prayer and Bible study group at the Sunnyvale Seventh-day Adventist church, a sister church about three miles from the Los Altos Seventh-day Adventist church. These Chinese Seventh-day Adventists were longtime members of the worldwide church and most of them originally came from mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, or Southeast Asia. They regularly met at a small chapel on Sabbath afternoons for worship service and potluck. They also had a plan and vision to expand their group by reaching out to the Chinese community on the southern side of the Greater San Francisco Bay Area.

During the early years the group had limited usage of the facilities of the Sunnyvale church, and was not able to plan a full range of church-based activities to meet the needs of the Chinese members or the Chinese community. The leaders were hampered by the challenge of sharing facilities from organizing outreach and evangelistic programs to the expanding Chinese community. They felt a growing need to establish a separate Chinese Seventh-day Adventist congregation. This was particularly urgent as the number of Chinese believers continued to increase rapidly.

The Chinese leadership decided to look for a separate facility to conduct church programs. During their search, they learned that the Los Altos Seventh-day Adventist church was in the verge of closing due to membership decline. They immediately met with the Los Altos Seventh-day Adventist church leadership and were given permission to adopt the church as their home church. This move created an opportunity for the Chinese Seventh-day Adventists to use the church as their base to share the Gospel with the Chinese community.

The Ministry of the LACSDA Church

With the addition of the Chinese Seventh-day Adventists to the Los Altos congregation, the attendance increased, and the church was able to support its operating expenses and maintain a full time pastor. Shortly after the arrival of the Chinese Adventists to the LASDA church, their numbers exceeded those of the original LASDA church members. The number of Chinese Seventh-day Adventists continued to grow while the number of original Caucasian members gradually declined due to old age and membership transfers. In 1987, a Chinese pastor joined the ministry of the LACSDA church, working alongside the Caucasian pastor until the latter was transferred to another church. No specific ministry was provided for the ABC members although their numbers continued to rise.

The ABC members of the LACSDA church were faced with the challenges of assimilation into American society. English had become their main language, and although some were required to speak Chinese with their parents at home, they were generally not fluent in the language. There was no other Chinese Seventh-day Adventist church in the area that provided a special ministry for their ABC members, and as a result, many ABC members felt that they were excluded from full participation in the congregation and its ministry. They perceived that they were not valued and they did not have a voice in their own church.¹⁸

Commenting on the future of ABC Christians in North America, Felix Liu observes: “Most have forgotten their Chinese heritage and are now searching for a new

¹⁸Los Altos Chinese Seventh-day Adventist church, Minutes of LACSDA Church Business Meeting, August 14, 1999.

identity in the Western world.”¹⁹ He argues that it is critical for Chinese churches to create an approach to ministry that is geared to the ABC population. With this in mind, the LACSDA church needed to consider the ABC members a “mission field.” Proper measures in terms of language and cultural factors required consideration in order to disciple and retain the ABC members.

Neglecting this sentiment could lead the ABC members to withdraw gradually from the LACSDA church to attend other English language Adventist churches or even to leave the denomination altogether. The ABC members were overlooked for many years and few measures were taken to remedy this inclination on their part to drift away. The aim of this study was to identify the bases for the decrease in ABC membership, to recommend measures to reverse the trend, and to analyze the effects of the measures once they were implemented at the LACSDA church.

Neglect of Ministry to ABC Members

In order to accommodate both the Chinese-speaking members and ABC members, the church service was conducted in both English and Chinese. An interpreter standing on the platform beside the speaker translated the sermon. The church service would go well when the interpreter was fluent in both languages and the congregation would benefit from the message of the sermon. However, from time to time, due to the lack of ability to grasp the language, an “interpreter” would become an “interrupter,” and the

¹⁹Felix Liu, “A Comparative Study of Selected Growing Chinese Churches in Los Angeles County” (D.Miss. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1981), 45.

congregation would experience discomfort listening to a “disengaged” and “choppy” sermon.

More and more Chinese people joined the LACSDA church between 1986 and 1990, when attendance at services fluctuated between 80 and 100. However, there was still no focused attention or specific ministry geared specifically to the needs of the ABC members. In spite of this lack, the ABC individuals who attended services were often baptized into membership of the LACSDA congregation after a short series of Bible studies. With no programs or services directed specifically at them, they worshipped in the mainstream services geared towards their parents. The ABC membership was growing, but these members were also on the sidelines, neglected, and out of place. Those who grew restless with the bilingual services were told to participate in the Chinese services since they were of Chinese descent. No acknowledgement was made of their unique cross-cultural background. Some of them left the church when they were in high school or college and little effort was made to bring them back.

In 1990, the first Chinese pastor left for another position and he was replaced by a new Chinese pastor who was employed and funded by the local church, but was again replaced after about a year. In 1992, a newly appointed pastor and his father, a retired pastor, were invited to minister to the LACSDA congregation. The father-son team worked effectively to expand the church. Nevertheless, no special ministry was provided to cater to the felt-needs of the ABC members. They were left to worship with the Chinese-speaking congregation. Early in 1996, the third Chinese pastor left to take a pastoral position in another city.

Personal Encounter with ABC Members

This writer became the pastor of the LACSDA church toward the end of 1996. Since this writer is bilingual, he thought that he could readily minister to both the Chinese and the ABC members. However, after about six months, he noticed that ABC members were increasingly reluctant to participate in the services. Some skipped church services and others stopped attending altogether. Despite frequent pastoral visits and encouragement to continue attending church, the attendance of ABC members continued to drop. The continuation of a traditional ministry directed at the ABC members yielded no positive results suggesting that a new type of ministry had to be prayerfully crafted and implemented if ABC members were to be retained.

Attending Chinese churches of various denominations revealed that the traditional Chinese way of ministering was ineffectual among ABC members. One of the key factors was that ABC members did not enjoy bilingual or translated services. Many churches had adopted monolingual church services, offering English, Chinese, and Cantonese services at different times or in separate areas of the same church. Most of the ABC members wanted sermons and services in English without the continual interruption of translation.

ABC members were willing to serve the Lord and they deserved a community of worshippers who shared a similar cultural background and with whom they could participate and communicate more meaningfully during church services. Aside from cultural barriers, language differences also posed a problem to ABC members. They preferred their own ways of worship, using their preferred English language to listen to and praise God. These observations led me to brainstorm further regarding the cultural

and linguistic needs of ABC members.

ABC Members' Challenges with Culture and Language

The Bible, in 1 Cor 12, presents an analogy of the church as a living body in which there are many parts. Each church member has been given gifts to be used for the body as a whole. Jesus Christ is the head and every member functions by using his or her spiritual gifts in coordination with the other parts of the body. The LACSDA church is part of the "body of Christ" and it has important functions to play and numerous gifts to contribute to God's cause, including ministry to its ABC members. It is supposed to disciple and retain the ABC members facing the challenges of their cross-cultural and multilingual backgrounds.

Culture and language are important determinants of whether ABC members continue their association with the LACSDA church. During a brainstorm session with the ABC members of the LACSDA church, a period set aside in a church business meeting on August 14, 1999, this writer was able to listen first hand to a message on the struggle and dilemma of the ABC members.²⁰ They were forthright in voicing their discontentment with the church. They informed the participants in the business meeting that they sometimes encountered "life stresses such as isolation, lack of confidence, peer pressure, loneliness, and uncertainty about their spiritual development."²¹ Surrounded by Chinese-speaking church members with Chinese traditions and practices, ABC members experienced little support from the church which resulted in feelings of alienation and

²⁰Los Altos Chinese Seventh-day Adventist church, Minutes of LACSDA Church Business Meeting, August 14, 1999.

²¹Ibid.

little sense of belonging. ABC members did not feel comfortable to freely express themselves and, as a result, they disliked attending the LACSDA church. Sandwiched between the culture and language of their parents and that of their home country, some ABC members believed that attending the LACSDA church was but a waste of time.

ABC members often felt powerless to exercise their individuality because of the language barriers and even more because it was not accepted for young adults to express individuality too overtly in the traditional Chinese family or church. They were often lonely outsiders who remained on the margins of two cultures. They did not identify with either culture and were susceptible to suggestions and self-doubts of having “sold out” and becoming “bananas; yellow on the outside, white on the inside.” They felt despised, forsaken, and misunderstood in many ways by their own people due to differences in culture and language.²²

Culture and language are two main components of any community or group of people. In the Christian context, the church cannot grow unless the message of God is communicated in a clear and convincing manner in the language and culture of the community. According to Eugene Nida, the ability to communicate and worship comes best through the language of the heart and culture of the person.²³ It is essential to know how people feel about their culture and language when they worship in church. They should have the freedom of worshiping in the language and culture of their choice.

²²Los Altos Chinese Seventh-day Adventist church, Minutes of LACSDA Church Business Meeting, August 14, 1999.

²³Eugene A. Nida, *Message and Missions: The Communication of the Christian Faith* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1992), 63.

The Bicultural Issue

Humankind has always taken great pride in its family, tribe, ethnicity, or race. Differences in tradition, language, skin color, body structure, and geographic origin often identify groups of people. This cultural affinity is an important component for the ABC members. They experience biculturalism as they are “sandwiched” between the “old” culture of their parents and the “new” culture in the United States. The “new culture” contrasts starkly with the traditional culture, that of the individuals who arrived as new immigrants in the USA who have found their church home with the LACSDA congregation. A bicultural situation is formed that generally contains a conservative, older Chinese-speaking and more culturally Chinese group; and a more progressive, younger English-speaking and more culturally American group. Tension exists when the distinctly Chinese way of doing things clashes with the American way. For example, American culture values openness and equality, so ABC members tend to approach conflict in a direct and confrontational manner and expect to be treated as equals. However, this manner can be deeply offensive to the Overseas-born Chinese (OBC) members, who are more familiar with a paternalistic hierarchy and strongly value the notion of saving face. Conflict created by differences such as these frequently results in high levels of frustration.

The ABC members experienced particular frustration because of lack of power and voice to make changes. The older, more culturally Chinese group usually controlled the leadership and sets the rules for language, finances, activities, music, and almost all other aspects of the church’s programming and worship. These “traditional” leaders set the goals of the church and determined who will be the focus of its ministry. Given the

church's limited resources, the OBC members desired to provide a safe haven for new immigrants, preserve Chinese culture, and govern the church as a whole, and these priorities have often taken precedence over the wishes of the second generation for an autonomous ABC ministry. Not a few ABC members have felt that the LACSDA church left much to be desired because ABC ministry has either not been a priority, or because the OBC members simply could not run it well but would not let the younger ABC members run it themselves.

Feeling unable to get their needs met, ABC members have frequently responded by leaving the LACSDA church. In 1996, Samuel Ling, then director of the Institute for Chinese Studies at Wheaton College, Illinois, estimated that only about 4 percent of ABCs—who constitute 40 percent of the U.S. Chinese population—were integrated into the Chinese church.²⁴ Thus, retaining and effectively ministering to ABC members within the LACSDA church may be the best means of reaching ABC individuals in the community. If the LACSDA church is to reach the ABC members, it will have to effectively minister to and incorporate them, and the church leadership plays a very important role in ensuring this.

ABC members are in a unique position to address their own needs, to make the LACSDA church a relevant place for spiritual growth, and to help bridge the gap between the two cultures. The LACSDA church can continue to be a Chinese church but at the same time, the bicultural ABC members need not be neglected. The church is in a position to provide a special ministry to the ABC members who have not fully adopted

²⁴Helen Lee, "Silent Exodus: Can the East Asian Church in America Reverse the Flight of Its Next Generation?" *Christianity Today*, August 1996, 50.

their parents' culture. As free human beings who happened to be born to immigrant parents in the United States, they have the right to perpetuate their own unique culture and to worship the Lord in the manner that best fits them.

The Bilingual Issue

Many of the Chinese members at the LACSDA church were first generation immigrants who came to the United States, bringing their language and traditions with them. Their American-born children, however, often caught between their parents' language and English, did not necessarily fit comfortably into the church of their parents where Chinese was most often used. The LACSDA church needed therefore to consider the ABC members a "targeted mission field," one that required an organized effort to disciple and retain ABCs in the church.

However, some members of the LACSDA church refused to recognize the problem the ABC members were facing and resisted making changes. Adamant to protect the Chinese language and failing to take into consideration the felt-needs and concerns of the ABC members, the LACSDA church administration failed to meet the needs of the ABC sector of the church. A significant number of ABC members protested through a silent exodus, some never returning to church again. This was one of the preventable pitfalls into which the LACSDA church fell and a problem that the congregation failed to address in a timely manner. As a result, the church was not able to disciple or retain many of its ABC members.

In a 1996 issue of *Christianity Today*, Helen Lee reported that recent times have seen a "silent exodus" of church-raised young people from the Chinese church, who "find their immigrant churches irrelevant, culturally stifling, and ill equipped to develop them

spiritually for life in the multicultural 1990s.”²⁵ Such an exodus of the ABC members has two major drawbacks. First, families are divided when the parents go to a Chinese church and the ABC members do not. Secondly, those who leave their parent’s ethnic churches rarely join other churches.

According to Edward Lee, “The Christian Church demands that people of every race, in mutuality, give to and receive from the church and thereby make it a truly universal church. Above all, we ought to encourage these now exclusively Chinese churches and their gifted people in making contributions to add to the luster of the universal church.”²⁶ The desire to maintain the Chinese language was not intended to discourage the development of faith in children born to Chinese immigrants or stunt the newfound faith of ABC converts. Rather, though the strategy used was counter-productive, the laudable intention was to enhance the identity of Christianity as a universal religion with many spoken and written languages. Some members of Chinese Christian churches in the United States, the LACSDA church included, were determined to maintain their own language within the church. They believed that all Chinese people, including the ABC members, ought to perpetuate the Chinese language in the church as evidence of the inclusiveness of the gospel, although English might be used as needed. This thinking, however, was dangerous and divisive, as it could only lead to the exclusivity of a certain language and group, exactly the opposite of the gospel inclusivity it was intended to engender.

²⁵Helen Lee, “Silent Exodus,” 50.

²⁶Edward Lee, “The Future of the Exclusively Chinese Churches in America,” *Published Papers of the Second National Conference of Christian Work Among the Chinese in America, September 17-19, 1998* (San Francisco: n.p., n.d.).

Bilingualism/Biculturalism and Church Growth

Historically, the Christian church, through its congregations and parochial school systems, has been one of the prime sustainers of bilingualism. Many immigrant groups retained their mother tongues and cultures in celebrations such as religious services, ethnic associations, and community support groups. These non-English-speaking churches were common in the twentieth century. They were usually regional, following the settlements of the immigrant groups in various parts of the country. Many Chinese immigrants came from traditional Buddhist and Taoist backgrounds. They normally sent their American-born children to learn Chinese language and culture in after-school care centers or weekend classes. Community-based organizations and cultural celebrations such as the Lunar Chinese New Year, the mid-autumn festival, and several other holidays also helped to perpetuate their language and culture.

Immigrant churches of all ethnicities frequently perpetuate the language and culture that they brought into the country.²⁷ The same is true for Chinese immigrants, but appreciation of the Chinese language and culture in the church may change when the second and third generation ABC children assimilate themselves into American culture and language. The LACSDA church needed to adapt to this phenomenon of cultural and linguistic change as an opportunity to disciple, train and retain more ABC members. Lumping them together with the Chinese-speaking members was not the best way to grow a church.

In order to accommodate both the Chinese-speaking members and their ABC

²⁷Ken Uyeda Fong, *Pursuing the Pearl: A Comprehensive Resource for Multi-Asian Ministry* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1999), 52.

children, a bilingual, bicultural church on the same campus as the traditional church was thought to offer a good solution. The church services could be separate—one geared to the Chinese-speaking members and the other catering to the needs of the ABC members. Donald McGavran made clear that people could hear the Gospel better and obey it more readily if it was presented in their primary language and culture, safeguarded from intrusions by another language or culture.²⁸ There is no way in which a church can function effectively if it is divorced from the people's language and culture. The LACSDA church is under obligation to serve the ABC members in their own preferred language and culture as much as it serves the Chinese-speaking members in their mother tongue.

The evidence indicates that, all things being equal, homogenous unit churches grow faster than multi-ethnic churches.²⁹ The nature of human beings often dictates a preference for a homogenous unit. This homogenous unit is a very important factor in church growth. Human nature dictates that people normally like to go to places where they feel comfortable and have commonalities with the other attendees. Realizing the advantages of the ethnic homogeneity of a Chinese congregation, and at the same time addressing the desires for cultural and linguistic homogeneity among the Chinese-speaking and ABC subgroups, the LACSDA church needed to take up the challenge of developing bilingual and bicultural facets of congregational life so as to facilitate healthy church growth.

²⁸Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 34.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 45.

McGavran maintains that many immigrant churches in the United States have sacrificed opportunities for substantial growth because they have not understood or heeded the language and culture factors.³⁰ Immigrant churches have often been ill-equipped to reach out to and retain the generations born in this country. The LACSDA church was no exception. The ABC members were Chinese biologically, but they were unable to relate fully to the Chinese language and culture. Thus, it became important for the LACSDA church to take into account the environment, language and cultural realities that ABC members were facing in order to be more focused in discipling and retaining them as members of the congregation.

Cultural Assimilation

Bicultural individuals face the demands of two cultures. In the case of ABC members, they are the way of life in the United States and the Chinese way of life. They do not fully belong to either of those cultures. There are three main responses to the cultural experience that ABC members face in the LACSDA church. Some, by insulation from the culture of the host society, have managed to retain their Chinese cultural identity. A second group has so accommodated themselves to the culture of the host society that they have either subconsciously or consciously rejected their Chinese identity and fully embraced an American approach to life. They have undergone what is sociologically described as “assimilation.” The last major group produces third-culture individuals, traversing the challenging pathway of “acculturation,” defined loosely as having one foot in each of the cultures, and more precisely as adopting preferred aspects

³⁰McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 45.

of both cultures that, in fact, become a newly constructed third culture. These men and women cannot fully identify with either culture and are caught between the two cultures, which has the consequence of setting them apart from both.

Confrontations between two cultures are not simply theoretical. Cultures are not abstract entities. Culture is a lived reality that navigates the passageway from thought to action. Concretely, culturally influenced choices of individuals or subgroups may be in direct conflict with beliefs and behaviors. The members of the LACSDA church have often resisted assimilation into American society, preferring to retain their unique Chinese identity. Yet this resistance is the very embodiment of an acculturation process by even first-generation immigrants seeking to preserve the Chinese culture in the context of the American society. The Chinese culture of the immigrants has indeed become significantly more American, though these immigrants may not realize or admit to their acculturation. Sociologists acknowledge assimilation by degrees—a step-by-step journey in abandoning one culture and embracing another. Though Chinese ethnicity is likely to result in a Chinese flavor to the most complete assimilation, the fact remains that assimilation will occur for most individuals over the course of several generations. The LACSDA church members, both first-generation immigrants and ABCs, if they will but recognize that each generation is involved in this acculturation/assimilation process, will find it easier to accommodate to the needs of other generations.

The following diagram represents the bicultural experience and how it develops through acculturation toward assimilation. An ethnic Chinese individual is caught between two cultures and is led to adopt preferred aspects of both cultures as a newly constructed third culture—acculturation. Over a period of time, this individual becomes

accustomed to the culture of the host country and consciously or unconsciously embraces the culture of the host country—assimilation.

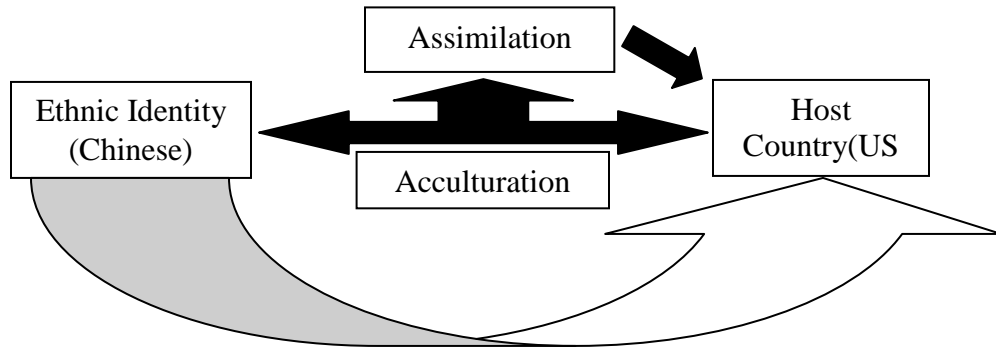


Figure 1. Cultural Assimilation

Summary

As long as the challenges of culture and language exist, there will be a need for an ethnic church. This is true for the Chinese speaking LACSDA church members who immigrated to the United States. However, the ABC members born and raised in this country are naturally more comfortable with English and the culture of the land. It is biblically and sociologically acceptable, even advisable, to create a special ministry to cater to their distinctive spiritual quest. The disservice that the LACSDA church had imposed on its ABC members for many years needed to be discontinued. It is not uncommon to have a parallel ministry for alternative language groups within a church, especially for those who do not speak English. In the same manner, ABC members may not speak the Chinese language and may have a different attitude toward the Chinese culture. As the congregation matured into a sociologically bicultural group, it became imperative for the LACSDA church leaders to reconsider their approach to ministry so as

to meet the needs and best interests of the ABC members. The alternative was to allow the church to degenerate into a culturally isolated and aging church as the ABC members indicated by their absence that the LACSDA church did not meet their needs.

Appropriate communication of the gospel to the ABC members is dependent on the appropriate use of the language with which they are familiar and accommodation to the cultural patterns in which they most naturally find self-expression and community well-being. When these two changes have been instituted, the possibility of structuring and implementing a more appropriate ministry to disciple and retain ABC members is significantly enhanced. New approaches implemented to meet the needs of ABC members—adults, youth, and children—become viable and sustainable options.

CHAPTER IV

A NEW YOUTH DISCIPLING MODEL

Disassociation of the ABC Members

There was no separate worship service for the ABC members from the inception of the LACSDA church in 1986 until 1999. They had to participate in the services for the Chinese-speaking members, where translation was provided from the pulpit for both Sabbath School and the Divine Worship services. Although some of the ABC members were not comfortable with these arrangements, they did not openly voice their opinions, fearing rebuttal from the senior and vocal Chinese-speaking members who contributed financially to the church and were likely to have been founding members of the congregation.

Reasons for ABC Discontent

Some ABC members have asked: “If we all speak English, why should we worship in Chinese? Can’t we all worship together with our peers in the language of our choice? Doesn’t it make sense to have two churches worshipping separately in the same place but in different languages at different times?”¹ They felt that their spirituality was influenced by their sense of belonging and well-being, and that the imposition of a

¹Los Altos Chinese Seventh-day Adventist Church, Minutes of LACSDA Church Business Meeting, August 14, 1999.

Chinese imprint on church activities raised negative emotions and interfered with their natural communication and worship of God. The ABC members wished to practice their spirituality in their preferred language and, when opportunities were not provided by the church leadership, the ABC members experienced disappointment and discomfort in their own congregation.

In my third year as pastor of the LACSDA church, several ABC members approached me and expressed their desire to worship in the language and culture of their choice. They stated that they would like to worship in English, but not simply to go to a “white” church and completely abandon their own culture. They desired to keep their bicultural identities, even though their adopted culture differed to a degree from that of their immigrant parents. The culture of the Chinese immigrants may not always have coexisted comfortably with the ABC culture, but there remained a strong affinity in spite of the cultural and linguistic changes within the ABC group. Given an opportunity to worship according to their own cultural and linguistic preferences, many of the ABC members indicated that they would choose to remain as members in the LACSDA congregation.

After watching the ABC members’ discomfort and hearing their complaints, several of the church leaders recognized that the traditional approach of ministering together to both Chinese and English speaking members did not work because many of the ABC members did not feel that they were part of the church. This was particularly true among the youth and young adults whose primary language is English. Attending the LACSDA church services became to them an alien experience. Unprecedented measures would need to be taken by the church leadership to address the problems.

Crystallization of the Problems

The ABC members considered themselves to be a minority in the LACSDA church with little opportunity to speak up for themselves. They were not the main financial supporters of the church and had unequal representation on the church board. They felt that they were spectators and not participants in church activities. Several board members who were concerned about the spirituality of the ABC members advocated a separate church service, but the idea was unsupported on the grounds that it would be seen as a split in the church.

The silent exodus of some of the ABC members reignited concern among church leaders who saw shortcomings in the traditional ABC ministry. ABC members were invited to join brainstorming sessions related to the predicaments they were facing and were encouraged to propose solutions.² The ABC members were forthright about the dilemmas that had been affecting them and their concerns were taken seriously. The church leaders and ABC members deemed the meetings useful and recommendations were drawn up addressing the areas of culture and language.

The most crucial criticisms voiced by the ABC members were their dislike of translation during the church services and singing Chinese songs. They felt that the “translations were an interruption” and that the Chinese songs were “unfamiliar and unenjoyable to them.”³ To them, worshipping with the Chinese speaking members was an exercise based on ethnic origin that took virtually no account of the differences in

²Los Altos Chinese Seventh-day Adventist Church, Minutes of LACSDA Church Business Meeting, August 14, 1999.

³Ibid.

mindset, culture and language. Moreover, while programs were planned with the Chinese-speaking members in mind, there were no activities prepared exclusively for the ABC members. The ABC members believed that they were in the wrong church, one which neither fulfilled their felt-needs nor contributed to their spiritual growth. As a result, the ABC members gradually lost their interest in church. When they were young, they were obliged to go to church with their parents but as they gained independence, they chose not to attend the Chinese church.

The Solution

This phenomenon was detrimental to the overall health of the church because these young people were in a position to be nurtured, trained, and equipped to be the future leaders of the church. Without future generations of members, the church would ultimately collapse. The church leadership realized that proper measures had to be taken as soon as possible to help the ABC members stay in the church.

The Inevitability of Change

Since the Chinese-English translation worship services in the LACSDA church did not meet the needs of the ABC members, changes were necessary. However, they were difficult to carry out, especially for church leaders who confused responsibility with control, unity with conformity, and faithfulness to God with preservation and maintenance of the status quo. There needed to be a recognition that the composition of congregations change over time and these changes call for creative responses.

The message of the gospel does not change but the method and medium of presenting the gospel has to be dynamic to reflect the changing population and culture.

Christ's church will last until his physical return, but the form, structure and language of church activities may need to adapt to the surrounding environment. The LACSDA church could not afford to remain static. Creative and open-minded strategies were called for, using various innovative programs to teach, nurture, and disciple the ABC members in response their changing needs.

The Need for a New Ministry Model

The ABC members were sandwiched between two cultures and languages and were neither as Asian as their immigrant parents nor as American as their peers in the country they called home. This confusion would persist for the ABC members and was a social issue to which the LACSDA church should respond in order to remain relevant to the ABC members. The introduction of a new ministry model was needed to retain the ABC members, or sooner or later they would leave the LACSDA church.

Although the current combined traditional church service might continue for a while, it was not the ultimate solution to the ABC dilemma. In fact, it was short-lived. Due to peer pressure and the school environment, many ABC members assimilated partially or wholly into contemporary American culture. Because of that, a new ministry model specifically geared toward ABC members in the LACSDA church was deemed necessary.

The Beginning of a New Youth Discipling Model

In order to become a fully functioning congregation, the LACSDA church members needed a change of heart and mind. The church's leadership had to implement the change, and in order to do so that traditional OBCs had to be convinced. No

improvement is without a price, and many reformers have been considered heretics, at least for a time. Some of the traditional old guards in the LACSDA congregation insisted that everyone should meet together during church services to maintain the Chinese culture and language. They argued that it was a shame for Chinese people not to continue their heritage. It was not without much resistance that they eventually agreed to the changes.

The leadership of the LACSDA church was aware of the obstacles, and to overcome them, the church began a New Youth Discipling Model that ran at the same time as the regular worship service each Sabbath. This model catered specifically to the ABC members by implementing a separate English worship service along with other supporting programs. The Chinese and English groups were set up for separate ministries. Each ministry was to function independently under its own leadership and worship.

Description of the New Youth Discipling Model

It is important when developing a model to consider the circumstances and conditions in which it will exist. The New Youth Discipling Model was a comprehensive ministry developed to cater specifically to the needs of the ABC members. The main objectives were to teach, nurture, disciple, and retain baptized ABC members and to reach out to those who were not baptized. This model included the ABC Ministry, the Multi-Approach Ministry, and the Vision Church. The three components of this New Youth Discipling Model shared some of the same techniques and principles, but there were differences among them.

The ABC Ministry focused on nurturing, evangelism, discipleship, and worship of

the ABC members. Nurturing and discipleship stem from the very heart of God. God is a vinedresser who devotedly tends his vineyard (Isa 5:1-7), a physician who tenderly nurses his patients (Jer 8:22), and a parent who lovingly teaches his child to walk (Hos 11:1, 3). These prophetic metaphors reflect God's desire to relate personally to Israel, his chosen people. God is portrayed in scripture as the ever-present, compassionate Lord sending his messengers to nurture and disciple his people to come into relationship with him. Evangelism refers to the practice of dissemination of the gospel to others who are yet to accept Christ as their personal savior. The ABC members were encouraged to live their lives as Christ's ambassadors and to witness for him through righteous living, love, honesty, and involvement in church activities to reach out to others. Worship is at the heart of ABC members' spiritual life, bringing them into the presence of God. Worship involves showing reverence and gratitude to God for his goodness and grace.

The Multi-Approach Ministry differed from the ABC Ministry in that it provided a ministry that was based on activity, meeting, and individual needs. Unlike the ABC Ministry that emphasized evangelism, the Activity-based Approach offered a wide range of outreach activities in which ABC members could participate. Retreats, social events, and trips were organized for both church members and non-members so that ABC members might mingle with non-members and reach out to them with the gospel message.

Compared to the ABC Ministry's focus on worship through Bible study and preaching, the Meeting-based Approach put more emphasis on worshipping the Lord through music, praise, thanksgiving, and giving. It also encouraged ABC members to express their love and devotion to God more intimately. While the ABC Ministry

provided nurturing and discipleship to ABC members collectively as the body of Christ, the Individually Based Approach offered the same thing, but more on a one-to-one basis. Since each ABC member's felt-need and spiritual condition varied, the Individually Based Approach endeavored to nurture and disciple the particular member according to his or her respective stage of faith development and commitment to the Lord.

The Vision Church aimed to build a culturally sensitive, socially conscious, and spiritually dynamic church that would lead the ABC members beyond postmodernism through various strategies and techniques. All of the elements in these three components of this New Youth Discipling Model complemented one another and endeavored to provide a balanced, spiritually focused, and integrated life experience for the ABC members.

This New Youth Discipling Model was contextualized and targeted to be effective within the ABC culture. It was intentional and purpose-driven. The desired outcomes provided the framework for the design. Success was not to be measured in infrastructure or money generated for the church. Instead, it was to be determined by its ability to connect to the ABC culture and by its faith development and growth in discipleship. Ministry skill discovery and development comprised another objective. Goals such as friendship enhancement, fellowship improvement, worship enrichment, relationship building, and Christian peer group development were also included as desired outcomes in the New Youth Discipling Model. Evaluation of the success of the model would be based on observation made by church leadership, self-reporting by the ABC members, and growth in the number of the ABC members.

After a lot of discussion and preparation by the church leaders, the church board

met on October 9, 1999 and voted to allocate funds for the New Youth Discipling Model. The purpose was to help finance the programs and activities run for ABC members in the New Youth Discipling Model.⁴ This financial need was also met by donations from concerned members of the congregation, including funds from Chinese-speaking members. In order to reverse previous neglect of the ABC members, the church board was eager to assist and support the New Youth Discipling Model.

The ABC Council

The ABC Council was composed of two ABC leaders who had been appointed by the church board together with three other ABC members who were selected by their peers. These five members on the ABC Council would hold the positions of ABC leader, associate ABC leader, secretary, treasurer, and communications director. The ABC officers were responsible for sustained execution and administration of the New Youth Discipling Model. The council was overseen by sponsoring church elders whose role was to be “supportive” and “advisory” to ABC members in accordance with the LACSDA church’s direction and objectives. The church pastor was the ex officio member of the ABC Council. He oversaw the overall development of the New Youth Discipling Model. The ABC Council members would set the direction and implement the objectives of the New Youth Discipling Model.

The two appointed ABC leaders were invited to be on the LACSDA church board. They represented the ABC Council and provided progress reports on the ABC

⁴Los Altos Chinese Seventh-day Adventist Church, Minutes of LACSDA Church Board Meeting, October 9, 1999.

activities and initiatives to the board. The ABC Council in turn had its own working committee to establish ABC goals within the operating framework of the LACSDA church. To ensure that the ABC members were part of the ministry, they were encouraged to shoulder the leadership and operation of the ABC Council. They were also responsible for establishing and planning the direction, strategy, and course of action to disciple and retain ABC members and to reach out to their peers in the local community. In the past, the LACSDA church leadership used to hold events for the ABC members such as parties, banquets, picnics, gym nights, retreats, and trips. After the New Youth Discipling Model was formed, the ABC Council was responsible for these events.

Vision and Mission

A clear vision and mission are essential elements of effective ministry, providing focus, direction, and goals. ABC member involvement was a key factor in developing a strong vision and mission for the New Youth Discipling Model. The vision and mission needed to be realistic and executable because they are among the primary catalytic factors for growth in a local church. Proverbs 29:18 says, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” The appropriate vision is determined by the capacity of the church leadership to see clearly what God wants to accomplish through them and, in this particular case, through the LACSDA church. Mark 16:15 contains the mission that Jesus gave to his followers, “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” The ABC members can participate in this mission when they are actively involved in the New Youth Discipling Model.

The ABC Council’s initial responsibility was to capture a vision and a mission for ABC members through brainstorming and discussion sessions among ABC members.

The ABC members spent a lot of time praying to God and asking God for wisdom and understanding to make the New Youth Discipling Model a “cutting edge” tool to disciple and retain ABC members at the LACSDA church. They were also willing to dedicate their lives to the Lord and to advance his work through the New Youth Discipling Model. After much soul-searching and numerous meetings, the ABC Council was able to determine both vision and mission of the New Youth Discipling Model.⁵ The followings are the vision and mission statements:

Vision Statement: To disciple and to retain the American-born Chinese members in the Los Altos Chinese Seventh-day Adventist church through their own culture and language. To help the church become a place where LOVING GOD and LOVING PEOPLE love to visit.

Mission Statement: To encourage the English-speaking members of the Los Altos Chinese Seventh-day Adventist church to grow in Jesus Christ and to remain faithful to Him all the days of their lives. To maintain a burning desire to be trained and equipped in the Word of God, and to utilize all the resources available in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ to everyone, particularly the American-born Chinese.⁶

Essentials of the Vision and Mission Statements

The ABC Council aspired to create a welcoming and inclusive community that supports spiritual growth through learning and serving in a respectful, safe, and joyful environment through their own culture and language. The ABC Council provided the following “Words to Live By” for the ABC members:

⁵After the LACSDA church board approved the New Youth Discipling Model on October 9, 1999, the ABC Council met every Sabbath for about a month before determining both the vision and mission statements of the New Youth Discipling Model. The vision and mission statements were presented to the LACSDA church board on November 13, 1999.

⁶Adopted from ABC Council, “Mission and Vision Statements,” November 13, 1999.

- Experience a relationship with Jesus Christ through nurturing spiritual disciplines such as prayer, scripture reading, regular devotions, worship, and personal reflection.
- Build community with other ABC members and LACSDA Chinese-speaking members.
- Respect and be sensitive to the Chinese culture and language without criticizing them.
- Receive God’s gift of cultural and linguistic differences in the context of the LACSDA congregation.
- Provide a sound Christian ministry that reaches out to everyone, especially non-Christian ABCs, and assist them into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Make disciples of the ABC members so that they may disciple others for Jesus.
- Get involved, be nurtured and trained to become ABC leaders for ministry in a changing environment.
- Give and receive love, acceptance, and forgiveness in the attempt to help retain all ABC members.
- Live out their commitment to Jesus in practical ways as they minister, support, and encourage each other so that most ABC members feel comfortable to serve at the LACSDA church.
- Embrace both the vision and mission statements as adopted by the ABC Council.⁷

The ABC Ministry

The first component of the New Youth Discipling Model is the ABC Ministry. This ministry includes a blend of nurturing, evangelism, discipleship, and worship that attracts both ABC members and non-members. Through the ABC Ministry in the New Youth Discipling Model, a faith community is envisioned that aims to serve God and share the gospel. The goal of this ministry is to provide an opportunity for ABC members to use the language and culture of their preference and to participate in the various ministries of the LACSDA church.

⁷Los Altos Chinese Seventh-day Adventist Church, “Words to Live By,” November 13, 1999.

The ABC Ministry is a comprehensive ministry that encompasses many aspects of the ABC members' life and mission. Included are the weekly English church services, organized activities and programs, and ministry to the felt-needs of the ABC members. Networking is also facilitated among ABC members' peers who might not be Christians but would like to learn more about faith-related questions. The church pastor would provide resources and positive reinforcements to the ABC members. The church leadership is always behind the ABC Ministry to achieve the objectives of the New Youth Discipling Model.

The Principles of the ABC Ministry

The ABC Ministry is a multi-faceted program. It includes a comprehensive directive about how the ABC members plan to disciple and retain other ABC individuals at the LACSDA church. The principles of the ABC Ministry were pivotal to the existence of the New Youth Discipling Model. They guided the ABC members to devise and formulate programs and activities with the purpose of building a spiritually dynamic church that would play a vital role in discipling and retaining ABC members culturally, socially, and spiritually.

Personal Growth

Since most of the ABC members are youth or young adults, they represent the critical period of transition from childhood to adulthood during which physical, psychological, spiritual, and social growth is an important stage in their life. James Fowler, a developmental psychologist, proposed a staged development of faith across the lifespan. He is best known for his book *Stages of Faith*, published in 1981, in which he

sought to develop the idea of a developmental process in faith. According to Fowler's theory, youth and young adults mainly fall in Stage 3 of "Synthetic-Conventional" faith arising in adolescence and characterized by conformity.⁸ Conformity is the process by which an "individual's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors are influenced by other people. This influence occurs in both small groups and society as a whole, and it may be the result of subtle unconscious influences, or direct and overt social pressure."⁹ Since the development of faith is tied to the interpretation of meaning in one's life and experiences, the youthful years are an important juncture for the individual's spiritual development.

Jean Piaget, a psychologist and philosopher, was well-known for his pedagogical studies. His theory of cognitive development suggested that individuals from the age of twelve onwards enter the formal operational stage when they develop abstract thought and can easily conserve ideas and think logically. According to Piaget, these individuals move beyond concrete experiences and begin to think abstractly, reason logically and draw conclusions from the information available, as well as apply all these processes to hypothetical situations.¹⁰ ABC members are mainly in the formal operational stage. They can begin to forge a personal sense of meaning and a set of values, and become capable of a deeper personal relationship with Christ and responsible Christian action.

⁸James Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1981), 151.

⁹James Fowler, "Conformity," Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conformity> (accessed November 17, 2009).

¹⁰Jean Piaget, "Stages of Cognitive Development: Formal Operational," *Learning and Teaching*, <http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/piaget.htm> (accessed November 17, 2009).

To help ABC members as they negotiate these experiences, the ABC Ministry must involve the understanding of parents, the guidance and example of peers and significant adults, and the ongoing maturing of the faith community which accepts the responsibility sharing in the search for meaning and cultural identity of the youth in the language of their choice.

The Total Person

Ellen White stated that “true education . . . has to do with the whole being. . . . It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers.”¹¹ The ABC Ministry takes heed of her counsel and endeavors to assist ABC members to become rounded in various aspect of their life. It takes seriously the responsibility to help ABC members grow as total persons, socially, spiritually, culturally, and linguistically. The total young person has many important concerns which must be understood holistically in the context of daily living, including family situations, relationships with peers, academic and extra-curricular involvement, response to religion, and moral values. In the life of each ABC member, different needs express themselves at various times during the process of maturing, and one of the hallmarks of the ABC Ministry is to be sensitive to the ABC members’ readiness for new steps.

Relationships

The ABC Ministry involves first and foremost, not programs, but relationships. Within accepting relationships, ABC members are enabled to face and accept themselves

¹¹Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1952), 13.

and others, to clarify their goals and values, and to dare to become the persons they are called to be. Relationships that form the ABC Ministry are those that form community and mediate the grace of Christ, challenging youth and young adults to greater growth and openness to God. The relationship of persons in a ministerial situation involves a mutual openness to change and willingness to grow. The ABC Ministry presents the challenge to help reveal the Christ of the gospel and to facilitate the development of this faith in the community and through personal relationships.

Ephesians 2:19 says, “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” The church is like a house, and every converted sinner is one of the family, a servant, and a child in God’s house. They are interconnected and related in the family of God. The ABC members are encouraged not only to grow daily in their personal relationship with Jesus Christ, but also in meaningful relationships with others in the community and with the entire LACSDA church family.

Support of the LACSDA Church Leadership

The LACSDA church leadership pledged to support the activities and programs of the ABC Ministry in the New Youth Discipling Model. An amount was committed in the church budget and disbursed each month. Donations by those who had a desire to support the ABC Ministry were also gladly accepted.

In addition, many of the ABC members were relatively young and did not have experience in handling the difficult circumstances that might arise in terms of ministry leadership, relationship, finances, or programming. Special guidance and supervision from the church board was necessary to safeguard the best interests of the ABC members.

The ABC Council would discuss the felt-needs of ABC members and it would present their requests to the church board for consideration. The church board would often provide support to the ABC members through leadership training, youth seminars, spiritual retreats, and counseling. The purpose of these programs was to equip and prepare more ABC members for leadership positions, ultimately nurturing, discipling, and training them to take responsibility for the ABC Ministry through the New Youth Discipling Model.

Prayer and Commitment

Aside from moral support, financial assistance, and various contributions from the church leadership, divine aid was sought through prayer and commitment on the part of those involved in the ABC Ministry. The consistent prayer and dedication of the church leaders to the project aimed to encourage the rest of the church members to be involved in assisting the ABC Ministry. Writing about church growth, Boone Porter states: “If growth is God’s gift, the first and most basic thing we must do to obtain it is to pray to Him for it. Our Lord has taught us that prayer must be insistent and persistent.”¹² Robert Coleman echoes Porter’s sentiments, noting that “we must realize that the kind of manpower that Christ needs does not happen by accident. It requires deliberate planning and concentrated effort. If we are to train men and women, we must work for them. We must seek them. Above all we must pray for them.”¹³

Philip Yancey, a Christian author who addresses postmodern America, notes:

¹²H. Boone Porter, *Growth and Life in the Local Church* (New York: Seabury Press, 1968), 21.

¹³Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1964), 117.

“Prayer is our partnership with God, our chance to join forces with God’s power to confront suffering and evil head-on.”¹⁴ There may not be suffering or evil in carrying out the ABC Ministry but there are always challenges and obstacles during the process. The importance of joining forces with God to carry out the ABC Ministry cannot be overstated. Yancey also says, “Prayer is a window into knowing the mind of God, whose kingdom is entrusted to all of us frail, selfish people on earth.”¹⁵ Prayer is for the Christian life what breathing is for biological life. Prayer is the active communion or conversation of the believing heart with God. Its necessity for the success of the ABC Ministry is fundamental. Through prayer, the ABC members are able to commit themselves to the continued development of the ABC Ministry. They were supportive of the ministry and hoped that it would play a vital role in discipling and retaining the ABC members. The ABC members were happy to know that their concerns and wishes were considered important and were being addressed. They too resolved to pray for the success of the ministry and to offer their time and effort to ensure the correct direction of the ABC Ministry.

The Multi-Approach Ministry

In order to attain the vision and mission of the New Youth Discipling Model, many intentional steps were taken and their implementation monitored to ensure that the felt-needs of the ABC members were met. The ABC Council organized various programs and activities to help the ABC members to be firmly grounded in Christian

¹⁴Philip Yancey, *Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 5.

¹⁵Ibid., 24.

ideals. This was done through the Multi-Approach Ministry. This ministry utilized three distinctive *modi operandi* to build a dynamic church that played a vital role in discipling and retaining ABC members. The Multi-Approach Ministry includes the Activity-based Approach, the Meeting-based Approach, and the Individually based Approach.

The Activity-Based Approach

The ABC members of the LACSDA church were mostly youth and young adults. They had tremendous amounts of energy and the Activity-based Approach aimed to channel their energy constructively. In the New Youth Discipling Model, the Activity-based Approach facilitated a series of youth and young adult activities designed to appeal to ABC members. The purpose was to involve ABC youth and young adults actively in leadership and participation in the group, building relationships with other members in the LACSDA church. The aim was to keep the ABC youth and young adults occupied through productive and meaningful activities. They were generally thrilled to be involved in hands-on activities and leadership at the church.

There are two dimensions of faith in the Activity-based Approach, vertical and horizontal. The vertical dimension represents a life-transforming relationship with God. The ABC members may express this dimension of faith by worshipping God, praying, and seeking opportunities for spiritual growth. They also exercise this dimension through activities that are God-centered such as retreats, social events, trips, and joint events. These activities have helped nurture and disciple the ABC members to come closer to God and to feel that they are part of the church.

The horizontal dimension represents a consistent devotion to serving others within the church and in the broader community. For example, contact is made with those who

are not members of the church. ABC members express this dimension as a living faith by helping people in need; visiting prisons, nursing homes, and orphanages; feeding the homeless; and cleaning elderly people's homes. These activities have enhanced the social awareness and responsibility of the ABC members while putting their faith into action. These are just a sampling of the many activities in which the ABC members have been involved. The purpose of these activities was to help the ABC members grow socially, physically, and spiritually.

Each activity or set of activities has a theme represented by an overarching goal, with the underlying purpose of attracting more people, using the budget wisely to do more things each week, and therefore having more fun as a community of Christian friends. The ABC Council has excelled in organizing activities such as gym nights, picnics, special celebrations, and trips to places of interests. Through these activities, relationships among the ABC members were strengthened and some spiritual interest was generated among the ABC's peers, of whom a number started to attend services and eventually joined the church.

The Activity-based Approach does not make frequent demands on the time of the ABC members but rather captures their attention and creates enthusiasm with special activities for them. It allows for an opportunity to tackle ideas or projects intensively for short periods. This approach tends to attract more people, especially ABC individuals who are not otherwise involved in the LACSDA church. Through friendship with ABC members, these individuals who do not have ties to the LACSDA church are introduced

to the activities and fellowship of the LACSDA church in the Activity-based Approach.¹⁶

The Meeting-Based Approach

The Meeting-based Approach is centered on regular gatherings of ABC members held on a weekly or biweekly basis. Bible study fellowships, Sabbath Schools, and Divine Worship services provide a time for corporate worship and study as well as an opportunity to share personal joys, concerns, and needs. The meetings have set times so as not to become long and tedious and they offer a balanced approach that sets up opportunities to learn and to reflect, to worship, to reach out in ministry, and to relax and socialize. The Meeting-based Approach enables ongoing group life and friendship. It offers a Christian support group to ABC members who are struggling and provides the security of a consistent time each week for members to get together. It offers a chance to study a topic in depth over a long period of time or tackle a project that might take a number of weeks to complete. The topic or project can be anything that concerns the group. The regularity reduces the complexity of planning and the need to publicize meetings.

The Meeting-based Approach is different from the Activity-based Approach, although superficially it may look similar. The Meeting-based Approach proceeds with different goals. It grows out of the ministry of the church and is consequently linked directly in building spiritual community, while the Activity-based Approach emphasizes more the building of social community. Naturally there is some overlap. The Meeting-

¹⁶For a summary of the Activity-Based Approach in the New Youth Discipling Model, see appendix A, table 7.

based Approach fosters in ABC members a deepening knowledge and appreciation of the Scriptures, which in turn facilitates biblically based spiritual growth. It also stimulates ABC members to think more innovatively and imaginatively, selecting Bible principles as the guide for living a life of discipleship.

The core of the Meeting-based Approach is learning from the Word of God. The ministry of the Word includes sharing the gospel with others and teaching about God's love and salvation through Jesus Christ. This sharing involves elements of nurturing, teaching, discipling, and training of ABC members in English, the language medium of choice for the LACSDA church ABCs. The cultural identity of ABC members also plays a crucial role in sharing the gospel. ABC members are naturally more comfortable communicating with other non-Adventist ABC individuals who share similar cultural characteristics.

A particularly successful event in the Meeting-based Approach is the annual youth and young adult camp at venues such as Yosemite National Park or Soquel campground in central California. ABC members come together for a weekend of intensive Christian interaction and peer support. The ABC Council arranges the programs and activities that include singing, praying, worshipping, and fellowship. ABC members enjoy bringing non-church friends with whom they can socialize and share in a relaxed Christian atmosphere. The retreat has been effective as an ongoing program providing rest, recreation, and an opportunity for spiritual growth for the ABC members, and introducing new ABC individuals to the Adventist Church. Some ABC individuals have joined the church as a result of the effort of the Meeting-based Approach.

In addition to fostering study of the Word, the Meeting-based Approach

emphasizes music and worship, which is a celebration of the relationship between God and His people and helps worshipers respond positively to the proclamation of the gospel. By using English, their preferred language, and by praising God in music, they have a distinctive way of expressing themselves in the worship experience. The music that they play, songs and praises that they use, and the manner in which they worship are Americanized, but they are free to express the distinctive Chinese-American flavor of their experience. In the framework of this worship, ABC members can celebrate the spectrum of their feelings and thoughts, using signs and symbols that have special meaning for them.

The Meeting-based Approach has a clear purpose—the development of mature Christians, both now and for the future. Meetings may be a starting place, but they are not the gauge by which the New Youth Discipling Model is measured. The Meeting-based Approach attempts to involve increasing numbers of ABC members in the New Youth Discipling Model. It makes frequent demands on the time of the members. It may sometimes be difficult to find interesting things to do week after week, but with good planning and creative ideas, this approach has been effective in nurturing and discipling ABC members and attracting their non-Adventist friends to church. The Meeting-based Approach primarily attracts ABC members who are already involved in the LACSDA congregation and it depends upon their response and collaboration to make it successful.¹⁷

¹⁷For a summary of the Meeting-Based Approach in the New Youth Discipling Model, see appendix A, table 8.

The Individually Based Approach

First and foremost, the New Youth Discipling Model involves relationships. Without positive relationships, ABC members are not able to interact with one another in a healthy manner. Youth and young adult ABC members are in the critical period of transition from childhood to adulthood, during which important physical changes and psychological and social development are occurring. James Fowler noted that the development of faith is tied directly to the interpretation of meaning in one's life and experiences, and that the youthful years are an important juncture for the individual's spiritual development.¹⁸ In addition to the Activity-based and Meeting-based approaches, the ABC Council has employed the Individually Based Approach to help the ABC members through these significant transitions in their lives. This approach focuses more on the individual needs of ABC members and helps each of the ABC members feel that he or she is listened to and cared for.

Through the Individually Based Approach, ABC members are provided with focused assistance from the pastor and the ABC Council sponsors in forging a personal sense of meaning and set of values. This individualized support helps the ABC youth and young adults to a deeper personal relationship with Christ. It also emphasizes one-to-one relationships with other ABC members, at home, church, school, and elsewhere. These interactions may involve counseling, learning a skill, recreation, study, or casual conversation; or the interaction might be part of a program leading to baptism and church membership. ABC members are encouraged to participate in the activities of the entire

¹⁸Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 79.

church family rather than just stick within their own separate ABC group. They are specifically encouraged to mingle with those church members who may speak little English, but who can teach them their cultural roots and Chinese traditions. Through these personal encounters, they may learn more about their own identity and appreciate those who are different from themselves.

The Individually Based Approach evokes the strengths, interests, and concerns of youth and adults. It encourages the development of strong friendships. It readily accommodates ABC members and non-members, and is appealing to those who do not like or are not accepted in group-based activities. It does not require large numbers and can work well with just one or two ABC members. It also helps individuals to see themselves as a part of the whole church, accepted and nurtured by the other members. Another important aspect is that this approach does not require extra space or money from the LACSDA church.

The social events, one-on-one encounters, informal gatherings, and trips that the ABC Council plans are aimed at building relationships and fellowship between the leaders and the ABC members, as well as among the ABCs themselves. In addition to fellowship and trust building, there is teaching and proclamation of the gospel. The ABC members are often encouraged to share their spiritual experience with other ABCs.

Jesus was most often called Rabbi or Teacher in the New Testament (John 1:38). His teaching and his deeds were supported by the example of his lifestyle. He gave attention to individuals and ministered to them.¹⁹ One example of how Jesus related to

¹⁹Philip Samaan, *Christ's Way of Reaching People* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1990), 46.

the needs of others is His encounter with the Samaritan Woman at the well (John 4:4-26). Through the Individually Based Approach to ministry, following the example of Jesus, ABC members can build relationships and bridges with other individuals, just as the Master Rabbi did.²⁰

The Vision Church

Definition

The third and final element of the New Youth Discipling Model is the Vision Church, which was launched to enhance ministry to the ABC members in the LACSDA congregation. The Vision Church was conceived to provide the congregation with a firm foundation to perpetuate its vision and mission as stated in the New Youth Discipling Model. As an alternative to the postmodern culture, the Vision Church strives to offer ABC individuals a relevant and meaningful worship experience. The purpose of this Vision Church is to build a culturally sensitive, socially conscious, and spiritually dynamic church that will impress ABC individuals with the vitality and relevance of the gospel of Christ.

The Objectives of the Vision Church

The Vision Church's function is intended to change to reflect its cultural context. Without compromising biblical principle, the style of worship, the language, and the pastoral practices are adjusted to the experiences, needs, and worldview of the participants, so as to ensure their optimum spiritual development. Effective

²⁰For a summary of the Individually-Based Approach in the New Youth Discipling Model, see appendix A, table 9.

communication of the Gospel depends on a thorough understanding of its message and an adherence to the cultural setting in which the message is promulgated. The Vision Church is not designed to be radically different from the main LACSDA church, but is designed to set an appropriate tone to meet the needs of ABC members.

The Vision Church endeavors to build a spiritually dynamic ministry. The LACSDA church works with a generation in which many are unfamiliar with the Bible and are morally ambivalent. These individuals were raised in a postmodern culture that is often pessimistic and undoubtedly cynical. Stanley Grenz, a leading evangelical theologian who addresses the issues of postmodernity, states that “central to a truly biblically informed Christocentric theology is the affirmation that Jesus is the one who came to be the *imago Dei* and to establish the new humanity of those who are confirmed to that image, in completion of what God intended as the human vocation from the beginning.”²¹ The postmodern society that spawned the younger generation has not nurtured them, but rather has shattered their trust and loyalty to Christ who came in the image of God. Grenz has written a lively and engaging work to sketch a creative vision for a renewed evangelical theology that faces the intellectual thoughts of postmodern and postchristian culture.

Self-absorbed and individualistic, many second generation American-born Chinese have personal agendas filled with daily problems, language issues, cultural identity, and social dilemmas. To counteract some of these negatives, the ABC Council was proactive in utilizing available tools and resources to strategically strengthen ABC

²¹Stanley Grenz, “Jesus As the Imago Dei: Image-of-God Christology and the Non-Linear Linearity of Theology,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47, no 4 (December 2004): 628.

members to be firmly rooted in Jesus, to share their faith with their peers, to disciple one another in the faith, and to turn the dream of the Vision Church into a reality in the New Youth Discipling Model.

Leadership Team for the Vision Church

The ABC Council's goal is to provide the healthiest New Youth Discipling Model possible through the Vision Church. It is a model that depends on a solid team of spiritual leaders rather than on a charismatic individual. Ideally, the members of the leadership team should have a strong faith in Christ and the ability to foster this faith in the hearts and minds of their ABC congregation. These leaders implement a ministry that equips the members rather than one which merely coordinates events—a ministry that impacts lives, not just organizes activities. They encourage ABC members to “think globally and act locally.”

The leaders in the ABC Council play an important role in the effectiveness of the New Youth Discipling Model. The leaders are trained to be qualified to lead the Vision Church. They need to teach and nurture ABC members and commit themselves to the Vision Church. The leadership team must incorporate shared decision-making, member involvement, group interaction, teamwork, and individual member skills into the framework of the Vision Church.

The plans and policies of the ABC Council are grounded in biblical teaching which empowers young ABC members to become servant leaders of the Vision Church. Christ-centered discipleship is the primary goal of the leadership team to empower ABC members to develop personal relationships with Christ and to be disciple-makers for him. The leadership team also empowers ABC members with the knowledge and skills for

active participation in the life and ministry of the Vision Church.

The leadership team helps ABC members in the understanding and acceptance of self by affirmation, biblical concepts of self-image, and Christian leadership training. They do so by challenging ABC members to live to their full potential. The leadership team also uses training resources to cultivate the gifts and talents of ABC members, and empowers them to utilize their gifts and talents in leadership of the Vision Church.

The Three “*Ships*” of the Vision Church

The Vision Church endeavors to satisfy the needs of ABC individuals by implementing the following three “*ships*:” *friendship*, *fellowship*, and *worship*. The strategy is to facilitate the gathering together of the ABC members into a genuine supportive community to celebrate life in God through Jesus Christ. The process begins with friendship, followed by fellowship, and finally worship. This process is helpful in reaching out to many ABC individuals through the New Youth Discipling Model.

Friendship

Friendship has often been described as a universal language. When ABC individuals come to church, they come with or through friends. ABC members frequently employ friendship as the initial step in evangelizing their peers. True friendship is one of the most important strategies for reaching out to individuals of other faiths or ideologies. When Jesus was asked why he mingled and made friends with those who were considered “outcasts” of the time, he responded by saying, “The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!” (Luke 7:34). Jesus responded with friendship to those

who took an interest in him, because friendship is often more effective than other methods of evangelism which are less personal.

Friendship is sometimes known as “loving someone into the kingdom.” Although it may take a long time to build a genuine friendship that continues whether or not the individual responds to the gospel, this strategy of using interpersonal relationships in the service of God’s kingdom proved successful in the ministry of Jesus and is likely the most effective approach in winning people to Christianity.

The kindness, friendliness, and willingness of ABC members to go beyond a surface-level relationship can attract people to Christianity. In John 15:13, Jesus said that “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” To influence others through friendship, ABC members are encouraged to lay down their feelings, reputation, comfort, and time to share their faith through kindness, friendliness, and righteous living.

Long-term friendship also keeps ABC members from feeling pressured to cover the complete gospel in one sitting, since they know they will have another opportunity to converse with their friends. The effectiveness of evangelism and discipleship is largely dependent on the friendship cultivated between the individuals. Because friendship has often been described as a universal language, it plays a crucial role in attracting people to the gospel.

Fellowship

When ABC members befriend individuals in the local community, these people gradually come to fellowship with the ABC members through various church activities and programs such as Bible studies, cell group meetings, and other social events. The

ABC members always seek to cultivate a place of belonging where their new non-Christian friends can feel accepted, culturally and linguistically compatible, and fully at home.

The proclamation of the gospel is not restricted to preaching; rather a variety of methods can be used to reach “all creation” (Mark 16:15). Through fellowship, these new acquaintances are able to learn more about God and the Bible. St. Francis of Assisi once said, “Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words.”²² Without preaching, ABC members can be “living sermons” everyday through lives well lived. If the gospel is to be accepted, it has to be communicated in the context of the everyday life of the Christian. Fellowship is one of the means of accomplishing this. Through fellowship, ABC individuals can learn the principles of Christian living and acquire an interest in worshipping God.

Worship

When ABC individuals in the community get to know the ABC members better as friends and learn more about their lifestyle and belief system through fellowship, they may respond positively to an invitation to come to Sabbath School and church. When this takes place, they will gradually learn to love the Creator God and worship him. They will then be offered Bible studies, and when they are ready, they will be baptized into the body of Christ which is the church. With the help of friendship and fellowship, worshipping the creator is also the ultimate goal for the Vision Church.

²²*Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (2000), s.v. “St. Francis of Assisi.”

The Watchwords of the Vision Church

In order to disciple and retain the ABC members, and to reach out to ABC individuals in the community, the ABC Council has adopted several watchwords to enhance the New Youth Discipling Model at the LACSDA church. These watchwords are acronyms of certain words and common adages that are easy to remember. The purpose is to help ABC members focus on the objectives of the Vision Church.

G-R-A-C-E

The ABC Council uses an acronym of GRACE as a mnemonic for a philosophy to live by and to share the good news of salvation. ABC members are taught that all humanity has been saved by the grace of Jesus Christ which is free to all who are willing to receive it. In appreciation of what Christ has done for them, the word grace is formed:

- G** —God’s Word as our inspiration and standard
- R** —Relationships as the primary context for growth
- A** —Acceptance of others as Christ accepts us
- C** —Commitment to Christ and his mission
- E** —Every believer a disciple and a minister

T-I-M-E-S

The ABC Council believes in the priesthood of all believers. God would like all his children to spread the gospel message by reaching out to others to retain them for his kingdom. In order to do this, ABC members follow the example of Christ’s ministry. Christ always put people first, and the ABC members are encouraged to focus on the people around them by keeping in mind the acronym of TIMES. This acronym has the connotation of multiplying (as in times tables), that is, multiplying or extending the number of believers:

- T** —Turning strangers into friends
- I** —Inviting friends to become seekers
- M** —Making seekers into followers
- E** —Equipping followers to become ministers
- S** —Steering ministers into leaders

C-H-R-I-S-T

One of the objectives of the New Youth Discipling Model is to assist ABC members grow into fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ so that they will be more like Him in their everyday living. To attain this objective, the ABC members apply the acronym of CHRIST-centered ministry, through which it is their purpose to:

- C** —Communicate the gospel effectively
- H** —Honor God with praise, worship and lifestyle
- R** —Relate to ABC individuals with love and care
- I** —Integrate God’s Word into their lives
- S** —Serve others by using the spiritual gifts God has given for His glory
- T** —Tell the world of his saving grace through missions

Summary

Culture is shifting. Young ABC members are changing. The days of a “one-size-fits-all” ministry model, if it ever existed, are over. The LACSDA church identified the reasons ABC members left the church and the underlying problems that led them to do so. It attempted to resolve the issues through implementation of the New Youth Discipling Model. In order for the LACSDA church to succeed in reaching and retaining ABC members, its culture and language must adjust to the context and needs of those who come to the church. The church seeks to cultivate a place of belonging where those who come can find a group of people for mutual support and acceptance.

In the New Youth Discipling Model, through the ABC Ministry, the Multi-approach Ministry, and the Vision Church, the LACSDA church has developed a strategy

to fulfill the felt-needs of its ABC members. It sets the vision and mission to nurture, teach, disciple and retain ABC members at the LACSDA church. This New Youth Discipling Model has proven to be a very useful means of building a culturally sensitive, socially conscious, and spiritually dynamic church. The LACSDA church leadership desires to reach this generation of ABC members and assist them to become mature Christians in God's kingdom. The church also strives to provide opportunities where ABC members can be trained, equipped, and inspired for involvement in the life and ministry of the church in the New Youth Discipling Model.

CHAPTER V

IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION RELATING TO
THE NEW YOUTH DISCIPLING MODEL

Before the Implementation of the New Youth Discipling Model

Prior to 2000, ABC members at the LACSDA church had been neglected for too long with no appropriate ministry geared specifically to them. Many ABC members left to join other Caucasian churches or left the Adventist church entirely. The church leadership had overlooked the ministry to ABC members and it was crucial for them to reexamine this issue. Before the implementation of the New Youth Discipling Model, the LACSDA church was not able disciple and retain its ABC members or to reach out to non-Christian ABC individuals in the community.

Helen Lee, a respected missiologist, wrote: “The surge in Asian immigration led to an explosion of new churches. But the flip side of the success story has been a silent exodus of church-raised young people who find their immigrant churches irrelevant, culturally stifling, and ill-equipped to develop them spiritually for life in the multicultural 1990s.¹ Chinese-speaking churches are mostly suitable for the new immigrants but they are inappropriate for the ABC members unless a special ministry is organized to meet their felt-needs in the same church. It took a lot of time and effort to develop the New

¹Helen Lee, “Silent Exodus,” 50.

Youth Discipling Model in the beginning but the time and effort paid off for the LACSDA church, generally, and the ABC members, in particular.

Preliminary Steps

The church board voted on October 9, 1999, to begin a New Youth Discipling Model that was geared towards the ABC members.² The ABC Council was given the responsibility and authority to organize the ministry and other supporting programs for the ABC members. Two members of the ABC Council were appointed by the church board and they represented the ABC members in the church board. These two members of the ABC Council convened with the ABC members and they selected three other members to form the ABC Council together with the church pastor and two sponsors. This eight-member ABC Council met to discuss and plan a New Youth Discipling Model that could effectively minister to the ABC members.

The ABC Council met regularly during the last few months of 1999 before launching the New Youth Discipling Model in January of 2000. They determined not only to seek for the success of the ministry, but also to offer time and effort to ensure that the ministry was sustainable and beneficial to the ABC members. The ABC members were grateful to know that their concerns and wishes to have a ministry geared to them and for them had been met and they vowed to support the new ministry.³

The first task of the eight-member ABC Council was to brainstorm to develop the

²Los Altos Chinese Seventh-day Adventist Church, Minutes of LACSDA Church Board Meeting, October 9, 1999.

³The pastor recalls that the ABC members approached him after the church board approved the New Youth Discipling Model in October of 1999. They expressed their joy and thanked him for being instrumental in meeting their concerns and wishes.

vision and mission statements for the New Youth Discipling Model. It took them over a month before they were able to agree on the statements. The ABC Council also deliberated on the supporting components of the New Youth Discipling Model. They recommended including the ABC Ministry, the Multi-approach Ministry and the Vision Church in the New Youth Discipling Model. Many of the members of the LACSDA church were willing to commit themselves for the success of the new ministry. The ABC Council also planned the strategies to attain the goal and direction of the New Youth Discipling Model. With thorough planning and creative ideas, the ABC Council hoped that this New Youth Discipling Model would be effective and efficient in nurturing, teaching, and retaining ABC members.

ABC Member Survey

Prior to the launch of the New Youth Discipling Model in January, 2000, the church pastor worked closely with the ABC Council to prepare a survey for all the ABC members on their experience and perspective about language, culture, and LACSDA church ministry to the ABC members. This survey was designed for initial feedback on the formation of the New Youth Discipling Model and was distributed before the model was implemented.⁴ There were twenty questions in the survey using a Likert scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the most agreeable and 5 being the least agreeable. The data gathered was not intended as a formal statistical study, but was for the purpose of providing verifiable information that could be used in the construction of the model.

⁴See appendix B for a copy of the ABC Member Survey. This survey was distributed to twenty-two attending and non-attending ABC members on November 13, 1999.

The survey was distributed to twenty-two attending and non-attending ABC members in the LACSDA church. Fifteen of them participated in the survey before the launching of the New Youth Discipling Model. The results were studied and analyzed one by one by the ABC Council. Questions 1 to 5 were on the language issues. The results of the survey administered prior to the implementation are reported in table 1.

TABLE 1
RESULTS OF ABC MEMBER SURVEY ON LANGUAGE ISSUE

Question	Likert Scale with <i>N</i> =15					% Agree	Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5			
1. Primary language is English and use it regularly.	11	2	1	0	1	0.87	1.53	1.13
2. Do not enjoy worshipping in Chinese with Chinese members.	11	3	0	1	0	0.93	1.40	0.82
3. Unable to communicate proficiently in Chinese with peers.	12	1	1	1	0	0.87	1.40	0.91
4. Do not enjoy Chinese songs and sermons.	11	1	2	0	1	0.80	1.60	1.18
5. Uncomfortable with Chinese and English translation.	13	1	0	1	0	0.93	1.27	0.80

Note. “% Agree” denotes combined responses by survey participants to 1 and 2 on the Likert scale where 1 is most agreeable and 5 is least agreeable.

On these questions, the means for the scale were between 1.27 and 1.60 with standard deviation between 0.80 and 1.18. The percentage of those indicating a score of 1 or 2 on the Likert scale was between 80% and 93% on questions 1 to 5. The low standard deviation showed that there was a high homogeneity among the ABC members

in regard to the use of language. This indicated that most ABC members agreed or agreed strongly that English was their preferred language for worship, fellowship, and communication at the LACSDA church.

Questions 6 to 10 were on the culture issues. The results of the survey administered prior to the implementation are reported in table 2.

TABLE 2
RESULTS OF ABC MEMBER SURVEY ON CULTURE ISSUE

Question	Likert Scale with <i>N</i> =15					% Agree	Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5			
6. The LACSDA church helps retain Chinese culture.	10	2	2	0	1	0.80	1.67	1.18
7. Proud of Chinese-American culture.	10	3	1	1	0	0.87	1.53	1.23
8. Able to relate both Chinese-American and Chinese cultures.	10	1	2	2	0	0.73	1.73	1.16
9. Prefer the Americanized culture to that of family's culture.	9	2	1	1	2	0.73	2.00	1.51
10. Right to adopt culture that he/she is comfortable with.	10	2	1	1	1	0.80	1.73	1.28

Note. “% Agree” denotes combined responses by survey participants to 1 and 2 on the Likert scale where 1 is most agreeable and 5 is least agreeable.

On these questions, the means for the scale were between 1.53 and 2.00 with standard deviation between 1.16 and 1.51. The percentage of those indicating a score of 1 or 2 on the Likert scale was between 73% and 87%. The low standard deviation showed that there was a high homogeneity among the ABC members in regard to culture.

These numbers pointed out that ABC members were comfortable with their own culture or Americanized Chinese culture.

Questions 11 to 15 were about ABC members' involvement in the ministry of the LACSDA church. The results of the survey administered prior to the implementation are reported in table 3.

TABLE 3
RESULTS OF ABC MEMBER SURVEY ON MINISTRY ISSUE

Question	Likert Scale with <i>N</i> =15					% Agree	Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5			
11. Not invited to minister with Chinese-speaking members.	10	3	1	1	0	0.87	1.53	0.92
12. Unable to use gifts and talents in the LACSDA church.	11	2	1	0	1	0.87	1.53	1.13
13. Unappreciated for contributing time and effort in the ministry.	12	3	0	0	0	1	1.20	0.41
14. The LACSDA church's ministry did not help equip oneself.	12	2	1	0	0	0.93	1.27	0.59
15. Church programs did not meet the need to grow in various aspects.	11	3	1	0	0	0.93	1.33	0.62

Note. “% Agree” denotes combined responses by survey participants to 1 and 2 on the Likert scale where 1 is most agreeable and 5 is least agreeable.

On these questions, the means of the scale were between 1.20 and 1.53 with standard deviation between 0.41 and 1.13. The percentage of those indicating a score of 1 or 2 on the Likert scale was between 87% and 100%. The low standard deviation

showed that there was a high homogeneity among the ABC members in regard to lack of ministry to the ABC members. This supported the notion that ABC members were neglected in the ministry of LACSDA church and they did not feel comfortable to serve at the church.

Questions 16 to 20 were about how well ABC members responded to the concept of a new ministry that the church had voted to launch. The results of the survey administered prior to the implementation are reported in table 4.

TABLE 4
RESULTS OF ABC MEMBER SURVEY ON THE NEED FOR A NEW MINISTRY

Question	Likert Scale with <i>N</i> =15					% Agree	Mean	<i>SD</i>
	1	2	3	4	5			
16. Church leadership made an effort with a new youth ministry.	13	2	0	0	0	1.00	1.13	0.35
17. Thrilled that a separate ministry was to cater to ABCs' needs.	14	1	0	0	0	1.00	1.07	0.26
18. Would share faith with other ABCs in the new youth ministry.	12	2	0	1	0	0.93	1.33	0.82
19. Would stay with the LACSDA church to support new ministry.	13	0	1	1	0	0.87	1.33	0.90
20. A born-again Christian with desire to help in the new ministry.	11	1	3	0	0	0.80	1.47	0.83

Note. “% Agree” denotes combined responses by survey participants to 1 and 2 on the Likert scale where 1 is most agreeable and 5 is least agreeable.

On these questions, the means of the scale were 1.07 and 1.47 with standard deviation between 0.26 and 0.90. The percentage of those indicating a score of 1 or 2 on the Likert scale was between 80% and 100%. The low standard deviation indicated that there was a high homogeneity among the ABC members in regard to the need for a new ministry model. This showed that ABC members would support the new ministry that was geared for them and they would actively participate in the new ministry model. Although this survey had only twenty questions and only fifteen ABC members participated, it provided a good source of information about what the ABC members wanted to see happen in the LACSDA church in general and their individual spiritual lives in particular.

The Process

It took a lot of effort and time to begin the process of implementing the New Youth Discipling Model. First, the ABC Council put the plan into writing, outlining what they wanted to see happen in the New Youth Discipling Model. The ABC members held discussions and brainstorming sessions. The outcome of the meetings provided the goals and guidelines on how to proceed with implementation of the New Youth Discipling Model. It also ensured the smooth running of the ministry for the best interests of the ABC members.

The ABC Council decided to officially launch the Youth Discipling Model in January of 2000. There were fifteen ABC members in the beginning. The ABC Council contacted ABC members and invited them to become involved in the Youth Discipling Model. They met regularly at the church chapel on Sabbath mornings for Sabbath school and worship service. The programs and activities were semi-formal during church hours.

The ABC Council members were worship leaders and from time to time, they recruited other ABC members to lead the worship. They arranged a lot of inspirational music and songs to praise and worship God. During the Sabbath School, ABC members were encouraged to participate in the discussion of the Sabbath School lesson study. The ABC Council members and sponsors rotated themselves to lead Bible study and provide sermons on each Sabbath.

There was always a joint potluck with the Chinese-speaking members after church service and it was a good opportunity to fellowship with other members within the same church. The Chinese-speaking and the ABC members finished their worship services at about the same time so that the LACSDA church families could get together for a meal on each Sabbath. This practice was able to partially satisfy older Chinese-speaking members who were very much against a separate ABC ministry before the church board took the action to vote for a New Youth Discipling Model.

ABC members generally had programs and activities that took up much of the day on Sabbath. They were able to integrate the ABC Ministry, the Multi-approach Ministry, and the Vision Church in the New Youth Discipling Model. Many of them participated in the programs and activities that were geared to fulfill the vision and mission of the ministry for ABC members. The programs and activities sometimes lasted until late Saturday night. The whole church, particularly the church board and elders, supported the New Youth Discipling Model. Although this process made frequent demands on the time of the members, it was an approach that encouraged ABC members to be involved in Christian ministry and equipped to advance the cause of Christ. It took great commitment and dedication on the part of the church pastor, church leaders, ABC

Council members, and ABC members for the New Youth Discipling Model to become a reality.

During the Implementation of the New Youth Discipling Model

Planning the New Youth Discipling Model was easier than implementing it.

When the New Youth Discipling Model was inaugurated on January 1, 2000, the first Sabbath of the year, there was a celebration ceremony for the ABC Council and the ABC members. The purpose was to have a new beginning, to build rapport, and to strengthen relationships among all those who attended. Thereafter, several social events, one-on-one encounters, informal gatherings, discussions, and trips also helped to build relationships and foster fellowship among the ABC Council and the ABC members. It was essential to hold these activities in order to build mutual trust and rapport early during the implementation of the New Youth Discipling Model.

Beyond the fellowship and trust-building, there were also some devotional talks and sharing of thoughts and perspectives. Philip Samaan supported the idea of fellowship and trust-building among individuals with whom leaders are working. He stated that “Jesus was most often called teacher in the New Testament because of his approach to ministry: He taught and performed by examples.”⁵ Jesus gave undivided attention to individuals and ministered to them. In his encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:4-26), Jesus initiated a conversation by building trust and friendship before sharing the good news of salvation with her. The ABC Council sought to learn from the example of Jesus. They understood the importance of building rapport, relationships, and

⁵Samaan, *Christ's Way of Reaching People*, 46.

trust between the ABC Council and the ABC members during the early implementation of the New Youth Discipling Model.

Problem Solving

In order to carry out the New Youth Discipling Model effectively and efficiently, the ABC Council and the sponsors regularly made sure that issues and problems were handled carefully before they grew too large to manage. Open communication was encouraged to avoid any misunderstandings or unpleasant feelings. Initially there were some hurdles such as disagreements between the ABC Council and the church leaders regarding activities and programs. The younger ABC members, in particular, wanted more freedom for their ministry. Places such as cinemas and karaoke clubs were suggested which the ABC Council sponsors and the church pastor felt were inappropriate to the original vision and mission of the New Youth Discipling Model. However, with congenial discussions and explanations, they were able to find alternatives such as state parks and beaches for their activities.

The ABC members sometimes found it difficult to find interesting topics to study and exciting things to do week after week. However, with the leadership of the ABC Council and support of the sponsors, creative ideas were introduced which kept the group activities dynamic. The ABC members were enthusiastic about the ministry that was created for them and by them. They were willing to participate and support the New Youth Discipling Model.

Assessments

Aubrey Malphurs stated that “churches that do not evaluate what they are doing

and the people who are doing it will struggle to improve. What gets evaluated gets done, and usually gets done well.”⁶ A number of assessments were administered during the implementation of the New Youth Discipling Model. The purpose was to evaluate if the strategies adopted by the ABC Council were effective and if any improvements were needed to fulfill the vision and mission of the model. The criteria of the assessments were based on the goals of the New Youth Discipling Model to teach, nurture, disciple, and retain baptized ABC members at the LACSDA church and to reach out to those who were not baptized.⁷ The process included evaluating various aspects of desired outcomes on friendship enhancement, fellowship improvement, worship enrichment, relationship building, and Christian peer group development.⁸

During the implementation of the New Youth Discipling Model between January of 2000 and January of 2005, the church board and the ABC Council monitored and evaluated processes that provided information which could be used to determine whether the outcomes of the model were being achieved. Assessment tools, such as surveys and interviews, and questionnaires for the self-reporting aspect of the evaluation, were developed collaboratively by the church pastor and the ABC Council to evaluate if the New Youth Discipling Model was on the right path to accomplish its purposes. These assessments were administered to determine the progress and success of the model.⁹

⁶Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 54.

⁷See description of New Youth Discipling Model and its goals, above, p. 84-86.

⁸Note goals and criteria for evaluation and assessment, above, p. 86-88.

⁹See above, p. 86, with regard to observations by leadership and self-reporting.

Survey on the New Youth Discipling Model

Surveys on the New Youth Discipling Model were conducted after its implementation in the beginning of the year 2000.¹⁰ The efforts of the ABC Ministry, the Multi-approach Ministry, and the Vision Church were evaluated to determine their success and for future quality improvement. The ABC members were given the surveys to which they responded anonymously. Thirty copies were distributed to ABC members. They were encouraged to provide relevant information to enhance the effectiveness of the New Youth Discipling Model. A Likert scale of 1 to 5 was used where 1 meant most important and 5 meant least important. Twenty-two ABC members returned the survey and the results were tabulated according to the degree of importance identified by the responses to the survey questions. The ABC Council and the church pastor evaluated the answers one by one and summed them up to get a better idea of how the New Youth Discipling Model was rated. The results of the survey administered during the implementation are reported in table 5.

An overview of the survey supports the following general observations. On the questions, the means of the scale were between 1.64 and 2.14 with a standard deviation between 0.91 and 1.36. The percentage of those indicating a score of 1 or 2 on the Likert scale was between 64% and 82%. This suggested that many of the ABC members agreed that the New Youth Discipling Model had produced positive outcomes for them. The low standard deviation indicated that there was a high homogeneity among the ABC members in regard to the felt need for the New Youth Discipling Model. They seemed to

¹⁰See appendix C for a copy of the Survey on the New Youth Discipling Model.

TABLE 5
RESULTS OF SURVEY ON THE NEW YOUTH DISCIPLING MODEL

Question	Likert Scale with <i>N</i> =22					% Agree	Mean	<i>SD</i>
	1	2	3	4	5			
1. Feel welcomed and affirmed in the new youth model.	14	4	2	2	0	0.82	1.64	1.00
2. The new youth model offers spiritual renewal and growth.	13	4	2	1	2	0.77	1.86	1.32
3. The model provides a friendly and understanding manner.	10	5	3	2	2	0.68	2.14	1.36
4. The ABC Ministry offers exciting programs and activities.	11	6	3	1	1	0.77	1.86	1.13
5. The Multi-approach Ministry helps understanding of God's call.	9	6	5	1	1	0.68	2.05	1.13
6. The Vision Church assists the ministry to others.	10	8	2	2	0	0.82	1.82	0.96
7. The new model helps ABCs to be on fire for God.	9	7	5	1	0	0.73	1.91	0.92
8. The new model assists ABCs on their language and culture.	10	7	4	1	0	0.77	1.82	0.91
9. The new model helps to meet ABCs spiritual needs.	9	6	4	2	1	0.68	2.09	1.19
10. The new model changed lives and ABCs will share it with others.	8	6	6	1	1	0.64	2.14	1.13
11. ABCs would like to take the role of leaders to lead other ABCs.	10	5	4	2	1	0.68	2.05	1.21
12. ABCs would like to remain and serve at LACSDA church.	11	5	3	1	2	0.73	2.00	1.31

Note. "% Agree" denotes combined responses by survey participants to 1 and 2 on the Likert scale where 1 is most agreeable and 5 is least agreeable.

concur that doing something for the ABC members was essential for the church to flourish and grow. This indicated that the ABC members were generally pleased with the New Youth Discipling Model although a number of them checked 4 and 5 on the scale. The ABC Council and the church pastor took the survey results seriously.

The high mean of 2.14 on question 3 reveals that not all the ABC members felt that the New Youth Discipling Model provided a friendly and understanding atmosphere. There were differences of perspectives as to how some programs and activities should be run. Several of the ABC members preferred to focus more on the social components rather than on the spiritual components of the Multi-approach Ministry. They argued that too much emphasis on the spiritual components might turn away newly arrived ABC visitors whom they invited.

The other high means of 2.14 and 2.09 were on Questions 9 and 10 respectively. Question 9 was about whether the New Youth Discipling Model was able to cater to the spiritual needs of the ABC members. Despite some negative responses, the data was encouraging as more ABC members felt that the LACSDA church did care for them by providing several approaches to minister to them. On Question 10, some ABC members concurred that implementation of the New Youth Discipling Model had changed their lives for the better. A number of ABC members believed that while the New Youth Discipling Model had helped them to some degree in their walk with the Lord, the implementation of the model was too recent for them to determine how far or how much it had impacted them. However, from the results of survey, the ABC members appeared to be willing to share the positive changes that they had gained from the model with others, including their peers.

The lowest mean was on Question 1. Most of the ABC members felt welcomed and affirmed in the New Youth Discipling Model. Their responses to this and other questions, as well as triangulated information from the interviews, indicated that there was a loving, caring, and supporting environment where the ABC members felt comfortable and safe. They were able to grow in the faith while enjoying renewal and confirmation in the Lord. Their wishes for English language church services in the company of their peers of similar culture also contributed to how the ABC members responded to Question 1.

Two of the most important conclusions made from the survey relate to questions 11 and 12. These responses reveal that many ABC members appeared to be willing to take the role of leaders and would remain with the congregation and serve the Lord through the LACSDA church.

Interviews

The church pastor randomly conducted interviews with attending and non-attending ABC members. The interviews were an ongoing process, conducted between January of 2000 and January of 2005. Questions were drawn from a set of twelve, asked selectively as appropriate to the situation.¹¹ The purpose of the interviews was to get direct feedback on how the operation of the New Youth Discipling Model was progressing and how it could be improved so that the vision and mission of the ministry could be achieved. Feedback was recorded in family visitation files kept by the pastor.

¹¹See appendix C for a copy of the Interview Questions. Interview Questions were administered by the church pastor, mostly during his home visits with the ABC members and their families.

Based on notes taken during the interviews, the comments of ABC members were summarized and entered into the files.

The ABC members' response to the interviews was evaluated through observation of their interest and engagement with the programs and activities of the New Youth Discipling Model. Their answers to the interview questions were also indicative of what was going on in their lives and if more assistance could be offered to nurture and retain them in the LACSDA church. In addition to conducting the interviews during home visits, attending and non-attending ABC members were asked appropriate questions from the interview protocol during telephone calls, informal conversations, and at some social events when there were opportunities to do so. Interviews were conducted not only as a conduit to get acquainted with ABC members, but also as a means to reach out to non-attending ABC members to inform them about the New Youth Discipling Model and to invite them back to the LACSDA church.

The church pastor took notes during interviews so that he could use the information collected to assist the New Youth Discipling Model dynamically and also so that he could use the material as supporting data for this research project. The goal was to make the New Youth Discipling Model more efficient and effective in discipling and retaining ABC members. The church pastor would present concerns, desires, and ideas of the ABC members to the ABC Council and its sponsors for consideration and support. Thus, with interviews, there was an ongoing evaluation and monitoring process during the implementation of the New Youth Discipling Model. The purpose was to determine what further actions, changes, or improvements needed to be made for the success of the model.

An analysis of the themes emerging from the interviews showed that ABC members unanimously supported the overall ministry and direction that the New Youth Discipling Model espoused. They stated they were excited to know that the more established Chinese-speaking members finally consented to a separate ministry that was geared towards the cultural and linguistic needs of ABC members. They appeared to be very excited about the vision and mission as well as the goals that the New Youth Discipling Model adopted. During the interviews, some ABC members expressed their perspectives that each culture and language should stand on its own and should maintain its own identity in church, and that it made no sense to be assimilated into the Chinese culture and language. They also voiced that the ABC Council was very helpful in assisting them to focus on the objectives of the New Youth Discipling Model.

The analysis of the interviews focused on identifying how the New Youth Discipling Model had helped the ABC members in their spiritual journey and if it encouraged them to remain faithful to the Lord and serve him at the LACSDA church. The findings from the interviews suggested that the spiritual life of ABC members seemed to have improved. They attended the church more regularly and were motivated to participate in various types of activities and programs. They also exemplified a changed attitude towards church life and were more conscientious with their personal devotion and worship. During the interviews with some of the leaders of the New Youth Discipling Model, they reported that they were able to experience God in their team work with other ABC members and that it was very rewarding for them to have hands-on experience serving in a Christian community at the LACSDA church. Many ABC

members stated in the interviews that they would continue to serve the Lord at the LACSDA church.

Questionnaires

There was a quarterly church business meeting on the first Sabbath of each quarter between January of 2000 to January of 2005 for ABC members to discuss the direction and achievements of the New Youth Discipling Model and its supporting components.¹² During the church business meeting, questionnaires prepared by the church pastor and the ABC Council were given to ABC members. The quarterly questionnaires were provided to ABC members to evaluate the progress of the New Youth Discipling Model.¹³ ABCs were invited to provide both positive and negative feedback in the questionnaires. It was a good opportunity for ABC members to suggest new ideas or voice their opinions for improving the programs and activities. ABC members were encouraged to answer all the questionnaires as honestly as possible. The goal was to get as much feedback and as many responses as possible from the ABC members so that the ABC Council could assess their needs and dreams. The issues and proposals that ABC members raised would be addressed in the ABC Council meeting. Appropriate measures were taken to handle the assessment feedback and proposals with the best interests of the ABC members in mind.

The themes that emerged from the questionnaires that demanded attention by the ABC Council included the issue of how to retain, minister to, and effectively integrate the

¹²Los Altos Chinese Seventh-day Adventist Church, Minutes of LACSDA Church Board Meeting, January 8, 2000.

¹³See appendix C for a copy of the New Youth Discipling Model Questionnaires.

ABC members within the LACSDA church. The answers received from the questionnaires indicated that the LACSDA church had developed a distinctive approach that fairly and comprehensively addressed the needs of the ABC members and made the church a relevant place for their spiritual growth. With the New Youth Discipling Model, the church had taken the necessary measures to minister to the ABC members and to keep them involved in various church activities and programs.

From the feedback to the questionnaires, the pastor and the ABC Council concurred that most ABC members were pleased with the effort to provide a relevant ministry through the New Youth Discipling Model. Their comments on the questionnaires suggested that ABC members were on the right path to becoming more committed and mature members of the LACSDA church. Their willingness to participate in the ABC Ministry, the Multi-approach Ministry, and the Vision Church indicated that the ABC members were open and eager to involve themselves in the LACSDA church when their felt needs were attended to and their aspirations to serve the Lord in their own culture and language were met. Some ABC members wrote in the questionnaires that they were pleased to be part of the greater family of the LACSDA church although they spoke little Chinese or no Chinese at all. These positive responses on the questionnaires were attributed by the respondents to the willingness of the LACSDA church leadership to shift the traditional method of ministry in an unprecedented way toward a novel ministry that yielded positive outcomes in the spiritual and social lives of the ABC members.

In the analysis of the responses from the questionnaires, the pastor and the ABC Council found out that there was some minor negative feedback by the ABC members on

the LACSDA church as a whole. A few of the ABC members complained that although they received a measure of help from the Chinese-speaking members in terms of moral and financial support, the latter did not manifest the mindset for which they were seeking. The OBC members were not always inclusive and accepting, and it was sometimes difficult for the ABCs to feel that they were integral to the community and valued members of the “body of Christ.” The ABC members asserted that although they were genetically Chinese, the Chinese-speaking members tended to use language that distinguished the two groups. As a result, the ABCs stated that they found more commonalities with their peers than with the Chinese-speaking members in their ministry and relationships.

Leadership Team Observations

The LACSDA church leadership held a church business meeting on January 11, 2003 to evaluate the success of the model. During the meeting, the ABC Council informed the LACSDA church congregation that the New Youth Discipling Model was able to provide positive influences on the ABC members in their faith development and growth in discipleship.¹⁴ They appeared to enjoy using the language and culture of their preference to serve the Lord and to reach out to others. The worship atmosphere was more conducive and favorable to the ABC members due to the lack of distraction caused by translation. The ABC members were able to focus more on the worship and Bible learning experience.

¹⁴Los Altos Chinese Seventh-day Adventist Church, Minutes of LACSDA Church Business Meeting, January 11, 2003. Similar assessments and conclusions were made over the next two years until January 2005 when the project, as it relates to this dissertation, was completed.

The church pastor reported to the LACSDA church congregation that the New Youth Discipling Model had been a very functional instrument to reach out to and retain ABC members. He stated that the responses of the various assessment tools such as the survey, the interviews and the questionnaires had indicated that ABC members were very supportive of the New Youth Discipling Model. He informed the congregation that he was able to observe how ABC members participate and have hands-on experience in conducting church worship programs through the ABC Ministry, the Multi-Approach Ministry, and the Vision Church. The church pastor also complimented the LACSDA church congregation on having done well to set the right kind of worship atmosphere by allowing ABC members to conduct their church services in the culture and language of their choice. As a result of this effort, many ABC members remained in the church and were actively involved in various kinds of church ministry.¹⁵

Concluding Assessment of the New Youth Discipling Model

The implementation of the New Youth Discipling Model began in January of 2000. A number of assessments on the New Youth Discipling Model were administered over time until the project concluded in January of 2005. The process of carrying out assessments was, at times, tedious and time consuming, and took a lot of patience and cooperation on the part of the church leaders and the ABC members. The LACSDA church had been experiencing the problem of losing its ABC members. However, through the assessments, the church leaders were able to discover many issues that had

¹⁵Los Altos Chinese Seventh-day Adventist Church, Minutes of LACSDA Church Business Meeting, January 8, 2005.

not been addressed before which were vital to the ABC members' participation at the church. The church leaders were able to focus on those issues and improve their approaches to cater to the felt needs of the ABC members. The assessments provided the church leaders ample insights to enhance the New Youth Discipling Model and prevent many of the ABC members from leaving the church.

Based on feedback from the various assessments administered, the New Youth Discipling Model appeared to provide ABC members with the opportunity to connect with their own ABC culture and language through faith development and growth in discipleship. The assessment results indicated that ABC members were able to enhance their friendship with their peers, improve fellowship quality, enrich worship atmosphere, build better relationships with the church, and develop a satisfying Christian peer group in the New Youth Discipling Model.¹⁶ Through the model, ABC members were also able to discover their talents and gifts to prepare them to serve at the LACSDA church. Evaluation of the desired outcomes was based on observation made by church leadership, self-reporting by the ABC members, and growth in the number of the ABC members at the LACSDA church.¹⁷

The evaluation of the success of the New Youth Discipling Model was observed by the church leadership. The board of the LACSDA church was well pleased with the positive outcomes after the implementation of the New Youth Discipling Model. The ABC members were able to actively involve themselves with the LACSDA church's

¹⁶Note objectives of the New Youth Discipling Model as enumerated on p. 84.

¹⁷See p. 86.

goals and objectives through the New Youth Discipling Model. They seemed to enjoy and cherish the programs and activities that the ABC Council designed for them.

The church leadership was able to conclude that the church had become more caring, loving, and friendly as a result of the effort to implement the vision and mission the ABC Council had helped develop with the ABC members. Through the ABC Ministry, the Multi-approach Ministry, and the Vision Church, the ABC Council was able to focus on and work towards the objectives of the vision and mission statements. The ABC members seemed to develop a burning desire to be trained and equipped as good disciples of Jesus Christ. They were able to utilize the resources that the LACSDA church provided to empower them in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with other non-Christian ABCs.

The ABC members reported that they were able to get closer to one another and were able to develop their friendships, fellowship, worship, and relationships to achieve the goals of the New Youth Discipling Model. It appeared that the spiritual condition of the ABC members was very different during the implementation of the New Youth Discipling Model. They seemed to be more devoted and committed to being followers of Christ. They stated that they were able to discover their ministry skills and utilize them as members of a congregation in which they felt they had a stake as equal players.¹⁸

In addition to the encouraging feedback from the church leadership and ABC members, the number of ABC members grew consistently after the implementation of the model. The attrition of ABC membership had been a serious problem for the LACSDA

¹⁸Los Altos Chinese Seventh-day Adventist Church, Minutes of LACSDA Church Business Meeting, January 11, 2003.

church, but through the implementation of the New Youth Discipling Model, the decline in the number of ABC members was averted. The commitment of the ABC members was attested by their faithful church attendance and participation in church programs and activities.

The Morale of the ABC Members

The morale of the ABC members has been greatly boosted by all the positive feedback and encouragement of the LACSDA church. The ABC members were very excited that they had a part to play in the formation of their ministry and church programs in the New Youth Discipling Model. By using the language of their heart—the English language—and their ability to worship God in their mother tongue and praise God in the music of their choice, they had their own way of expressing themselves in the experience of serving God. The Word of God that they heard and the music that they played, the songs and praises that they used, and the manner in which they worshiped God were more fitting to the taste and culture of the ABC members than had been the case when they worshipped together with the Chinese-speaking members. In the framework of worship, ABC members could celebrate the spectrum of their feelings, expressions, concerns, and joys, using signs and symbols that had special meaning for them. The ABC members' morale improved due to the fact that they continued to be actively involved and attended church faithfully.

A Closer Relationship

Through the New Youth Discipling Model, the ABC Council intended to help ABC members experience the abundant Christian life about which Jesus spoke in John

10:10: “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” Aside from regular church programs, the ABC Council worked with ABC members in organizing various types of activities such as gym nights, picnics, trips to places of interest, and other witnessing programs to the homeless shelters. Through these activities, the relationships among the ABC members have been strengthened and they were able to minister together as a team in the New Youth Discipling Model. They were also able to build mutual trust and respect for one another.

ABC members were able to foster healthier and more vibrant relationships among themselves when they served the Lord together in the New Youth Discipling Model. This was accomplished by organizing activities together, sharing their faith with other ABC individuals, engaging in meaningful corporate worship, leading spirit-led prayer, and communicating the gospel which resulted in intimate fellowship within the LACSDA church. They were able to build friendships and relationships in the New Youth Discipling Model.

Empowerment of the ABC Members

The ABC members were greatly empowered to carry out the great commission of Matthew 28:19 through the New Youth Discipling Model. They were aware that Jesus did not command his followers merely to share the gospel. He also commanded them to make disciples. The ABC members have been taught that followers of Christ are to do far more than communicate the facts of salvation through Christ. They are to come alongside new believers and help them to have a relationship with Christ and to live for him. Some churches stop with the proclamation of God’s truth and fail to nurture the new life that results when people receive that truth.

Through the activities and programs of the New Youth Discipling Model, the ABC members were empowered to focus on the vision and mission that they helped put together with the ABC Council. They were empowered to experience a relationship with Jesus Christ through nurturing spiritual disciplines such as prayer, scripture reading, regular devotions, worship, and personal reflection. They were encouraged to provide a sound Christian ministry that reaches out to everyone, especially non-Christian ABCs, and helps lead them into a personal relationship with Jesus.

An example of the empowerment was the retreat to Wawona Adventist Camp in Yosemite National Park in the summer of 2001 which resulted in three baptisms.¹⁹ The ABC members were encouraged to invite their friends to the retreat after befriending them for about a year. These three individuals had been visiting the New Youth Discipling Model worship regularly and made the decision to be baptized after hearing inspiring messages during the retreat.

The church pastor provided a report to the church board on August 25, 2001 on the feedback that he received during a youth retreat in early August of 2001 at Wawona Adventist Camp in Yosemite National Park. He stated that a group of ABC members approached him and they informed him that they had a sense of belonging and comfort at the church because of the New Youth Discipling Model. They would remain at the church to serve their fellow ABC members as long as they were able to do so.²⁰ The sentiments expressed early on in the project in response to the activities and experiences

¹⁹Los Altos Chinese Seventh-day Adventist Church, Minutes of LACSDA Church Board Meeting on the Report of the Youth Retreat in Yosemite National Park, August 25, 2001.

²⁰Ibid.

of the New Youth Discipling Model were repeated through the years until 2005 and confirmed as participation and attendance by ABC members increased.

Another example of the empowerment was to challenge ABC members to utilize their gifts and talents in leadership and ministry of the church. During a church business meeting on January 8, 2005 to evaluate the success of the New Youth Discipling Model, the church pastor reported to the LACSDA church congregation that the ABC members were able to receive a number of leadership training sessions during the implementation of the New Youth Discipling Model. This training included workshops to equip and prepare ABC members to leadership positions.²¹ During the workshops, ABC members were encouraged to excel in their knowledge and skills to lead others in a vital and growing relationship with Jesus Christ. Some ABC members were initially shy or reluctant to lead in group Bible study and church programs. However, after the ABC Council empowered them through leadership training and workshops, they were willing to participate as group leaders. By training the ABC members to lead, the ABC Council was able to equip them and allow them to be leaders in group Bible study and church programs. Many ABC members were pleased to have the privilege of participating as group leaders in the New Youth Discipling Model.

Because of these developments, the church board affirmed the ABC members and supported the continuing implementation of the New Youth Discipling Model. The ABC members were also empowered to develop a clear purpose to become mature Christians in the community of the LACSDA church, responsible for their own spiritual growth in

²¹Los Altos Chinese Seventh-day Adventist Church, Minutes of LACSDA Church Business Meeting, January 8, 2005.

relationship with God, both in the present and for the future. They were given opportunities to be leaders and they stated that they felt they were truly part of the LACSDA church extended family. Through empowerment, the ABC members were inspired and motivated to fulfill the Great Commission as outlined in Matt 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-18, and also in accordance with Acts 1:8. They were also equipped and trained to engage in the New Youth Discipling Model so that they could remain and serve the Lord at the LACSDA church.

The Number of ABC Members

The bold steps to taken by the LACSDA church board to begin the New Youth Discipling Model have paid off. With the consistent effort and support of the church, the New Youth Discipling Model has brought positive results that continue to be evidenced. Average attendance on a given Sabbath was 15 in the year 2000 during the first year after the implementation of the New Youth Discipling Model. With 3 additional baptized members in 2001, the average attendance increased to 18. Two non-attending ABC members returned to the church in 2002 and, at about the same time, 3 others left for colleges in Southern California. In the same year, a friend of an ABC member was baptized and the number remained the same as the year before.²²

²²Based on church records and recollections of the church pastor.

TABLE 6
ABC MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

Year	Average number of attending ABC members
2000	15
2001	18
2002	18
2003	20
2004	22
2005	24

In the ensuing years, although there were fluctuations in attendance due to ABC members moving away or going to colleges in other cities, the average active membership continued to increase steadily, signifying that the New Youth Discipling Model was working. By the year 2005, the average attendance was 24, an increase of 60 percent, compared to 2000.

Summary

In the process of growing, change is a constant. Changes are necessary in order to develop and improve. The difficulties associated with change may eventually pay off through persistence and consistence in a positive direction. In the postmodern age, if the church refuses to change in its approach to carrying out the great commission, it will not be able to accomplish its goals of effectively reaching out to others with the gospel. Changing the approach to share the gospel does not mean altering the core beliefs of the church. The New Youth Discipling Model has retained the essential elements of an

Adventist Christian theology while at the same time creating strategies for ministry appropriate to a postmodern ABC setting.

Although there were a lot of initial objections to a separate ministry for the ABC members, the LACSDA church launched a New Youth Discipling Model that was geared to its ABC members. Retaining the ABC members is a challenge as is reaching out to ABC individuals. Through the New Youth Discipling Model, the ABC members' were more ready to achieve their potential as members of the "body of Christ" (1 Cor 12:27). The number of ABC members has consistently increased since the implementation of the New Youth Discipling Model in the year 2000 and it is hoped that this growth will continue in the years to come.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

God is not a God of any one particular people or culture and he does not discriminate against any society or ethnic group. In the context of this project, God is as much the God of the Chinese ethnic minority as he is of the majority population in North America. He is also the God of the third culture individuals caught between the American and Chinese cultures, specifically the ABC members of the LACSDA church. Jesus did not discriminate during His ministry on earth. He corrected erroneous concepts about ethnic missions when ministering to non-Jewish peoples. He accepts all those who come to him for salvation. In the same manner, he loves the Chinese people as much as he loves the Jews, the Samaritans, and the Gentiles. Because of this, it is only appropriate for the LACSDA church to heed the example of Jesus Christ by carrying the great gospel message to everyone, including the ABC individuals who have been neglected for so long. Chinese churches should minister to their ABC members as long as time lasts. They should also cater to their ABC members' linguistic and cultural needs.

Luke 5:10-11 provides an example of how Jesus attracts men and women by accepting them the way they are. He is willing to meet them on their own level, accommodating their differences but without alienating them. Similarly, the Christian

church can participate in the task of teaching the truth, affirming worth, and accepting the linguistic and cultural needs of its members within the context and parameters of the gospel. The LACSDA church boldly took the initiative of following the example of Jesus by meeting the linguistic and cultural needs of the ABC members. On this basis, a solution to the dilemma of the ABC members was determined.

Conclusions

Scriptural and Inspirational Guidance

In the Old Testament, God chose the nation of Israel with the purpose that it would share the message of salvation with the surrounding nations. He appointed Israel to be “a kingdom of priests” when He spoke to Moses in Exodus 19:6. In the same way, the LACSDA church has been chosen as “a kingdom of priests” and it needs to exercise its role, particularly in discipling and retaining its ABC members. The ultimate purpose of the LACSDA church is to bring people to a knowledge of Christ and help them to become part of the family of God. The members of the LACSDA church can begin to bring the gospel of salvation from where they are without going to the “end of the world.”

In the New Testament, Jesus showed His love and ministered to the felt-needs of both the Jewish people and those who were outside His own language and culture. Similarly, Jesus loves the Chinese as much as He loves anyone else. For this reason, it is appropriate for the LACSDA church generally, and the ABC members in particular, to follow the steps and examples of Jesus Christ in their ministry. He did not discriminate on the basis of culture or language. On the contrary, He ministered to the deepest needs of any who came to Him for help.

The apostle Paul came from a multicultural and multilingual background. He was able to cross cultural and linguistic boundaries with knowledge and sensitivity. His evangelistic strategies were adapted to people of varying language and cultural backgrounds. The same was true of several other apostles in the early church such as Peter and John who reached out to people of various cultures and languages. Thus, the LACSDA church's decision to provide a ministry for the ABC members is supported by biblical precedent.

Ellen G. White, a pioneer leader in Adventism, provided instruction regarding activities among ethnic groups, specifying that distinctions should not be made in the church based on race, language or culture. She presented important principles and insights into the conduct of ethnic mission. The LACSDA church has attempted to follow her advice, appealing to Scripture as the authoritative source for handling language and culture issues.

The mission of the LACSDA church is to see many people accept Christ as their personal Savior. Their task is to invite people to come to God and be converted. In the past, the LACSDA church has not been able to disciple and retain its ABC members. A break from the traditional approach to ministry in the Chinese Adventist community was crucial in order to carry out the great commission of Jesus. The LACSDA church has a solid theological basis from biblical teachings and Ellen White's counsels to continue to strive towards discipling and retaining its ABC members. Changes were essential and, after proper planning, training, equipping, and implementing, the ability of the LACSDA congregation to disciple and retain its ABC members has improved significantly.

The Impact of the New Youth Discipling Model

The impact of the New Youth Discipling Model was very encouraging to the ABC members. The goals to integrate ABC members' friendship, fellowship, and worship in the language and culture of their preference were achieved. Their desire to have a better working relationship with of the LACSDA church ministry team was attained. The ABC members seemed to feel comfortable with the ministry that was geared to them, for them, and by them. The criteria by which evaluations were made for the New Youth Discipling Model to teach, nurture, disciple, and retain baptized ABC members at the LACSDA church and to reach out to those who were not baptized were realized for the most part. The assessments administered indicated that the New Youth Discipling Model has indeed positively impacted the ministry of the LACSDA church in general, and its ABC members in particular.

Before the implementation of the New Youth Discipling Model, the drive to preserve the language and culture of the Chinese-speaking immigrants has had unintended negative consequences for their ABC children. As a result, the LACSDA church was not able to retain the ABC members who desired separate worship services in English for their comprehension and spiritual growth, but whose requests were turned down by church elders. Exclusively using the traditional Chinese approach to cater to the felt-needs of the American-born Chinese has not and will not work. A new generation presents different needs, and the approach to ministry which was appropriate for their parents is ineffective for the ABC members. Cultural and linguistic differences were two of the greatest obstacles in ministering to the ABC members at the LACSDA church.

These differences needed to be addressed and corrected, or the church was bound to lose its ABC members.

The intercultural and inter-linguistic differences have not only led to dysfunction of the LACSDA church in its mission, but also the loss of a generation of young Chinese ABC members. From research in the LACSDA church records and input from senior members, it appears that as many as 50 percent of ABC members became disenchanted with the church as teens and young adults. While a minority of these ABC members remained at the LACSDA church or transferred their membership to other Asian or Caucasian churches which have better facilities or programs that address their needs, the majority have left the church.

The ABC Ministry, the Multi-approach Ministry, and the Vision Church were implemented to support the objectives of the New Youth Discipling Model. Ministries in this new model were designed to disciple and to serve a specific target group, the ABC members. With the various surveys, questionnaires, and interviews conducted, this strategy has proven to be an effective way to hold the main congregation and the ABC members together. It applies a comprehensive approach to ensure that the New Youth Discipling Model is beneficial to both the ABC members and the LACSDA congregation as a whole.

The ABC members at the LACSDA church have been reminded of their responsibilities to promote the vision and fulfill the mission that the church has entrusted to them. Many approaches and strategies were employed to reach their goals and objectives. According to the information collected from the surveys, questionnaires, and interviews, the ABC members were more united than before and they were willing to

contribute to the success of the New Youth Discipling Model. In the final analysis, the model has indeed been a blessing to the LACSDA congregation.

The number of attending ABC members increased by 60 percent between the years 2000 and 2005. The New Youth Discipling Model has positively impacted the ABC members. Since the introduction of the model, the dynamics of the LACSDA church have changed substantially. Not only has the departure of the ABC members been stemmed, but there is also life and vitality in the church. This is due in part to more programs and activities with more new ABC individuals joining the LACSDA church. The ABC members stated that they felt that they were a part of the church ministry and they have gladly involved themselves in the church. The New Youth Discipling Model has indeed supported the LACSDA church to disciple its ABC members and retain them in its congregation.

Recommendations

Consistent with the literature review and findings of this project, the author would like to propose the following recommendations:

1. A quantitative study conducted in all Seventh-day Adventist Chinese churches in North America to determine if these churches are able to reach out, disciple, and retain their ABC members. Based on a sample size that adequately represents the ABC members in the United States, the study should aim to find out from members if their needs are being met. A study of that nature would provide useful information to both Seventh-day Adventist ABC members and non-Seventh-day Adventist ABC Christians.

2. A qualitative study interviewing non-attending ABC Adventists to find out what their reasons are for non-attendance.

3. A survey of pastors of Chinese churches in North America to discover what kind of discipling models or programs their churches implement, if any, that are geared specifically for their ABC members.

4. Encouraging and enabling Chinese Immigrant parents to adopt a multilingual and multicultural worldview whereby parental values from both American and Chinese cultures could be utilized for the benefit of their children. Some ABC members are caught between conflicting aspects of the two cultures when parents do not agree on or are not sure of which culture to adopt. Seminars and workshops on “third-culture” kids could be presented in a format that addresses the felt-needs of ABC members.

5. This project to be reproduced in other San Francisco Bay Area Chinese Seventh-day Adventist churches in particular, and other North American Chinese churches in general, so that many more ABC individuals can be reached, retained, and disciplined for the Kingdom of God.

Postscript

The project is a pilot undertaking to design, implement, and evaluate the New Youth Discipling Model at LACSDA church in regards to language and culture for the ABC members. It may require more studies for the leaders of any of the Chinese churches in North America to seek more solutions to handle their own unique ABC members’ felt-needs. It is essential for any church that desires a new ministry model to earnestly design, implement, and evaluate the model in order to minister to their own ABC members in the best way. This is an earnest desire of the writer and the ultimate purpose of this project.

APPENDIX A

THE MULTI-APPROACH MINISTRY

TABLE 7

THE ACTIVITY-BASED APPROACH FOR ABC MEMBERS

Activity	Description
Retreats	<p>Several retreats spaced over the year provide time for the ABC members to be together. The purpose is to enable meaningful community building and spiritual renewal among ABC members. The underlying motive is to strengthen their faith and to help retain them in the LACSDA Church. These retreats also provide ABC members time to address cultural, linguistic, social, and spiritual issues in depth.</p>
Social Events	<p>Holidays such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year, and Lunar Chinese New Year are celebrated in the local community. Other social events such as gym night, games night, talent show, and musical performances are open to the community. The purpose of these events is to create opportunities for ABC members to bring their non-Christian peers to the knowledge of Christ. They can reach out to them through new contacts. It also helps promote the present of the congregation and creates good will in the community.</p>
Trips	<p>Programs such as training camps or mission trips are organized and taken place during school vacations. The purposes of these programs are to assist ABC members to acquire skills to share their faith and to disciple other individuals to become faithful to the Lord.</p>
Joint Events	<p>To provide contact with the ABC members beyond the local congregation. Plans for involvement in an area or regional convention, or for a weekend spent with other churches. The purpose is for the ABC members to get to know other congregations, to fellowship with them, and to gain new innovative ideas and strategies to enhance the New Youth Discipling Model.</p>

TABLE 8

THE MEETING-BASED APPROACH FOR ABC MEMBERS

Meeting	Description
Sabbath School	<p>The ABC Council provides creative and interesting Sabbath School programs to nurture, teach, and help retain ABC members. It also helps them develop a meaningful and devotional prayer life through providing quiet time materials, Sabbath School lessons, and modeling/example. Sabbath School also provides a forum for discussion on issues inherent in the cultural, social, moral, and spiritual development of ABC members. These meetings are conducted in English only and participation is greatly encouraged.</p>
Worship Service	<p>Worship is at the heart of ABC members' spiritual life, bringing them into the presence of God. They seek to grow in their understanding and experience of worship in all its aspects—including praise, thanksgiving, giving, commitment of their lives—personally and in community. The worship service is designed for maturing Christians, and ABC Council strives to make it winsome to people seeking to know God. It offers different service formats to better engage the hearts and minds of ABC members whose cultural identity and language use are different from that of their Chinese-speaking parents. ABC members participate in leading the song service, sharing testimonies, saying prayers, and reading the Bible.</p>
Youth Camp Meeting / Bible Seminar	<p>Youth camp meeting / Bible seminar are held annually. The purpose is to use these meetings to assist ABC members to grow spiritually and to strengthen their faith. When their faith has been strengthened and built up, they may be able to actively involve in the ministry of the New Youth Discipling Model. ABC members are equipped and challenged to reach out in love and faith to non-Adventist friends and the community in the vicinity of the LACSDA Church.</p>

TABLE 9

THE INDIVIDUALLY-BASED APPROACH FOR ABC MEMBERS

Individual	Description
Interest Pairings	<p>Each ABC member is paired with a visitor who has similar interests or outlooks. The host seeks to guide the visitor into a relationship with Christ through friendship, love, and care. Most visitors are converted to Christianity first by friendship, then fellowship, and finally by a personal encounter with the divine. The Individually-based Approach is to help ABC members and visitors to relate well to each other, to develop relationship, and to achieve meaningful spiritual growth.</p>
Worship Involvement	<p>The ABC Council plans active involvement of each individual ABC members in worship. This not only includes traditional components of the service but also encourages creative involvement through their own worship expressions, music, and interpretation of the biblical principles of worship. ABC members are also individually encouraged to experience worship in private and corporate settings. This is done by letting them plan a worship service and allowing them participate in the worship committee.</p>
Personal Visits	<p>The pastor and other church board members intentionally get together with each individual ABC members on an informal but regular basis, for example, for pizza and a soda after church activities. Home visits are also conducted by church leaders. These visits demonstrate an interest in the ABC members, and help to maintain positive interaction conducive to mentoring and role modeling between church leaders and ABC members.</p>
Discipleship	<p>ABC members are trained individually to increase their knowledge and understanding of Bible truths and to apply these truths in every area and relationship of life. This involves discipleship. Discipleship helps ABC members grow into mature devoted disciples of Jesus Christ through intentional discipleship training. To help this happen, the ABC Council prepares training series to help turn ‘seekers’ into believers, believers into disciples, and disciples into disciple-makers. It also focuses on strategic plans to nurture and multiply disciples.</p>

APPENDIX B
ABC MEMBER SURVEY PRIOR TO IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE NEW YOUTH DISCIPLING MODEL

ABC MEMBER SURVEY

Dear ABC Members:

As a faith community who honors your potential and cares for your needs, the LACSDA Church invites you to voice your concerns and offer your talents to the ministry of the church. Your abilities, desires, and ideas are very important and are noted by the church.

Personal Information (Optional):

Name: _____ Gender: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____ Telephone: _____

Please rank order the following on the scale on the right and circle the number from 1 to 5 where 1 = most agreeable to me, and 5 = least agreeable to me:

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. My primary language is English and I use this language regularly. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I don't enjoy worshipping in Chinese with the Chinese-speaking members. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I am unable to proficiently use the Chinese language to communicate with my peers. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I don't enjoy singing in Chinese language and listening to Chinese sermons. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I am not comfortable with the translation of English and Chinese languages at church. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. The LACSDA Church has helped me to retain my "Chineseness" culture. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. I am proud of my Chinese-American culture and my culture is different from that of the Chinese-speaking members. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I can relate my culture with the culture of the Chinese-speaking members. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. I prefer the Americanized culture to that of my family's culture. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10. I have the right to adopt the culture that I am comfortable with. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. I am not invited to minister together with Chinese-speaking members and to become a valuable member of the church. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. I don't have the opportunity to use my gifts and talents with the Chinese-speaking members in the LACSDA Church. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. I am not appreciated by the LACSDA Church for contributing my time and effort in the ministry of the church. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. In the past, the ministry at the LACSDA Church has not helped me to be equipped as a matured Christian. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. The programs of the LACSDA Church do not meet my needs and help me to grow intellectually, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. The LACSDA Church leadership makes a sincere effort to assist ABC members with a new youth ministry. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. I am thrilled that the LACSDA Church is going to offer a separate ABC worship service to cater to their needs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. I would like to share my faith with my ABC friends and invite them to worship with me at the New Youth Discipling Model. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. I would like to continue to stay with the LACSDA congregation and support its ministry at the new youth discipling model. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. I am a born-again Christian and I am willing to actively participate in the new youth discipling model. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

APPENDIX C

ABC MEMBER INTERVIEWS AND INFORMAL QUESTIONS DURING
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW YOUTH DISCIPLING MODEL

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. It has been a known fact that the LACSDA Church was losing its ABC members for many years. They either attend other Seventh-day Adventist Churches or leave the church altogether. Why do you think this is happening? What difference do you observe after the implementation of the new youth discipling model?
2. As a current (or former) ABC member yourself, how much has the new youth discipling model helped you grow to become a better person? How has the church encouraged you to better understand and live the good news of Jesus Christ?
3. How have your needs been met? How has the New Youth Discipling Model leadership provided you with sufficient spiritual guidance and advancement?
4. As a bicultural and bilingual church, how comfortable were you to grow and worship at the LACSDA Church? How did the church relate to you as an ABC member?
5. How have you been fed with the knowledge and word of God as a result of the new youth discipling model? Did you gain much out of it? How?
6. In the past, when the LACSDA Church used to lump together both the OBC and ABC members as one group of people, how did you relate with OBC members who were different from you? Do you see a difference now? If so, how?
7. How did you communicate your concerns and ideas to the Chinese-speaking members since your first language is not Chinese? What was their reaction? Are you able to communicate directly to the ABC Council with your concerns and ideas?
8. Are you able to see any similarities in the mindset and thinking processes of the OBC and yourself as an American-born? What kind of hindrances do you have to work with them culturally and linguistically?
9. How do you resolve the cultural and linguistic differences between you as an American-born and the Chinese immigrants?
10. What is your comfort zone in worshipping God in a language that is not of your heart? How do you feel about English being used in the new youth discipling model?
11. Do you think it is a reality that both Chinese-speaking and ABC members should have their own separate worships and ministries? How can it be done?
12. What further comments or suggestions can you offer to the New Youth Discipling Model to further its mission of discipling and retaining its ABC members?

NEW YOUTH DISCIPLING MODEL QUESTIONNAIRES

Please answer the following questionnaires to the best of your ability:

1. Does the New Youth Discipling Model meet your spiritual needs? How?

2. What are the most enjoyable things about the New Youth Discipling Model to you personally? Tell us more how we can improve the model.

3. What are the least enjoyable things about the New Youth Discipling Model to you personally? What are your concerns?

4. What goals that you want to see the New Youth Discipling Model accomplish?

5. How has the ABC Ministry helped you personally, what are the greatest strengths that this ministry possesses for the New Youth Discipling Model?

6. How has the Multi-approach Ministry helped you personally, what are the greatest strengths that this ministry possesses for the New Youth Discipling Model?

7. How has the Vision Church Ministry helped you personally, what are the greatest strengths that this ministry possesses for the New Youth Discipling Model?

8. How have you changed or grown as a person because of the New Youth Discipling Model to the ABC members?

9. What essential changes and paradigm shifts that you would like to see in the ministry to the ABC members?

10. How has the New Youth Discipling Model benefited you culturally, linguistically, and spiritually?

11. Do you think it is a great idea to separate both language groups and let them worship separately? How do you think this has helped the LACSDA Church?

12. How has the New Youth Discipling Model programs and activities catered to your needs and how can it be further enhanced? How can the church assist you to grow as a person?

13. What do you think are the main reasons for the ABC members to leave the LACSDA Church? How has this phenomenon been averted?

14. Please provide some suggestions how to retain the ABC members at the LACSDA Church? How do you carry out your suggestions?

15. Since the ABC members will be future leaders of the church one day, what are the cutting edge methods for leadership training on the ABC members of the LACSDA Church?

16. In what way can the ABC members of the LACSDA Church help carry out the Great Commission that Christ has entrusted to his followers? How can they help reach out to their peers with the gospel of Jesus Christ?

17. LACSDA Church is a bicultural and bilingual church, how comfortable were you to grow and worship at the New Youth Discipling Model? How does the church relate to you as a ABC member?

18. How have you resolved your cultural and linguistic issues since the launching of the New Youth Discipling Model?

19. How do you plan to continue to support and enhance the New Youth Discipling Model?

20. What other concerns and recommendations do you have for the New Youth Discipling Model?

SURVEY ON THE NEW YOUTH DISCIPLING MODEL

Please rank order the following on the scale on the right and circle the number from 1 to 5 where 1 = most important to me, and 5 = least important to me:

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I feel welcomed and affirmed in the New Youth Discipling Model. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Worshipping at the LACSDA Church after launching of the New Youth Discipling Model offers me spiritual renewal and growth. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. The ABC Council was able to provide the New Youth Discipling Model with a friendly, understanding, and enthusiastic manner. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. The ABC Ministry has offered a lot of well-organized, exciting, and enjoyable programs and activities for the ABC members. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. The Multi-approach Ministry focuses a lot on my spirituality and it challenges me to grow in my understanding of God's call to me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. The Vision Church helps me to minister to others as I would like to be ministered to. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. The opportunities to serve at the New Youth Discipling Model are fulfilling and it makes a real difference to me to be on fire for God. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. The New Youth Discipling Model helps me to become aware of my language and culture. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Rate how the New Youth Discipling Model has helped you meeting your spiritual needs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. The New Youth Discipling Model has changed my life for the better and I will not hesitate to recommend it to my peers. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. I would like to take the role of leadership and disciple other ABC members. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. I would like to remain at the LACSDA Church and serve the Lord faithfully. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

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