1999

Portrait of a Regional Conference Revisited The Allegheny East Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

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A Portrait of a Regional Conference

Survey of the Allegheny East Conference of SDAs
Introduction: the first major survey of a Regional Conference.

During the fall of 1992 about 3,000 members of the Allegheny East Conference completed a four-page questionnaire. Each local church was given the opportunity of participating and more than 70% of the churches returned questionnaires that were usable in data processing.

This is a very high response rate and provides excellent data for this study. The range of sampling error is between 1 and 2 percentage points. This is the range (plus or minus) within which the results of repeated samplings in the same time period could be expected to vary, 95% of the time, assuming the same sampling procedure and the same questionnaire. This is consistent with the highest standards of survey research as practiced by the polling industry today.

The principal researchers for this study are Harold Lee, secretary of the Columbia Union Conference, and Monte Sahlin, an associate director of church ministries for the North American Division. They are involved in a partnership to provide consultant services to selected organizations.

Data collection for this study was conducted by the Allegheny East Conference staff and pastors. Data processing, analysis, graphics and report preparation were completed by Hamilton Chandler Communications Group.

April, 1993
The skew in this survey

- Because of the data collection method used this study does not represent the attitudes of the 30% to 40% of the membership that is inactive
Allegheny East membership is largely in churches located in the central cities.

It is important to be clear about the terminology here; the term "central city" is not synonymous with "inner city." The central cities are the large municipalities that form the core of the major metropolitan areas; Newark, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Richmond, etc. The inner city is a much more restricted ring of neighborhoods, usually decaying or undergoing revitalization, near downtown.

The local church in the Allegheny East Conference (AEC) is overwhelmingly an urban experience, in sharp contrast to the context of most Adventist churches across North America. The vast majority of White members belong to churches located in small towns and rural areas.

This is true for Adventists, but it is not true for Americans and Canadians in general. Where half of all Adventists live outside the metropolitan areas, only 23% of the general population does so.

The membership of the AEC is deployed much closer to where the general population is located than is the White membership in the North American Division (NAD). This provides greater opportunity for evangelism and church growth, as well as greater demand for community service and the nurture of Christian discipleship among members.

The development of urban ministry as an effective approach to outreach, evangelism and church life, and as a professional discipline must be a priority for the AEC. Its churches are positioned not only to reach, win and hold the African American population of the middle Atlantic states, but also to evangelize significant White, Hispanic, Asian, and other populations in major metropolitan areas.

Source of comparative data:
Percent of membership in churches by location

- Urban: AEC 20, NAD 59
- Suburban: AEC 25, NAD 30
- Small Town: AEC 11, NAD 29
- Rural: AEC 4, NAD 21
Allegheny East membership is largely in congregations of 100 to 599 members.

Two out of three of the members of the Allegheny East Conference (AEC) hold membership in congregations of medium size (with 100 to 599 members). The largest number (40%) are in congregations of 100 to 299 members, which church growth researchers identify as usually having a Pastor-centered dynamic.

This is in contrast with the overall membership in the North American Division (NAD) where larger percentages are in the congregations under 100 members and the congregations with 600 or more members. The difference is even more striking when the AEC membership is compared with the White membership of the NAD, which is largely in churches of less than 100 members.

There is some evidence that Adventist local churches in the medium-sized category provide the best context for evangelism and church growth. Gottfried Oosterwal reports that “churches between 100 and 350 members, in general, showed the largest growth” and “the lowest apostasy rate was found in the churches ranging between 150 and 350 members.” (Pages 28-29) While Dudley and Cummings report that “churches do not grow at a faster rate if they are smaller or if they are larger . . . there is no correlation between size and growth rate in this study.”

However they also found that “churches with fewer than fifty members are not generally doing well at all . . . nearly two-thirds of these churches are standing still or actually declining.” (Page 29)

On balance, it is probable that by focusing on the mid-sized congregation with a Pastor-centered dynamic, the AEC has optimized its potential for evangelism and church growth. A new generation of membership of converts and church members with differing needs and social context may change this pattern.

Roger Dudley and Des Cummings, Jr., "A Study of Factors Relating to Church Growth in the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists" (1981, Institute of Church Ministry, Berrien Springs, Michigan)

Gail R. Hunt, "Report on Church Size, Ethnicity and Membership in the North American Division" (1988, NAD Church Ministries Department, Takoma Park, Maryland)

Gottfried Oosterwal, Patterns of SDA Church Growth in America (1976, Andrews University Press, Berrien Springs, Michigan)
Percent of membership in churches by congregation size

- Under 100: AEC 17, NAD 19
- 100 to 299: AEC 40, NAD 33
- 300 to 599: AEC 24, NAD 24
- 600 plus: AEC 19, NAD 24
The median age of the Allegheny East membership is 48.

This is not significantly different than the median age for all Adventist members in the North American Division (NAD), although the Allegheny East Conference (AEC) has somewhat fewer senior citizens than the NAD.

Half the AEC membership is under 48 years of age, and the largest single share (40%) is made up of members in the Baby Boom generation. Born from 1946 through 1964, Baby Boomers currently make up the majority of the adult population in the United States, so the AEC is not winning and holding a proportionate share of these adults now in their 30s and 40s.

The Baby Boom generation brings a quite different set of expectations to the church than the assumptions Adventist congregations have used for several decades. This conflict may be more pronounced in White congregations than in African-American congregations, and may be entirely absent in congregations made up largely of immigrants. Nonetheless, most of the Baby Boomers among the AEC membership have the hallmarks of the “affirmative action generation”—higher education, professional and managerial jobs, and upper middle class socio-economic status.

Source of comparative data
Age profile -- percentage of members in each age group

- Young Adults: AEC 9, NAD 10
- Baby Boomers: AEC 40, NAD 40
- Middle-aged: AEC 26, NAD 24
- Seniors: AEC 20, NAD 26
The church membership of Allegheny East is mostly women.

Two out of three church members in the Allegheny East Conference (AEC) are women. That is an even larger female majority than the overall Adventist membership in the North American Division (NAD).

The gender profile of the AEC is strikingly different than that of the general population in the United States. It is much closer to that of most churches.

These facts raise the question of why churches find it easier to attract women than men. They suggest the importance of finding effective approaches to outreach among men. Due to the serious issues impacting on African-American men, it is particularly important that the AEC give attention to this information.

At the same time, because women make up the overwhelming majority of AEC members, significant priority must be given to ministries for and by women. The church has a proven capacity to meet the needs of women and should capitalize on this strength.

Gender profile -- percentage of members male and female

Bar chart showing:
- Males: 33 AEC, 39 NAD
- Females: 67 AEC, 61 NAD
Nearly a third of Allegheny East members are not native-born African-Americans.

One in five members of the Allegheny East Conference (AEC) are immigrants from the Caribbean, including Haiti. Another one in ten are Hispanic or of other ethnic background. Traditionally, the mission of a Regional Conference has been to minister to the African-American population. Just as the North American Division is becoming increasingly multicultural, so a number of Regional conferences are developing a broader range of congregations and membership.

Of course the original mission of the AEC must not be forgotten, yet perhaps the time has come to explore other possibilities as well. AEC may be better positioned for outreach to selected White populations in the large cities than some of the traditionally “white” conferences.
Ethnicity reported by Allegheny East members

- African-American: 71%
- Non-"black": 6%
- Other "black": 4%
- Haitian: 4%
- Caribbean: 15%
Single adults make up nearly half of the Allegheny East membership.

One in four members in the Allegheny East Conference (AEC) have never married, more than three times the proportion for the North American Division (NAD). There is also a significantly greater number of divorced and separated persons.

Single adults are less likely to participate in church activities and attend on Sabbath. They often express the feeling that local churches tend to focus entirely on the needs of married couples.

This makes the development of effective singles ministries a priority for the AEC. Local churches that learn to evangelize single adults will find a largely untouched mission field because most Protestant churches in the United States are ineffective in reaching singles.

Because the majority of AEC members are married, programs that strengthen marriages are also important. In fact, one of the reasons that some people join a church is to bring stability and values to their marriage relationships. Marriage enrichment and family life seminars have proven to be effective outreach tools in the West Indies and among the Carribean community in Canada, as well as in limited experiments in the United States.

Source of comparative data:
Marital status of members

- Married: 54
- Never married: 72
- Divorced/Separated: 23
- Widowed: 15

AEC - NAD
The economic profile; not significantly different than that of all NAD members.

The majority of Allegheny East Conference (AEC) members are solidly middle class. Two out of three live in households where the annual income is more than $10,000 and less than $50,000.

When the economic profile of AEC members is compared to that of the entire membership of the North American Division (NAD), there are slightly greater percentages of the poor and the wealthy. The differences are close to the margin of statistical significance.

This is a strikingly different picture than the stark contrast revealed when the economic profile of the African-American population of the United States is compared with that of the total population. There 27% of the African-American population lives in households below the poverty line that make less than $10,000 per year and only 9% of White Americans live at that level of income.

The AEC has been blessed through a process that missiologists call "salvation and lift." It describes the reality that when poor people come to Christ and join the church, they are encouraged and supported in improving their education and job skills, increasing the stewardship of their income and possessions, and putting aside bad habits that waste money. In the Adventist church they are given special encouragement to provide a Christian education for their children. All of this results in social mobility—the next generation moves up the educational, occupational and economic ladder.

"Salvation and lift" has been a powerful dynamic in Adventist church growth around the globe, in almost all people groups where the message has reached. But success brings its own set of problems. "Second-generation" Adventists, raised in the faith and with higher education, often have different needs and expectations about church life than do those who joined the church as adults. The social mobility between generations increases this "preference gap."

Studies show that the majority of the half million members that have been dropped from the Adventist membership rolls in the NAD since 1950 were "second-generation" Adventists. Some researchers suggest that when the "salvation and lift" factor "tops out" after two or three generations of social mobility, Adventist evangelism becomes ineffective.

The AEC is at a critical point of success in the economic development of its membership. In order to remain faithful to its unique mission, it must continue to effectively reach out to the poor. At the same time, it must develop new approaches to ministry to prevent the loss of affluent, successful members and especially their children.

Information resources:
Annual household income of church members
There are a significant number of highly educated members in Allegheny East.

One out of four Allegheny East Conference (AEC) members have completed a college degree. One in ten have gone on to complete a graduate degree. The majority have taken at least some college courses.

This is a significantly higher level of education than the general population in the United States and markedly higher than the level in the African-American population. Adventists place a high value on education and sacrifice to see that their children obtain a Christian education. This dedication has paid off in a highly educated membership.

Higher education changes individuals' expectations and creates a set of preferences that is different than the assumptions that have been dominate in Adventist local churches for many decades. For example, people with higher education tend to prefer the sharing of a range of opinions instead of one "right" viewpoint on an issue. They like to experiment with many different methods, instead of being locked into the "recommended" approach presented in an official program manual.

This can be a source of conflict in the church. Pastors sometimes find themselves caught between differing expectations about their leadership style. Traditionally, Adventist pastors have been expected to function as authoritative leaders, but members with higher education are more likely to prefer a pastor who functions as an enabling, facilitative leader.

Members with higher education are more likely to be critical of church programs and local traditions. They are quick to ask, "Why?" They may suggest alternatives to established goals and official study materials in the Sabbath School, for example.

In order to insure that time and energy is not lost in such conflict and that church members in whom much has been invested are not lost, it is important for the AEC to develop ministries in some congregations that are specifically designed to meet the needs of the highly educated. Particular support should be given to those congregations that are already attempting to do this.

Source of comparative data:
Education profile of church members

- Elementary: 25 (AEC), 16 (NAD)
- Secondary diploma: 47 (AEC), 48 (NAD)
- College degree: 18 (AEC), 23 (NAD)
- Graduate degree: 10 (AEC), 13 (NAD)
The majority of male members are professionals, managers, and White Collar workers.

One in three men among the Allegheny East Conference (AEC) membership are employed in professional and managerial occupations. Another third are Blue Collar workers, while one in five has a job as a White Collar worker.

Men and women among the AEC membership are somewhat less likely than the general membership of the North American Division (NAD) to hold professional and managerial occupations. Nonetheless, the contrast with the general African-American population of the United States is striking. Only 15% of Black Americans are employed in professional and managerial occupations; half the percentage in AEC.

"White Collar workers" include people employed in technical or sales positions and service jobs. Examples are office secretaries, computer operators, bank tellers, Licensed Practical Nurses, hairdressers, and child care workers.

"Blue Collar workers" include people employed as craftsmen, repairmen, laborers, factory workers, equipment operators or in farming and forestry. Examples are mechanics, bakers, carpenters, truckdrivers, welders and construction workers.

Sources of comparative data:
Occupations of church members

![Bar chart showing occupations and gender distribution among church members.](chart.png)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Occupations Reported by Survey Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager or professional</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical, clerical or sales</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming or forestry</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftsman, repairman</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborer, operator or driver</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homemaker</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed Forces</td>
<td>2%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Employment Status Reported by Survey Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed full-time, outside the home</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed part-time, outside the home</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired and not employed</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presently unemployed</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One in four Allegheny East members has been baptized in the last five years.

The Allegheny East Conference (AEC) has nearly twice as many members baptized in the last five years as does the North American Division (NAD). It has significantly fewer members with tenure of 20 years or more. Where the majority of NAD members are in the 20-year or more category, only a third of the AEC members fall into this group.

This is very likely the result of the high priority AEC has placed on evangelism over the years, as well as congregations that are adept at attracting and holding new members. It is evidence that the AEC has been successful in encouraging and supporting church growth in its congregations.

The high percentage of members who have become Adventists in recent years has an impact on the dynamics in local churches. Across North America many Adventist churches are stalled in their growth and unable to attract and hold significant numbers of new members in part because of entrenched majorities of long-term members who have found a comfortable routine. Many AEC churches are better positioned for growth because this dynamic is less powerful in them.

How many years have you been a baptized Adventist?
How did you happen to join the Adventist Church?

- Raised SDA: 35%
- Not raised SDA: 65%
Insight on dropouts in the Allegheny East Conference

- 35% of respondents say they came into the church by being raised an SDA
- 40% say that at least one parent was an SDA during the first 12 years of life
- This means that about one in eight dropped out as a youth and then came back into the church as an adult
- Seven out of eight may have been inactive for a time as a young adult, but consider themselves to have still been in the church
Biological growth VS evangelistic growth

- 39% of Allegheny East baby boomers were born into the church as compared to more than 50% among white members in the NAD
- 53% of AEC's young adults were born into the church -- Is the same dynamic found the white church one generation away?
Most of the converts who join Allegheny East churches are won through relational evangelism.

Four out of five converts report that they joined the Adventist Church because they were introduced to it by a friend, relative or acquaintance. These data include only those respondents who indicated that neither parent was an Adventist during their childhood.

Two out of five indicate that personal evangelism was responsible, at least in part, for their conversion. Personal evangelism includes Bible studies by a lay person, visits by a pastor or Bible instructor, and door-to-door contacts by church members.

One in four say that seminars and small groups played a role in their conversion. This includes 11% who attended a Revelation Seminar, 8% who participated in a small group Bible study, and 5% who joined a Pastors Bible class.

One in five report that they attended public evangelistic meetings. An equal portion mention media ministries, publications or visits by a literature evangelist as instrumental in their joining the church.

Conversions cannot in most cases be attributed to a single cause. Most respondents indicated more than one item that was instrumental in their joining the church.

A look at the profile of those most likely to select particular evangelistic approaches gives an indication of where the effectiveness of each approach is the greatest. These data include the entire sample of church members.

Altogether, 42% report that they joined the Adventist Church because a friend, relative or acquaintance introduced them. This response is most likely among members not raised in the church. There is also a strong correlation with the most recently baptized members. Others who are more likely to report friends as key to their joining the church include members 27 to 64 years of age, those in households with annual incomes of $10,000 to $19,999, Blue Collar workers, full-time homemakers, Hispanics, those with 12 years of education, and members of the largest and smallest congregations—those with fewer than 100 members and those with 600 or more members.

Continued on page 30
How did you happen to join the Adventist Church?

![Bar chart showing reasons for joining Adventist Church]

- Through a friend: 80 (SDA), 5 (Non-SDA)
- Seminars & small groups: 39 (SDA), 13 (Non-SDA)
- Public evangelism: 21 (SDA), 9 (Non-SDA)
- Felt-needs outreach: 19 (SDA), 3 (Non-SDA)

![Checkered pattern]
A total of 15% select public evangelism as a means to their conversion. Those most likely to do so include members not raised in the church and members with a Caribbean background. There is also a strong correlation to age; the older the respondent, the more likely they report coming into the church through public meetings.

A total of 13% indicate that Bible studies conducted by a lay person helped them join the church. Those most likely to select this option include members who were not raised in Adventist homes, members from churches located in small towns and rural areas, and members from churches with fewer than 100 members. Again, like public evangelism, there is a strong correlation with age.

Visits by a pastor or Bible worker is the selection of 11% of the respondents. Full-time homemakers are more likely to report this, as are members not raised in an Adventist home, members from churches with fewer than 100 members, Blue Collar workers, and members from rural and small town churches. There is also a strong negative correlation to annual household income; lower income households are more likely to report a pastoral visit as significant in their conversion.

Small numbers of respondents selected other means of conversion; 9% read Adventist literature, 8% attended a Revelation seminar, 6% participated in a Bible study group, 5% had a literature evangelist come to their door, 4% were contacted by lay volunteers visiting door-to-door, 4% attended a Pastor's Bible class, 2% responded to a radio or television ministry, 2% had needs met by Adventist Community Services or an inner city project, 1% attended a health seminar, and another 1% attend a family life seminar.
Allegheny East members are more involved in the church than are most Adventists in NAD.

Nearly twice as many report that they have attended a witnessing training program in the last year. Significantly larger percentages report that they hold a church office or other volunteer responsibility and that they have distributed literature to non-members within the month.

This is a strong correlation between the number of years a respondent has been a church member and the level of involvement reported. The longer a person is a member of the Allegheny East Conference (AEC), the more likely that they will volunteer, attending witnessing training, and give out literature. This is a significant element of strength in the AEC.

There are also correlations with education and annual household income. Those members with more education and higher incomes are more likely to hold church office.

Members of rural and small town congregations, middle-aged members, church members who are married, and members in churches with fewer than 100 members are more likely to hold a church office. Among members not born in the United States, especially Haitian members, smaller percentages hold church office.

One in three AEC members is active in Adventist Community Services, inner city projects and similar social concern ministries. The strongest supporters of these compassion ministries are members with higher incomes, members in the Baby Boom generation, members with graduate degrees, those who are full-time homemakers, members with professional and managerial occupations, and those who are senior citizens. Surprisingly urban churches have the smallest percentage of community service volunteers and rural churches have the highest. Attention needs to be given as to how to involve more church members in the pressing human needs that plague the large cities.

One in three AEC members report that they distributed witnessing literature. Those who are most likely to be a part of this group include members of rural churches and churches with fewer than 100 members, middle-aged church members, those with higher incomes, and those with higher education. Hispanic and Haitian church members are also more likely to be active in literature distribution. There is a negative correlation with urbanization. These data raise two significant issues:

1. The need for increased quality and quantity of literature in Spanish and French.
2. The need to explore how literature can play an increased role in urban ministry.
Involvement of church members

- Holds a church office or other responsibility
- Attended witnessing training in last year
- Volunteers in Adventist community service
- Distributed literature to non-members in month

![Bar chart showing involvement percentages for AEC and NAD.]

- AEC: Holds church office - 69%, Attended training - 27%, Volunteers - 44%, Distributed literature - 44%
- NAD: Holds church office - 61%, Attended training - 16%, Volunteers - 42%, Distributed literature - 38%
One in four Allegheny East members is involved in some form of personal evangelism.

Members of Allegheny East Conference (AEC) are significantly more likely than the average member of the North American Division (NAD) to give Bible studies, visit door-to-door and use the telephone to make witnessing contacts. They are also more involved in helping with public evangelism, Revelation seminars, Daniel seminars and family life seminars, but less likely to lead a small group Bible study or help with health seminars.

The use of the telephone for witnessing is most likely among members who have been Adventists for 20 years or more, members with graduate degrees, full-time homemakers, middle-aged members, middle-income members, and members in small town and rural churches. Although few organized programs of telephone contact have been promoted by the denomination, this is the most widely used witnessing activity among AEC members. Perhaps more attention should be given to this methodology by conference staff and resource specialists.

AEC members most likely to give Bible studies include those who have been members for more than 20 years, those with annual household incomes of $30,000 to $49,999, those who are married, those in professional and managerial occupations, and those in the Baby Boom generation. There is a strong correlation between education and giving Bible studies. The greater the level of education an AEC member has, the more likely they are involved in giving Bible studies.

Small group evangelism is a new area of outreach for AEC members. Those baptized in the last five years are far more likely to be involved than long-term members, and there is a strong negative correlation to age. The younger a member is, the more likely they may help lead a Bible study group. There is a positive correlation to education; the more education a member has, the more likely they are to help lead a Bible study group. Members with annual incomes over $50,000 are also more likely to be involved.

Door-to-door witnessing contacts are most likely to be made by Haitian and Caribbean members, those from churches with fewer than 100 members, middle-aged members, members who are Blue Collar workers, and members who were not raised in an Adventist home. There is also a correlation with lower-income households.

AEC members most likely to help with public evangelistic meetings include those not born in the United States, those from churches with 300 to 599 members, those who have been members for more than 20 years, and those

Continued on page 35.
Participation in witnessing programs -- top five

- Telephone contacts: AEC 27, NAD 21
- Bible studies: AEC 24, NAD 18
- Small group evangelism: AEC 23, NAD 15
- Door-to-door visits: AEC 22, NAD 15
- Public meetings: AEC 21, NAD 15
with higher education. Unlike many studies conducted outside the Adventist denomination, there is no correlation with socioeconomic status.

Revelation seminars get the most help from the members of rural and small town churches, Hispanic members, and those who are full-time homemakers. There is also a correlation with age.

Daniel seminars get the strongest support from Hispanic and Haitian members, members of churches with 600 or more members, and middle-aged members. Health outreach is participated in most by members who have higher education, who are professionals and managers, who are in small town churches, have been Adventists for more than five years, and those who are married. Family life seminars attract the support of members with higher education, members of suburban congregations, those in small churches, and members raised in Adventist homes.

Household income presents one of the most consistent and interesting set demographic correlations to witnessing activity. Higher income church members are more likely to help with innovative and relational approaches to outreach such as small groups, family life seminars, and health programs. Middle income members are more likely to get involved in personal evangelism. Lower income members are more likely to participate in structure programs such as seminars and door-to-door witnessing programs. These data underscore the necessity for conference leadership to be sensitive to the way in which socioeconomic factors shape the preferences of church members for particular kinds of witnessing and outreach involvement.

Participation in witnessing programs -- page 2

![Bar chart showing participation in various seminars and programs.]

- Revelation Seminar: 20 (AEC), 13 (NAD)
- Daniel Seminar: 9 (AEC), 6 (NAD)
- Other Bible Seminar: 12 (AEC), 12 (NAD)
- Health programs: 15 (AEC), 18 (NAD)
- Family Seminar: 9 (AEC), 7 (NAD)
Two out of five Allegheny East members are experienced soul-winners.

A significantly higher percentage of Allegheny East Conference (AEC) members report that they have been wholly or partially responsible for bringing at least one person into the Adventist Church in the last three years than is true for the total membership of the North American Division (NAD). Much of the increased percentage of soul-winners is in the category that report two to five persons won to Christ.

AEC members raised in the church are less likely to report recent converts than are those who came into the church as adults. At the same time members who have joined in the last five years are less likely to report converts than are members who have been in the church longer.

Young adults and singles are among the members least likely to report a convert. Members with incomes above $50,000 a year and those with membership in small-town churches are also less likely to say that they have been involved in bringing someone into the church recently.

Church members who are immigrants, especially Haitian and Hispanic members, are more likely to be soul-winners, as are full-time homemakers and those in rural churches. They are also more likely to report smaller numbers of converts.

Among the 3% of AEC members who report that they have been wholly or partially responsible for ten or more conversions in the last three years, there are a significant number of educated professionals. Members with graduate degrees are two times as likely to be in this category of top soul-winners, and half of the group are church members with professional and managerial occupations. Networking, special support and encouragement needs to be provided for these soul-winning specialists who are also likely to have the skills needed to be good trainers, “coaches” and resource people among other church members who want to get involved in soul-winning.

How many people have you helped bring into the church in the last three years?

- Unaware of any: 60 (AEC), 72 (NAD)
- One: 15 (AEC), 14 (NAD)
- 2 to 5: 12 (AEC), 18 (NAD)
- 6 to 10: 12 (AEC), 18 (NAD)
- 11 or more: 1 (AEC), 3 (NAD)
The strongest devotional lives are found among those who have been members the longest.

The longer an Allegheny East Conference (AEC) member has been a Seventh-day Adventist, the more likely he or she is to engage in daily prayer, Bible study, family worship, study of the Sabbath School Lesson and reading from the writings of Ellen G. White. The recently baptized and younger adults are less likely to do so on a daily basis.

Adults over 26 are very consistent in daily, personal prayer. In this and every other practice about which the survey asked, young adults are less likely to participate on a daily basis.

The study of the Sabbath School Lesson has a strong correlation to age. Adults 46 years of age and younger are significantly less likely to do so on a daily basis. The same is true for reading from the writings of Ellen G. White. There is a weaker age correlation to daily personal Bible study and family worship.

A pattern emerges in which higher incomes and education correlate to increased rates of daily, personal prayer, personal Bible study and family worship, and at the same time correlate negatively with study of the Sabbath School Lesson and reading daily from the writings of Ellen G. White. The higher a member's education and income, the more likely they are to pray daily. The more education a member has, the more likely they are to study the Bible daily and have family worship. The more income a member has, the less likely they are to study the Sabbath School Lesson on a daily basis, and those members most likely to read daily from Ellen White's writings are those with the lowest level of education.

AEC members who were not born in the United States are much more likely to engage in daily devotional practices. Hispanics are much more likely to report daily study of the Sabbath School Lesson, personal Bible study, family worship and reading from Ellen White's writings. Haitians are, interestingly enough, less likely to report daily private prayer, but more likely to study the Sabbath School lesson daily and have family worship. Caribbeans report the highest level of daily, personal prayer as well as significant participation in family worship and daily study of the Sabbath School Lesson.

Source of comparative data:
Daily devotional practices of church members

- Private prayer: 70% (AEC), 68% (NAD)
- Study the SS Lesson: 35% (AEC), 32% (NAD)
- Personal Bible study: 33% (AEC), 36% (NAD)
- Family worship: 27% (AEC), 32% (NAD)
- Read from EG White: 13% (AEC), 15% (NAD)
Members trust church leaders, but are not supportive of the denomination’s financial system.

A strong majority of Allegheny East Conference (AEC) members indicate that they have confidence in the leadership of their pastor and the AEC administration. Nearly half express confidence in the leadership of the Columbia Union Conference and the North American Division (NAD).

At the same time, with the exception of their local church finances, only one in three church members say that they understand how denominational entities spend money and smaller percentages approve of how denominational funds are used. There is a serious erosion of support for the denomination’s financial system.

Church members who have been Adventists for 20 years or longer have greater confidence in leadership than do those who have joined recently. They are also feel that they have a somewhat better understanding of the church’s financial system and are, to a small degree, more supportive of it. But even in this group, no more than two out of five approve of the way the AEC, the Columbia Union and the NAD utilizes the denomination’s funds.

Church members 47 to 64 years of age are more supportive than either younger adults or senior citizens. Young adults and singles are the least positive about both confidence in leadership and support of the financial system.

Middle and lower middle income church members are more likely to be supportive of their pastor, while more affluent members are more likely to understand and approve of their local church financial situation. Higher income church members are also more likely to be supportive of the leadership and financial system of the Columbia Union Conference, but there is a strong negative correlation between household income and approval of the way the NAD and the General Conference utilize denominational funds.

There is strong correlation between higher education and respondents who say that they understand how denominational entities handle money. At the same time, AEC members with graduate degrees are slightly less supportive of their local pastor and the AEC leadership, while they express greater confidence in the NAD administration.

Continued on page 43.
Attitudes about leadership and finances of the denomination

- Have confidence in leaders
- Understand how money is used
- Approve of how money is used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Local church</th>
<th>AE Conference</th>
<th>Columbia Union</th>
<th>NAD &amp; GC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have confidence</td>
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<td>55</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>32</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
With the significant exception of Hispanic members, those AEC members not born in the United States are less likely to express confidence in leaders, an understanding of finances and support of how funds are used at all levels. Hispanics are much more likely than any other subsample to express confidence and report that they understand and support the financial system at all levels of the church.

Members of urban churches and those with memberships of 300 or greater are more likely to express confidence in their pastor. The members of the largest congregations (those with 600 or more members) also are more likely to approve of AEC spending. The members of the smallest churches (those with less than 100 members) and those from rural churches are more likely to approve of the financial system at the AEC, the Columbia Union Conference and the NAD.

These data show clearly that for church members to approve of how funds are spent they must understand how monies are used throughout all levels of church organization.

Confidence in leadership does not ensure approval of budgeting, again emphasizing of open communication about financial decisions. The following recommendations are important for the AEC administration and Executive Committee to consider:

1. Simplify the funds expenditure process at all levels.
2. Implement simple and more systematic financial reporting systems for church members from all levels.
3. Clearly define the function of each level of church structure for the understanding of church members.

For additional information, see Financial Findings: People's Opinions About Church Tithe & Offerings (1991, Pacific Union Conference Church Resources Center, Westlake Village, California)
There is a strong consensus among members in support of basic stewardship principles.

Nine out of ten Allegheny East Conference (AEC) members believe it is important for a Christian to tithe. Two out of three believe that tithing is a good indicator of the spiritual condition of an individual.

Three out of four affirm the tithe and offering envelopes used in the AEC. Almost an equal percentage report that their commitment to the Seventh-day Adventist Church has grown in the last five years. And the majority do not believe that tuition to Adventist schools should be considered a church offering.

Those who are most likely to express belief in the spiritual value of tithing include church members who are married and those who have been members for 20 years or more. Affirmation of the importance of tithing is the same across all segments.

There is a strong correlation between how long a respondent has been an Adventist and how likely they are to say that their commitment to the church has grown in recent years. A similar correlation exists with annual household income.

Church members from the Baby Boom generation as well as those 47 to 64 years of age, those who have professional and managerial occupations, and those who have higher education are all more likely to report growing commitment.

The tithe and offering envelope gets highest ratings from church members with middle-range household incomes, the middle-aged, Blue Collar workers, Hispanic church members, those with 12 years of education, and the members from churches with fewer than 100 members.

AEC members with graduate degrees, members of suburban churches and Haitian members are more likely to be critical of the information on the envelope.

These data reveal a strong base of support for the stewardship of money in the AEC. This support provides an excellent basis upon which to address some of the serious issues that exist regarding the denomination’s financial system.
Attitudes about stewardship and the church

- It is important for a Christian to tithe
- The envelope clearly explains where the offerings go
- My commitment to SDA Church has grown in the last 5 years
- Tithing is an indication of the spiritual condition of a person
- Tuition to SDA schools should be considered an offering
Allegheny East has an exceptional percentage of highly motivated “intentional” givers.

What actually motivates a church member to give? Beliefs, deep spiritual commitments, information about the needs, persuasive communication are all part of the picture, but the personality of the giver plays a key role in the choice of exactly how to work out these attitudes. At least three significant behavior patterns or “giving styles” have been discovered in studies of giving. That key question was replicated in this study.

Reactive Givers are those who require some stimulation to help them actually get around to making a donation. They believe in giving and intend to give, but until they receive a persuasive appeal or find an exciting project, somehow they just don’t drop money in the plate or write a check. Some even reveal that they amount of their offerings is sometimes determined simply by how much money they happen to have with them at the time the plate is passed.

Intentional Givers are those who plan their giving. They make pledges, or establish a personal giving plan, setting aside a percentage of their income for offerings each pay period. The Personal Giving Plan stewardship materials are addressed primarily to this behavior pattern.

Habitual Givers are those who have become used to giving a set amount of money each Sabbath to certain offerings. Perhaps as a child, a member learned to place a quarter in the mission offering each week at Sabbath School. Twenty years later they are still putting a quarter in each week, even though its value is less than a third of what it was when they learned to give it.

Compared with other conferences that have asked the same question in recent surveys, Allegheny East Conference (AEC) has about twice as many “Intentional Givers” as do some other fields. AEC members most

Continued on page 48.
Profile of giving behavior segments of AEC members

- Intentional givers: 45%
- Reactive givers: 28%
- Habitual givers: 18%
- Others: 8%
likely to be in this pattern include long-term members, those who are married, the middle-aged, more affluent members, members who were not born in the United States, those with higher education, those in churches with 300 to 599 in membership, and those in rural churches.

One in four AEC members are “Reactive Givers” who need specific appeals and projects to stimulate their offerings. Those more likely to be in this pattern include members who were baptized in the last five years, young adults, singles, those with the lowest household incomes, Haitian members, and those church members with little education.

One in five AEC members are “Habitual Givers.” Those more likely to be in this pattern include members of suburban churches, those in the smallest congregations with less than 100 members, and senior citizens.

An effective stewardship strategy will take into consideration all three of these giving styles and prepare approaches and materials suited to each group. Sometimes this is difficult because the needs of one group may be at odds with the methods that will work best with another group, but a “one size fits all” stewardship program will not result in giving up to the full potential of the conference.

For additional information, see Financial Findings: People’s Opinions About Church Tithe & Offerings (1991, Pacific Union Conference Church Resources Center, Westlake Village, California)
Giving patterns

- 93% say they turned in some tithe in the last year
- 84% say they gave some offerings in the last year
- For a number of reasons, this data cannot be correlated with the observations of local treasurers.
The preferred method of calculating tithe may very likely be in transition.

A slim majority of Allegheny East Conference (AEC) members say that they calculate their tithe on their pre-tax income. Another third base their ten percent on their net income after withholding taxes, while one in eight use various other methods due to being self-employed or for other reasons.

Those most likely to prefer to calculate their tithe on gross income, including taxes, are members over 46 years of age, those who have been Adventists for 20 years or longer, those who have annual household incomes of $50,000 or more, full-time homemakers, and members in the largest congregations with 600 or more members. In contrast, those AEC members who prefer to base their tithe on their net income, after withholding taxes have been taken out, are those in the Baby Boom generation, young adults, those raised in Adventist homes, those with middle incomes, those employed in White Collar jobs, those who are immigrants, those with higher education, and those in the smallest congregations with fewer than 100 members.

The general differences are particularly sharp and may point to a transition in the most widely accepted method of calculating the tithe. Will Baby Boomers change their tithing methods as they grow older?
How do you calculate your tithe?

Before taxes 53.0%

After taxes 34.0%

Other ways 9.0%

Self-employed 4.0%
Did you give any tithe to non-tithe funds last year?

- Most diverted less than one quarter of their tithe to non-tithe purposes
- Older members are more likely to have done so
Where was diverted tithe placed?

- The local church: 40%
- Community Services: 13%
- Church schools: 9%
- Media ministries: 6%
- Overseas SDA entity: 5%
- Independent ministry: 3%
- Non-SDA entity: 3%

Percent reporting...
Where was diverted tithe placed?

- Baby Boomers are more likely to report that they gave some of their tithe to the local church
- Seniors are more likely to report that they gave some of their tithe to Community Services, media ministries and non-SDA ministries
What percent of your income did you give to offerings?

- One to four: 34%
- Less than one: 16%
- Double tithe: 20%
- Five to nine: 29%
What percent of your income did you give to offerings?

- Young adults are more likely to give less than one percent of their income
- Baby Boomers, professionals and White Collar workers, members with higher education and incomes are more likely to give one to nine percent
- Seniors, Blue Collar workers, members with less education and lower incomes are more likely to give a double tithe
Have you ever attended an Adventist school?

Yes 40%

No 60%
Have you ever attended an Adventist school?

- 7% attended some elementary school
- 5% attended full eight grades
- 6% attended some academy years
- 3% attended full 4 years of academy
- 8% attended some college years
- 6% received degree from SDA college
- 3% attended SDA graduate school
Have you ever attended an Adventist school?

- 68% of those raised in an Adventist home attended some SDA schooling
- 19% of those not raised in an Adventist home attended some SDA schooling
- Younger, higher income and more educated members are more likely to have attended an Adventist school
Where are your children enrolled in school?

- No school-age child: 54%
- SDA school: 17%
- Other school: 29%
Where are your children enrolled in school?

- 9% child in SDA elementary school
- 14% child in other elementary school
- 4% child in SDA academy
- 9% child in other secondary school
- 4% child in SDA college/university
- 6% child in other college/university