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Collaboration: Seeking an Organizational Model to Maximize Inter-Congregational Cooperation Within the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists

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ABSTRACT

COLLABORATION: SEEKING AN ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL
TO MAXIMIZE INTER-CONGREGATIONAL COOPERATION
WITHIN THE NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION OF
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

by

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ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Document

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: COLLABORATION: SEEKING AN ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL TO
MAXIMIZE INTER-CONGREGATIONAL COOPERATION WITHIN THE
NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

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Problem

Current organizational structure within the North American Division (NAD) of

the Seventh-day Adventist Church appears to be relatively inefficient and allow for little

or no collaborative efforts among Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) congregations within

any given local ministry area. This situation encumbers the ministry effectiveness of local

SDA churches. The redundancy present in the current organizational system, with large

and often overlapping local conferences, results in substantial waste and inefficiency. The

purpose of this study was to investigate whether an alternative organizational model

could foster greater levels of cooperation among neighboring SDA churches, and if such a change would correspond to increased efficiency and effectiveness.

Task

The task of this study was to explore the potentialities to be found in a move towards a church organizational model that more intentionally fosters cooperation among all Adventist churches comprising a given ministry area located within the NAD. Conditions and structures deemed likely to foster, or hinder cooperation among neighboring Seventh-day Adventist congregations were analyzed. The aim was to investigate whether an alternative organizational structure would better foster cooperation among neighboring SDA congregations and, thereby, result in greater administrative efficiency and congregational effectiveness. In the process, this study also examined the feasibility of effecting such changes.

Method

The primary method of inquiry employed in this study was that of textual theoretical academic research. The study fundamentally consisted of textual theoretical research of primary and secondary sources, and analysis of the resulting information gathered in this manner. The study generally employed a systems theory approach in an attempt to discover what, if any, changes in church organizational structure within the NAD—particularly on the local conference level—would contribute to an increased level of cooperation among the several churches, with the expectation that such an increase in collaboration should result in greater efficiency and effectiveness.

Conclusion

      The majority of scholars, whose literature was reviewed in this study, concur that freedom, cooperation, and empowerment of local leaders are crucial elements for an effective system of organization. Therefore, this study concluded that a less hierarchical and more horizontal structure should be employed by the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists (NAD), in order to achieve its full potential and more successfully accomplish its God-given mission. This study found compelling evidence that the current organizational structure in the NAD does not have inter-congregational cooperation as a primary concern. In contrast to the current NAD structure, the model for conference reorganization proposed in this study has inter-congregational cooperation as a principal priority. The results of this study indicate that, if the concept of local conference was redefined away from both state and regional conferences and toward conferences defined by natural ministry areas, then inter-congregational cooperation would increase and there is a reasonable expectation that greater efficiency, increased effectiveness, and improved public awareness/opinion within the NAD will be the corresponding result.

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A Project Document

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ChD   Church Dogmatics

FC   Florida Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

GC   General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

KJV   King James Version of the Bible

NAD   North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists

NDBT   New Dictionary of Biblical Theology

NIB   New Interpreter's Bible

NIV   New International Version of the Bible

NKJV   New King James Version of the Bible

SDABC   Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary

SDACM   Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual

SEC   Southeastern Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Nearly twenty years of experience as an Adventist pastor in North America has merely confirmed my deep conviction that virtually all individuals, with membership in any of the many and varied churches that comprise the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists (NAD), share a deep desire to see the Global Adventist Church expand, grow, prosper, and, above all, win souls for Christ. However, this experience has also resulted in a very disturbing question arising in my consciousness. This question simply is, "Are these self-same 'typical' Adventists in the NAD just as excited to see the Adventist church across town grow?" I must reluctantly express my conviction that the likely answer all too often is "No."

The Problem Illustrated

Perhaps an illustration might be helpful in explaining this position. For the sake of discussion, assume that a certain "SDA Church A" in "Town X" has found a ministry formula that regularly results in a 20% annual growth rate. Now consider "SDA Church B," which is also located in Town X, roughly five miles away from Church A. SDA Church B, being the "typical" NAD church, has a few baptisms each year. However, membership, for the most part, remains plateaued—in this particular case membership may, in fact, have recently declined due to several members transferring to Church A. The relevant question in this scenario is, "Are the members of Church B likely to

celebrate the success of Church A?"—or might they actually be jealous of this successful

Adventist church just a few miles away? Would they come to see Church A as a threat to

their own church's viability, and even begin to talk and/or work against Church A?

If one can envision such a scenario as plausible, then it would seem we have a

real cause for concern. Principally, because "Church B" behavior, as described in this

scenario, hardly can be construed as a manifestation of the spirit of cooperation and

oneness that Jesus Himself prayed would be found in His Church (John 17: 20-23). If any

of this is accurate, it leads one to ponder other questions such as: "Why do Adventists in

North America engage in so little inter-congregational cooperation on the local level?"

and "What, if anything, can be done within the NAD organizational structure to change

this mindset and foster greater collaborative activity?"

Background to the Problem

For the purpose of clarity, we note here that *The NAD Working Policy 2011-2012*,

Section C, Item 05 defines the territory of the NAD as follows:

> The North American Division shall consist of Bermuda, Canada, the French
> possession of St. Pierre and Miquelon, the United States of America, Johnson Island,
> Midway Islands, and all other islands of the Pacific not attached to other divisions
> and bounded by the date line on the west, by the equator on the south, and by
> longitude 120 on the east. (NAD, 2012, p. C1)

Section B, Item 10-20 of the same publication explains the rationale for the establishment

and describes the work of the several divisions of the General Conference (GC) in this

manner:

> To facilitate its worldwide activity, the General Conference has established regional
> offices, known as divisions of the General Conference, which have been assigned, by
> action of the General Conference Executive Committee at Annual Councils, general
> administrative and supervisory responsibilities for designated groups of unions and
> other church units within specific geographic areas. (NAD, 2012, pp. B6-B7)

Section C, Item 05 further delineates the current organizational structure within the NAD as consisting of nine Union Conferences (NAD, 2012, p. C1). One of these nine Union Conferences is the Southern Union Conference (SU), the territory of which Section C, Item 05-45 defines as consisting of the following States: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee (NAD, 2012, p.C1). This territory is organized into five state conferences: Carolina, Florida, Georgia-Cumberland, Gulf States, Kentucky-Tennessee, and three regional conferences: South Atlantic, South Central, and Southeastern (NAD, *Area Headquarters*, 2010). The Florida and Southeastern Conferences, along with the Southern Union itself, will be the primary geographical focus of this study.

With the caveat that during the course of this study evidence supporting or refuting any such statements will be vigorously explored, we tentatively present the following historical assumptions. The working premise that constitutes the context of this study is the understanding that historically within the NAD, on the level of practical local ministry, there has been little evidence of genuine, effective cooperation between neighboring Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) churches—even among those within the same local conference. Going a step further, this study accepts as plausibly self-evident the perception that neighboring Adventist churches tend to view themselves as being in competition with each other more than they feel called to mutual cooperation. Additionally, it seem reasonable to describe the organizational structure and policies of the NAD and Southern Union—along with those of the Florida and Southeastern Conferences—as doing little to intentionally encourage cooperation between neighboring SDA churches, and that they may actually, unintentionally, hinder such collaboration.

An extreme example of the impediments to collaboration, perceived to be inherent in the current organizational structure, is found in the case of neighboring SDA churches in Florida that are part of different local conferences but operate in that same local ministry area—i.e., one is a Florida Conference church, and the other is part of the Southeastern Conference. These two churches, although they both are part of the same global Adventist Church, both part of the same division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (GC), as well as the same Southern Union Conference (SU)—actually they have little or no relational connection with each other on a practical organizational level.

An unintended consequence of our current dual administrative structure is an all too common situation where pastors and members of neighboring Seventh-day Adventist churches, sharing the same mission territory (i.e., they may literally be mere city blocks apart), find that the existence of separate organizational structures effectively inhibits coordinated strategic planning, collaborative area-wide ministry, and/or joint outreach efforts between their respective churches.

Moreover, within the NAD organization, it seems fair to say, there are interest groups that are likely to exhibit tendencies to resist structural changes that might fundamentally address the situation. Regarding this most extreme situation of divided conference organizational structure, Johnsson (2006) observed:

> Some Black leaders, who have suffered injustices in the church, see no prospect of change and want the present structures to continue. Some White leaders are more comfortable with the separation. But some lay members, Black and White, think it is time for us to come together. And maybe this is the way the change will come—as a movement of the laity who desire fellowship with one another above all else. In some areas conferences are beginning to explore initiatives, as Black and White leaders bring ministers together for fellowship and joint planning. Such efforts toward visible unity should be applauded and encouraged. (p.13)

It appears that the NAD, Union, and Conference organizational structures themselves can even frustrate the grassroots efforts of neighboring pastors, church members, and others who desire to work in a collaborative way outside of these established organizational channels.

Pollard (2000) gives voice to pertinent questions relevant to the situation of divided conference structure when he states:

> In the twenty-first century, the Seventh-day Adventist Church faces the wonderful challenge of organizing its mission and fellowship around the same principles that actuated Ellen White [A vision of cross-cultural ministry embracing principles of ethnic diversity]. Practical questions for which we will find answers include: How will ethnic groups (i.e., Anglo, Asian, Latino, African, etc.) balance the need for same-race particularity in mission with the biblical mandate to be cross-cultural in our outreach (Matt. 28:18-20)? Will spiritual gifts be primary or subordinated to ethnicity in making pastoral assignments? How much diversity of structure will be acceptable, and how will the effectiveness of structural diversity be measured? (p.111)

While not the main focus of this study, such questions will, of necessity, be cursorily examined—although a more thorough study of these factors that have potential to hinder cooperation within the NAD would certainly seem warranted.

Indications of the Problem

Two questions seem relevant to our discussion at this point: Are there indicators/symptoms of a problem throughout the NAD? Furthermore, can or should these issues be seen as related to a perceived lack of local collaboration between neighboring SDA churches? We will look at each of these questions in turn. First, we will attempt to determine what, if any, indicators there are of a problem, in a general sense, within the NAD. Then secondly, we will explore if there exists any connection or potential correlation between the problem and perceived lack of collaboration between neighboring SDA churches within the NAD.

Erosion of Confidence

One plausible indicator of trouble within the NAD seems to be what might be described as a growing crisis of confidence—an erosion of church members' faith in church leaders at all levels. The existence of this particular aspect of a problem is evidenced by the apparent decrease in members' commitment levels, less consistent giving, and the perception of a general unwillingness on the part of members to assume positions of responsibility as lay leaders within their respective local congregations or at the conference level.

An especially troubling aspect of this unwillingness to serve is the reluctance to effectively fulfill the trustee roles built into the current system—in the form of membership on local church boards, conference executive committee, and conference constituencies. As Greenleaf states:

> Trustees are accountable to all parties at interest for the best possible performance of the needs of all constituencies—including society at large. They are the holders of the charter of public trust for the institution. (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 97)

Perhaps because they have come to feel that their voices will not be heard—that they are merely a rubber stamp—or simply because they do not have access to the needed information and/or are otherwise challenged by the level of commitment required to effectively serve in a trustee role, the "best and the brightest" members throughout the NAD seem to adverse to accepting such responsibility. The result is a general lack of constructive accountability and/or direction from the various constituencies for denominational leadership. This situation is a serious indication of a breakdown within the structure of the NAD that carries worrisome implications for the organization.

Another glaring evidence of such a decrease in commitment and support—and/or perhaps a consequence of it—is the fact that individual churches, local church and

conference schools, and even conferences themselves, are facing unprecedented and

increasingly dire financial circumstances.

Richli (2009), marketing director and associate publisher of the *Adventist Review*,

created a comparative measure of SDA tithe of over 100 countries around the world,

called the Global Tithe Index (GTI). He explains in simple terms the meaning of the GTI

ratio:

> The ideal ratio is 1. What that means is that if a given country has a Gross Domestic
> Product per capita of $20,000, statistically, Adventists taken in the aggregate would
> give $2,000 per capita in tithe, which is 10 per cent of their theoretical income of
> $20,000. If Adventists in this country give only $500, then the ratio is 4. If they give
> only $200, the ratio is 10. The median GTI ratio in 2008 for the 108 countries listed
> this year is 7.1. This means that half the countries have a better ratio than 7.1, and the
> other half have a ratio higher than 7.1. (p.10)

In the 2009 report, Richli ranks the United States forty-first among the 108 countries

analyzed, with a ratio of 5.9 (up from 4.9 in 2002, when it ranked 18th in the world). In

this he sees cause for concern:

> After dropping below the top twenty percentile of the ranking in 2003, the United
> States unfortunately has lost its past position as role model. It may soon be crossing
> the 50th percentile mark. *It is true, of course, that generosity and faithfulness to the
> principle of tithing may not be quite as compromised as the chart seems to indicate,
> given that undisclosed amounts of tithe moneys flow into independent ministries,
> more so than in other countries.* Still, the concern remains valid, because the United
> States fiscal policy allows tax payers to deduct their charitable contributions,
> including tithe, from their reportable income. This incentive to faithfulness is absent
> in most other countries where charitable deductions are not available. This
> underscores even more the faithfulness of our members in those countries that have a
> GTI ratio below 5 where no preferential tax treatments. (Richli, pp. 28-29, Emphasis
> supplied)

In his 2010 report, Richli states that:

> The United States continues its slide, landing on the 46th position with a ratio slightly
> below the overall ranking average of 16.8% [of Total Potential Tithe—i.e., American
> Adventists gave less than 16.8 percent in tithe of what would be the potential full
> 10% of the country's GDP], and ranked close to the bottom of the advanced
> economies. (Richli, 2010, p.14)

For our purposes, it is interesting to note that Richli does not necessarily attribute the USA decline in the GTI rankings to lessening generosity or decreased commitment to the principle of tithing among Americans, but rather to the "undisclosed amounts of tithe moneys that flow into independent ministries, more so than in other countries" (2009, p. 28). One may reasonably see this growing trend of resources being siphoned off from the official church to para-church organizations as a function of decreasing confidence in the organized church by North American Adventists. Even as we view this growing phenomenon, it would seem likely that we are only seeing the "tip of the iceberg." The problem actually may run much deeper and, if unchecked, is likely to grow worse.

Consolidation of Power

It might be suggested that North American Adventists are sending increased levels of tithe funds to 3ABN, Amazing Facts, Breath of Life, It Is Written, ASI, Maranatha, and other independent ministries; not only because they want to support these fine evangelistic organizations, but also because they feel the official church is not doing what it should be doing—that we are no longer capable of getting the job done. It must be emphatically stated that this perception is not an accurate reflection of the quality, sincerity, level of sacrifice, and/or dedication of denominational leaders—instead it may simply be a consequence and function of a system of organizational governance that is showing its age or has profoundly drifted from its original mission and mandate.

Regarding SDA church structure, Patterson (2010, p. 1) asks "Can an organization founded and directed with religious, well-meaning purposes, slip into a way of organizational being that can be both efficient and yet, unethical?" While discussing the

legitimate and important role of management in the church context, as well as its

limitations in the same church context, Patterson observes:

> The church was built upon a relational model that involves necessary free association
> of members. Pastors have spiritual authority to lead but have no control authority. As
> such they are not managers of members since we can only manage that which we
> control. They cannot themselves contribute their best spiritual leadership when
> managed in a manner that stifles creativity and opportunity for innovation or forces
> them into uniform programs that may or may not fit the context of their ministry
> assignment. Theirs is a spiritual work that thrives in an environment that is free of
> control and coercion that engenders fear and anticipates a high degree of uniformity
> in regard to production of new members, etc. (p. 21)

Specifically, Patterson concludes:

> Leaders . . . bear the responsibility of maintaining the integrity of the representative
> system by assuring that the voice of the body remains as clearly heard today as it was
> when the church was small and young. Ignoring the impact of growth and the
> tendency for positional leadership to gradually gather more and more authority to
> itself will almost certainly lead to ongoing ethical violations of the norms of a
> representative system. Technology and innovative leadership can and must be applied
> to both the governance process whereby leaders are selected and to the manner and
> extent to which leaders apply management principles to pursue the mission of the
> organization. We dare not for the sake of expediency or efficiency progress further
> toward an Episcopal model of governance. Nor should we allow organizational
> management and leadership behaviors that were designed for and by secular
> corporate models to be imposed upon the ecclesiastical organization for which they
> are not fit. The Church doesn't need a new model, it needs to renew its commitment
> to model we have been given. (p. 22)

The outworking of an erosion in confidence, evidenced by the apparent increase

in tithe diversion to independent ministries, coupled with a growing tendency to

concentrate power in the hands of a few leaders—the move toward the "Episcopal"

model of which Patterson warns—is likely to produce increased stress on these already

overworked and underappreciated conference officials, pastors, and lay leaders

throughout the NAD. As the current set of problems overtake them, it must seem to

conference leaders that the world, as we have always known it in the Church, is slipping

away. Faced with the prospect of presiding over even deeper budget cuts, more personnel

reductions and layoffs, and growing discontent among the constituents, those in positions

of responsibility are likely to feel like the lone Dutch boy holding his finger in the leaking

dike. The resulting sense of insecurity, likely to be produced in conference leaders, may

cause some of these leaders to lean all the more heavily on command and control

authority in a vain effort to maintain the status quo.

Pastoral Frustration and Burnout

If there is indeed a crisis of confidence, pastors, as the front-line leaders within

the church structure, merely feel this erosion of confidence on a more personal level. The

result is a growing level of frustration, a deepening sense of futility, a greater feeling of

isolation, and growing sense of distance from conference officials. Dr. Richard J. Krejcir

(2007, p. 3), of the Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development,

conducted surveys of 1050 Protestant pastors attending two pastors' conferences held in

Orange County and Pasadena, CA—416 in 2005, and 634 in 2006. Among the results of

this study were the following disturbing findings:

Table 1

American Protestant Pastors and Burnout (Krejcir, 2007)

Query	Percent
Had a close associate or seminary buddy leave ministry due to burnout, conflict in their church, or from a moral failure	100%
Considered leaving the ministry at one time	89%
Would leave pastoral ministry if had a better place to go—including secular work	57%
Feel burned out, and battle depression beyond fatigue on a weekly and even a daily basis.	71%

That similar feelings exist among NAD pastors, and constitute a growing

problem within the NAD pastorate, is born out as I listen to my colleagues in ministry—

those within the Florida Conference as well as around the North American Division.

Many share experiences very similar to those described by the pastors in Krejcir's study.

Little study has been done on burnout among Adventist pastors in the NAD, but Kilmer

(1996) reports the results of a 1994 survey he conducted, while at the Upper Columbia

Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, which shows that burnout is a real threat to North

American Adventist ministers. Of the 76 pastors surveyed, sixty-seven percent (67%) of

pastors surveyed expressed that they have experienced some burnout. According to

Kilmer, of those pastors who experienced some degree of burnout, most "were problem-

oriented and spent most of their time troubleshooting." Additionally, they also indicated

that they regularly: (a) deal with an overabundance of relational problems; (b) spend

more time dealing with symptoms rather than cures; (c) spend more time than they would

like in keeping the organization running; (d) do not work with a consciousness of the

presence of Jesus with them in ministry; and (e) tend not to depend on the Holy Spirit in

their lives. (pp. 19-20)

Dudley and Cummings (1982, p.129) surveyed 172 Adventist pastors in a study

on pastoral morale. While, on a positive note, they found that ninety-four percent (94%)

of respondents "really enjoy being a pastor," their findings also report the respective

percentages of the pastors who responded either agreed or strongly agreed with the

following statements:

Table 2

Pastor attitudes about pastoral ministry (Dudley and Cummings, 1982)

Query	Percent
Sometimes feel a loneliness and isolation in ministry	58%
Concerned I may not meet the approval of my superiors in the conference	34%
Sometimes feel as if I'd like to leave pastoral ministry	28%
Talked with my wife about the possibility of leaving pastoral ministry	33%

More recently, Dudley (personal communication, October 11, 2011) shared that his work on the unpublished *Supplement for Pastors* addition to the 2002 World Survey project— consisting of 39 questions dealing with pastor's personal and professional life as well as relationships with the larger church organization, completed by 1,055 pastors— confirmed his previous findings when the stated percentage of the pastors responding either agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

Table 3

Pastor attitudes about pastoral ministry (Dudley, 2002)

Query	Percent
Enjoy being a pastor	96%
Caught between demands of conference and congregation	56%
Most of the time feel lonely and isolated in ministry	37%
Pastors not appreciated in the Adventist Church	35%
Little direct interaction with local conference leaders	33%
Sometimes would like to leave pastoral ministry	25%

As I see friend after friend from my college and seminary days leave the ministry, it is becoming evident that pastoral stress and burnout are real problems within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. The available evidence on the subject of SDA pastoral burnout in the NAD, while admittedly limited, nonetheless seems to support the probability that the increasing frustration and stress felt by pastors can, in large measure, be traced back to their experience of isolation and their self-perceived inability to engage in effective ministry. NAD pastors' overall sense of isolation, frustration, and ineffectiveness also may well result from personal constraints perceived by them as coming from above—constraints indicative of an organizational structure that no longer serves the needs of pastors and/or those of the local churches in which they serve. Such constraints may be particularly felt in relation to structural impediments to regional cooperation, on a practical level, among neighboring SDA churches.

Increased Financial Difficulties

When we face serious problems or challenges, we are called to put our trust in God and therefore come to the realization that there is hope and not just doom and gloom. Yet prudence often compels us to acknowledge that there are indeed serious issues in need of attention. In the case of the present situation in the NAD we would do well to recognize that, as local conferences within the NAD are increasingly forced to cut evangelism budgets and school subsidies, local SDA churches and schools—more and more "left to fend for themselves" financially by the conferences—are struggling and finding it ever harder to make ends meet financially. In the absence of real fundamental structural changes, as we strain to maintain the whole organizational structure and "keep all the balls in the air," so to speak, it will, in all probability, become increasingly

unlikely that any local church in the NAD will have the necessary resources or capabilities to engage in effective and sustained ministry in their community. A pertinent question is, "Are we wasting too much time, energy, and resources trying to maintain and prop up an outmoded system, when we should be about the business of reinventing it?" Drucker (1999) seemed to be describing our situation when, in discussing the most pressing need of the modern organization, he postulated:

> The first need is to free resources from being committed to maintaining what no longer contributes to performance, and no longer produces results. In fact, it is not possible to create tomorrow unless one first sloughs off yesterday. To maintain yesterday is always difficult and extremely time-consuming. To maintain yesterday therefore always commits the institution's scarcest and most valuable resources—and above all, its most ablest people—to non-results. Yet to do anything different—let alone innovate—always runs into unexpected difficulties. It therefore always demands leadership by people of high and proven ability. And if these people are committed to maintaining yesterday, they are simply not available to create tomorrow. The first change policy, therefore, throughout the entire institution, has to be *Organized Abandonment.* (p.74)

Perhaps, we expend too much of our limited resources on maintaining and supporting the current organizational structure, instead of freeing these precious resources to the task of pursuing and inventing new methods and structures designed to better fulfill the greater purpose and mission of the SDA Church in North America.

<div align="center">Implications of the Problem</div>

If the indications previously discussed could rightly be described as symptoms related to the perceived lack of cooperation between neighboring Adventists churches in the NAD, then the implications which follow might well be described as the "results" of this same lack of cooperation. These implications pertain to both the local churches within the NAD, the NAD itself, as well as the world-wide SDA Church.

Implication for the Local Church

The typical local SDA church in the NAD rarely has the resources on hand that would allow it to develop and sustain ministries that could produce dramatic results. The pastor and the church members may even share a vision of having a real impact on the lives of their neighbors and dream of their church being a real presence in their community, and yet it seems to be a rare case indeed when such visions and dreams become reality in Adventist churches. Specifically, Adventist churches are finding it extremely difficult to establish, fund, and maintain local SDA elementary and/or secondary schools. They also are less able to engage in consistent, effective evangelism, and any large-scale community service operations seem impossibly out of reach. In fact, one is hard-pressed to find a truly successful, growing Adventist church in North America—where successful is defined by sustained and substantial growth through baptism and/or profession of faith of non-SDA individuals from the community, rather than merely transfer growth.

Members of local Adventist churches in North America seem to expect, desire, and frankly deserve an organizational model that is more flexible, more collaborative, and, more importantly, empowers greater decision-making authority closer to the point of the action. As the adage attributed to the late Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neil points out, "All politics is local." In the context of the organizational mindset of the NAD, it may be wise to likewise understand that, "All *ministry* is local." While ministry can and does take place at all organizational levels of the Adventist Church, ultimately we need to acknowledge that individuals, who are won to Christ, are nurtured, grow spiritually, and engage in the ongoing process of discipleship in and through a local church. The average SDA member seems to intuitively know this and appears to be searching desperately for

ways to bolster the effectiveness of his/her local church. However, if an organizational structure were in place that made it easier and more natural for neighboring churches to work together, could not then the Adventists within a region collectively accomplish much?

World-wide Implications of the Problem

Historically, one can say, with a fair degree of confidence, that the churches of the NAD have functioned as—and continue to serve as—the financial engine powering a world-wide Adventist movement. In fact, in 2011 the 1,142,039 members of the NAD, comprised only 6.5 % of the nearly 17.5 million global Adventist Church membership, yet these relatively few individuals were responsible for over 74.3 million in tithe—or roughly 32.8 % of the $ 2.27 billion in tithe that was received by the General Conference (GC, 2013, pp. 4, 23). This is actually down from the 46 % NAD portion of the 1.9 billion in tithe received by the GC in 2008 (GC, 2008, pp. 4, 21)

The churches of the NAD may well be described, as it were, as the golden goose of the global Seventh-day Adventist Church. But warning signs of trouble are emerging. The membership of the NAD was 955,076 in 2001 and 1,142,039 in 2011, representing a net increase of 186,963 of this ten year period. This data suggests that, while the global Adventist Church is currently gaining over a million members annually, the NAD had a *net* average annual growth rate of only 18,693 individuals per year over the ten years period from 2001 to 2011—representing only 1.69 % of the annual world-wide growth in SDA membership (GC, 2013, p. 5 & GC, 2001, p. 4). Our sense of urgency in dealing with the underlying issues of our current situation should be all the greater, considering the implications for the future health and success of the global SDA Church if a loss of

vitality of the churches within the NAD continues. The negative impact of such a development would be hard to overstate. Thus, a study undertaken to determine if the current set of circumstances within the NAD warrant a reassessment of its modes of operation and organizational structures would seem to be justified.

Societal Implications of the Problem

It does not seem much of a stretch to say that societal influences of this post-modern age have changed the way that individuals relate to organizations. While the Church must not allow secular society to dictate its beliefs and practices, church leaders might do well to consider the new realities faced by the Church in this age of post-modernism. The Church, in particular, likely will be forced to deal with an altered reality where member's attitudes and understanding related to church organizational structure will be markedly different. We likely will no longer be able to rely on the expectation that individuals will "get in line" with organizational directives simply because they are part of the Church, or that they will even feel the need to identify officially with the organized Church—rather we likely will need organizational structure that operates with greater transparency and presents logical reasons for members to cooperate and identify with the organization.

Unquestionably, the Adventist Church has been blessed by, and prospered under, the current structure that was instituted well over a century ago. However, the fact that the present cultural climate is so different—when compared to that which was in existence when our current church organizational framework was adopted in 1903—advances the notion that perhaps we may have reached a point where our present organizational structure is no longer the optimal system and may, in fact, now hinder

rather than enhance effectiveness. We must find a way to adapt organizational structure

so that it positively relates to individuals influenced by post-modern thought and

sensibilities, while at the same time upholding the principles that are essential to

maintaining a true and correct form of Adventism.

Add to this situation of a culture influenced by post-modern thought, the

growing disintegrative, inertial force that is the siren call toward congregationalism, and

it seems that the Church is faced with a complex and dire challenge. Congregationalism

is continually exerting its distorting effect on the churches of the NAD, leading many to

conclude that the "system" and "denominationalism" are useless vestiges of the past. In

their desperation to produce effective and sustainable local ministry, many are

unfortunately coming to the conclusion that the only path to achieving their goal is to

strike out on their own. Gladden (2009), who sadly left the Adventist Church to pioneer

Mission Catalyst, an independent offshoot organization, is a primary advocate of this call

to congregationalism in Adventist circles. He plainly states the following belief:

> Take a long and honest look at the family of Adventist churches in North America.
> Somewhere north of 95% struggle to keep the same attendance year after year. Bursts
> of success in the other churches are limited and temporary. Because, here is the
> unvarnished truth (Dr. Schaller tried to warn us): In the denomination, every local-
> church-based dream is eventually shattered. (p. 27)

While Gladden's views are extreme and his subsequent choice to leave the

Church is not a constructive one, we ignore at our own peril the underlying issues that

would cause this Adventist leader to lose faith in the Adventist organization and walk

away from the Church—not for any real doctrinal issues, but simply because he no longer

supported the "way we do church."

The view that fundamental change to the organizational structure of the Adventist

Church is necessary, and that such change in one form or another looms on the horizon, is

held not only by radical separatists such as Gladden, but rather by many reputable

Adventist leaders as well. For example, in response to the question, "What is the

alternative to radical change in Seventh-day Adventist Church structure?" Knight (1995)

observed:

> We could see the gradual strangulation of the church in the industrialized world. As
> frustration with the bureaucracy increases, dissident groups will drain away more and
> more tithe. Amongst those who maintain their loyalty, the more intelligent will be
> more and more troubled over supporting a system that is not functioning as efficiently
> as it should. (p. 51)

Therefore, it appears that the relevant question is not, "Will there be change?" But

rather, the essential question is, "Will it be a 'managed change' that will serve to build up

the church, or will it be the chaos of congregationalism?" One is left to wonder, "Will

we witness the decline of Adventism, as it becomes more and more an institution that no

longer resembles a movement raised up by God to prepare the world for the soon coming

of Christ? Will we see the further splintering and fragmentation of Adventism into

competing special interest groups?" Hopefully, the answer will be "None of the above"

as we instead find solutions to the problems that we face and discover a form of

organizational structure that will effectively lead us into a bright and successful future.

Statement of the Problem

The two major issues addressed in this study concern the correlation of local SDA

church effectiveness to the level of cooperation and collaborative activity among

neighboring SDA churches, and the type of NAD organizational structure that would

serve to maximize such cooperative activity. The view that current organizational

structure within the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

(NAD)—consisting, as it were, of state-wide local conferences and overlapping regional

conferences—may actually hinder, rather than facilitate, collaboration between the various Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) congregations located within the many "local ministry areas" to be identified within the NAD was stated previously. Furthermore, it should be understood that if conference-level organization is limited in its ability to focus on maximization of the potential for collaborative effort between neighboring SDA congregations—and/or likewise limited its ability to capitalize on the economies of scale that could be gained relative to the various local ministry areas that comprise the conference—then virtually little or no collaborative activity or economy of scale will likely take place.

In the interest of clarity, the working definition of an "economy of scale" employed in this study is that which is generally understood in the world of business to be, "Reduction in cost per unit resulting from increased production, realized through operational efficiencies. Economies of scale can be accomplished because as production increases, the cost of producing each additional unit falls" (InvestorWords, 2011). An example of economy of scale that would seem relevant to our discussion is found in the cost savings that large multi-branch banks experience by consolidation of all check processing functions to a central location rather than having each of the thousands of branch banks process the checks of their customers independently at that particular branch location. The simple truth that is meant to be conveyed here is that there are "things" (tasks, functions, ministries, etc.) that we can accomplish better and more efficiently together than each of us could do independent of one another. The whole can indeed be greater than the sum of its parts in certain matters. Related to the Adventist Church setting, one example would be an area-wide community service organization

which could operate on a scale and scope that is exponentially more effective, efficient, and resulting in a greater community impact, than the net effect of all the various community service efforts of the several churches, within the same ministry area, working independent of one another.

Because the current NAD/local conference organizational structure does not place emphasis on inter-congregational cooperation, it is anticipated that the resulting situation will be one of a less-than-optimal level of ministry effectiveness and/or community impact at the local church level within the NAD. Furthermore, the prospect that certain characteristics of current NAD organizational structure—specifically, those that demonstrate a lack of unity—may actually be a factor contributing to a condition of limited and/or negative general public awareness of the Adventist Church.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate any possible correlation between levels of cooperation among neighboring SDA churches with either the level of local church effectiveness and/or the measure of positive public awareness of the Adventist Church. The primary goal is to explore the potentialities to be found in a move towards church organizational structure that more intentionally fosters cooperation among all Adventist churches within a given ministry area located within the NAD. In the process of this study, the feasibility of effecting such changes will also be examined.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The core questions of this study are:

1.   What is the relationship between levels of collaboration/cooperation among neighboring SDA churches and their ministry effectiveness?

2. What is the relationship between levels of collaboration/cooperation among neighboring SDA churches and positive general public opinion of the Adventist Church?

3. Does the current organizational structure of the NAD foster or hinder levels of collaboration/cooperation among neighboring SDA churches?

4. What form of NAD organizational structure would maximize levels of local collaboration/cooperation among neighboring SDA churches?

Ultimately, the main hypothesis to be explored is: Redefining the concept of local conference within the NAD away from *both* state and regional conferences toward conferences defined by natural ministry areas (e.g., the Greater Tampa Bay area), should maximize inter-congregational cooperation resulting in great efficiency and ministry effectiveness. These smaller conferences would continue to operate as the constituent entities of their respective union conferences,

Russell (2008) would seem to be affirming such an approach when he postulated the following:

> So I gently propose that NAD conferences, specifically in the United States, be reorganized into a series of regional units across the country but not as large as most union territories presently cover. These regional units would be responsible for all "work" in their assigned territory. For instance, the Washington/Baltimore metropolitan area (northern Virginia, Washington D.C., and Maryland) would be such a regional unit. At present, three conferences cover this particular metropolitan area-with three separate school systems, three separate systems of governance...three of everything! It's an inefficient, cost-prohibitive way to do the business of the church, even if there were no race issue. (p.14)

Ultimately, this study explores the possibility that perhaps the lack of both baptismal growth and favorable community awareness is potentially impacted, or perhaps even caused by, a general dearth of inter-congregational cooperation between neighboring SDA churches. The corollary argument, that any lack of inter-congregational cooperation

is, in turn, likely amplified by the structural impediments to such collaborative activity inherent in current NAD organizational system, is examined as well. The idea that changing societal factors indicate that organizational structure, moving into the future, will need to be more coordinated, sustained, community-based, personal, with greater emphasis on the primacy of the local in order to be successful church is discussed.

Rationale for the Study

The number of individuals who joined the Adventist Church in the NAD in 2001, through baptisms and/or professions of faith, was 36,966 (GC, 2001, p. 1). This figure increased slightly over the next 30 years to where, in 2011, accessions were 39,504— down from 45, 419 in 2009 (GC, 2013, p. 5). While any increase is a positive development the fact remains that, as a percentage of NAD membership, accessions declined from 6.11 % in 1977 (GC, 1977, p. 15) to 3.87 % in 2011 (GC, 2013, p. 4). Furthermore, the fact that the *net* increase to NAD membership in 2011 was actually only 15,224 or a mere 1.3 % (GC, 2013, p. 24) shows that, at the very least, we should acknowledge that the Adventist Church in North America is growing more and more slowly—if not actually in decline.

The community awareness of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has likewise shown little or no positive growth during this same period. A 2003 survey conducted in North America reported that 44 percent of those surveyed had never heard of Seventh-day Adventists and, of those who had heard of Seventh-day Adventists, only two-thirds could provide further information. Surprisingly, 15 percent of all respondents confused Adventists with either Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses and, while one-third of the respondents expressed a favorable opinion of SDAs, one in five had a negative opinion.

Most alarmingly, 62 percent of adults born after 1964 knew nothing of Seventh-day Adventists (Bull & Lockhart, 2007, p.1). This state of public awareness of Adventists has occurred despite the best efforts of the local church leaders and conference administrators to affect positive growth in this area.

There is a need to explore the causes of this failure of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to significantly impact the community and generate positive public opinion. Furthermore, if problems such as: eroding SDA church members' confidence in organizational leaders, a growing sense of frustration and isolation among conference leaders and local church pastors, an inability of local churches to develop impact ministries, a lack of local leadership development or discipleship growth, and financial difficultly being felt by churches, church schools, and conferences throughout the NAD, might be found to correlate to the lack of cooperation that exists between neighboring Adventist churches; would it not therefore be advisable to focus on discovering ways to increase such cooperation?

Additionally, if a lack of cooperation is shown to be the result of structural impediments that exist in our current conference structure, does it not follow logically that a change in NAD organizational structure to one that more intentionally fosters greater regional cooperation between neighboring Adventist churches should produce better outcomes? The logical question, therefore, that we should be asking is simply this, "Can we develop an organizational and leadership structure within the NAD that removes structural impediments to cooperation and facilitates a regional approach to ministry based on cooperation among neighboring Seventh-day Adventist churches?"

Theoretical Framework

The study will employ a systems theory approach in an attempt to discover what, if any, changes in church organizational structure within the NAD—particularly on the local conference level—would contribute to an increased level of cooperation among the several churches; with the expectation that such an increase in collaboration would result in greater efficiency and effectiveness.

Industrial Model of Organization and Leadership

Decades of research, beginning in the early part of the twentieth century, was undertaken regarding organizational structure, management, and behavior. This resulted in an approach, now known as classical organizational theory, which views the organization as a hierarchical bureaucracy with well-defined substructures, all organized and linked, with machine-like precision, linearly from top to bottom. Taylor (1911), a fitting representative of this classical organizational theory, developed his scientific management theory early in the 20th century. His theory was based on the premise that, by analyzing each task individually, one was able to find the right combinations of factors that yielded large increases in production. While Taylor's scientific management theory proved successful in the simple industrialized companies at the turn of the century, it has not fared well in describing modern companies and/or organizations.

Classical organization theory was rigid and mechanistic. A formal set of rules was bound into the hierarchy structure to foster stability and uniformity. The goal was to establish clear lines of authority and control. Its major failing was in treating human beings merely as one factor of production, while also attempting to explain peoples' motivation to work as a function strictly of economic reward. The philosophy of

"production first, people second" has left a legacy of declining production and quality, dissatisfaction with work, and a near complete loss of organizational pride and cohesiveness.

A simple Google search of the simple phrase "church business plan" quickly reveals a trend in the Christian community, particularly in North America, to view the church as a business—increasingly applying business management models to operation of the church. Such applications are woefully inadequate to deal with this entity that God's word repeatedly calls "the Body of Christ" (e.g., Rom 12:4-5; Eph 4: 11-16; 1 Cor 12:4-27). The case for viewing church organizational structure from a place beyond the limited vantage point of business models is powerfully made by Herrington, Bonem, and Furr (2000) when they point out that:

> Christian congregations are the most complicated human organizations that exist. Their mix of the human and the divine, a heritage measured in centuries, and variations in size, context, beliefs, values, and practices make them extraordinarily intricate. We are tempted to treat them like social machines by indiscriminately interchanging people, programs, and purposes, but their status as living systems requires a far more nuanced understanding and approach. (p.145)

Johnson (1997) pointedly exposes the undesirable outcome that results when we view the church from an industrial perspective that does not embrace the fullness of God's plan for the church:

> As the result of a limited understanding of what church is supposed to be, church life can become routine. Ministry can revolve around the pastor and a few overworked volunteers. More and more energy and money can be focused inward just to keep the machinery going . . . Many churches lose their focus and clear sense of purpose. When this happens they are likely to become more of an "institution" than a biblical "church." Church as an institution can be full of activity but devoid of vitality and no longer on the cutting edge. An institution exists to perpetuate itself but is not entirely sure how or why. (p.3)

We must endeavor to keep in mind the organic and holistic aspects of the church, as opposed to simply seeing it as a hierarchical organization with an industrial mindset that

focuses on control and management. The danger is that there appears to be a growing tendency in the Adventist Church to adopt this corporate or business model in place of the relational model given to us in scripture.

Systems Theory

Positioned in contrast to Classical Business Organizational Theory is the ever-growing body of work known collectively as Systems Theory. One can trace the development of Systems Thinking from its inception—in the work of early proponents of *Cybernetics* (Wiener and Gregory Bateson) and the concurrent development of *General Systems Theory (GST)* by von Bertalanffy and Boulding—to its contemporary expressions—in the work of *System Dynamics* proponents (Forrester, Meadows, & Senge), *Complexity Theorists* (Prigogine or Kauffman), *Operations Research (OR)* practitioners (Churchman & Ackoff), and the *Learning Systems* approach, which was advocated by Lewin and carried forward by Schön and Mary Catherine Bateson (Ramage & Shipp, 2009).

Senge (1990) offers a clear and concise working definition of systems theory, "Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns of change rather than static 'snapshots.' It is a set of general principles—distilled over the course of the twentieth century, spanning fields as diverse as the physical and social sciences, engineering, and management"(p.68). Aronson (1997) gives a succinct explanation of the nature and advantages of systems thinking:

> Systems thinking provides a set of tools for constructing maps of systems and determining the points at which change can have the greatest impact on a company's performance . . . The approach of systems thinking is fundamentally different from that of traditional forms of analysis. Instead of focusing on the individual pieces of

what is being studied, systems thinking focuses on the feedback relationships between the thing being studied and the other parts of system. Therefore, instead of isolating smaller and smaller parts of a system, systems thinking involves a broader view, looking at larger and larger numbers of interactions. In this way, systems thinking creates a better understanding of the big picture. (p. 1)

Given Herrington, Bonem, and Furr's expression of the organic, holistic, and complex nature of the Church, the case for viewing church organizational structure from the vantage point of systems thinking as the preferable approach, is powerfully made when they point out "their [Christian Congregations] status as living systems requires a far more nuanced understanding and approach" (p.145).

This study attempts to view NAD organizational structure as a whole—with the fulfillment of overall purpose and mission of the organization being seen as paramount. The emphasis is not on what is the current/historical structure; rather, we attempt to essentially start from scratch. The intention is to determine the most desirable outcome for NAD organization as a holistic, God-ordained system, then attempt to describe the organizational structure that might be best suited to achieve this result.

To this end, attempts were made to ascertain if any increase in the scope and level of cooperation might result in a corresponding increase in membership growth and a greater sense of Adventist presence within the mission territory. Additionally, we endeavored to recommend specific changes in church organizational structure that possibly could make church structure more effective in fulfilling these purposes, and explore the impact of such structural changes on the local church.

General Methodology

The primary method of inquiry employed in this study is that of textual theoretical academic research. Therefore, this study consists of textual theoretical research of

primary and secondary sources, and analysis of the resulting information in the following areas:

1. Theological reflection centered on the concept of cooperation, developed through the exposition of three general biblical themes. First, biblical teachings related to the nature, scope. and purpose of church organizational structure are studied. Second, the concept of cooperation and unity within diversity in the church setting as a biblical principle is examined. Third, the biblical emphasis on the local church as the center of ministry and missionary outreach activity is explored.

2. Review of Current literature. This included books and articles on leadership and organizational theory, systems theory, Adventist organizational history (particularly that of African-American Adventists), and the experience of the United Methodist Church in developing cooperative structures in their context.

3. Data related to social demographics, growth history, and financial situation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America was collected from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists— along with data from the Florida Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and the Southeastern Conference of Seventh-day Adventists—in an effort to ascertain the feasibility of any proposed reorganization plan for the NAD. Similar data about the United Methodist Church also was obtained for purposes of comparison.

4. Investigation is made of the nature and level of current collaborative effort among neighboring Seventh-day Adventist churches.

5. The Methodist Church in North America was studied to identify organizational principles and structures that they employ to further regional, inter-congregational collaboration, which may inform the Adventist context.

6. Strategies for fostering and encouraging effective regional collaborative efforts among Seventh-day Adventist churches in North America are explored. Factors that are both helping and hindering in this process are identified, analyzed, and discussed, and possible alternatives presented.

Expectations for the Study

The overall expectation for this study is that, by God's grace, it will help advance the kingdom growth of the various SDA churches within the North American Division. Also, it is anticipated that this study may generate insights that will have the potential to enable Adventist churches in North America to more positively affect the public's awareness of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in their respective communities. The general hope is that this study can outline one or more possible structural changes that could produce economies of scale savings in several areas, while simultaneously increasing both regional collaborative efforts and local church effectiveness.

It is believed that this study could effectively transform the vision of the pastors and members of the various congregations within the several ministry areas of the NAD regarding the benefits of collaborative efforts among their respective churches. On a personal note, it is my expectation that the very process of research study will further develop my leadership skills, as well as broaden my understanding of the role of a local church pastor in relationship to other area Adventist congregations. Ultimately, the greatest desire is that this study should stimulate thinking within the North American

Division regarding opportunities to better coordinate regional planning within the NAD of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Delimitations

The scope of this inquiry is limited to the organizational structure found within the Southern Union of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, specifically related to the Florida Conference of SDA along with the Southeastern Conference of SDA. The particular geographical focus of this study is the territory corresponding to the Florida Conference of SDA (which is concurrently administered as the major portion of the Southeastern Conference of SDA). This territory is defined as the entire state of Florida, excluding the panhandle of Florida, which encompasses Bay, Calhoun, Escambia, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Walton, and Washington counties (Florida Conference, 2010).

Limitations

The conclusions and recommendations that emerge from this study are understood to be directly pertinent to only the geographic territory and organizational entities specifically considered. They may or may not be relevant and/or applicable to other conferences within the Southern Union and/or other Unions within the NAD.

Definition of Terms

Adventist: In this study, Adventist is synonymous with Seventh-day Adventists (SDA), and therefore does not refer to other groups that might use the term in their name. Thus, the term may be used interchangeably with "Seventh-day Adventist" or the abbreviation "SDA."

Autonomous Unit: A group of individuals within a larger organization that has a substantial degree of decision-making authority and a valid, but limited, ability to engage in independent action. In this study, this concept is most often associated with the local church

Church (Local): A specific group of Seventh-day Adventist members in a defined location that has been organized in harmony with Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual. (NAD, 2012, Section B, Item 10-5, p. B-6).

Church (Universal): A reference to the theoretical idea that the church is composed of all believers everywhere from all times and places. (Erickson, 1986, p. 175).

Collaboration: A cooperative arrangement where two or more parties work jointly for the accomplishment of a common task and/or the fulfillment of a unified goal.

Community Identity: The ability of a minority group to view themselves as part of a larger non-homogeneous organization or community. For example, African-American Seventh-day Adventists identifying with the larger mixed race community of the world-wide Seventh-day Adventist Church (Pollard, 2000, p. 111).

Conference (Local): A specific group of local churches, within a defined geographic area, that has been organized according General Conference and division working policies and has been granted . . . official status as a local conference (NAD, 2012, Section B, Item 10-10, p. B-6).

Cooperation: The condition of individuals or organizations acting together for the common purpose and/or benefit of the whole.

Division: Regional office of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists which have been assigned . . .general administrative and supervisory responsibilities for

designated groups of unions and other church units within a specific geographic (NAD, 2012, Section B, Item 10-20, pp. B-6 – B-7).

Florida Conference of Seventh-day Adventists: Administrative unit of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, whose territory is defined as the entire state of Florida excluding the "panhandle" of Florida, which encompasses Bay, Calhoun, Escambia, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Walton, and Washington counties (Florida Conference, 2010).

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (GC): Highest administrative unit of the Global Seventh-day Adventist Church composed of all the divisions of the world church (GC, 2005, p. 27).

Member: A person holding membership in a local Seventh-day Adventist church and considered to be in "good and regular standing" with the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is a geographical region—defined by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Office of Management and Budget—with a relatively high population density at its core and close economic ties throughout the area. There are 20 MSAs designated by the Census Bureau in the State of Florida and thirty-nine of Florida's sixty-seven counties are in an MSA.

Ministry Areas (Local): Geographic territories comprised of a group of several neighboring counties within a given state, whose composition are influenced by U.S. Census Metropolitan Statistical Areas and/or Nielsen Media Research Designated Market Areas (DMAs) and/or the Metro Groups (GMRs) as assigned by Polidata County-based Regional Mapping (Polidata, 2002).

Missiological Particularity: The tendency for a given people group to engage in missional activity among those most closely associated with their given people group. For example, Spanish-speaking Adventists in North America are most likely to focus on evangelizing Spanish-speaking non-Adventists rather than engaging in cross-cultural outreach to the significantly larger English-speaking non-Adventist community. (Pollard, 2000, p. 111)

North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists (NAD): Administrative unit of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church comprising the territory of Bermuda ,Canada, the French possession of St. Pierre and Miquelon, the United States of America, Johnson Island, Midway Islands, and all other islands of the Pacific not attached to other divisions and bounded by the dateline on the west, by the equator on the south, and by longitude 120 on the east. (NAD, 2012, Section C, Item 5, p. C-1).

Regional Conference: Any one of the nine conferences in the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists that were originally created "to provide for the organization of black-administered conferences where membership, finances, and territory warranted" (NAD, 2006, Section B, Item 40-21, p. B-21).

Southeastern Conference of Seventh-day Adventists: One of the nine regional conferences in the NAD which serves the regional constituency members in Florida (except for the portion west of the Apalachicola River), and the following Georgia counties: Appling, Baker, Ben Hill, Jeff Davis, McIntosh, Miller, Mitchell, Seminole, Telfair, Turner, Wayne, and Worth (Southeastern Conference, 2005).

Southern Union: A Union Conference of the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (organized in 1901), whose territory encompasses the

following states : Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee; and comprising the Carolina, Florida, Georgia-Cumberland, Gulf States, Kentucky-Tennessee, South Atlantic, South Central, and Southeastern Conferences .(NAD, 2010, Section C, Item 5-45, p. C-1)

State Conference: Generally, any local conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America that is not a "Regional Conference." They are commonly known as "state conferences" because their territory generally consists of one or more (or portions of) states of the United States of America.

Union Conference: A specific group of local conferences, within a defined geographic area, that has been organized in harmony with General Conference working policies, and granted official status as Seventh-day Adventist union conference (NAD, 2012, p. B-6).

CHAPTER 2

A THEOLOGY OF COOPERATIVE

CHURCH ORGANIZATION

That a theology of cooperation might emerge from the pages of Holy Scriptures

will probably come as no surprise to even the most casual student of the Bible. After all,

the Bible begins in Genesis with a description of what could fittingly be called God's

collaborative act in the creation of mankind, and ends in the book of Revelation with a

scene of the redeemed from every nation living harmoniously in the New Jerusalem on

the earth made new throughout eternity (Rev 21:22-22:5). This situation is vividly

described by Ellen G. White in the concluding paragraph of the classic book, *The Great

Controversy* (White, 1941, p. 678):

> The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is
> clean. One pulse of harmony beats through the vast creation. From Him who created
> all, flow life and light and gladness throughout the realms of illimitable space. From
> the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their
> unshadowed beauty and perfect joy declare that God is love.

While volumes could be written exploring the glorious themes of the unity and

cooperation modeled and ordained by God, our purpose here is limited to ascertaining if

there exists a biblical basis for an ecclesiological theology of cooperation. We begin with

a discussion of the nature of church organization in both the Old and New Testaments,

and end with a description of the role of the local congregation—in between we will

examine cooperation in relation to the purpose of church organization and the biblical

role that unity and diversity should play in the organizational framework of the church. It

is expected that through this process of exploration a theology of cooperative

organizational leadership will emerge.

The Beginning

That Creation was a collaborative act is evidenced by the following: "And God

said, 'Let *Us* make man in *Our* image, according to O*ur* likeness: let *them* have dominion

over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth, and

over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in his own

image, in *the image of God* he created him; *male and female He created them*." (Gen

1:26-27, NKJV, Emphasis supplied—all scriptural references are from the New King

James Version, unless otherwise noted). Long before any explicit theology of the Trinity

was formulated, the Hebrew Scriptures accurately reflected the plurality found in the

Godhead. According to the *SDA Bible Commentary* (Genesis, SDABC, 1980, 1, p.215)

on Genesis 1:26:

> The plural "us" was regarded by the early church theologians almost unanimously as
> indicative of the three persons of the Godhead. The word "us" requires the presence
> of at least two persons counseling together. The statement that man was to be made in
> "our" image and was made in "God's" image leads to the conclusion that those
> counseling must both be persons of the same Godhead. This truth, implied in the OT,
> in various passages such as the one discussed here . . . is fully and clearly revealed in
> the NT, where we are told in unmistakable terms that Christ, the second person of the
> Godhead, called God by the Father Himself (Heb. 1:8), was associated with His
> Father in the work of creation.

The *SDABC* indicates that, while the understanding of the plurality of the Godhead being

found in the Genesis account of creation may not find proponents among modern critical

scholars, such an interpretation has a long and credible history dating back to "early

church theologians." Many modern theologians may see no great significance in the

plural expression of God in Genesis 1, but Barth is not one of them. In fact, for Barth, this plurality is the essence of the image of God in man. Barth (1958) makes the point that:

> The divine form of life, repeated in the man created by Him[God], consists in that which is the obvious aim of the 'Let us.' In God's own being and sphere there is a counterpart: a genuine but harmonious self-encounter and self-discovery; a free co-existence and co-operation; an open confrontation and reciprocity. Man is the repetition of this divine form of life; its copy and reflection. He is this first in the fact that he is the counterpart of God, the encounter and discovery in God Himself being copied and imitated in God's relation to man. But he is it also in the fact that he is himself the counterpart of his fellows and has in them a counterpart, the co-existence and co-operation in God Himself being repeated in the relation of man to man. Thus the *tertium comparationis*, the analogy between God and man, is simply the existence of the I and the Thou in confrontation. This is first constitutive for God, and then for man created by God. (Barth, *ChD*, Vol. III, Part 1, p.185)

Not only was the action of God in creating mankind one of collaboration and cooperation between the three persons of the Godhead, but the product—the human race in the persons of Adam and Eve—of that collaboration was itself intended by God to be collaborative in nature (see the Definition of Terms Section, Chapter I, p.31 of this study for a delineation of meaning of "collaboration" and "cooperation" understood and employed in this study).

The Image of God

How might we understand that man was created in the "image of God" from the Genesis account? The image of God in mankind is primarily found in the relationship between the man and the woman. The essence of the image of God in man is best seen through the unity in plurality of the Triune Godhead being made manifest in and through the unity in diversity exhibited in the first human couple. The Bible speaks of "the two becoming one flesh," separate from one another and equals in the fullest sense, yet in some cosmic way they are one—partners in life. Is not the Godhead itself, therefore, the very model of unity in diversity?

The Godhead, established on the twin principles of collaboration and cooperation, is one in purpose and objectives, yet three distinct persons. As such, God serves as the source as well as the model of collaboration and cooperation. "God is one" and this oneness is a unity founded on cooperation and revealed in collaborative activity. Seeing the principles of cooperation and collaboration thus evidenced cosmologically in the act of creation, is it unreasonable to expect that the self-same God would extend cooperation as an organizing principle in ecclesiology?

God—who chooses to define Himself by a collaborative relationship between the three distinct autonomous, yet interdependent, personalities that collectively are the Godhead—created a man and a woman to collectively be the human race. This study agrees with Barth that it is this cooperative relationship, internal to God Himself and reproduced by Him in the human race, that constitutes the image of God in man. If such a cooperative relationship between human beings is a fundamental aspect of the image of God in man, is it unreasonable to expect that cooperation should be a foundational principle of church organization—both between individuals in the church and, by extension, individual congregations that collectively comprise the church as a whole?

The Nature of Organization in Scripture

A review of the history of organizational development found in the Bible is deemed informative as to both the nature and purpose of ecclesiastical organization. Through this process of discovery, principles of biblical organization will emerge that may help us to understand the role that cooperation and collaboration are to play in the life of the church. Pertaining to the Old Testament, our task is understood to be that of uncovering, within the biblical narrative, concepts which will enrich our overall

understanding of ecclesiology. With regards to the New Testament, the task is seen as one of peeling away the layers of ecclesiastical thought and practices, which have been built up over the centuries of church history, to rediscover the essence of what Jesus Christ truly desired for His church. In both cases, it is hoped that the end result will serve as a key to unlock principles that might give proper shape to our understanding of ecclesiology.

<div align="center">Organization in the Old Testament</div>

While it would be worthwhile to exhaustively explore the many examples pertaining to organization in the Old Testament, we will simply highlight the more prominent and informative cases in order to illustrate the overall theme regarding organizational structure that emerges from the pages of the Old Testament.

Moses and Jethro

The seminal foray into formal organization for God's people, recorded in the Old Testament in the 18th chapter of the book of Exodus, resulted in what has come to be called the "Jethro Principle." The newly liberated nation of Israel ironically received its first organizational framework not directly from God, but rather through the meddling of Moses' father-in-law. In a way this is, in itself, telling evidence of God's belief in the power of collaboration. For it must be pointed out that God Himself could have easily instructed Moses, and yet He allows Jethro to be the bearer of the organizational model that would serve Israel for years to come. Through the coming alongside of Jethro, God, in an object lesson, teaches Moses of his need to collaborate with others.

In fact, in the closing verses of the previous chapter (Exod 17:8-16) is found a story that provided Moses with a practical lesson in the need for collaboration. An

analysis of the language used by Moses to indicate his plans shows that he intended to ascend the hill above the valley of Rephidim where Joshua and his troops were to engage the Amelekites alone. And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amelek. Tomorrow *I will stand* on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand" (Exod 17:9, emphasis provided). The story goes on to relate that when Moses raised his hand with the rod, presumably in prayer, (Exodus, *SDABC*, Vol. 1, p. 585), "Israel prevailed, and when he let down his hand, Amelek prevailed" (vs.12). Nowhere in the narrative is there any indication that Moses asked either Aaron or Hur that they should help him.

In fact, Moses clearly indicated that he himself would ascend the hill on the next day, yet Aaron and Hur went with him and were there to support Moses' arms. Their help in "holding up his hands" was vital to the success of Israel in the battle. If they had not been there, and taken the initiative to intervene in holding up Moses' hands, victory would have been lost. It appears that, for a time, Moses insisted on doing it himself, but finally, when he was too weak, he sat down on the rock that they brought to him and let Aaron and Hur assist him by holding up his hands (vs.12), and only then was victory secured. "To impress upon Israel the importance of intercessory prayer, God permitted success and failure to alternate accordingly. At the same time God wished His people to learn that their success was to be found in cooperating with His chosen leaders" (Exodus, *SDABC*, Vol. 1, p. 585).

Returning to the story of Moses and Jethro, Napier (1978) postulates, "Whether or not the religion of Moses in form or content was directly indebted to the religion of Jethro, there can be little doubt that Jethro gave Moses significant advice in matters of

civil administration. Although the advice comes from Jethro, it is implicitly the

commandment of God" (p. 64). The *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* strongly

makes the case for the divine origin of Jethro's advice to Moses:

> Knowing that his son-in-law acted according to divine directions in all matters, he realized that the success of the plan would be assured only if God should approve of it, and that only on this condition would Moses accept it. That Moses acted in harmony with Jethro's advice is evidence that it did receive divine sanction, and that in giving it Jethro must have been inspired by the Spirit of God. (Exodus, *SDABC*, Vol. 1, p.591)

Furthermore, it should not be lost on us that Jethro's advice—for Moses to set up

a network of leadership that placed individuals in positions of coordinated levels of

responsibility—was itself a call to collaboration. Prior to this, Moses felt obligated to do

it all alone, but God, through Jethro, instructed Moses, "The thing that you do is not

good. Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For

this thing is too heavy for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself" (Exod 18:17-

18). This is sound classical management advice—delegate responsibility and establish a

chain of command. But there is more than meets the eye here. As we see in the following

passage, Moses not only delegated responsibility, he also delegated decision-making

authority:

> So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people; rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. So *they judged* the people at all times: the hard causes *they brought* unto Moses, but *they judged* every small matter themselves. (Exod 18:24-26, emphasis supplied)

These leaders had the authority to decide whatever they wanted. If they felt it was

within their jurisdiction and ability, they would decide the matter. If they felt it was too

much for them, they could refer it to the next level or, ultimately, to Moses himself. That

God through Jethro presented a radical and boldly new approach to leadership is borne

out by the fact that it is only recently that the field of leadership studies has given a name to the emerging model of this form of leadership—specifically, Shared and/or Distributed Leadership. As Pearce and Conger (2003), key proponents of shared leadership, state:

> We define shared leadership as a dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals or both. This influence process often involves peer, or lateral, influence. The key distinction between shared leadership and traditional models of leadership is that the influence process involves more than just downward influence on subordinates by an appointed or elected leader. Rather, leadership is broadly distributed among a set of individuals instead of centralized in hands of a single individual who acts in the role of a superior. (p.1)

The key point emerging from the Jethro model was that, for each leader, it was *their* choice, *their* responsibility, *their* authority, not Moses' decision. It was a system that empowered leaders from top to bottom, and gave real authority to the lowest levels— even down to the leaders over 10 individuals. This is a very collaborative approach to leadership, but especially so when contrasted with the autocratic centralized system of Moses which it replaced.

Early Israel in Canaan

As Moses was passing from the scene and the children of Israel were entering into Canaan, the Bible gives another glimpse into their organizational structure. In the story of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, we find the basis of the nation's organizational structure to be the Twelve Tribes. In Moses' instruction to Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh is revealed the collaborative nature of the relationship between the tribes. These two and a half tribes desired to have the land east of the Jordan as their own, rather than receive a portion of land when Israel crossed over into Canaan.

Moses granted their request, but required their pledge to send fighting men across the Jordan with the remaining tribes "until the Lord has given rest unto your brethren, as well as unto you, and until they also possess the land which the Lord your God hath given them beyond the Jordan: and then shall ye return every man unto his possession which I have given you" (Deut 3:20, KJV). Israel, at this time, was a confederation of the Twelve Tribes, each with its own territorial jurisdiction and people. Each tribe was independent yet united, by mutual agreement among all the tribes, into a cooperative single nation— much like the thirteen original states were under the Articles of Confederation of the United States of America. They were pledged to mutual defense and unified under the central authority of Moses, yet each was relatively independent and autonomous in their own right. In Joshua 22:1-4, Joshua commends the eastern tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh for fulfilling their pledge to assist their brothers in conquest west of the Jordan.

Davidson (1995) underscores the confederate nature of this "nation" of Israel when he points out,

> They deserve his accolades. Imagine leaving family and friends behind for seven years to go to the assistance of your countrymen. . .Perhaps some of the two and a half tribes did get some rest and relaxation across the Jordan between campaigns, but they still need to be commended for their loyalty to the welfare of the unified nation of Israel. (pp. 115-116)

While they did make a covenant with their fellow Israelites before God that they were expected to fulfill, it is clear that the unity between the tribes had a strong voluntary aspect to it.

Ai and Beyond

The next view we have into the organizational structure of ancient Israel comes in an odd manner through an event that occurred soon after they crossed over the Jordan. After the fall of Jericho, Israel went to take the city of Ai, which should have been an easy operation, but proved to be a battle with a difficult foe ending in defeat. God reveals to Joshua that the failure was because someone had disobeyed His command and kept for themselves some of the spoils from Jericho. God instructs Joshua on a procedure to uncover the guilty party. The people were assembled according to the Twelve Tribes. By lot, the tribe of Judah was selected. Out of Judah, the "family" of the Zerah was chosen. From this group, the "household" of Zabdi was singled out. He, in turn, brought his whole group and from these "Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son Zerah, of the tribe of Judah" was identified as the guilty party (Josh 7:18, KJV).

Perhaps these tribal, household, and family designations correspond to the "rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens" spoken of in Exodus 18:21? Regardless, we see in this snapshot the layers of organizational structure from top to bottom.

The point of all this is to say that the vast nation of Israel that left Egypt, described in Exodus 12:37-38 as "six hundred thousand on foot that were men, besides [women and] children, and a mixed multitude as well," were organized under a confederated form of governance based on mutual cooperation and collaboration. Dyrness (1977), in his discussion of human relationship in the Old Testament, concludes:

> Persons in fact are never considered separately but always as responsible members of a family or tribe. The individual is located as a member of a house, which belongs to a clan, united in a tribe, which all together finds its unity in the house of Israel. (p. 82)

In the persons of Moses and Joshua, who were in turn led by God, there was strong central leadership on matters of policy and strategy, but the day-to-day operations and the local implementation of policy was left to autonomous units with real decision-making authority—even down to the level of groups of ten.

During the Time of the Judges

That this confederated form of organization continued through the time of the Judges is shown by the incident of the Levite and his concubine—who was abused and murdered by the Benjamites of the city of Gibeah—and the response of the other tribes (Judg, chap. 19-21). Here we find a powerful example of the practical implementation of this arrangement in the reaction of the confederate tribes confronting the sin of Benjamin against the Levite and his concubine, where all joined together to punish the offending tribe. "So all the tribes of Israel were gathered against the city, knit together as one man." (Judg 20:11). "Literally, 'united together as a club [society].' It is remarkable that so great unanimity could be achieved in view of the divergent interests of the various Hebrew tribes" (Judges, *SDABC*, 1980, Vol. 2, p. 414). Benjamin refused to yield to the demands of the other tribes to turn over the guilty parties, and a bloody civil war ensued. In spite of all the negative aspects of this event, we still find in it a prime example of the collaborative nature of the organization of the nation of Israel at this time.

This basic construct continued through the time of the Judges and Prophets until, against the wishes of God and Samuel, the people clamored to be just like all the other nations around them and have a king over them (see 1 Sam 8:1-22). Thus, the monarchy was established over Israel, with Saul as the first King of Israel. And just as Samuel had

warned, this move to a monarchical form of government sowed the seeds for the captivity of the nation of Israel and its ultimate ruination.

<div align="center">Organization in the New Testament</div>

There exists today in the Christian faith a broad spectrum of organizational structures—ranging from the imposing hierarchy of the Catholic and Orthodox churches to the freewheeling congregationalism of the Pentecostal Movement, or even the anti-organization stance of the Church of Christ. Somewhere near the middle of this continuum one finds the modified Episcopal organization of the Methodists and the representative structure of the Seventh-day Adventists (Mead & Hill, 2001).

Given the numerous approaches to church organization, the most productive and enlightening question is not, "Which structure currently employed is the best model?" but rather, "What model does the Bible recommend?" To answer this we must go back to the source. We would do well to examine the biblical narrative concerning the birth of the church and inquire, "How was the 1st Century church organized, and upon what principles was it based?" After all, the early church started with only a small, motley crew of rough and seemingly uneducated leaders, yet these first disciples of Christ were able to "turn the world upside-down" and launch one of the world's great religious movements.

Christ's Principles of Organization

A primary goal is ascertaining Christ's vision for the structure of His Church. Doing His earthly ministry, Christ set the organizational process in motion by calling to Himself the twelve disciples and sending them out. Later, He did the same with the seventy. Scripture indicates that He also had what might be construed as an inner circle of

Peter, James, and John (Mt 17:1, Mk 5:37). From this one could observe that He had at least some sense of multiple levels of organizational leadership. Yet it is not clear that this should serve as a basis for the establishment of a hierarchical church structure. The biblical record of Jesus' teaching does not show Him delineating a specific ecclesiological structure; nonetheless, He did clearly intimate principles of church organization *through* His teachings.

The relevant question is, "What type of organizational structure, if any, is most in harmony with the Christ's principles of church organization?" Prominent in the teachings and instructions to His Disciples related to organizational structure, is the imperative to practice servant leadership. In Matthew 23 Jesus tells His Disciples:

> But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. (Mt 23: 8-12)

Tidball (2008) commenting on this passage says:

> Jesus instructs them to reject the status and title of 'Rabbi' or 'Teacher', because they were, in reality, simply 'brothers' and any role they had in the church needed to be played with humility as servants rather than masters. The spirit of their leadership, therefore, seems of far more importance to Jesus than their rights or position. (pp. 23-24)

In his exploration of "Ministry in the New Testament," Fung (1987) argues that Jesus "seemingly did not appoint any of His disciples to permanent posts; there is no hierarchy among them." However, Fung also seems to believe that Jesus anticipated formal ecclesiastical organization—a view evidenced by the following statement:

> Yet the very fact that he constituted twelve apostles may indicate that even the early followers of Jesus were not a mere haphazard band, while the picture of the retinue of Jesus during his ministry as a series of concentric circles of people provides some evidence of 'degrees of intimacy and of responsible sharing in the work of the ministry' even at this early stage. (p.164)

In Matthew we see the mother of the "sons of Zebedee" (James and John) coming to Jesus and asking for power, place, and authority for her boys:

> Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom." But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able." So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but *it is for those* for whom it is prepared by My Father." And when the ten heard *it,* they were greatly displeased with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mt 20: 20-28)

The response of Jesus—to this mother's request, her sons demonstration that they are in harmony with their mother's ambition for them, and the angry expression of jealousy from the other ten disciples—is a call to servanthood. When Jesus says to the Twelve that they shall not be like "the rulers of the Gentiles" he is "not commanding the disciples to abandon the world, rather identifying that monarchs are often prone to despotic behavior and that the disciples should lead in a different manner" (Wilson, 2011, pp. 93-94). Wilson further states:

> Jesus established a new paradigm for organizational design by providing a new model of leadership towards which the disciples could aspire, and the inferred endorsement to engage with the world. There seems to be a certain irony that Jesus seemed to discourage hierarchy among His followers, and yet Christian institutions often operate under a hierarchical model . . . In this historical account [of the development of the Christian church] many of the stages leading to the expansion of the hierarchy involve seizure of power, compulsion to concede power to a central body, and posturing for increased power. The question to consider is whether the hierarchy resembled more Jesus' description of Gentile rulers, or rather His description of a reformed model of leadership supported by the principles of humble service (Wilson, 2011, pp. 94-95)

Although not prescribing a specific model for the organization of His Church, Jesus clearly offers principles that endorse a model of distributed leadership. In fact one might say that Jesus expects that the relationships in His Church not be based on power and/or ambition at all, but rather on love and service.

In the Gospel record, Jesus directly spoke of "the Church" or "congregation"─ the Greek "*ekklēsia*" only twice—both occurrences recorded in the book of Matthew (Matt 16:18 and Matt 18:17). In the first, Jesus refers to the church universal, in the second, to the local body of believers (Matthew, *SDABC*, 1980, Vol. 5, p. 448). In both instances, Jesus is affirming the place, power, and permanence of the church—both universal and local. In this one might see the anticipation of formal structure in the future. Jesus said, "I will build my Church," which foreshadows a planned organized structure, built upon His principles, the construction of which He will oversee.

While Jesus seemingly did not outline a formal ecclesiological structure, He did, as was stated previously, intimate principles of church organization through His "kingdom" parables, "vineyard" analogies, and other teachings that are relevant to our current understanding of ecclesiology. For example, in John 15:1-8, Jesus begins with the statement, "I am the true vine, and my father is the vinedresser" and ends with "by this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples." Boa (2005), in his article entitled "Systems Thinking," quotes John 15:1-8 and makes the point that "Jesus often used nature to illustrate spiritual truth─ in this case He is speaking of an organic system of life." Boa goes on to make the following application:

> Just as the branch must receive its life from the vine, so believers must depend upon and look to the life of Christ within them to find their spiritual vitality. And just as the fruit nourishes others and contains within itself the seeds of its own reproduction, so the outward manifestation of the life of Christ in us nourishes and reproduces his life

in others. If any part of the system malfunctions, the byproduct of fruit will fail to appear. When individuals function from a standpoint of self-promotion and self-protection, cooperation evaporates. Whether in a family, church or business, when team members are out of alignment, inefficiency rules. (2005, p. 5)

Based on this application of John 15:1-8, it seems that Boa understands Jesus to be conveying ecclesiological principles focused on the functional necessity of cooperation within any living organic system—with the understanding that the church is just such an organic system. Built and sustained on the principles of cooperation and servant leadership.

Organization in the Book of Acts

The book of Acts is the logical focal point for any discussion of the organizational structure of the early church. In its pages the growth of the church is chronicled and the corresponding development of ecclesiastical organization unfolds. Beginning in Act 1 with the selection of Matthias to replace Judas and serve along with the remaining 11 disciples (now apostles) of Jesus Christ, we get a glimpse into the New Testament church's polity and organization. The process of Matthias' selection illustrates the simple organizational structure in place at the birth of the church. Peter spoke to the "disciples (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty) . . . And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias" (Acts 1:15, 23, KJV).

They took these two names, which had been put into nomination by the 120 disciples, prayed over them, and then cast lots between the two—trusting that God would reveal His chosen replacement for Judas among the twelve. Soon after this the disciples went out in the power of the Holy Spirit and preached to the masses in various languages, resulting in the conversion of thousands. The organization of this early group is described

as follows, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrines and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers . . . And all that believed were together, and had all things in common and they sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all men, as every man had need, and they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house" (Acts 2:42-46, KJV).

One would be hard pressed to find a clearer description of a cooperative organization than this description of the collectivist body that was the early church. In Acts 6 we find a church that has grown so rapidly that it soon outstripped this original simple organizational structure. A dispute arose that necessitated an adaptation in the structure of the church. The result was the creation of the office of deacon. To better serve the church a division of labor was effected: deacons were given responsibility over the temporal needs of the church, while the apostles continued to focus on evangelism and the spiritual leadership of the church—although the later experience of Stephen, which resulted in his stoning (Acts 6:8–7:60) would seem to argue that the deacons (and later local elders) were also empowered as spiritual leaders on par with the apostles. Perhaps the deacons had a more local, pastoral role, while the apostles were charged with the wider task of evangelizing the whole of Judea. Dederen (2000, *SDABC*, Vol. 12, p 553) takes the position that:

> While the apostles exercised what may be broadly described as a general and global ministry, deacons and elders seemed to have carried out theirs at the local level. Elders or presbyters, otherwise known as bishops or overseers—the terms are interchangeable in the NT—performed duties that were chiefly spiritual and supervisory . . . Their permanent role is evidenced by the list of qualifications necessary for such leaders as found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:7-9. The same is true of deacons, whose work appears to have been spiritual as well as the care of the temporal business of the church.

Moreover, beginning with the dispersion of the church as a result of persecution spearheaded by Saul of Tarsus, the church could no longer merely be spoken of as "the church." It now had to be spoken of as "the church in Jerusalem" or "the church in Damascus" or "the church in Antioch" etc. With the conversion of Paul and his work of church planting in various places, the number of congregations that made up "the church" expanded even more rapidly. Thus, the church, while still seen as a single entity, was in fact becoming more differentiated in its operational structure—local churches interconnected and united comprising the Church as a whole.

As Gentile believers were added to the church, a dispute arose concerning their need for circumcision and keeping of the ceremonial laws. In the resolution of this crisis, through a decision of a council of "the apostles and elders" in Jerusalem, we are privy to another essential aspect of the basic organizational structure of the 1st century Church (Acts 15:1-29). In short, the convening of this Council of Jerusalem demonstrates that the structure of the early Church was primarily a confederation of operationally autonomous congregations in various locales connected to each other by means of a unifying representative body in Jerusalem that was accepted as being able to offer authoritative counsel on doctrinal matters.

The later narrative of the book of Acts confirms this as the pattern for ecclesiastical structure of the early church. In Acts 22:15-25, when Paul goes to Jerusalem, he presents himself to "James and all the elders," receives from this council a "do what we tell you" instruction to accompany four men, who have made vows, to the temple and assist them in fulfilling their vows, which he does without argument. So while we see that day-to-day Paul operates with a high level of autonomy and exercises great

independent authority, he obviously acknowledges the overarching doctrinal authority of the Council convened at Jerusalem to address his particular situation. The *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* on the book of Acts (1980, Acts, *SDABC*, Vol. 6, p. 306) offers some insight into the nature and role of the Council at Jerusalem:

> Peter, John, and James, the Lord's brother, were at Jerusalem. These, with the elders and possibly other apostles not specifically named appear as the guiding group of the youthful church. The fact that the early church referred the vexing question of circumcision to a council of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem is a highly significant precedent for church organization. It stands against the theory that a final decision in ecclesiastical matters should be made by one man acting as an autocrat. It also illustrates the need of counsel and authority on a wider level than that of the local congregation, when affairs affecting the entire church are in question. For the NT church, the apostles and officials of the initial congregation at Jerusalem logically constituted such a board of appeal.

Whether this "Council at Jerusalem" was a standing body elected to serve in this capacity or a series of *ad hoc* meetings convened as the church had need does not substantially impact or undermine the overall view that the early church was a confederation of operationally autonomous congregations in various locales, connected to each other by means of a unifying representative body.

Ecclesiology in the Writings of Paul

Any examination of the organizational structure of the early Church rightly will concentrate on the writings of the apostle Paul. After all, next to God, Paul was arguably the most instrumental agent in the growth and expansion of the 1st century Church. Not only was it Paul who did much of the work of creating the Church in various places, it also was Paul who, through his letters to the churches, provides the clearest expression of an ecclesiological framework for this self-same Church. His principles regarding the Church must be pieced together from the various teaching tools he employed—vivid imagery and metaphors, deep theological insights, and his urgent and highly practical

pastoral advice. Engaging in a thorough exploration of the Paul's writings relating to the

purpose and nature of church organization should yield a deeper understanding of what it

means to be church and how local congregations should relate to one another.

Tidball (2000, *NDBT,* Church entry, p. 409-410) states that "there can be no

doubting the centrality of the church in the writings of Paul." He further emphasizes the

importance of Paul's thoughts in shaping our understanding of what it means to be

"Church" when he relates:

> Of the 114 references to *ekklēsia* in the NT, sixty-two are to be found in Paul. In his
> early writings he uses *ekklēsia* mostly with reference to the gathering of the local
> congregation (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 2:1; Phlm 2) which usually
> meets in someone's home. When he wants to describe more than one local
> congregation he uses the plural (1 Cor 16:1,19; Gal 1:2; 1 Thess 2:14). There is little
> reason to believe that Paul thought of the church as some abstract or other-worldly
> entity. When he uses the term 'the church' generically, as he does in 1 Cor 10:32;
> 15:9; Gal 1:13, he is referring to all the Christians on earth, to the entire Christian
> community which finds expression in many varied local congregations. But the one is
> never disconnected from the other after the manner of Platonic substance and form.

This description of Paul's overarching view of the church appears to coincide

with the one previously described in the OT, the Gospels, and the book of Acts—namely

a confederation of operationally autonomous congregations in various locales held

together by a central unifying authority.

Paul's Teachings and Collaborative
Church Organization

We will now explore Paul's teaching regarding church organization for the

purpose of ascertaining Paul's view of the role cooperation and collaboration should play

in church structure. Essentially, Paul's ecclesiology finds its expression in the images he

employed to describe the Church. Our discussion will, therefore, center on some of the

major metaphors that he applies to the church—along with some of Paul's theological

insights and pastoral instructions relevant to his various descriptions of the church.

The Bride of Christ
and the Family of God

In harmony with the OT view of God's people, Paul describes the church as a

"bride" (2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:25) and the "Family of God" (Rom 8:14-17; Gal 4:4-7; Eph

1:3-6; 3:14-21). The key idea being conveyed by these images is that of relationship—

specifically, the intimate relationship between a woman and her husband and that found

in a family. These relationships, the best that the world has to offer, are used to represent

the love relationship between the church and her Bridegroom, Jesus Christ.

Theologically, Paul expounds on the intimate nature of this relationship between the

church and Christ, as well as the individual believer and Christ, through the "in Christ"

motif—where "in Christ" is understood to mean "the state of being in a saving

relationship with Christ"(see Rom 8:1-11). On a practical level, Paul commends "the

saints and faithful brethren *in Christ* who are in Colossae . . . since we have heard of your

faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints" (Col 1: 2, 4, emphasis supplied).

Those "in Christ" in Colossae are praised for their love for "all of the saints"—the

implication being that the objects of their affection are the believers in the other churches.

Furthermore, this love for fellow believers is seen as the outworking of the love

relationship of the Colossians for Jesus Christ. To Paul, the church, seemingly in its

widest sense, constitutes the family of God.

The Living Temple

Speaking to the Gentile believers in Ephesus, Paul wrote:

> You are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. (Eph 2:19-22)

Elsewhere, he says plainly, "You are the temple of the living God" (2 Cor 6:16). The temple described here is not brick and mortar, but rather is made up of "living stones"— all believers, both Jew and Gentile, in Ephesus and throughout the world. This idea of stones being fitted together to form the "temple of God" speaks of an extreme level of unity and interconnectedness that Paul believes should be found in the universal church of God. That Paul has the universal church in mind, rather than merely a single local church in Ephesus, is shown by the fact that Paul is pointing to the believers in Ephesus *collectively* as being part of the larger "holy temple of God." Paul, through this analogy, is once again describing autonomous local churches (stones) joined and linked together with each other to form a united and harmonious whole (a holy temple for the Lord) which is indeed greater than the sum of its individual parts.

The Army of God

Paul charges Timothy to "wage the good warfare" (1 Tim 1:18) and tells him he "must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ … that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier" (2 Tim 2:3-4). Elsewhere, Paul speaks of Epaphroditus as a "fellow soldier" (Phil 2:25). Paul thus describes the church as the army of God engaged in warfare with evil. Paul explicitly describes the nature of the Christian's warfare when he says, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to flesh. For the weapons of our war are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds" (2 Cor 10:3-4). The collective "we" in these verses also is best seen as the universal church

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of God. In defense of his own right to receive material support from believers, Paul asks the rhetorical question, "Who ever goes to war at his own expense?"(1 Cor 9:7). While his main point in this verse is not related to the role of a soldier, or the church as an army, the clear implication relevant to our present discussion of spiritual war is the idea that no one fights alone. That Paul had the idea of an organized, coordinated, well-trained army in mind in his letters to the Corinthians is supported by Sampley (2000) when he concludes:

> Every aspect of an awesomely efficient military siege is depicted, but now transferred over onto Paul's advocacy of the gospel; not by his own efforts, but by the "knowledge of God"… Paul's picture of military action is modeled from Roman peacekeeping and enforcing operations, which, with vastly superior power, sweep away obstacles, crush resistance, and establish complete compliance. Tacitus, born about the time Paul wrote 2 Corinthians 10 to 13, captures the Roman sense of making peace that Paul brandishes…"Make a wilderness and call it peace." (NIB, v. XI, p. 138)

If Sampley is correct in his observations, then Paul had the centuries, cohorts, and legions of the Roman army in mind as he penned these words to the Corinthians—perhaps even his counsel to Timothy as well. If so, what better example could be put forth of multi-leveled autonomous units working in coordinated action as a harmonious whole than the Roman legion?

The Body of Christ

Finally, Paul repeatedly describes the church as "the body of Christ" (Rom 12:4-8; 1 Cor 12:12-14; Eph 4:11-16). Paul was, in a practical sense, the architect of the early church. To some extent, he may have modeled the organization of the local churches he planted, as well as nature of their interconnectedness, after that of the synagogue with which he was so familiar. But far beyond this, Paul calls believers and, by extension, the churches he organized them into, to a higher, more profound type of organization when

he says, "You are the body of Christ." What greater expression of unity in diversity could there be than the human body? It is various members working independently, yet that activity supporting and harmonizing with the whole body. According to Cate (2006):

> Paul is one of the earliest people we know to call a person a member of anything. Up until Paul, a "member" was a term of anatomy … So when Paul called believers members of the body of Christ he meant that the relationship between individual believers and Christ was the same as between individual parts of the anatomy of the body … For Paul it was absolutely essential for a Christian to be active in a congregation of believers, in the body of Christ. Membership was not a choice for Paul. A Christian could no more say he was not a member of the body of Christ than a foot or eye could say it was not a member of the human body. (p.138-139)

That Paul calls the church universal to the high calling of collectively being the body of Christ is perhaps the most profound statement of his vision for the church as a collection of relatively autonomous local congregations, organized together with Christ as the Head—the central authority that holds it all together.

Collaboration: God's Purpose for Organization

When we pose the questions, "Why does church organization exist?" or "What form of organization should be employed by the church?"—we are, in essence, asking, "What is the purpose for church organization?" Our determination as to the purpose of church organization provides the basis for ecclesiastical structure, and also should be the primary factor that gives shape to this structure—form should follow function. Perhaps if we could begin to understand what it is that God wants for His church and then commit to fulfilling this purpose according to God's methods as empowered by His Spirit, a more practical ecclesiastical structure—one that conforms to God's model—would organically emerge as form would simply follow function. In this section, we will attempt to briefly

outline the perceived purpose that God has for Church organization, as well as touch on some key elements of the organizational structure that might best fulfill this purpose.

A Reproducing Church

The two-fold commission of Jesus Christ to His Disciples: 1. "Go and make disciples" (Matt 28:19) and 2. "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12), contains perhaps the clearest statement of purpose for the church. As Boatman (1985) states simply, "The primary function of every living thing is to reproduce itself" and "The first business of the church is to reproduce itself, and the second is to nurture and care for its own" (p. 283). Growth and "the care and feeding" of its members is the most elemental expression of God's purpose for His Church. Barth (1958), in his discussion of the purpose for the true church, which he defines as "the community," expresses this same idea in more elaborate terms when he writes: "For the community everything depends upon its readiness not to try to be anything more or better or surer than His people, His body, and to live and grow as such on earth" (ChD, V. 4, Part 2, p.676).

The church is to be the living growing body of Christ that makes disciples and models divine love before the world. Organization is intended to empower the church to fulfill this lofty purpose. The *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* makes clear the Adventist acceptance of this principle:

> Just as there can be no living, active human body unless its members are organically united and functioning together under central control, so there can be no living, growing, prospering church unless its members are organized into a united body, all performing their God-given duties and functions under the direction of a divinely constituted authority…For the sake of her healthy development and for the accomplishment of her glorious task of carrying the gospel of salvation to all the world, Christ gave to His church a simple but effective system of organization (GC, 2005, p. 22)

Unity in Diversity and the Gifts of the Spirit

The "simple but effective system of organization" the authors of the church manual have in mind is clearly one based on unity in diversity, where each party functions according to their giftedness "performing their God-given duties and functions under the direction of a divinely constituted authority."   What is described in the above quotation is a system made up of many autonomous agencies working collaboratively within an organized, organic system united "under central control." Regarding this issue of "central control," Patterson who sees "a migration of the SDA system toward an organizational model that exerts control from the central agency to a degree that the representative system of governance is being degraded while it moves toward episcopal behavior," profoundly points out that:

> Since control is a management concept that requires coercive structures to make it happen, then the only true "control" is what is exerted within the denominational structure [i.e. influence over paid employees]; since the body—members who we hope to energize for mission—freely associate with the church and are under no coercive mandate to cooperate with demands from the organization or its leaders. The goal of cooperation must therefore assume the voluntary participation of freely associated members who are not under the control of professional leaders. Control assumes compliance. Cooperation assumes commitment. Control assumes if you ratchet up the control pressure then compliance will be more complete. Commitment assumes intrinsic motivation that is responsive to inspiration. Conference leaders have historically exerted most of their influence toward pastors with whom they have a management based relationship. Little control is focused toward lay people because there is no way to enforce control. "Central control" is a fantasy built around a business model of hierarchical authority. (S. E. Patterson, personal communication, July 22, 2009)

While we would all agree with the need for a unifying center to hold the church together, the concept of "central control" may not be the best expression of this unifying principle. Implicit in the model described in the church manual, is what we want to assert explicitly—true biblical ecclesiastical structure is predicated on a spirit of cooperation throughout the organization.

Insights into what such an organization would look like are to be found in the exploration of two very important biblical principles of leadership and organization—namely servant leadership and unity in diversity. In the book entitled *Christian Leadership*, White offers the following, "One person must not suppose that his wisdom is beyond making any mistake. God would have the greatest cherish that humility that will lead him to be the servant of all, if duty thus orders it" (1985, p. 40). Regarding organization, she penned the following:

> In order for the work to be built up strong and symmetrical, there is need of varied gifts and different agencies, all under the Lord's direction; He will instruct the workers according to their several ability. Cooperation and unity are essential to a harmonious whole, each laborer doing his God-given work, filling his appropriate position, and supplying the deficiency of another. (White, *Evangelism*, 1946, p. 104)

These two observations by White would seem to give credence to an emphasis on servant leadership and unity in diversity, particularly within an overarching concept of cooperation, as being crucial to uncovering a suitable church organizational structure.

Organization and Servant Leadership

First and foremost, the acceptance of the concept of the leader as servant, particularly among those in positions of authority within the church structure, is essential if we are to have a practical ecclesiology that is based on cooperation. The words of Jesus, "But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant, and whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Matt 23:11-12), speak to the heart of the matter as to the purpose for church organization. "He who is greatest among you shall be your servant" cries out to every church leader to follow Jesus Christ's example of servant leadership. Conference, union, division, and, yes, even General Conference officials within the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church must not

view their positions as demanding homage from those "under them" or granting a right to command others, but rather as a call to even greater personal service on behalf of these individuals. On the other hand, these officials are empowered by the church with a measure of oversight authority, and therefore sometimes will need to exercise courage by making hard decisions related to difficult issues and/or errant or incompetent personnel.

Somehow it seems our sense of whom or what is important is in the process of being distorted. White (1985) offers this sage counsel to Christian leaders:

> Leading men should place responsibilities upon others, and allow them to plan and devise and execute, so that they may obtain an experience. Give them a word of counsel when necessary, but do not take away the work because you think the brethren are making mistakes. May God pity the cause when one man's mind and one man's plan is followed without question. God would not be honored should such a state of things exist. All our workers must have room to exercise their own judgment and discretion. God has given men talents which He means that they should use. He has given them minds, and He means that they should become thinkers, and do their own thinking and planning, rather than depend upon others to think for them. (p. 43)

When we perceive the role of conference leadership to be one of planning the next initiative, then calling upon pastors to implement it in their churches . . . when we see the role of conference as overseer rather than as a facilitator . . . when we somehow come to the place where, even in the least, we act as though the churches exist to serve the conference, then we have lost sight of the message of Christ found in Matthew 23. More to the point, any denominational organizational structure that allows such attitudes to prevail will inevitably cease to fulfill God's purpose for church organization. And when such a system becomes so top-heavy and distorted that it predictably starts to break down, we must resist the temptation to become even more autocratic and control-oriented in an attempt to save it. More pressure and guilt-tripping will never turn around the crisis of confidence that will surely result, or stop the financial bleeding that predictably will

accompany such a crisis. If we perceive that the church is, in any way, approaching such

a state, then a reorientation centered on servant leadership and cooperation likely is in

order.

Perhaps it is frustration—founded on an inability to effect change and produce

positive results at the highest levels under the current structure—that motivates leaders to

buy into approaches that seem so out of harmony with the self-sacrificing servant

leadership modeled by Jesus. Perhaps the verse that is operative here is the one that

reminds us, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death"

(Prov 14:12). We must come to see our mission as church leaders—regardless of how

high up we see ourselves in the hierarchy of the church, or what level we may occupy on

some organizational chart—to be primarily that of inquiring of the individuals engaged in

ministry on the local level, "What do you need to better do what you are called by God to

do?"

Then we must really listen to their answers and endeavor to do all that we can to

provide what is needed. The goal, then, would always be to structure our organization to

best serve the individuals on the ground as they minister and evangelize in the name of

Jesus Christ and the Church. This is "servant leadership" applied to the organized

church/denominational setting. Furthermore, it is my belief that a church organization

that cherishes servant leadership would, and should, naturally be one that fosters

cooperation among congregations—particularly those in close proximity to each other

within a definable ministry area.

Unity in Diversity: A Call to Cooperation

The analogy of the church as the body of Christ, so foundational to Paul's view of church organization, is the very picture of unity in diversity. When coupled with Paul's teaching on spiritual gifts (Rom 12:2-8; 1 Cor 12; Eph 4:7-16), this concept presents a most compelling call to cooperation within the church—not simply within a single local congregation, but also the universal church. Dare we say throughout our particular denomination? It must be understood as being so—if we truly believe Christ to be the head of the whole church. The Church is not a collection of little "mini-Christs"─ each congregation individually lead by Christ in exclusion of all other congregations, as some suppose. Rather, these several congregations together form the body of Christ.

Now the concept of the body is a most interesting and fruitful one regarding church organization. If we allow the expanded understanding of the human body that science has afforded us, since the time when Paul first employed this analogy, to further inform our application of it to the church; then we can draw some very interesting conclusions regarding ecclesiastical structure. "Christ is 'the head of the body,' the church" (Col 1:18).

This body metaphor portrays the church as an interconnected organism that works as an organized system of distinct and unique parts whose origin and unity is in Christ" (Boa, 2009, "Christ as Lord of the System" section, p. 4). Paul, obviously, had never seen a living human cell, or likely had any concept of such a thing, yet he <u>did</u> employ the analogy to the fullest extent known to him. One might ask, "Is it unreasonable to assume that had he a more detailed knowledge of human anatomy, he would have made application of these facts as well?" Moreover, is it unreasonable to think that God—the

one who formed the human body and has perfect foreknowledge of the insights that man, in these last days, would gain concerning human anatomy—would expect that we would apply this greater understanding of the body to the analogy itself?

The Body of Christ Extreme View

For the sake of argument, what insights would such an application yield? From the scientific study of human anatomy, we understand cells to be the basic unit of the human body, and that

> The cells in our bodies make up tissues—groups of the same kind of cells with a common structure and function. Examples of tissues include muscle, skin, or bone. Groups of different types of tissues are arranged together to form organs. For example, the stomach includes mucus membrane tissue, muscle tissue, a layer of tissue lining the abdomen, etc. Organs, in turn, are grouped into systems. The systems in our bodies include: cardiovascular (circulatory), digestive, endocrine, excretory (urinary) immune, integumentary (skin, hair, nails), lymphatic, muscular, nervous, reproductive, respiratory, and skeletal. (Carter, 1996)

In short, the human body is a complex organism made up of millions of cells of various types, which form various types of tissue; these, in turn, are organized into organs, which comprise the components of the several systems within the body—all of which works in a collaborative and mutually dependent way to produce the unity that is a fearfully and wonderfully made human being. If we apply this increased knowledge of human anatomy to our understanding of His organizational plan for the church, a picture of church emerges in which individuals (cells) are part of a local congregation (tissues), which, in turn, is grouped with other congregations that are in close proximity and/or share a particular trait or characteristic (organs). These groups of congregations would exist as component parts of a larger grouping (systems) that collectively and cooperatively work to support the growth and development of the whole church organization (body). Now in the human body there is unity, but there also is mutual dependence. Each cell contributes

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to the overall well-being of the body, but at the same time the body also must provide the necessary resources for the cell to thrive and perform at peak levels.

The church is not merely local autonomous congregations and a universal church. There is, of necessity, various inter-related organizational structures needed for the church to be the body of Christ. Being part of the body should not destroy the structural integrity or autonomous function of the local congregation, but likewise the local congregation must realize that it is united, through various systems, to every other local congregation, as well as the church as a whole. Simpson (Simpson & Bruce, 1957), commenting on Ephesians 4:11-13, sums up Paul's "admonition," which he "seems to address primarily to particular churches, such as were in process of formation under his apostolate," in this manner:

> Multiplicity of agencies empowered from on high is to promote unity of type. We are not 'violating the unities' in likening them to a gallant flotilla bound for a common haven rather than a solitary ark breasting the waterfloods. Syncretism effects juxtaposition, a mere caricature of unison; in fact, a smothered discord; but a variegated unity embellishes the world of nature and of grace. Neither oddity for oddity's sake nor quadrangular monotony is its ruling principle, but circumstantial diversity subserving a harmonious whole. Bald identity is much less attractive than multiplex coadaptation. The perfecting of the saints in like manner does not blot out their personalities nor pool them. We are to be ourselves throughout eternity, veritable integers, not atomic particles of the universe. (Simpson & Bruce, p. 95)

What is required for true biblical unity is not conformity and unanimity, but oneness of purpose and a shared vision of a common goal and mission. This is the glue that brings us together as distinct congregations and binds us together as a worldwide movement, regardless of geography, language, race, etc. In light of Simpson's exposition of Paul's teaching on unity in diversity, Tidball (2000) would seem to confirm that Paul envisioned a church as a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts when he observes that:

Traditionally it has been argued that in Paul the church was local and universal and that there was little room for anything in between. More recently it has been recognized that various NT churches formed special associations (Rom 16:4, 16; Gal 1:22; 1 Thess 2:14). These affiliations probably arose from Paul's calling as a missionary to the gentiles (Gal 2:8). The need for any such group to submit to the wider church, and not to work in arrogant isolation, is underlined by Acts 15. (p. 410)

The church described here is made up of autonomous congregations joined together through multiple and various levels of association, to form a universal church whose head is Christ. In the human body, when any organ or system ceases to function properly, the life of the whole body is in jeopardy. The church, like the human body, is an organic system and, when the system of organization ceases to foster and facilitate cooperation between the various congregations that make up the universal church, particularly those congregations in close proximity to one another, then the existence of the church as a whole will be threatened.

The Call to Cooperation

It is becoming self-evident that the Adventist Church in North America needs to find a way to restore the spirit and practice of inter-congregational cooperation at the conference level, or likely face the dissolution of the organized church. If we do not restore the proper function of the structures that exist to connect congregations—exist to provide them with what they need to thrive—then the body of Christ will be unhealthy and potentially suffer breakdown. Commenting on Paul's body analogy in Ephesians, Johnson (2007) writes:

If we look only to our needs we will be divided. We may claim to be unified simply because we are all 'body parts,' but true unity only comes when we look beyond our own needs and desires and focus on how we can humbly serve one another in the spirit of Christ … Cooperation and mutual support equal life. Separation equals death─ not physical death but death to the Trinity's vision of what we can become together in Their power and under Their leadership. Diversity in the hands of human

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beings creates division. Diversity in the hands of God creates divinely inspired unity. (pp. 126-27)

We have neglected those intermediary connections between congregations that are vital to unity and the well-being of both the world church and the local congregation. We do not presently have unity *in* diversity in the NAD; rather we have unity *and* diversity.

Unity *in* diversity would be evidenced by real and practical cooperation at all levels of church organization. Instead, we are united only at the highest levels and only on paper. On the level of the street, we have no real inter-connectedness. On a practical level, there is little or no real cooperation between neighboring SDA churches—even among those within the same conference. As was said previously, neighboring SDA churches actually seem to compete more than they cooperate. In general, all Adventists share a desire to see the world church expand around the world. However, it would seem that we are not as excited to see the SDA church across town doing well.

For example, the members of one church are likely to be jealous of the SDA church a couple miles away that is doing well—they may even see it a threat to their own church's success. Furthermore, in areas where you also have regional conferences alongside state-wide conferences—Florida for example—churches literally within a few city blocks of each other actually have no practical organizational connection whatsoever, and likely will find it nearly impossible to work in a collaborative way. It appears that the current organizational structure itself often frustrates the efforts of neighboring pastors, and members alike, who desire to work in a collaborative way. This is not true unity in diversity … This is not the spirit of cooperation … This is not God's plan of organization.

The Local Church: Center of
Ministry and Mission

The Great Commission of Jesus Christ to His disciples was that they should, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt 28:19-20). The fact that He promises to be "with you always, even to the end of the age" implies that the commission was not only for those eleven disciples who were physically present when He spoke these words, but also intended for all of His future followers, even until His return at the Second Coming.

The Great Commission and the Local Church

The Great Commission is for us—we are to be about the business of making disciples. But how are we to accomplish this task? First and foremost, Jesus makes it clear that it is only because "All authority has been given to Me [Jesus] in heaven and on earth" (Matt 28:18) that the disciples of Christ are able to "Go." Jesus is saying, in essence, "Because all authority has been given to Me, you will be empowered by Me to go and make disciples." The fact that it is only through the power of the indwelling Spirit of Christ that we can hope to fulfill God's purpose for the Church, should not be neglected in any discussion of accomplishment of the Great Commission. However, when discussing the practical accomplishment of God's mission for the church, we likewise should also be mindful of the fact that God, in His infinite wisdom, has chosen to spread the Gospel and make disciples through ordinary people—specifically, the individuals that make up His church. Furthermore, we would do well to acknowledge the adage that "All ministry is local." By this, I mean to say that only the people of God, in

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any given locale, can ultimately win that territory for Christ. Yes, evangelists and others may come into an area, resulting in conversions and/or baptisms, but ultimately it will be a local congregation of believers who will be most instrumental in discipling the individual. In reference to 1 John 1:1-4, Burrill (1998) makes the very salient point that:

> It is not only Jesus and Paul who emphasized Christianity as community. It was a strategy of all New Testament apostles and the basic strategy of the New Testament church. The apostle John gives one of the clearest declarations of the function of the church as an evangelistic agency and it is community based… The purpose of evangelism is to bring people into community. If people are brought to a knowledge of salvation and truth but are not brought into community, Christian mission has failed. (p.119)

Centrality of the Local Church

No matter how great the preacher, no matter how effective the TV or satellite ministry, no matter how well devised the conference strategy; if those evangelized are not connected to a congregation in their community then, according to Burrill, "Christian mission has failed." The simple fact is the world church, the union, or, for that matter, the conference, cannot win anyone, it will be people on the ground in the community where an interest resides who will be the primary instrument God uses to bring them into full discipleship and fellowship with Him. Thus, in this sense, "All ministry is local."

With this in mind, it must be reiterated that organizational structure exists to facilitate local congregations in fulfilling the Great Commission in the area where they reside. It seems plausible that the effectiveness of any local SDA congregation would be increased as it cooperated with neighboring SDA congregations. Therefore, the world church, and the cause of Christ, would probably be best served if organizational structure were developed with this principle of inter-congregational cooperation in mind.

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Summary

In this chapter, an attempt was made to show that there exists a biblical basis for a theology of cooperative church organization. The scriptural record, in both the Old and New Testaments, was examined in relation to ecclesiology. Principles related to church organization in the teachings of Jesus and the writings of Paul were explored. While by no means exhaustive in its treatment of the topic, it is hoped that this study sufficiently dealt with the issue to allow for the formation of the following conclusions.

First, that God affirms cooperation as an overarching principle of organization, at the very least, on the purely abstract level. That it may even be said that cooperation and collaboration are integral aspects of His character, as well as His highest aspirations for His people.

Second, that the central theme of this chapter—namely that God desires cooperation between the members of His Church—appears to be born out in Paul's teaching on both the nature of the church and the operation of the gifts of the Spirit in the context of the church.

Third, while admittedly less incontrovertible, that the facts seem to support the plausible conclusion that ecclesiological cooperation should extend to the inter-congregational level. Furthermore, if this conclusion—that the relationship between neighboring SDA churches should be collaborative in nature—is accepted as valid, then the organizational structure of the SDA Church should be re-evaluated for the purpose of maximizing its ability to facilitate just these types of association.

CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The focus of this study is cooperation, particularly the potential benefits of

cooperation as an organizing principle for the structure of the North American Division

of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (NAD). As one surveys the literature on the subject

of cooperation, it becomes readily apparent that many great minds have explored the

topic. It also quickly becomes apparent that there are nearly as many approaches to the

subject as there are authors. The diversity of scholarly opinion reflects the vastness of the

subject. However, whether one's focus is cooperation in nature, human culture,

international affairs, the halls of government, the workplace, the church, or even the

family setting, certain themes seem common to all, which we will attempt to reflect in

this treatment of the subject.

In this chapter, current literature is reviewed centering around three general

themes: cooperation, collaborative organizations, and organizational structure (with

particular emphasis on church organizational structure). This review will include books

and articles on leadership, organizational theory, systems theory, Adventist

organizational history, and the experience of other faith groups in developing cooperative

structures in their context— primarily the United Methodist Church in North America

(UMC). The goal of this review is to discover literature that can contribute understanding

to the challenges of developing cooperative organizational structure within the NAD. It

must be said that, although considerable effort went into making this study a thorough

treatment of the subject of cooperation, it is by no means represented as being exhaustive. The intention is to convey an understanding of the breadth of the subject, while sufficiently exploring the aspects of this important subject that are most relevant to the ultimate aim of lending understanding to the furtherance of developing a cooperative organizational structure in the NAD . To God be the glory if these objectives are in any way met in this work.

Cooperation in Theory and Practice

Historically, much has been written in academic circles, and a great deal of research generated by social scientists, concerning cooperation and collaboration. However, precious little attention has been paid to application of collaborative concepts in the "real world" of business and management. "Collaboration rarely occurs naturally, because leaders, often unintentionally, erect barriers that block people from collaborating. Many people, though not all of course, have a natural tendency to collaborate, but they are not left to their own devices. And the culprit is modern management" (Hansen, 2009, p. 49). Managers often point to the loss of control and the greater inefficiencies inherent in more cooperative organizational models as reasons for rejecting greater collaboration in the workplace.

The Case for Cooperation

Contrary to most managers' commonly held beliefs, the facts are now emerging and even gaining the attention of progressive organizational leaders that there is real power in cooperation. Sawyer (2007) makes a compelling case for the concept of group innovation and the power of collaboration when he observes:

We're drawn to the image of the lone genius whose mythical moment of insight changes the world. But the lone genius is a myth; instead, it's group genius that generates breakthrough innovation. When we collaborate, creativity unfolds across people; the sparks fly faster, and the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. (p. 7)

In addition to this positive effect on innovation and creativity, evidence seems to support the conclusion that cooperation actually improves productivity, rather than diminishing it. A study of data from the 1998 British Workplace Employee Relations Survey (Forde, Slater, & Spencer, 2006, pp. 369-398) examined the impact of cooperative participation on workplace productivity, while also investigating the effect of threat-based coercion on the same. The study found little evidence of a direct effect on workplace productivity from different measures of the threat of job loss. Strong support was found, however, for the notion that worker participation can enhance workplace productivity – especially where practices are combined in systems of participation. Additionally, there was evidence that the positive effects of participation can actually be undermined by threat, not merely of job loss or the external threat of job loss as reflected in the local unemployment rate but, rather more directly, from high levels of supervision that tend to undermine cooperative participation.

Many leaders in business and industry are awakening to the practical value of cooperation, experiencing a measure of success in implementing change in the direction of greater collaboration, and writing about the experience. Stallkamp (2005), former President of Chrysler Corporation, believes that long-term success in business depends on focusing on win/win collaboration with business partners, rather than using coercion and adversarial tactics to force compliance. That Stallkamp believes in the power of cooperation and collaboration to make a real difference in the real world of business is born out in his statement that, "The tools of collaboration offer the power to help this

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country's older mature industries revitalize themselves and avoid dropping into eventual decline (p. 203).

Such a change is a real break with the near universal norm in the history of corporate organization in America. Tapscott and Williams (2006) observe that, throughout history, corporations have organized themselves according to strict hierarchical lines of authority:

> Everyone was a subordinate to someone else – employees versus managers, marketers versus customers, producers versus supply chain subcontractors, companies versus the community. There was always someone or some company in charge, controlling things, at the 'top' of the food chain. (p. 1)

They freely acknowledge that the idea of organizations based on principles of cooperation and collaboration challenging the traditional corporation as the primary engine of production sounds like a fantasy. "So deeply embedded in the fabric of society have these lumbering industrial-age creatures become that we would scarcely recognize a world without their monopoly over production" (p. 55.) But this is exactly what they propose.

Tapscott and Williams (2006) unabashedly believe that profound changes in technology, demographics, and the global economy dictate that organizations cannot merely ramp up existing management strategies and methods based on hierarchical lines of authority. Instead, they share their conviction that organizations must embrace a new paradigm of collaboration if they are to survive and thrive—they call this new paradigm "wikinomics." They go on to explain further:

> This is more than open source, social networking, so-called crowdsourcing, smart mobs, crowd wisdom, or other ideas that touch upon the subject. Rather, we are talking about deep changes in the structure and modus operandi of the corporation and our economy, based on new competitive principles such as openness, peering, sharing, and acting globally. (p. 3)

They argue that the coming together of a global platform for collaboration, a generation that grew up collaborating, and a global economy that enables new forms of economic cooperation is creating the conditions for a perfect storm will drive deep changes in the strategy and architecture of firms. So much so that, "The old, ironclad vessels of the industrial era will sink under the crashing waves, while firms that create highly nimble and networked structures and connect to external ideas and energies will gain the buoyancy they require to survive" (Tapscott & Williams, 2006, p. 63).

Finally, while Sawyer (2007) readily acknowledges that "improvised innovation" is quite inefficient—that it simply makes more mistakes than the traditional command and control organizational structure. In defense of collaboration, he counters that, "the hits can be phenomenal; they'll make up for the inefficiency and the failures" (p.16). This is the essence of the power of cooperation in the workplace, not to mention that it also tends to simply make work more fun and pleasurable.

Collaboration Defined

While cooperation and collaboration are inextricably linked, it seems useful at this juncture to share a few views as to what constitutes collaboration, and the relationship between the two concepts. Stallkamp states the following:

> For our purposes, collaboration is any management practice that features close and organized or managed cooperation between independent firms. This attitude of cooperation involves participative planning to achieve a desired specific purpose. The main feature of a collaborative system that distinguishes it from the negative dictatorial command method is that here the involved parties work jointly as a common team, with each member being responsible for an assigned role. (p. 97)

According to Hansen (2009):

> Collaboration takes place when people from different units work together in cross-unit teams on a common task or provide significant help to each other. . . . collaboration across organization units, including across divisions, business units,

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product lines, country subsidiaries, departments, functions, factories, and sales offices in a company. That's companywide collaboration. For governments, the equivalent is collaboration across governmental departments, agencies, and branches of government; for non-profits, it's collaboration across geographical offices and departments. (p. 15)

Hansen also makes the distinction between "good" collaboration and "bad" collaboration. In fact, he goes as far as saying, "Bad collaboration is worse than no collaboration" (p.1). His answer to the question of what is the difference between good and bad collaboration is set forth in principles of what he calls disciplined collaboration, which he defines as "the leadership practice of properly assessing when to collaborate (and when not to) and instilling in people both the willingness and the ability to collaborate when required" (p. 15). Hansen's process involves three steps: Evaluate opportunities for collaboration; spot the barriers to collaboration; and tailor collaboration solutions to tear down the barriers.

The Collaborative Organization: What it is and how it Works

What constitutes a new organizational model that is based on cooperation and that is collaborative in nature? What does it look like and how does it function? What is the difference between such an organization and the traditional corporation? Hanover's CEO, O'Brien (cited in Senge, 1990, p.181), addresses these questions when stating the following:

In the traditional organization, the dogma was managing, organizing, and controlling. In the learning organization, the new 'dogma' will be vision, values, and mental models. The healthy corporations will be ones which can systematize ways to bring people together to develop the best possible mental models for facing any situation at hand.

The majority of the literature reviewed for this study related to collaborative organizations seems to point to three characteristics that are common among successful

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collaborative organization, namely: 1. Integrity, 2. Empowerment, and 3. Structures, policies, and procedures that enhance cooperation. We will look at each of these three in turn.

<center>Integrity</center>

That the collaborative organization is of necessity "value-based" is somewhat revolutionary, and at the same time, common sense. Batstone (2003) believes that, counter-intuitively, the key to having a high-performing organization that serves the needs of its stake-holders and employees, while at the same time meeting the needs of its clients, is for it to organize around eight principles that will result in it being credible and trustworthy. He points to data that proves the power of integrity and that it is essential for the success of the collaborative organization. Batstone cites a study by the research company Walker Information which measured employee satisfaction and loyalty at the workplace and concluded:

> Workers are six times more likely to stay in their jobs when they believe their company acts with integrity, but when workers mistrust their bosses' decisions and feel ashamed of their firm's behavior, four out of five workers feel trapped at work and say they are likely to leave their jobs soon. (p. 3)

Batstone makes the case that companies that incorporate these eight principles of integrity into their operations do not put themselves at a competitive disadvantage, but rather the opposite. In fact, substantial evidence indicating that principled companies excel financially over the long haul is found in a study by Tower Perrin, a management consulting firm. They took a close look at twenty-five companies enjoying strong reputations for public integrity and that are rated year in and year out as desirable places to work. This group includes such well-known corporations like Southwest Airlines, Johnson & Johnson, Applied Materials, and Procter & Gamble. Towers Perrin analyzed

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the market performance of these principled companies over a fifteen-year period and then compared their returns to those generated by public companies at large. "The results: the principled companies delivered a total shareholder return of 43 percent, while the shareholders return of Standard & Poor's 500 performed at less than half that figure: 19 percent" (pp. 11-12).

Successful organizations are dynamic systems with interdependent parts and it is not easy to generalize regarding the factors that predict high performance. However, the *American Management Association High-Performance Organizations Survey* (2007, p. 26), developed a short list of characteristics of high-performance organizations:

1. They "walk the talk," behaving consistently throughout the organization.

2. They understand their customers to a very high degree, knowing what customers need and focusing on meeting those needs.

3. They manage locally and yet share information; they develop and support great supervisors and provide access to as much information as employees can use.

4. They create an environment of focus and teamwork; they do this by designing procedures and processes to pull everyone together and by clearly measuring outcomes.

5. They treat employees well so that employees will treat the organization well; they clarify values and expectations and they behave with the highest ethical standards.

Apparently, along with being an integral part of the collaborative organization, integrity is good for business over the long haul—meanwhile it should go without saying that it is an absolute imperative for any church organization.

<div align="center">Empowerment</div>

Blanchard, Carlos, and Randolph (1999) argue that empowerment is crucial for the long-term success of an organization, and identify three keys to empowerment of

people within the organization: Sharing information with everyone; creating autonomy through boundaries; and replacing the hierarchy with teams. They state,

> We believe that empowerment (which we link with team member involvement, ownership, responsibility, proprietary interest, and pride) is crucial for companies to be competitive in today's business world and certainly in the world of tomorrow. Literally, for companies to succeed in the new world of business, team members must feel that they own their jobs and that they have key roles. (p.3)

In his landmark book, *Fifth Discipline*, Senge (1990) sees the organization of the future as being the "learning organization," which he defines as "an organization where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together" (p. 3).

After recounting the story of Goldcorp—a small, unprofitable gold-mining company that did the unthinkable and posted all of their precious geologic data on line and offered a reward to *anyone* that could help them find the gold, the results of which was merely the discovery of one of the richest gold deposits ever—Tapscott and Williams (2006) ask:

> If a small underperforming company in one of the world's oldest industries can achieve greatness by opening its doors to external input and innovation, what would happen if more organizations followed the same strategy? Couldn't just about any social or economic challenge be solved with a critical mass of self-organized contributors seeking an answer to the problems? In fact, wouldn't businesses be more productive if they could reach outside their walls to harness the insights and energies of a vast network of peers that converge around shared interests and goals? If so, how would the traditional corporation change? And what new business models could be built on this new collaborative approach to producing goods and services?" (p. 269)

This example shows that, despite long held views to the contrary, a commitment to openness and empowerment works, and is crucial to the success of the collaborative organization.

Structures, Policies, and Procedures that
Enhance Cooperation

Lencioni (2006) believes that building a cohesive leadership team is the first

critical step for an organization to have the best chance at success. But Lencioni also

views as equally important overcoming the structural challenge of departmental politics,

divisional rivalry, or turf warfare—essentially eliminating the barriers that exist within an

organization, which he identifies as "silos" that often thwart behavioral cohesiveness. His

solution for this phenomena is the establishment of a thematic goal for the organization—

a single, qualitative focus that is shared by the leadership team, and ultimately by the

entire organization. "To tear down silos, leaders must go beyond behaviors and address

the contextual issues at the heart of departmental separation and politics" (p. viii).

Tapscott and Williams (2006) observe, "An important part of creating critical

mass involves cooperating to supply the open standards, shared IP, legal foundations, and

collaborative infrastructure that will support the innovative process" (p. 287). Mitchell,

Coles, and Metz (1999) believe that organizations, like people, are creatures of habit.

Organizational habits often appear to be efficient procedures and sound policies, yet these

ingrained procedures and structures can actually obstruct growth, generating "stalled"

thinking. A situation best overcome through a systems approach searches for answers to

questions like, "Why are we here?" and "Why do we do what we do?" Mitchell et al.

conclude that the result will be exponential growth stemming from organizational

redesign based on the conscious pursuit of the "Theoretical Best Practice" for

accomplishing your primary objectives (p. 187).

In a collaborative organization, structure supports cooperation and interdependence, while at the same time promoting freedom, individual responsibility, and personal initiative. Senge makes a salient point:

> Helplessness, the belief that we cannot influence the circumstances under which we live, undermines the incentive to learn, as does the belief that someone somewhere else dictates our actions. Conversely, if we know our fate is in our own hands, our learning matters. This is why learning organizations will, increasingly, be 'localized' organizations, extending the maximum degree of authority and power as far from the 'top' or corporate center as possible. Localness means moving decisions down the organizational hierarchy; designing business units where, to the greatest degree possible, local decision makers confront the full range of issues and dilemmas intrinsic in growing and sustaining any business enterprise. Localness means unleashing people's commitment by giving them the freedom to act, to try out their own ideas and be responsible for producing results. (pp. 287-288)

Rainer and Geiger (2006) believe that defining the process *is* formulating a strategy. They say, "Church leaders must define more than the purpose *(the what)*; they also must define the process *(the how)*" (p. 114). The structure, policies, and practices need to be in harmony with the objective of unleashing the creative power of cooperation.

Systems Thinking and the Church

When one explores the concept of a collaborative organizational structure, it is important to view the organization as a whole and not just a collection of pieces and parts. Systems thinking should prove very beneficial in this regard. Therefore, in this section we will examine literature related to general systems theory and then begin the process of applying systems theory to the Church setting (i.e. viewing the Church as a system). It needs to be stated at this point that our purpose in this section is not to provide a complete and exhaustive view of systems thinking, or its history, but instead to simply "hit the high points" and explore the viewpoints that might prove to be most relevant to our study of church organization.

Systems Thinking

Senge tells the tragic story of personally witnessing a young man who unwisely decided to take his rubber raft over a small dam. The raft overturned and he was thrown into the freezing water. Senge remembers:

> Unable to reach him, we watched in horror as he struggled desperately to swim downstream against the backwash at the base of the dam. His struggle lasted only a few minutes; then he died of hypothermia. Immediately, his limp body was sucked down into the swirling water. Seconds later, it popped up, ten yards downstream, free of the maelstrom at the base of the dam. What he had tried in vain to achieve in the last moments of his life, the currents accomplished for him within seconds after his death. Ironically, it was his very struggle against the forces at the base of the dam that killed him. If he hadn't tried to keep his head above water, but instead dived down to where the current flowed downstream, he would have survived. (p. 93)

Senge draws the following conclusions from this story:

> This tragic story illustrates the essence of the systems perspective . . . *Structures of which we are unaware hold us prisoner*. Conversely, learning to see the structures within which we operate begins a process of freeing ourselves from previously unseen forces and ultimately mastering the ability to work with them and change them. (p. 94)

Aronson (1997) gives a succinct explanation of the nature and advantages of systems thinking:

> Systems thinking provides a set of tools for constructing maps of systems and determining the points at which change can have the greatest impact on a company's performance . . . The approach of systems thinking is fundamentally different from that of traditional forms of analysis. Instead of focusing on the individual pieces of what is being studied, systems thinking focuses on the feedback relationships between the thing being studied and the other parts of system. Therefore, instead of isolating smaller and smaller parts of a system, systems thinking involves a broader view, looking at larger and larger numbers of interactions. (p. 3)

One can trace the development of Systems Thinking from its inception, in the work of early proponents of *Cybernetics* (Wiener and Gregory Bateson) and the concurrent development of *General Systems Theory (GST)* by von Bertalanffy and Boulding, to its contemporary expressions, in the work of *System Dynamics* proponents

(Forrester, Meadows, and Senge), *Complexity Theorists* (Prigogine or Kauffman), *Operations Research (OR)* practioners (Churchman and Ackoff), and the *Learning Systems* approach, which was advocated by Lewin and carried forward by Schön and Mary Catherine Bateson (Ramage & Shipp, 2009).

The work of Wheatley provides the interesting perspective of an organizational theorist who is looking at systems theory from the world of science. Wheatley (2006) examines recent insights from the world of science in biology, physics, chemistry— particularly the multidisciplinary theories of evolution and chaos that are changing the way we view the world—and draws conclusions about human organizations. Even if one believes the Bible to be authoritative regarding the origins of life (as I do) and therefore rejects theories of macro-evolution, one can still allow that wisdom might be found in the conclusions that Wheatley draws regarding the nature of organizations.

According to Wheatley, one of the first differences between new science and Newtonianism is a focus on holism rather than the parts of things. Wheatley affirms this change, saying, "Systems are [now] understood as whole systems, and attention is given to relationships within those networks" (p. 10). Conclusions of chaos theoreticians, explaining the relationship between order and chaos in nature, she applies to social systems and organizations in general. The thrust of her application is:

> These two forces are now understood as mirror images, two states that contain the other. A system can descend into chaos and unpredictability, yet within that state of chaos the system is held within boundaries that are well-ordered and predictable. Without the partnering of these two great forces, no change or progress is possible. (Wheatley, 2006, p.13)

She further elaborates on this when she says:

> Our concept of organization is moving away from the mechanistic creations that flourished in the age of bureaucracy. We now speak in earnest of more fluid, organic structures, of boundaryless and seamless organizations. We are beginning to

recognize organizations as whole systems, construing them as 'learning organizations' or as 'organic' and noticing that people exhibit self-organizing capacity. (Wheatley, 2006, p. 15)

Kotter and Cohen (2002) focus is on change, and he argues that:

People change what they do less because they are given *analysis* that shifts their *thinking* than because they are *shown* a truth that influences their *feelings*. This is especially so in large-scale organizational change . . . whether in an entire organization, an office, a department, or a work group. (p. 1)

Kotter identifies a process of change, flowing through the following eight stages:

increasing urgency for change, create a guiding change team, develop the vision and

strategies of change, effectively communication the vision and strategies, remove

barriers, accomplish short-term wins, maintain momentum in waves of change, and create

a new culture that make the changes stick. He adds to this process the following counsel:

The central challenge is not strategy, not systems, not culture. These elements and many others can be very important, but the core problem without question is behavior – what people do, and the need for significant shifts in what people do. (p. 2)

Meadows (2008) defined a system as "an interconnected set of elements that is

coherently organized in a way that achieves something." She goes on to explain, "If you

look at that definition closely for a minute, you can see that a system must consist of

three kinds of things: *elements*, *interconnections*, and a *function* or *purpose*" (p. 11). She

makes the profound and challenging observation:

When a living thing dies, it loses its 'system-ness.' The multiple interrelations that held it together no longer function, and it dissipates, although its material remains part of a larger food-web system . . .there is an integrity or wholeness about a system and an active set of mechanisms to maintain that integrity. Systems can change, adapt, respond to events, seek goals, mend injuries, and attend to their own survival in lifelike ways, although they may contain or consist of nonliving things. (p. 12)

Gharajedaghi (2006), who dedicated his book "To Russ Ackoff, my mentor,

colleague and friend of over thirty years who made it all possible," expresses a view that

echos Ackoff when he says:

The imperatives of interdependency, the necessity of reducing endless complexities, and the need to produce manageable simplicities require a workable systems methodology and a holistic frame of reference that will allow us to focus on the relevant issues and avoid the endless search for more details while drowning in proliferating useless information. Contrary to widely held belief, the popular notion of a multidisciplinary approach is not a systems approach. The ability to synthesize separate finding into a coherent whole seems far more critical than the ability to generate information from different perspectives. (p. xvii)

In discussing Systems Methodology, Gharajedaghi (2006, pp. 128-132)

recommends an *iterative design process* for "operationalizing the most exciting vision of

the future that the designers are capable of producing. It is the design of the next

generation of their system to replace the existing order. Design process consists of two

distinct phases – idealization and realization." This process involves the following:

Idealization – The basic idea of idealization is the notion of "backward planning."

A process of iterations, in which a succession of design attempts, each building on the

one preceding, is used to create a "best approximation" of the ideal system to accomplish

a given purpose(s). Gharajedaghi illustrates the starting point of the process by saying, "It

starts with the assumption that the system has been destroyed overnight and that the

designers have been given the opportunity to recreate the system from a clean slate." The

designers are free to dream and ask, "what if?" However, this is not impractical

daydreaming.

The new design is subject to only three constraints: 1. Technological feasibility, 2. Operational viability, and 3. Learning and adaptation capability. Although idealizing, we are not dealing with science fiction; our idealized system is designed to be self-sustaining in the current environment . . . design is an iterative process. All three aspects of function, structure, and process are addressed in each iteration. (2006, pp. 128-132)

Realization – This phase is also iterative. "Successive approximation is at the core

of realizing an ideal design. Realization takes place in a real-world environment.

Therefore the designers must identify all the constraints that might interfere with proper

implementation of the design." Each successive design generation must include how

identified constraints are to be effectively removed, overcome, or otherwise taking into

account. In short, the idealized system that was "dreamed" must withstand rigorous

testing, proving its practical effectiveness, long-term viability, and real-world

adaptability.

This entire endeavor is predicated on "searching" for the purpose of defining the

problem or, as Ackoff would say, "formulating the mess." Searching is "the iterative

examination that generates information, knowledge, and understanding about the system

and its environment." The searching phase of mess formulation involves three kinds of

inquiry:

> *Systems Analysis* – To develop a snapshot of the current system and it environment
> that describes their structural, functional, and behavioral aspects without making a
> value judgment.

> *Obstruction Analysis* – To identify the malfunctioning in the power, knowledge,
> wealth, beauty, and value dimensions of the social system.

> *System Dynamics* – To understand the nature of multi-loop feedback systems and
> interactions of interdependent variables in the context of time.

The three inquires – *systems analysis*, *obstruction analysis*, and *systems dynamics* –

evolve iteratively. With each successive cycle of iterations, the designers try to achieve a

higher level of specificity. In the first iteration, they try to get a feel for the whole, define

the system boundary, identify important variables, and note areas of consensus and

conflict. In subsequent iterations, they verify the assertions made in the previous

iteration, obtain agreement on significant issues, and develop models to understand the

behavior of the system.

While at first glance Collins (2001) is not likely to be construed as an advocate of

the systems approach to organizational development, he does, nevertheless, seem to

articulate what could be described as a variation of the systems approach. Whereas a systems thinker might say, "We must consider the organization as a complex whole, interacting with a complex environment," Collins instead advocates taking a systematic look at your organization for the purpose of discovering its "Hedgehog Concept"—which he defines as "a simple, crystalline concept that flows from deep understanding about the intersection of the following three circles: What can you be the best in the world at, What drives your economic engine, and what are you deeply passionate about" (p. 95). This could be described as merely being a systems approach from a different angle. Collins does not focus, as the System thinker would, on determining the desired outcome and then finding the best system to accomplish this; rather he looks at the present "system" with the purpose of discovering what it can do best.

Systems thinkers are not prone to viewing people as cogs in a machine; they are about looking holistically at the organization, understanding the system in all its complex interdependencies, and redesigning it to maximize the potential of each individual in the best possible ideal system to best achieve a desired outcome. On the other hand, Collins says:

> First get the right people on the bus (and the wrong people off the bus) and then figure out where to drive it . . . 'I don't really know where we should take this bus. But I know this much: If we get the right people in the right seats, and the wrong people off the bus, then we'll figure out how to take it someplace great.'(2001, p. 41)

In this way, Collins' approach may be, in some way, viewed as the "reverse engineering" of System Theory—it is focused on putting the pieces together to produce a great result, but not necessarily a specific outcome.

For Collins, maximizing potential to achieve greatness is the overarching goal, thus allowing for the real possibility that the specific result will be different than what

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one initially set out to do—how one achieves great results is determined by the dictates of one's specific "Hedgehog Concept." This is not to say that Collins believes success is only achieved through pragmatism. On the contrary, Collins (Collins & Hansen, 2011) poses some very relevant questions and, based on his research, offers a profound answer:

> When the moment comes—when we're afraid, exhausted, or tempted—what choice do we make? Do we abandon our values? Do we give in? Do we accept average performance because that's what most everyone else accepts? Do we capitulate to the pressure of the moment? Do we give up on our dreams when we've been slammed by brutal facts? The greatest leaders we've studied throughout all our research cared as much about values as victory, as much about purpose as profit, as much about being useful as being successful. Their drive and standards are ultimately internal, rising from somewhere deep inside. (pp. 182-183)

All of this leads one to the observation that, while the model that Collins advocates seems somewhat incompatible with a systems approach, in the end both paths ostensibly lead to the same place and seem to have the same goals. While not stated as a primary principle, even Collins seems to effectively practice aspects of the holistic approach to organizations found in the Systems Theory approach. Perhaps we would do well to give greater thought to the benefits to be derived from viewing the organizational structure of the NAD from the more holistic vantage point of Systems Analysis.

The Church as a System

The case that the Church is a prime candidate for the application of systems thinking is powerfully made by Herrington, Bonem, and Furr (2000) when they point out that:

> Christian congregations are the most complicated human organizations that exist. Their mix of the human and the divine, a heritage measured in centuries, and variations in size, context, beliefs, values, and practices make them extraordinarily intricate. We are tempted to treat them like social machines by indiscriminately interchanging people, programs, and purposes, but their status as living systems requires a far more nuanced understanding and approach. (p. 145)

They see churches as open systems where everything in them affects everything else. Therefore, they advocate viewing congregations as comprising four connected "layers"— events, trends, structure, and mental models. Events are the congregation's easily discernible activities and routines. Trends more deeply reflect the directions taken by the congregation over time. Structure deals with the patterns of relationships and/ or the ways things get done. Mental models are the ways a congregation understands the nature of the Gospel, its mission, its role in the larger community, and issues involved in how it makes decisions.

Quicke (2006) builds on this approach by focusing on the complicated relationships between these levels, and the potential for impact on the change process. For example, a change made at the level of event may have little effect on the trend of a congregation, and none at all on the deeper levels of structure and mental models. His point is that, without being cognizant of the complex nature of the church organism and its multi-leveled makeup, a leader might make some change that is merely to programming on the event level, and he or she "might imagine that much more has been achieved than is the case!" (p. 122).

Much has been written about the barriers to congregational change. One reason often cited for a lack of transformation is that pastors generally do not see themselves as being agents of change or feel they do not have the power and authority to effect change. Secondly, there seems to be a general lack of accountability for pastors and/or lay leaders concerning progress, and a lack of incentive to promote change. Borden (2006) sees another in the organizational structure of the churches themselves:

> Regardless of the denomination and its polity, most congregations in the United
> States are designed to be small, remain small, and function ineffectively in the

twenty-first century. These structures, from their inception until now, reflect the cultures in which they were created. Unlike in the scriptures, authority is divided from responsibility to act . . . In some cases, triangulation is codified into the system. Egalitarianism is honored over effectiveness, and bold leadership is generally discouraged. (p. 21)

Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky (2009) could easily be speaking to the current situation in the NAD when they advocate for an adaptive form of leadership, with decision making distributed throughout the organization, as the best response to the present economic crisis and beyond. They share the following observation:

The danger in the current economic situation is that people in positions of authority will hunker down. They will try to solve the problem with short-term fixes: tightened controls, across-the-board cuts, restructuring plans. They'll default to what they know how to do in order to reduce frustration and quell their own and others' fears. Their primary mode will be drawing on familiar expertise to help their organizations weather the storm. That is understandable. It's natural for authority figures to try to protect their people from external threats so that everyone can quickly return to business as usual. But in these times, even the most competent authority will be unable to offer this protection. The organizational adaptability required to meet a relentless succession of challenges is beyond anyone's current expertise. No one in a position of authority – none of us, in fact – has been here before. (The expertise we relied on in the past got us to this point, after all.) An organization that depends solely on its senior managers to deal with the challenges risks failure. (p. 64)

Change is not optional, and the change that is most needed is widespread movement toward collaboration and decentralization, with a renewed appreciation for the primacy of the local congregation as the center of ministry and evangelism. All of which should be based on application of systems analysis in order to discover the best way to fulfill the mission to which God has called His church.

Organizational Structures of the Methodist Church

The United Methodist Church, which began as a movement and a loose network of local societies with a mission, has grown into one of the most carefully organized and largest denominations in the world. (Koehler, 1997, p. 24) On one hand, this organization

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structure is very similar to that of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, with four

constituent levels of organization. There is a General Conference that is the legislative

body for the worldwide United Methodist Church (UMC). Below that, there are five

Jurisdictional Conferences that oversee the work in the U.S., and seven Central

Conferences that function on the same level as Jurisdictional Conferences do in the US,

but in the rest of the world instead–all very similar to the role of Union Conferences in

the Adventist Church. Then there are Annual Conferences that oversee the work in one or

several states in the U.S. These Annual Conferences are, in turn, made up of all UMC

congregations in that given geographic territory (UMC, 2008, *Book of Discipline*, pp. 24-

34). Additionally, "Groups of churches in a geographic area are organized to form a

district, somewhat similar to the way cities and towns are organized into counties. Often,

churches in a district will work together to provide training and opportunities" (Koehler,

1997, p. 24).

On this "organizational level," the United Methodist Church is remarkably similar

to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but the UMC also employs an episcopal system of

governance, which means bishops provide the top leadership. All bishops (active and

retired) are members of the Council of Bishops. Bishops are directed to provide oversight

of the entire church, but have specific leadership responsibilities in a geographical area,

called an episcopal area. An episcopal area is comprised of one or more Annual

Conferences. There are 50 episcopal areas in the U.S. and 18 episcopal areas in the

Central Conferences.

There would seem to be, in the documents of the UMC, an appreciation for the

local congregation's role in the overall mission of the church. This is borne out by the

section in the *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (2008), which states

unequivocally:

> It is primarily at the level of the charge consisting of one or more local churches that the church encounters the world. The local church is a strategic base from which Christians move out to the structures of society. . . .Therefore, the local church is to minister to persons in the community where the church is located, to provide appropriate training and nurture to all, to cooperate in ministry with other local churches . . . . and to participate in the worldwide mission of the church." (pp. 133, 134)

This official "manual" of the UMC also instructs the Annual Conferences to "implement

a process of cooperative parish development through which cooperative parish ministries

are initiated and developed" (p. 117). Thus, the official organizing documents of the

UMC would seem to be saying all the right things–democratic governance, decentralized

administration, local cooperation between congregations.

However, the membership of the UMC has decreased from 10,671,774 in 1970 to

8,411,503 in 2000 – a decrease of 2,260,271 or over 21 percent (UMC-GCA&H

Website). Langford and Willimon (1995) observe that "The United Methodist Church in

its present form is one of the most hierarchical, bureaucratic churches in Christendom"

(p. 32). They also make the following assessment of their church: "We can now say, with

a growing sense of conviction, that a major reason for our denomination's decades of

decline is an unstated, but nevertheless real, prejudice against the local church" (p. 33). In

the same book, they call for the fundamental reformation of UMC organizational

structure, as the UMC faced the prospect of continued decline. They perceived the UMC

structure as being a "top heavy bureaucracy at greater distance from the local

constituencies than had been the case in any of our uniting churches, a funding system

with little accountability, and a perceived lack of attention to the needs of the local

churches" (p. 28). Their proposed changes focus on decentralization and a rediscovery of the primacy of the local church and its mission.

If one is to take them at their word, it would also seem that they hold out very little confidence that the UMC can turn the situation around, judging from the tone and tenor of following comment:

> No matter how many lay leaders rise up and call for change, no matter how many clergy speak out for renewal, renewal cannot occur within the presently mandated structures. The rules and the keepers of the rules are too self-protective. Not only our clergy leaders but our lay leaders as well who vote at General Conference, tend to be too enmeshed in the present order to conceive of a new order. While the legislative changes that we will propose as necessary are not many in number, they are fundamental in nature. (Langford & Willimon, 1995, p. 35)

The questions that remain are, "What went wrong?" "Does the actual polity and practices of the UMC differ so markedly from their profession, and could this resulting organizational structure be the root cause of the decline of the Methodist church in America?" Closer to home, one might wonder as to the meaning of all of this for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We have said previously that, regarding church polity, the Adventist Church has much in common with the United Methodist Church. This thought finds affirmation in the following observations of Knight:

> Churches in their second century face problems their founders never had to deal with. Two of those problems are institutionalism and secularization. Churches, like people and other organizations, pass from infancy through adolescence into adulthood and eventually have to face the problems of dysfunction that aging brings. The early church fell into this pattern, as did the Reformation churches and the Methodist movement. (Knight, 1995, p. 23)

Institutionalism saps the life out of the church, diverting resources from mission-minded action to maintenance of the status quo, and placing greater emphasis on respectability than effectiveness. Knight (1995) concludes, "Today Adventism, at 150 years of age, stands in an analogous position to Methodism at the same age" (p. 34). Will we heed the

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warning in time to avoid the paralysis that the Methodists experienced? Will we see the

need to return to the mindset that created the Advent Movement, and thus avoid the

pitfalls of institutionalism and secularism that would sap the life from the Church? These

would seem to be the pertinent questions of our time.

Organizational History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

In an Adventist Review article, Aufderhar, (1986), asks "Looking back over 125-

years [of Adventist history] since the first statewide conference [Michigan], what can we

learn about church structure that will help us complete our assignment?" (p.13). His

three-part answer is simple, yet profound, and still of value for us today.

First, he states his belief that the original reasons for organization still exist:

If Ellen White could write of the 1860's, 'As our numbers increased, it was evident that without some form of organization there would be great confusion, and the work would not be carried forward successfully,' how much more important organization looms today. (p. 13)

Second, he acknowledges that organization must be managed with prayer and

caution: "This system functions well when directed by the Holy Spirit. If human political

actions countermand the Spirit trouble follows . . . The Adventist model centers in a

message. Any technique that ignores this basic difference proves detrimental." (p. 14).

Third, Aufderhar proposes that advancement of the gospel is the only reason for

our existence:

Our organization becomes perverted when resources are diverted into 'good' enterprises not central to the mission of the church. Conference leaders and local pastors need to form a creative bond—a think tank—to dream up new ideas and evaluate current practices to assure that corporate resources are used to their greatest effectiveness. (p. 14)

Oliver (2007) does a remarkable job in exploring the organizational history of

Adventism, beginning with the initial organization of the church in 1863, its

reorganization in 1901-1903, the addition of Union Conferences and GC divisions, to the

present day. We will not recount his treatment of the subject here, but rather focus on his

conclusions with relevance to our present situation. While affirming that the

organizational structure of the Adventist Church has served us well and recognizing the

real need for strong global organizational structure to further the mission of the church,

Oliver does recognize a few areas that need to be reassessed. Foremost among these is the

effect of current structure on the local church. "Present organizational structures are

reducing the effectiveness of the local church to a critical extent; the advantages of a

universal organizational structure can be a disadvantage to the local church" (Oliver,

2007, p. 21). Oliver also proposes a move away from "authoritative and bureaucratic

models of leadership" in order to both reduce costs and increase flexibility (p. 27).

In 1992, then GC President, Folkenberg, wrote an article in the *Review*, entitled

"Renewing Church Organization," in which he said, "If any church organization,

institution, committee, or structure is not contributing to the mission of the church, if it is

stifling rather than advancing the gospel, if it is not making the assurance of the gospel

easier to grasp, that organization, institution, committee, or structure needs to be changed

or disposed of" (Folkenberg, 1992, p. 15). Bull and Lockhart (2007), two non-Adventists

whose study of the Adventist experience in America offers us valuable insights into who

we are, weigh in on the subject of Adventist organizational structure:

> Adventism is, then, a centralized society that accords its leaders absolute authority.
> The church puts more value on institutions than on lay membership and regards
> collective responsibility as more important than individual judgment. The church's
> financial structure and its general attitude toward money reflects these principles.

From an economic point of view, the church's resources are concentrated on administration and institutions rather than on individual churches and are controlled by central planners instead of local members. (p. 122)

While we may not agree fully with their conclusion, we must be honest and see that, within the Adventist context, collaboration seems to lose its innovative power because there is not the necessary decentralized decision-making process to go along with the espousal of collaboration as a guiding principle. The resulting structure seems to be far from the ideal of a "learning organization."

Knight (2001) further elaborates on the situation faced by the Adventist Church when he writes:

One possible option as Adventism looks toward the future in terms of church organization is to seek to maintain the status quo. While that option represents a possibility and the path of least resistance, it doesn't appear to be a healthy one. For one thing . . . . the present structure is not only costly but it is losing the mental and financial support of an ever larger percentage of church members. That is especially true of a generation that has grown up in the post denominational era. Given the erosion of "brand loyalty," it is probable that the option of maintaining the status quo in church organization will increasingly become economically unfeasible. (p. 168)

After essentially telling us what will not work, Knight turns his attention to the elements that likely will be part of any solution:

Any structure created for mission in the twenty-first century must be centralized enough to employ its financial resources in entering the most Christianity-resistant nooks and crannies of the world, while at the same time being flexible enough to meet local needs and utilize methodologies, approaches, and even arguments that appeal to vastly different populations. The church has to realize that "One size doesn't fit all," and it must have the freedom to adapt even its structure to the need and financial capabilities of the various fields in which it works. (p. 175)

Given Knight's stand represented here, it is not surprising to find his thoughts being referenced in the efforts to expand the "Union of Churches" model to all the divisions of the GC, including the NAD—evidenced by the tone of his paper presented at the first meeting of the Commission on Ministries, Services, and Structures, that met April 11,

2006, at Loma Linda (Commission on Ministries, Services, and Structures Website). The

final paragraph of this presentation to the commission, entitled "Organizing for Mission:

The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Organizational Structure," tells of his feeling

toward the need for restructuring:

> Such times can be met by facing backward or forward. Anyone who has studied Ellen White's life and ministry can hardly imagine her among that group who her husband categorized as thinking that all that was 'necessary to run a train of cars was to use the break [sic] well.' To the contrary, she was always at the forefront of those pushing the borders of doing things better and more efficiently. That was part of her prophetic voice. We may not have a living prophet amongst us today, but we dare not lose the prophetic spirit that continually put Ellen White at the forefront of Adventist mission and advancement toward structural efficiency. (Knight, 2006, pp. 51-52)

In their final report to the Commission on Ministries, Services, and Structures, the

Union of Churches sub-committee (2007) advanced the following as rationale for

consideration of expansion of the Union of Churches model:

> Local churches, conferences and missions sometimes complain that too much money is being passed on to other administrative levels, so much so, that they are finding it increasingly difficult to fund their own operations and assist their institutions. Most of their funds are used for maintaining the program, leaving very little in the budget for evangelism and mission. However, if the only reason for altering the structure of the church is for the purpose of saving money it may not be reason enough. Alternative models for structure must foster unity. We cannot afford to isolate any segment of the church community. Improved communication, additional financial resources and fairer representation are just some of the cures for isolation . . . Some areas of the world may benefit from a structure that is flatter than at present, with less administrative units and/or less levels. An organization is needed that will be responsive to mission and unity while avoiding unnecessary organizational proliferation of administrative structure. The selection of any model needs to be based on how it facilitates mission effectively and efficiently. In selected situations the union of churches model may serve to reduce the number of administrative units and facilitate a more effective distribution of financial resources. (p. 2)

The outline of the basic concept as proposed in the report of the Union of

Churches Sub-committee (2007, p. 1) to the Commission on Ministries, Services, and

Structures is as follows:

It is proposed that a union of churches be defined as a constituency-based organization consisting of local churches, within a defined geographical area, that has been granted, by a General Conference Session, official status as a Seventh-day Adventist union of churches. It will inherit the combined functions of a local field and union. A union of churches shall not have any subsidiary units that fulfill local conference administrative functions. A union of churches will therefore be the middle organization of a three tiered constituency model- (1) local church, (2) union of churches and (3) General Conference and its divisions. A union of churches is not considered a component of the current four tiered constituency model- (1) local church, (2) local conference/mission, (3) union conference/mission, (4) General Conference and its divisions.

The Union of Churches Sub-committee (2007, p. 3) ultimately proposed

amending the GC Constitution and Bylaws to revise the role and relationships of a union

of churches in denominational life and structure. The proposals include:

1. Amendments to General Conference Constitution and Bylaws.

2. Amendments to General Conference Working Policies in respect to

representation, finance, resource sharing, criteria and procedures for establishing or

discontinuing unions of churches.

3. A model constitution for a constituency-based organization.

4. A provision for unions of churches to have either mission or conference status.

That change is currently needed in the structure of the NAD would seem to be self-

evident, and finds apparent confirmation in this present GC-level discussion of expanding

the Union of Churches model to the NAD and elsewhere. However, it is important that as

change is considered, we understand fully what is involved in the change process. While

the expansion of the Union of Churches concept to "flatten" the Adventist organizational

structure may be effective, one is left wondering if establishing the precedent of creating

a "work-around" for normal organizational structure will not in itself create unintended

problems of its own. It may be the case of "swallowing the spider to catch the fly"—and

we all know how that story turns out. A solution that more directly and universally addresses the failures of the current structure may yet be achievable.

Summary

In this chapter, current literature was reviewed centering around three general themes: cooperation, collaborative organizations, and organizational structure (with particular emphasis on church organizational structure). This study, with its focus on leadership, organizational theory, systems theory, Adventist organizational history, and the experience the United Methodist Church in North America (UMC), seems to reveal a broad, multi-disciplined consensus that organizations would be more effective if they were more collaborative in nature and if the organizational structure allowed for greater local autonomy and increased local decision-making authority. In relation to the chapter's stated goal of informing our understanding of the challenges of developing cooperative organizational structure within the NAD, the basic preliminary conclusion is that, clearly, fundamental changes are needed.

However, though this change process holds out the promise of renewed passion and improved performance, it is also understood to be a process fraught with perils. In *Leading Change*, Kotter (1996) states:

> To date major change efforts have helped some organizations adapt significantly to shifting conditions, have improved the competitive standing of others, and have positioned a few for a far better future. But in too many situations the improvements have been disappointing and the carnage has been appalling, with wasted resources and burned-out, scared, or frustrated employees. (pp. 3-4)

Oliver (2007, p. 5) likewise stresses the need for caution as changes are considered and/or implemented, which he says are "best introduced in a conservative manner."

That being said, the need persists for careful consideration being giving to the search for

a NAD organizational structural that is more collaborative, while also promoting

decentralization and empowerment of the local church. Finally, it seems clear from the

literature that any such change process should employ a systems thinking approach to this

task of determining what organizational structure for the Seventh-day Adventist Church

in North America would most effectively enable it to accomplish its God-given mission.

CHAPTER 4

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE DESIGNED FOR INTER-

CONGREGATIONAL COOPERATION

Having explored the theological justification for establishing church

organizational structure upon principles of cooperation in Chapter 2, and having reviewed

current literature considered relevant to the same in Chapter 3, we now turn our attention

to a more detailed exploration of a specific model of organizational structure that might

better foster, and potentially maximize, cooperation between various local Adventist

congregations within the NAD. This model for collaborative organizational structure

within the NAD is presented in the hope that consideration of some aspects of these

proposed changes might result in improvement of the overall ministry effectiveness of the

Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. It is presented with trepidation, in the

full recognition that such a simple solution to the complex and detailed problems of a

system as dynamic and diverse as the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North American

is likely to be proven inadequate. Therefore, it should be seen merely as a starting point

for the discussion regarding structural changes within the NAD, rather than in any way

being definitive.

After first sharing a personal journey of discovery related to the importance of

organizational structure that promotes cooperation and collaboration, the remainder of

this chapter will endeavor to outline a model structure based on a systems analysis

approach. In this process (i.e., identifying a more effective organizational model for the NAD) we will first discuss a few aspects of general systems theory and briefly relate these to the specific situation of NAD organizational structure. We will then delineate the characteristics of a collaborative organizational structure that are deemed to be desirable for the NAD and, therefore, understood to be beneficial to the overall health and effectiveness of the churches in the NAD. An outline of the specific proposal for organizational structure in Florida will then be presented, followed by an examination of the potential benefits and economies of scale likely to be realized from the implementation of such a change in organizational structure. Finally, we will consider some additional aspects of the potential promise of the proposed model.

One Pastor's Journey

Before we explore a specific model, it seems appropriate to share a brief account of the personal journey that led me to explore this topic of inter-congregational cooperation in the first place. In 1996, I arrived—with a newly minted Master of Divinity degree from Andrews University—as an intern in the Florida Conference assigned to the First Seventh-day Adventist Church in Tampa, Florida. During my tenure at Tampa First, my senior pastor, Ken Burrill, initiated the start-up of an organization called the Greater Tampa Bay Council of Churches. All area Adventist churches on the west coast of Florida—from Citrus County in the north to Lee County in the south—were invited to send representatives (both lay and clergy) to the council. The invitation was made to both Florida Conference and Southeastern Conference churches. The response was generally good and the council was able to establish an annual convocation that each year, for more than a decade, brought together roughly 3000 people from the area churches for a

spiritual weekend. However, the real vision for the council—to facilitate area churches working together to reach the community—was never realized. It was clear to me at the time that this failure to thrive was caused by the reluctance of local church leaders to invest time, energy, and resources in an organization that existed "outside" of normal conference structure. Furthermore, conference leaders failed to take advantage of this opportunity and tap into the potential of such an organization. Thus, the Greater Tampa Bay Council of Churches failed to produce the hoped-for results and ultimately disintegrated due to a slow evaporation of support.

Fast forward eleven years to 2007, as I am beginning my DMin program, I find myself as pastor of the Adventist church in Venice, FL. Two years later, the neighboring congregation in Sarasota, FL, was added to my responsibility. Even before I was the pastor at Sarasota, I was involved in discussions with key community service leaders of the Sarasota Church. These individuals and I shared our mutual dreams of establishing an area-wide community service network. All of us being involved in local ACS activities, we each independently came to the realization that none of us, on our own, could accomplish what needed to be done—realized that one local church did not have the necessary resources, either in personnel or finances, to provide the type of services that were needed in the community. Thus was born the idea for Manasota Adventist Community Services (MACS). With the help of the Florida Conference, we were able to draft a constitution and bylaws for MACS and establish it legally as an independent 501-C organization. The charter member churches were Venice, Sarasota, and Palmetto. The Bradenton church has since joined, and the pastor and a few members of the Mt. Sinai

and Mt. Gilead churches of the Southeastern Conference now also serve as members of our Board of Directors.

Entering its fourth year of existence, MACS currently runs a weekly homeless feeding program out of the Mt. Gilead church, coordinates Adventist disaster response through representation on the COAD boards in both Manatee and Sarasota Counties, supports several monthly food pantries at member churches, and regularly conducts health education seminars, among other activities, in Sarasota and Manatee Counties. MACS owns a van, has administrative office space, and recently laid plans to open its second service center—centers where assistance is provided for the physical needs of the indigent, support groups meet, and, soon, counseling services will be offered. The expectation is that the organization will continue to grow, expand its menu of services, engage in more sophisticated grant proposal writing, and eventually be operated by paid staff who will oversee the volunteer operations. However, despite this measure of success, the organization is not nearly as effective as it could be—we are still searching for the ultimate fulfillment of the dream. MACS has limited resources, making it difficult to develop programs or provide services on a scale that will substantially impact the community. The nature of the organization—again, the fact that it exists outside of normal church organizational structure—offers a challenge related to gaining the confidence of the local Adventist community. There is a reluctance to invest time, energy, and resources in an enterprise that is new and outside of the norm of denominational organizational structure, which results in a continual scramble to secure consistent funding. This is just a slice of the "history" that propelled me to envision a better way of "doing" church organization.

Systems Theory and NAD
Organizational Structure

We begin our discussion of a proposed model for organizational structure with an exploration of system theory, along with the understanding that we approach the task of outlining a model for NAD structure from a systems analysis perspective. By this, we are simply stating our intention to start with a desired outcome in mind, and then proceed to explore what would likely be the best system to achieve the desired results and accomplish the overall purposes of the organization. In this section, we will begin this process by relating a few aspects of general systems theory to the specific situations found in the organizational structure of the NAD.

It seems proper to begin our discussion with an affirmation of the importance, influence, and impact of systems on our lives and the effectiveness of our organizations. Concerning systems, Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) advise taking the following approach:

> Create systems that sustain emotional intelligent practices—People matter, but so do systems, rules, and procedures. Reminders of what is acceptable and what is not are powerful drivers of behavior, be these policies and procedures (that are actually enforced) or attention to the right leadership behaviors. Specifically, for an organization to sustain emotionally intelligent practices, the rules, regulations, and human resources practices have to be totally in sync with the desired outcomes . . . so change the rules, if need be, to reinforce the vision. (p. 222)

The various aspects and components of any system determine, to a large extent, how well the members of the organization—individually and/or collectively—are able to fulfill the organization's objectives and uphold and sustain its stated values. The point seems clear that, for organizational structure to be useful it must reinforce the overall vision and goals of the organization and, at the same time, enable and motivate individuals within the organization to engage in activities that are aligned with these objectives.

It would be hard to overstate the influence that systems have in determining individual behavior within the organization. As such, it is imperative that we take a hard look at the way we do things—take a look at the system as a whole—and be willing to consider making structural changes that better align day-to-day practices with organizational values. Deprez and Tissen (2002) give a very powerful rationale for engaging in the process of making structural changes:

> We are trapped, caught in a prison of our own making, unable to operate effectively, get things done, or get our people to work together, unable to release the true potential that we know our companies contain. It's not a nice place to be, this prison. It inhibits our freedom. It forces us to focus on the inside. It keeps the outside at a distance. The name of this prison? Quite simply: the organization. (p. 1)

They further explain their position, providing a description that seems to be quite applicable to our current structural situation in the NAD:

> Our rigid organizational structures prevent close cooperation between people who may be doing the same work but are located in different departments or even, as globalization increases, on different continents. Organizational and geographical borders have conspired to keep us trapped. We've allowed ourselves to become victims of the pigeon-hole. (p. 4)

As our exploration in previous chapters alluded to, it is increasingly apparent that the current organizational structure within the NAD tends to limit inter-congregational cooperation rather than foster it. Thus, the idea that change in the organizational structure would be beneficial is gaining support among the members of NAD churches. It seems to be becoming increasingly apparent to many world-wide church leaders as well. Paulsen (2011) makes a keen observation from his vantage point as the out-going GC President:

> I've reminded myself many times that it's impossible to walk backwards into the future with eyes fixed on how things used to be. If as leaders we close our minds to new ideas, we become a hindrance to the church's progress toward fulfilling its mission. We become mere protectors of 'the way things have always been,' and lose sight of what it means to be leaders of God's people now. At the global leadership level, this attitude inevitably surfaces when we consider how the local church should

function and when we consider organizational structures and ministries of our worldwide church. (p. 34)

Apparently, Paulsen senses a problem in how the local church is supported in the current system, and their proper role in the overall ministry of the worldwide Adventist Church.

However broad the recognition that change is needed may be, any change process that impacts the long-standing organizational structure of the SDA Church will not be an easy road to navigate, nor a mission easily accomplished. Heath and Heath (2010) colorfully express the difficultly inherent in effecting lasting change:

> We argue that successful changes share a common pattern. They require the leader of the change to do three things: To change someone's behavior, you've got to change that person's situation. The situation isn't the whole game, of course. You can send an alcoholic to rehab, where the new environment will help him go dry. But what happens when he leaves and loses that influence? . . . For individual's behavior to change, you've got to influence not only their environment but their hearts and minds. The problem is this: Often the heart and mind disagree. Fervently. (pp. 4-5)

Friedman (2007) postulates that "The capacity to 'hear' new ideas in a family, in an institution, or in an entire civilization depends to a large extent on the capacity to avoid being automatically regulated by that system's emotional processes" (pp. 130-131). In order to effect change, one must be able to "get outside the box."

Brafman and Beckstrom (2006) observe:

> A common human trait: when we're used to seeing something in a certain way, it's hard to imagine it being any other way. If we're used to seeing the world through a centralized lens, decentralized organizations don't make much sense . . . organizations have structure, rules, hierarchy, and, of course, a president. (pp. 33-34)

Thus, the reason that we are attempting to step outside the current NAD structural arrangement by means of a systems approach to the problem—the hope is that such a vantage point will open our eyes to the possibilities of finding better organizational frameworks to achieve optimal results. In order to negate the tendency to see things only

through the prism of what currently exists, we choose to begin with the desired results

and work backwards from results to structure that is most likely to achieve said results.

It is the view of this work that the simplest, most direct form of organization is

also the most desired framework. Wheatley (2005) makes a strong case for finding this

simplest way to achieve one's organizational goals when she says:

> There is a simpler way to organize human endeavor . . . This simpler way feels new,
> yet it is the most ancient story there is . . . It is the story of how we feel when we see
> people helping each other, when we feel creative, when we know we're making a
> difference, when life feels purposeful. (p. 1)

This simple organizational structure will, of necessity, be unique to the specific situation

and be designed to uphold the values of the organization. Ostroff (1999), who advocates

for moving toward a more horizontal structure, stresses the need to customize any system

to support your core values:

> Every horizontal organization is different. To be sure they have some fundamental
> traits in common—for example, all derive their essential structures not from narrow
> functions, but rather from the broader concept of core processes, which in turn are
> determined by the value proposition. But no two horizontal organizations can ever be
> exactly alike. Why?—because you customize your structure to meet your specific
> problems within your distinct parameters. (p. 25)

As we apply the lessons learned from systems thinking to the organization structure that

is the NAD System, we likely will discover things that work well and things that

probably need to change. Through such a process, a picture of the system of

organizational structure that perhaps would best accomplish the overall objectives of the

organization and uphold and sustain Adventist values should emerge.

Desirable Structural Elements of
NAD Organization

We now turn our attention to identifying specific elements of structure deemed

necessary, or desirable, for the NAD system of organization to be more collaborative and

therefore, potentially, more effective. Rainer and Geiger (2006), who advocate for

keeping processes simple in order to maximize effectiveness, describe what they see as

the essential elements that need to be present in any successful ministry process:

> Four elements are critical to designing a simple ministry process . . . A simple church is designed around as straightforward and strategic process that moves people through the stages of spiritual growth. The leadership and the church are clear about the process (clarity) and are committed to executing it. The process flows logically (movement) and is implemented in each area of the church (alignment). The church abandons everything that is not in the process (focus). Clarity. Movement. Alignment. Focus. All are necessary. (pp. 67-68)

Dovetailing with Rainer and Geiger's concepts of Clarity, Movement, Alignment,

and Focus, any proposed organizational structure likely should include the following

characteristics: Value-centered operations, systems that are collaborative in nature, a

relatively horizontal structure that affords greater local decision-making authority, and an

effective community service/outreach orientation. We will now look at each of these

aspects in turn.

Value-Centered

It seems reasonable to suggest that one of the primary purposes of Adventist

church organization is to enable the individuals within the organization to live out the

ideals and values of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Theorists seem to generally agree

that organizational structure must be aligned with the values that one holds dear, and be

designed in such a way that structure facilitates the manifestation of these core principles

in the lives of the members. Actions, activities, programs, and processes must reinforce

the values that a community espouses, and it is essential that the organization deliberately

and thoughtfully develop structures that facilitate the systematic inculcation of these

values at every level of the organization and, more importantly, in the hearts and minds

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of the people. Stetzer and Rainer (2010), applying this concept to churches, point out that

"Transformational churches have found a way for the convergence of values and

activities to result in something specific—transformed lives. Without this key element,

the rest of the work does not mean much" (p. 201). Sider, Olson and Unruh (2002),

pointing out the failure of churches to properly align practices with values, offer this

frank assessment of the general state of current church organizational structures:

> The church is efficiently organized to serve a purpose—but it is the wrong purpose.
> There is a mismatch between what God is calling the church to do and what its
> system and routines are set up to do. The church may be organized primarily to
> satisfy the needs of its own members, for example, or to perpetuate its endowment or
> to enhance its status and reputation in the community. As a congregation strengthens
> its commitment to holistic mission, it needs to examine whether its structures help or
> hinder the goal of reaching out in word and deed. The shape of the church must be
> determined by its mission. Often the reverse is true. (p. 206)

This assessment appears to resonate with the current conditions within the SDA

Church in North America. It is becoming all too common for the structure at all levels of

the Adventist Church within the NAD to assume a maintenance character rather than one

designed to facilitate the fulfillment of the mission of the Church. Oliver (2007)

concludes that: "Mission is at the very center of Seventh-day Adventist self-identity and

structure. Mission must determine structure. Structure cannot inhibit mission" (p. 26).

The values of a worldwide Adventist movement that was raised up by God to prepare the

world for His soon coming must be the heart of all we do as Seventh-day Adventists and,

equally important as a Church, be at the center of how we "do" organization. It is hard to

overstate the need for proper alignment of the organizational system of the NAD with the

values of Adventism. We should endeavor to discover a system of organizational

structure that is more aligned with the values that we hold dear, while also better

fulfilling the mission of the Church.

Collaborative

Hoover and Valenti (2005) observe that:

A systemic approach to leadership is not only effective in enhancing individual leadership performance in every nook and cranny of the organization, it also provides the foundation and the methods for building strong and effective leadership teams, which are the core of any effective and dynamic organization. (p. 25)

It is too often the case that within the Adventist system we are better at building silos then we are at building teams. However, if we take Christ's call for unity among His followers seriously and believe what the Bible says about the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the diversity of gifts distributed among the various individuals within the church, then working together as a team would seem to be an essential activity. Manifesting this principle of collaboration at all levels of church organization would not seem to be optional, rather it appears to be an imperative from God Himself. We are the Body of Christ; if we cannot collaborate and find a way to develop tangible unity on the local level—regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender—then we have failed to fulfill the high calling of Christ for His Church, no matter how "successful" we may appear to be according to our own metrics.

Collaboration is vital to the church fulfilling its mission and God-given purpose. However, this collaboration must be of the right kind—the right kind being collaboration motivated by a desire to empower individuals at all levels of the organization, particularly those on the front lines. Hansen (2009) points out an ironic twist on collaboration that we need to be cognizant of, and determined to avoid, namely the temptation to move toward greater centralization even as we espouse collaboration:

Disciplined collaboration helps you avoid one of the greatest sins of collaboration: in the quest for collaboration across the enterprise, leaders sometimes centralize decision making, and information flows to the top of an organization pyramid, where a few managers rule. In the name of collaboration, decentralization goes down. This

approach implies that a trade-off – that you must choose between the benefits of decentralization and the benefits of collaboration. Disciplined collaboration rejects this compromise. Organizations can have it both ways – performance from decentralized work and performance from collaborative work. Indra Nooyi, CEO of PepsiCo, and her team call this 'connected autonomy.' (p. 18)

Collins (2001) seems to support this idea of "disciplined collaboration" when he advises, "Avoid bureaucracy and hierarchy and instead create a culture of discipline. When you put these two complementary forces together—a culture of discipline with an ethic of entrepreneurship—you get a magical alchemy of superior performance and sustained results." (pp. 121-122) He illustrates and elaborates on this theme using the experience of an airline pilot as one extreme example:

> Take a step back and think about the model here. The pilot operates within a very strict system, and she does not have freedom to go outside of that system (You don't want airline pilots saying, "Hey, I just read in a management book about the value of being empowered—freedom to experiment, to be creative, to be entrepreneurial, to try a lot of stuff and see what works!"). Yet at the same time, the crucial decisions— whether to take off, whether to land, whether to abort, whether to land elsewhere— rest with the pilot. Regardless of the structures of the system, one central fact stands out above all others: The pilot has ultimate responsibility for the airplane and the lives of the people on it. (Collins, 2001, p. 125)

Collins, based on the results of his extensive research into what makes organizations great, draws the following conclusion from this illustration:

> The point of this analogy is that when we looked inside the good-to-great companies, we were reminded of the best part of the airline pilot model: freedom and responsibility within the framework of a highly developed system. Good-to-great companies built a consistent system with clear constraints, but they also gave people freedom and responsibility within the framework of that system. They hired self-disciplined people who didn't need to be managed, and then managed the system and not the people. (Collins, 2001, p. 125)

Clearly, collaboration is the key to a successful organizational structure, particularly in the Church setting, and this collaboration must also be intentional about empowering leaders at all levels. That disciplined collaboration is a noble goal and an ideal model is affirmed by Tisch in what he describes as the "Power of We" approach:

It's an approach to leadership that is not divisive, but unifying; not competitive, but collaborative; not based on a zero-sum philosophy of scarcity, but on abundance—the economics, intellectual, and spiritual abundance that human beings can produce when their talents and energies are unleashed. (Tisch, 2004, p. 1)

It is imperative that the structure and policies of the organization, along with the tone set by organizational leaders through their words and actions, support and model cooperation. Unfortunately, we, as Seventh-day Adventists in North America, seem susceptible to the worst aspects of tribalism, showing ourselves to be unable or unwilling to model "disciplined collaboration" across boundaries, borders, and/or barriers (real or imagined) within the Church. Wheatley (2005) would seem to be speaking directly to us when she says

We are using the instinct of community to separate and protect us from one another, rather than creating a global culture of diverse yet interwoven communities. We search for those most like us in order to protect ourselves from the rest of society. Clearly we cannot get to a future worth inhabiting through these separating paths. (p. 45)

As Hansen (2009) profoundly points out:

When leaders preach teamwork, they may just get what they ask for – the wrong kind of teamwork. When managers start instilling teamwork in their own units and not across the rest of the company, it leads to pockets of local teamwork, but not companywide collaboration. The company becomes 'teamy' but not collaborative . . . When leaders give a sermon about the value of teamwork to the troops, and then ignore it themselves, they are not promoting collaboration . . . To unite a company, the top team needs to be united, too. Top executives need to practice the value of teamwork that they preach. (pp. 84-85)

This seems to be an apt description of the situation in the Adventist Church in the NAD. We talk a lot about unity and a "worldwide church," but on the level of the local church we, generally speaking, will perhaps cooperate with other members of our local church for the good of our congregation, but not often with others beyond this small circle. Hansen seems to be speaking to our situation, in that conference-level leaders, and the organizations that they lead, need to offer more than mere lip-service to the concept

of collaboration. The "system" of the church, particularly at the conference level, needs to foster disciplined cooperation—not by accident, but by design.

Hauser and Katz, from the Sloan School of Management state the following:

Our thesis is that every metric, whether it is used explicitly to influence behavior, to evaluate future strategies, or simply to take stock, will affect actions and decisions. If a brand manager knows that, in his or her company's culture, a "good brand is a high share brand," he or she will make decisions to maximize market share – even if those decisions inadvertently sacrifice long-term profit or adversely affect other brands in the company's portfolio. If an R&D manager knows that projects are chosen based on projected net present value (NPV), he or she will encourage research scientists and engineers to work on programs and make forecasts which make NPV look good – even if the NPV calculations are misleading. If a telephone service center manager is rewarded for reduced absenteeism he or she will seek to do well on the firm's measure of absenteeism – even if the measure does not lead to improved productivity. (Hauser and Katz, 1998, p. 2)

If Hauser and Katz are right then it would seem advantageous to ask, "What are the metrics that the typical local conference in the NAD uses to measure pastoral effectiveness?"

Anyone who has been a pastor can tell you that the data asked for by the majority of conferences are generally one or all of the following: the number of baptisms in the individual church, the membership of the individual church, the weekly Sabbath worship attendance at the individual church, the tithe and offerings received by the individual church. These measurements are not bad, because all of them are real indicators of growth, activity, and health of the church. However, because they are concerned with just one individual local church, to the exclusion of all the neighboring SDA churches, they have the potential to undermine and disincentivize inter-congregational cooperation. What incentive does a local pastor have to work with the pastor of the other church in town, if the measure of his effectiveness is based solely on what happens internally to

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his/her local church? The pastor's behavior is thus likely to be influenced by the metrics used by the conference.

If the conference measures attendance at their church, pastors are going to attempt to maximize *their* church attendance —which means that they will likely discourage people from attending a neighboring church. The almost exclusively bilateral relationship between the local conference and each of the local churches in its territory, by the very nature of the dynamics of the relationship, undermines cooperation and collaborative activity between sister churches. By the very act of measuring church well-being and pastoral effectiveness individually, the conferences are fostering a competitive rather than a collaborative relationship between the churches under their charge. Even if no structural reorganization takes place, it seems imperative that conferences find ways to create expectations for inter-congregational collaboration which do not exist presently. If the conference simply focused on baptisms, membership, attendance, and tithe for a designated ministry area rather than each church in that area individually, the message would be conveyed and received that the conference is serious about cooperation.

When I was at Air Force Officer Candidate School, all of the candidates were organized into "flights" or team groups. The purpose of this was to teach the concept of unit cohesion. I had the dubious honor of being part of "F Flight" which naturally quickly became "F Troop," and thus gained the reputation for being the base joke. However, soon into the first week all of that changed. The flights were to compete in an obstacle course/long hike. As was expected F Flight was off to the slowest start, but we vowed that every one of us would finish *together* no matter how long it took. We gave up on winning the award, and simply pledge ourselves to our mutual survival. All of the other

flights were long gone as we progress through the course, but along the way we would

pass individuals from the other Flights who had fallen by the wayside as their units had

raced on in the pursuit of victory. All of the other teams had long since finished when F

Flight crossed the finish line—we were the biggest losers. But a funny thing happened—

we were declared the winners and awarded the prize!!! Why? Because we were the only

flight which had *all* of its team members finish. A commitment to working together and

putting the team's goals and welfare ahead of individual ambition won the day. If it was

good enough for the United States Air Force, perhaps the church would be wise do

likewise.

<p align="center">Horizontal Structure with Greater Local
Decision Making Authority</p>

If, as was discussed in chapter 2, we understand cooperation to be a biblical core

value for the church, and, as an outgrowth of recognition of this truth, we desire an

organizational structure that is collaborative in nature; then it seems to follow logically

that the optimum organizational structure would be more horizontal in nature, allowing

for greater decision-making authority on the local level. Brickley, Smith, & Zimmerman

(2003) suggest three important organizational questions when one is considering the

structural nature of any enterprise.

The questions are: "Can altering the assignment of decision authority really have

an important impact on productivity and value? What factors affect the optimal

delegation of decision authority within the firm? When is it optimal to delegate decision

authority to a team of employees rather than to specific individuals?" (p. 68). These

appear to be extremely relevant questions for our topic of NAD organizational structure,

particularly related to local conferences.

Bell (2003) appears to advocate the position that the organizational structure of

the NAD should be more horizontal with greater decision-making authority vested in the

local leaders:

> I deeply feel the mission of the church would be better served by investing decision making processes, creativity, vision, and value in the pastors, teachers, and membership on the local level. They simply need to be empowered to lead and valued, in real terms, as much as their counterparts in organizational leadership . . . Local schools and churches with their leaders too often settle for limited effectiveness and effort. Within systems where resources of creativity and empowerment are held apart from the local context, disillusionment, discouragement, or complacency are noted. Rather than flourishing, mediocrity becomes acceptable. (pp. viii-ix)

Ostroff (1999) seems to confirm Bell's conclusion when he describes a successful

organizational redesign in this manner, "Hierarchy has been flattened throughout the

organization by redesigning and restructuring roles and eliminating much non-value-

added work, by integrating work flows, and by vesting decision making in lower levels"

(p. 122). Brickley et al. (2003) further refine their position with the following counsel:

> In deciding whether to centralize or decentralize decision making, managers must consider the pros and cons of each. The principal benefit of decentralization is that it strengthens the link between decision authority and local knowledge . . . Decentralized firms are better able to take advantage of local knowledge within the organization. (p. 70)

In the case of the Church, who knows better the needs of the community and what

resources and programs are needed to reach them than the individuals who live and work

in the community? One size does not fit all, and plans and programs sent down from a

conference office that is far removed from the point of contact are not likely to be the

most effective. If we are to truly be the Church as God intended it, then we must forever

renounce "command and control" structures and embrace openness and empowerment,

particularly for those on the frontlines of ministry. One is reminded that Christ's call to

leadership is beyond a doubt a "call to serve." Ostroff (1999) makes this observation:

In vertical organizations, people often use information to control others and protect themselves or their turf, not to support the frontline employees and improve the company's performance . . . In horizontal organizations, by contrast, information flows freely wherever it is needed. Information is the indispensable fuel that drives the value proposition and empowers people to do their best work. (p. 209)

Freedom, cooperation, and empowerment of local leaders are crucial elements for an effective system of church organization. A less hierarchical and more horizontal structure is needed for the Church to achieve its full potential and successfully accomplish its God-given mission. We must move toward the "connected autonomy" that Indra Nooyi, CEO of PepsiCo, advocates—which, ironically, seems remarkably compatible with the biblical model for church organizational structure.

Effective Community Service and Outreach Orientation

Stetzer and Rainer (2010) stress the importance of the church having an outward focus:

Churches with transformational practices were active—even aggressive—about service in the community . . . The engagement in compassion ministries did not serve as an end to itself but a way to communicate the reason for the service—namely the message of redemption in Christ. (p. 203)

If the church does not exist to serve the needs of the larger community, rather than the needs of the church community, then it is not likely to be the church that God intended to be His instrument for reaching the world. Paulsen (2011) counsels:

As leaders, let's ask ourselves, 'Are we looking for ways to get into our community and meet specific local needs?'. . . A church that isn't reaching outward searching for needs to meet will sooner or later become irrelevant to the community and to God. (p. 59)

Paulsen is simply stating, in a profound way, a plain truth: For the Church to live up to God's ideal for it, it must be "in the world" for the purpose of "seeking and saving the lost." We must be outward-oriented, and the systems and structures of the organization

must be designed and aligned to reinforce this overarching value and facilitate the realization of this supreme purpose in the most effective manner possible.

Positive Aspects of the Current System

The previous section attempted to apply a systems approach to the question of what might be the optimal organizational structure for the Adventist Church in North America, and yielded a conception of an organization having the following characteristics: Value-centered operations, systems that are collaborative in nature, a horizontal structure that affords greater local decision-making authority, and an effective community service/outreach orientation. From this exercise we now logically arrive at the following question, namely: "What seems to work well in the current system?" This is the topic to be explored here.

First, it should be pointed out that, while there appears to be real disagreement as to whether or not our current structure is the best formulation going forward into the future, there nevertheless seems to be general agreement among Adventist thought leaders that the current organizational structure of the Adventist Church has served the Church well. There is a consensus that our current four constituent level organizational structures has, in a large measure, facilitated the rapid worldwide expansion of the Adventist Church, and at the same time assisted in the maintenance of a unified global identity.

The current system oversaw and facilitated the movement of church personnel and resources from the developed world to the less developed areas of the world. Clearly, the extensive financial contributions of North Americans, Europeans, and Australians, channeled through this system, sponsored and, in a large measure, facilitated the

unprecedented growth of the Adventist Church in Africa, South America, Asia, and the Caribbean. Meanwhile, missionary activity funded through the self-same system ultimately resulted in the development of indigenous leadership—and leadership training—in these geographic areas.

The majority view is that the current structure certainly was a driving force behind the global unity that the SDA Church enjoys today, and effectively stands as a bulwark against the splintering of Adventism into many national churches, thus avoiding the fate of so many other denominations. Mustard (1987, p. 11), for example, plainly concludes that the centralized government of the Adventist Church remains essential for coordinating the mission of a world-wide church, maintaining unity, and lending weight to its sense of identity. Paulsen (2011) typifies the view of the majority of Adventist leaders when he describes the powerful influence of the current organizational system towards the worldwide unity of the Adventist Church:

> The origins of our church's global infrastructure, of course, lie in our system of governance, which is unique in Protestantism. We're not a loose collection of national churches that speak, act, and govern themselves independently. We're one body, whose leadership come together regularly from every part of the world to consult with each other, pray with each other, and be ruled by the counsel of all. Consequently, the smallest congregation in rural North America has direct ties to a house church in Cambodia, a café in the Netherlands, and a congregation in the remote highlands of Papua New Guinea. We have an essential 'sameness'—a common spiritual DNA—that you will always find if you dig beneath the surface differences of culture and nationality. (p. 92)

Another benefit to the Adventist Church of the current organizational system is the check that the system of four constituent levels exerts against the tendency toward the consolidation of power in the hands of a few at the GC level. Confirmation of this aspect is found in the writings of White. White (1985), herself, spoke of the value of a structure employing multiple constituent levels, particularly union conferences, from the

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perspective of it serving as a check on the consolidation of power in the hands of a few

individuals at the GC level:

> It has been a necessity to organize union conferences, that the General Conference
> shall not exercise dictation over all the separate conferences. The power vested in the
> Conference is not to be centered in one man, or two men, or six men; there is to be a
> council of men over the separate divisions. (p. 27)

What becomes evident from even a cursory study of SDA organizational structure is an

understanding that the current structure has fulfilled at least two vital functions—namely

holding together a unified worldwide denomination, yet checking the predictable

tendency toward centralization of decision-making authority at the General Conference

level. However, this balance has come with a steep price tag in terms of the resources that

are expended to support the system, measured in terms of the deleterious effect that

bearing the weight of such a top-heavy organizational structure has on the ministry

capability of the local church. Considering the pressures that these factors exert on the

Adventist organizational system, change seems to be a near inevitability.

How to maintain the needful balance of the current system must be considered,

and embodied within the framework of whatever structure the church moves to going

forward. Knight (2001) describes the situation this way:

> The unity aspect of a centralized church organization is important in helping the
> denomination maintain a shared doctrine, coordinate mission outreach, and provide a
> sense of worldwide identity. On the other hand, even a centralized structure should
> allow for the diversity required for various cultural sectors of the church to perform
> their mission most effectively in their corner of the world. (p. 174)

He goes on to suggest that:

> Seventh-day Adventism, as a worldwide church that has come of age, needs to
> recognize that what may have worked for a relatively small church largely controlled
> by North America will probably not work in a sprawling multinational religious body
> that could have close to 20,000,000 adherents by the year 2010. How to maintain
> unity in the midst of diversity continues to be one of the church's greatest

challenges—a challenge that Adventism must design organizational structure to accommodate. (p. 175)

This would seem to size up quite well the situation that the Adventist Church in North America is grappling with today. It is hoped that the modest proposal presented here may, even in a small way, help to empower Adventist leaders to better meet the challenge with which we, as a church body, are faced.

A Model Organizational Structure
Outlined

The focus of this section is a search for the system of organization that will: better uphold the values of the Church and serve its needs, increase inter-congregational cooperation, and maximize the effectiveness of the Church in reaching the community. To this end, we looked at the current system and attempt to identify potential changes in the current system, most likely to move the organization in the direction of greater alignment with the desired characteristics described in the previous section. The proposed model to be described in this section is based on a simple plan of redefining our understanding of conference in the State of Florida—away from the current larger state-wide (FC) and regional (SEC) organizations toward a system of smaller localized "mini-conferences" corresponding to natural ministry areas.

All of the Adventist churches within each of these newly established territories—regardless of their current conference affiliation—will be expected to work together to advance the Adventist mission in their respective ministry area. With the outlining of a potential model for future organizational structure for the NAD being the purpose of this section—with Florida as the specific assessment region—the sharing of some data related to the specifics of the situation in Florida seems to be appropriate at this time. Statistics

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for both the Florida Conference of SDA and the Southeastern Conference of SDA will be

presented and analyzed for the purpose of determining the feasibility of the proposed

model.

<p style="text-align:center">Combined Tithe Income and Membership Statistics</p>

In 2010, the tithe incomes of the Florida Conference (FC) and the Southeastern

Conference (SEC) were $48,087,828.37 and $19,669,689.59, respectively (NAD, 2011,

December, 2010 Tithe Comparison Report). The reported membership for the Florida

Conference at the beginning of 2010 was 59,998, while the Southeastern Conference's

membership was 39,126 for the same period (GC Statistics, 2011). Thus, the per capita

tithe for this snapshot in time can be calculated at $801.49 for Florida and $502.72 for

Southeastern. Subtracting the membership, and corresponding tithe income, of the nine

SEC churches located in Georgia leaves a membership of 38,642 and an estimated tithe

base of $19,426,106.24 (38,642 X $502.72) for the Southeastern Conference churches

located in Florida. These totals for SEC churches in Florida correspond to the Florida

Conference statistics (i.e., the territory is the same—all of Florida, excluding the

"panhandle" region west of the Apalachicola River).

Data was obtained reporting the membership for each church in the Florida

Conference, along with the actual tithe per church for each of these churches in 2010

(FC, 2011, internal report), and the 2010 membership figures for each Southeastern

Conference church was also obtained (SEC, 2010, pp. 68-74). However, we were only

able to calculate an approximate tithe per church for each Southeastern church by

multiplying actual membership of each church by the per capita tithe figure, because

statistics of actual tithe for each church were not made available by the Southeastern

<p style="text-align:center">125</p>

Conference. Armed with this data, combined with knowledge of the geographic location (city and county) of each church in both conferences, we can theoretically calculate the combined (i.e., Florida and Southeastern Conference) membership and tithe income for any area within the state of Florida.

This capability to calculate membership and tithe for any area of Florida is relevant because any analysis of what we are proposing requires just such a capability—that is, a conference reorganization wherein the concept of local conference related to geographic territory in Florida (which is currently administrated by both the Florida Conference of SDA and the Southeastern Conference of SDA) is redefined away from these two state-wide and large regional organizations toward smaller conferences that more closely correspond to natural effective ministry areas.

Appendix A sorts all of the Southeastern Conference and Florida Conference churches and reorganizes them into ten mini-conferences that correspond to potentially effective ministry areas. The proposed model is centered on a simple plan of redefining our understanding of conference away from larger state-wide and regional organizations—where these entities often overlap and duplicate each other—to a system of smaller localized mini-conferences corresponding to natural ministry areas in which all Adventist churches, regardless of the race, ethnicity, or preferred language of the individual congregations, work together to advance the Adventist mission and message in their respective ministry area.

Analysis of Combined Tithe Income and Membership Data

In an attempt to explore the feasibility of such a realignment of churches within the territory of Florida, all of the churches were placed in one of ten ministry areas—i.e.,

geographic territories comprised of one county or a group of neighboring counties within Florida. The composition of these ministry areas was informed by the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Office of Management and Budget's Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), Nielsen Media Research Designated Market Areas (DMAs), and/or the Metro Groups (GMRs), as assigned by Polidata County-based Regional Mapping (Polidata, 2002). Appendix A lists all of the churches and their corresponding tithe income for 2010, within each Ministry Area.

These Ministry Areas are comprised of one or more neighboring counties in Florida, excluding the ten counties of the Florida panhandle that are not part of the territory of either the Southeastern or Florida Conferences. The following table offers a condensed summary of the information presented in Appendix A:

Table 4

Florida Ministry Areas

Ministry Area	County or Counties in Ministry Area	Number of Churches	Members (2010)	Tithe Income (2010)
Avon Park	DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Highlands, Okeechobee, Osceola, Polk	33	4950	$ 11,234,567.88
Ft. Lauderdale	Broward	43	12,970	$ 8,765,639.56
Gainesville-Ocala	Alachua, Citrus, Gilchrist, Hernando, Lake, Levy, Marion, Sumter	31	5098	$ 4,185,069.71
Miami-Dade	Miami-Dade, Monroe	67	24,031	$ 11,820,101.66
NE Coastal Florida	Bradford, Brevard, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam, St. Johns, Volusia	34	6656	$ 5,283,600.68
Orlando	Orange, Seminole	48	22,081	$ 18,000,528.00
Palm Beach-Vero	Indian River, Martin, Palm Beach, St. Lucie	35	8048	$ 4,348,302.86
Southwest Florida	Charlotte, Collier, Hendry, Lee	25	4342	$ 2,978,793.80
Tallahassee	Baker, Columbia, Dixie, Franklin, Gadsden, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lafayette, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Suwannee, Taylor, Union, Wakulla	15	1477	$ 1,059,803.12
Tampa Bay	Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Sarasota	45	8987	$ 6,928,550.54

Before we proceed to a discussion of the primary aspects of the data in relation to this proposed organizational restructuring, two ancillary items that emerge from that data concerning the makeup of these ten Ministry Areas warrant a brief discussion.

First, the data shows that there is a wide fluctuation in the density of Adventist presence between various regions in Florida. One county (Miami Dade) has over 16 times the membership, and 11 times the tithe income, of the fifteen counties that comprise the Tallahassee Ministry area. Meanwhile, the two counties comprising the Orlando Ministry Area have nearly 17 times the tithe base of this same Tallahassee Ministry Area (see Table 1). The Tallahassee Ministry Area is the only one of the ten whose viability as a stand-alone conference might appear to be questionable—having only fifteen churches in the fifteen counties that comprise the Tallahassee Ministry Area and only $1,059,803.12 in tithe income. If this proposal were to be seriously considered for implementation within Florida, or beyond, the Tallahassee area might be better served by joining with the neighboring churches from the South Central Conference and the Gulf States Conference that are located in the panhandle region of Florida. In fact, this might even be a more natural geographical association for this ministry area, particularly the westernmost counties in the currently proposed Tallahassee Ministry Area.

Second, while it is really not surprising from a logical perspective, it may nevertheless be somewhat unexpected in Adventist circles, that the areas with the highest Adventist presence correspond to the areas of the state with the highest population. This presence is manifest in both the number of churches, the size of the respective congregations, and the tithe income associated with these churches. Sahlin (2003)

conducted research into the nature of the Adventist Church in North America, and concluded the following:

> Two-thirds of the local churches in the U.S. are located where only 20 % of the population lives—in small towns and rural areas. The congregations located in metropolitan areas—where 80 % of Americans live—include those in downtown and inner city neighborhoods (6 %), other urban neighborhoods in the central cities (13 %), and suburban communities (16 %). Adventist presence is less likely in both rural areas and the large cities. In fact, this represents the largest mission challenge for the Adventist Church in the US . . . Adventists have focused their efforts on the periphery of American culture outside the mainstream of the population. As a result, the Church is seriously marginalized and poorly positioned for outreach and evangelism in most metropolitan area. (p. 43)

Based on the cataloging of all of the churches in Florida performed as part of this study, i.e., in the process of defining the ten Ministry Areas, it seems self-evident that the location, size, and type of churches in Florida could be described as being atypical in relation to churches across the NAD, according to Sahlin's assessment. This would suggest that, rather than being "poorly positioned for outreach and evangelism," the churches in Florida—if reorganized into several smaller conference entities whose focus is on narrower areas of ministry—are poised to establish effective ministry operations in the most populated areas of the state.

Further research would likely be profitable in determining if Florida is, in fact, an anomaly or if, instead, these results and/or conclusions are merely a function of a "different way of looking at" the same data. Would the data related to other states, if the churches of all conference entities operating in the territory were consolidated and then reorganized into mini-conferences corresponding to natural ministry areas, conform to Sahlin's assessment or would they, like Florida, reveal a substantially different set of circumstances?

Potential Benefits of the Proposed Model

As was stated earlier, the model proposed in this study is centered on a simple

plan of redefining our understanding of conference away from the current larger state-

wide and regional organizations toward a system of smaller localized mini-conferences

corresponding to natural ministry areas in which all Adventist churches in the territory

work together to advance the Adventist mission in their respective ministry area. It is

thought that such a change in organizational structure would result in benefits to the NAD

and the GC, as well as the many local churches within the NAD. In this section we will

briefly explore this hypothesis.

The Proposed Model and Conference
Administrative Expenses

It is necessary at this time to explain that this projected model includes an

important corollary proposal. The concept in question relates to how logistical support

functions would be provided for these newly created mini-conferences. Rather than

having each of the ten new conferences in Florida establish sets of individual conference

support structures—departments for treasury, accounting, HR, payroll, etc.—a single-

source union-wide service center is proposed as part of the new model designed to

provide such logistical support for all these new mini-conferences within the union.

For the purposes of our discussion, it is important to note that, in 2010, the Florida

Conference (FC) reported expenses directly related to Administration and Conference

Office Operation/Maintenance of $4,102,984.72, along with additional administrative

expenses for the Florida Conference Educational Department of $997,682.94. Thus, the

combined total of conference general administration expenses and additional educational

department administrative expenses for the year 2010 was $5,100,667.66, or 10.6 % of

the entire annual Florida Conference tithe income for 2010. For purposes of comparison, only $1,353,186.72, or 2.8 percent, was allocated for evangelism (Florida Conference, 2011, pp. 4-5). Such expense data was not made available by the Southeastern Conference; therefore we have no way of knowing what their administrative costs are, but it seems reasonable to conclude that the percentage of tithe allocated for Southeastern Conference administrative expenses would be fairly similar to those of the Florida Conference.

With direct conference administrative expenses currently running at over 10 percent, it seems logical to expect that the implementation of the proposed reorganization likely would result in substantial administrative cost reductions, through economies of scale savings and the elimination of duplicate departments performing essentially the same task. The end result should be greater resources available for programs, plans, and community service/outreach activities within each ministry area and in each local congregation. This approach would itself be an example of a cooperative structure and a model of collaborative activity.

In this scenario, union-wide service entities could collectively handle HR and payroll, accounting, treasury, and other such functions for all of these newly created mini-conferences that would oversee the several Ministry Areas throughout the state of Florida. It is crucial that one understands that the newly created union-level logistical support entity (or entities) would have no decision-making authority—they would not control funds, make hiring decisions, or develop or influence the planning of the work in the conferences—but merely perform the accounting and logistical support functions for the new streamlined local conferences.

For this service, this union-level entity should receive a percentage of the tithe income from the several conferences—an amount that would need to be mutually agreed upon, but expected to be substantially less than the assumed 10 percent of tithe currently expended on conference administrative functions. This remuneration out of tithe funds would be separate from, and in addition to, the current level of conference tithe funds that are sent to support the Southern Union operations, Oakwood University, and Southern Adventist University.

The Local Benefits of Collaborative Organizational Structure

In addition to the development of a union-wide logistical support system described in the previous section, current union departments, taking on an enhanced role, could provide an umbrella network of departmental resources (Sabbath School, Youth Ministries, Family Ministries, etc.) that would allow for the elimination of duplication of these departments on the local conference level. The local conferences would no longer need, or even be encouraged to, maintain the departments that they now staff at great expense.

The proposed expanded union-level departments would be made accessible to all the newly created mini-conferences, along with each of the many churches within the union, thus adding to the potential savings to be realized, based on an economy of scale, as duplicate departments are eliminated on the conference level and consolidated at the union level. The nature of this consolidation of departmental functions at the union level should be specifically, and clearly, defined as being one of an advisory role. In fact, the intended role would be more correctly described as being one of acting as a "resource center" for local conferences and local church leaders within the union.

A local administrative team elected by the constituent members in each of these newly created mini-conferences would make hiring decisions, oversee the distribution and use of the tithe income within their area, coordinate the collaborative activity within the ministry area, and function as the constituent units to their respective union. Thus, having autonomy and control in these and other vital matters, but jettisoning the need to maintain individual support departments, these conferences would be streamlined and thus more nimble and better able to respond quickly to ministry opportunities in their area. In fact, the president and other officers of these conferences could be local church pastors, elected by the constituency of the "conference" and agreeing to serve in the additional role of conference leaders while continuing to pastor their church.

The conference office physical plant facilities could, and probably should, be quite modest. Staffing needs also likely would be minimal. All of this should result in substantial cost savings, allowing for increased resources to be diverted from administrative expenses and instead channeled into more productive ministry activities and facilities, such as large community service centers, a unified school system within each of the ten mini-conferences, and area-wide evangelism enterprises including, but not limited to, an ongoing media presence on local TV and/or radio.

The expectation is that, without the heavy administrative burden that now currently consumes such a large portion of conference resources—as well as a large portion of conference officials' time and energy—the leaders of these mini-conferences would instead have a greater ability to focus entirely on the task of reaching individuals residing in their ministry area. In short, the greater portion of tithe generated in a particular ministry area would stay in that area to be administrated by a local leadership

team familiar with the needs of the community. The nature of these smaller conference entities might, in fact, allow for the development of true permanent and on-going area-wide evangelism that has not been possible on such a sustained and consistent level heretofore.

Each conference, which essentially would correspond to a major media market, could develop a permanent TV/radio presence that features local ministers. Each conference could essentially create practical school districts, designed to oversee the development of a senior academy in each mini-conference, coordinate area Adventist elementary and middle schools, and organize student transportation. This ministry area approach (that is the redefining of conference territories to correspond to practical ministry areas) likely would allow for the development of large-scale community service center(s) within each conference that could offer community-wide programs and ministries (i.e., *pro bono* medical, dental, and counseling services, health and nutrition education, tutoring and mentoring, support groups, and much more as need be).

Community service centers, unified school districts, coordinated area-wide evangelism, etc., would serve as a hub for individual church-based ministry efforts—for example, a conference based Community Service Center could support and facilitate a network of church-based community service operations within the ministry area and in each church within the area. The basic premise of this study is grounded in the idea that, with funds staying closer to where ministry is actually being done, there should be a corresponding overall increase in ministry effectiveness. All of this should substantially benefit the local church and increase the effectiveness of the local church. It is the

position of this study that such a structure, based on fostering cooperation, would lead to greater efficiency and ministry effectiveness.

Potential Economies of Scale Created by a
Collaborative Organizational Structure

By consolidating treasury, accounting, HR, payroll, and other support functions at the union level, it might be possible to eliminate much duplication and wasteful overhead through economies of scale. In much the same way that human resource (HR) firms and accounting firms work for small businesses, support and treasury functions could be provided to all conferences by union-wide staffing entities. The results of such a change could potentially be two-fold: 1. Elimination of duplication of services and achievement of greater efficiency by moving many managerial support tasks to the union level, and 2. Freeing more resources to be deployed on the local level and providing a greater degree of flexibility for these smaller conferences to tailor their ministry to the demands and opportunities to be found in their particular ministry area.

Attempting to ascertain the actual level of cost savings to be realized through consolidation of conference support functions at the union level is beyond the scope of this study, but it seems reasonable to suppose that the probable savings from such a change could be substantial. Examples from the business world appear to support such a conclusion. Large national banks have many branch offices which provide highly personalized service to their local customers—the operations of which are typically coordinated by regional offices—yet these branches are part of larger national and/or international banks that employ common centers to process various transactions generated at these self-same branches (i.e., check processing and account statements,

credit, etc.). Is it reasonable to assume that they would not do this if it were not a cost

effective way to provide services to their customers?

The Clearing House (2011), the oldest banking association in the United States

established in 1853, reports in a recent study of U.S. banks that:

> Using bank data, we estimate product-specific economies of scale in seven areas: online bill payment, debit cards, credit cards, wire transfers, automated clearing house, check processing, and trade processing. Together these account for approximately 7 percent to 10 percent of total net interest earnings ("NIE") of banks over $50 billion. We estimate that associated economies of scale account for $10 billion to $25 billion in annual benefit, or 3 percent to 6 percent of NIE. (p. 10)

This banking association study reports substantial benefit to its member banks from

economies of scale savings being realized through consolidation of processing functions.

On the corporate front, Polák and Klusáček (2010) report the advantages that companies

are experiencing by centralizing their treasury functions:

> Centralization of treasury activities offers corporations the ability to achieve higher efficiency, greater transparency and access to real time information across a broad geographical area and many entities . . . Today, multinational companies, especially those based in Europe and North America, are increasingly recognizing the benefits they can gain from centralizing their treasury and liquidity management. As a shared service centre combines multiple tasks, processes and information technology infrastructures in one central location, one of the main advantages of the centralized treasury is the ability to deliver measurable, automated, unified, transparent, and efficient processes. Moreover, a centralized treasury pools highly qualified people, their skills and knowledge into one centre that allows management to monitor and grow treasury operations swiftly and efficiently. Within the treasury function, cash management is an activity that clearly benefits from economies of scale and process reengineering. (p. 8)

Brickley et al. (2003) point out another beneficial type of scale economy:

> There may also be economies of scale in having headquarters make operating decisions for all units within the firm (some decisions have to be made only once, rather than many times) . . . The important role of central management in a decentralized decision system is to promote information flows and coordinate decision making within the firm. (p. 75)

There are decisions that need to be made collectively where the larger unit is the most

logical and efficient entity to coordinate certain aspects of the operation.

In the context of the Adventist Church in North America, the unions, not large

local conferences, would seem to best positioned to fill this role. Paulsen (2011) makes

this observation concerning the structure of the Adventist Church and the role of unions:

> Organizationally, this means that our structures and our processes of electing
> leadership are essentially the same around the world. Congregations in a local area
> are organized into local conferences or missions. These conferences and missions, in
> turn, are organized into unions, and combined they make up the thirteen world
> divisions of our church. It's the unions—union conferences, union missions, and
> unions of churches—that are the building blocks of the General Conference. (p. 99)

Concerning the Church's organizational support structure, the NAD might be well served

by moving toward systems which incorporate some of these concepts which generate

economies of scale benefits.

Picture such a model for church organizational structure being repeated in every

metropolitan area and/or major geographic region in the state of Florida, the whole

Southern Union or, for that matter, the entire NAD. Based on the experiences reported

from banking and business, it is probable that great savings would be realized within the

Southern Union by consolidation of treasury, HR, payroll, health insurance, and other

logistical support functions of local conference at a union-wide service center. It is

impossible to know precisely what the potential impact upon ministry on the local level

would be unleashed if such an organizational system was implemented—one designed to

decrease overhead and duplication of services, lower administrative costs, maximize

regional cooperation, and empower the local church leaders to determine the optimal

approaches for reaching their respective communities for Jesus Christ—but it would be

exciting to see a union conference within the NAD pilot a move to such a proposed

model.

The Proposed Model and the Power of
Cooperation

This section explores the proposed reorganization model from the perspective of

the larger questions that are at the heart of this study. It is supposed that the proposed

model would, by the very nature of its structure, foster greater inter-congregational

cooperation. It is further understood that an increase in levels of cooperation and

collaboration on the local level would produce positive results related to ministry

effectiveness and public perception. This section will briefly explore these assumptions.

In particular, we will examine the following: How would this model affect the level of

inter-congregational cooperation? How would this model impact the effectiveness of the

local Adventist congregations?

The Proposed Model and Inter-
Congregational Cooperation

The reorganization outlined in this chapter by its very nature is designed to foster

inter-congregational cooperation. By recasting conference decision-making authority to

the level of the ministry area, this model essentially transforms the local conference from

a command and control hierarchical entity into a ministry team. The congregations that

reside in this ministry area—that are part of the conference—would have real incentive to

collaborate with the other churches in the conference. They would have a shared identity

and a common purpose and mission. Friedman (2007) shares a keen insight that

"Individuals function not out of their own personalities or past, but express that part of

their nature that is regulated by the emotional processes in the present system" (p. 198).

Our "present" system unintentionally inhibits inter-congregational cooperation, whereas

the proposed system is intentionally designed to foster it and maximize the positive

aspects of a collaborative organization.

Hamel (2000), a renowned business author who also happens to have Adventist

ties, offers a thought provoking tale of the negative power of "the system" that we would

do well to take to heart:

> Interview successful revolutionaries in large companies, and you'll hear a familiar refrain: "I succeeded despite the system." All of them know that "the system" is there to frustrate the new, the unconventional, and the untested. Management systems are designed to enforce conformance, alignment, and continuity. We would be horrified if employees said they managed to deliver quality products and services "despite the system." We should be horrified that employees have to produce innovation "in spite of the system" (pp. 292-3)

If there is any cooperation going on presently, especially between neighboring churches

from different conferences, it is occurring "in spite of the system" not because of it.

Bolman and Deal (2003) ponder the question, "How does structure influence what

happens in the workplace?" and came to the following answer:

> Essentially, it is a blueprint for formal expectations and exchanges among internal players (executives, managers, employees) and external constituencies (such as customers and clients). Like an animal's skeleton or a building's framework, structural form both enhances and constrains what an organization can accomplish. (p. 46).

"Like an animal's skeleton or a building's framework" is a very powerful way of

illustrating the power, for good or for ill, of organizational structure. Applying similar

concepts to the church setting, Stetzer and Rainer (2010) observe:

> The local church is God's platform for His glory and His chosen delivery system for the gospel. Every church has a system (way of doing things). Systems exist whether they are intentionally put in place or not. Each system has written rules but even more powerful, unwritten rules that every insider knows by heart. If relationships are God's chosen delivery system for evangelism and discipleship, then they are worthy of our

highest focus and intentionality. Relationships are the proverbial 'hill to die on.' But intentional and relational are difficult to wrap our arms around. (p. 120)

The "Church System" was intended by Christ to be "intentional about being relational," but how can it possibly be relational if is not first intentionally designed to foster collaboration? Hoover and Valenti (2005), commenting on the true meaning and measure of leadership, create a beautiful picture of a healthy collaborative organization when they plainly state their overarching contention that:

Leadership is a circle, not a ladder: a primary purpose of leadership is to increase and strengthen connections between people inside and outside of the organization, and to avoid potential disconnects. As rings of responsibility are formed around essential organizational functions and initiatives, the need for participation and a sense of ownership on everyone's part becomes more critical. People standing in a circle aren't looking up or down at one another, they're looking straight at the task. (p. 42)

Perhaps this is what church should look like, and collaboration is the key.

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The Proposed Model and the Effectiveness
of the Local Adventist Church

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This section will explore what, if any, effect implementation of the proposed model would have on the ministry effectiveness of the local church in the NAD. We approach this topic from two aspects: The effect of the proposed model on church member involvement, and the effect of the model on the focus of local church ministry in relation to the community.

The Pareto principle (also known as the 80–20 rule or the law of the vital few) states that, for many events, roughly 80 percent of the effects come from 20 percent of the causes. Business-management consultant Joseph M. Juran suggested the principle and named it after Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto, who observed, in 1906, that 80 percent of the land in Italy was owned by 20 percent of the population. He developed the principle by observing that 20 percent of the pea pods in his garden contained 80 percent

of the peas. It is accepted as a common rule of thumb in business; e.g., "80% of your sales come from 20% of your sales team" (Wikipedia, 2012).

Many within the Church apply the Pareto principle to the church setting by saying, "Twenty percent of the members in the church do eighty percent of the work." How many times have you heard this very comment from pastors and church members? The statement "Twenty percent of the people doing eighty percent of the work" seems, unfortunately, to be the rule rather than the exception in the current setting of North American Adventism. While it is likely an anecdotally accurate statement, Hoover and Valenti (2005) would seem to question the acceptance of the 80/20 principle as a given concerning individuals within your organization:

> The character of your organization is the composite character of your staff. If 20 percent of the people in your organization do 80 percent of the work and vice versa, does that mean 80 percent of your organization's population is lazy? Are 80 percent of the people lacking in virtuous character? We don't think so. It's much more likely that 80 percent of the people in your organization are not properly aligned with your expectations for, or the needs of, your enterprise. Alignment is key. (p. 9)

Rather than simply accepting this situation as a given and lamenting the apparent decline in the level of commitment among members of the Adventist Church, according to Hoover and Valenti, church leaders should instead focus on creating structures that better align people with the purpose and values of Adventism.   The model proposed in this study, with its heightened emphasis on cooperation and increased local decision-making, should result in greater church member participation, while also upholding the values and beliefs of Adventism.

Norman (2003) points out that the postmodern generation "desires to be actors and not spectators," that "they learn best by doing," and that this generation "also wants to be involved in the local community," all of which suggests that, for the church to

attract post moderns, its mission "should be service-oriented and primarily local" (p.

184). Is not the Adventist Church, with it holistic message and lifestyle, its

service/outreach orientation, and its multicultural makeup, well positioned to involve this

generation in service to the local community?

The proposed organizational model is very intentional about developing full-scale

community service organizations that can effectively impact the community for good,

and at the same time say to those in the community, who desire to serve, that we do

indeed care, and that we not only believe in the concept of unity in diversity but we

actually live it out on a daily basis on the local level. Norman goes on to share his belief

that:

> Instead of church politics, [the postmodern] wants spiritual power. In the place of
> materialism, she wants maternal, mutual love. In place of broken relationships, she
> wants healing. In place of cynicism and censure, she wants a living spirituality that
> changes her life so that she can grow in her relationship with God and her
> relationships with others. (pp. 129-130)

We now have an entire generation to win to Christ that is cynical, disinclined to believe

in absolutes or even, for that matter, that there such a thing as absolute truth. We have an

entire generation to win who are the embodiment of the new reality that Stuart Murray

(2004) points out when he says, "churches that have historically applied a 'believing

before belonging' approach report increasing numbers wanting to 'belong' before

believing" (p. 2) In exploring the reason for this change, Murray postulates:

> The most obvious are the cultural shifts signaled by the terms 'postmodernity' and
> 'post-Christendom.' In postmodernity, people are suspicious of institutions and more
> interested in whether beliefs work in practice than whether they are theoretically true.
> So belonging before believing is necessary to test whether Christians live out in their
> communities what they claim to be true. (p. 3)

If we are to fulfill God's purpose for the church in this present age, then we must

realize that, to win such a generation as this, we must have healthy, vibrant, thriving,

outward focused, and racially and ethnically diverse local churches that exist in close relationship to, and work together with, their neighboring sister churches. True unity and compassion in real terms is what the world is waiting to see, and it will only see it through the prism of the local church modeling it throughout the ministry area. If the local congregation in North America can successfully model such a unity of purpose, despite our history, that is likely to serve as a real catalyst for even greater success in the world-wide church in fulfilling its God-given mission.

The Proposed Model and Public Perception

The intention of this section is to attempt to answer the question, "How would this model affect the public perception of the Adventist Church?" Paulsen (2011), sharing from his experience as leader of the global Adventist Church dealing with public perception of the church, relates that:

> When you talk to the secular media about the Seventh-day Adventist Church, you quickly discover two realities: most journalist have little to no knowledge about who we are and what we stand for, and when a reporter does know something about Adventists it's usually defined by the ways we differ from 'mainstream' Protestantism. (p. 91)

This seems to be a clear sign that we have failed to adequately engage the public or effectively define what it means to be a Seventh-day Adventist.

Norman (2003) offers a wake-up call for the Adventist Church when he states his belief that:

> The rise of postmodern world view has altered the rules of engagement to which the church must adhere in sharing the gospel. Failure to understand this has lessened the church's ability to speak relevantly and effectively to the needs of young people. (p. 12)

He goes on to say that:

> Postmodern thinkers tend to be less concerned with sectarianism or denominationalism, and more concerned with making a difference in people's lives . . . Hence, the way to demonstrate that the principles of the Bible are absolute truth to the internet generation is to show how they work in real life. Truth, then, emerges when you 'practice what you preach.' To the postmodern thinker, absolute truth is only absolute if and where it is shown to work in real life. (p. 26-27)

It is a profound insight which Norman shares that "to the postmodern thinker, absolute truth is only absolute if and where it is shown to work in real life." It would seem that Norman is calling the Church to actually live out unity in diversity for the sake of our witness to the postmodern world around us.

When the missionary E. Stanley Jones met with Mohandas K. Gandhi, he asked him, "Mr. Gandhi, though you quote the words of Christ often, why is that you appear to so adamantly reject becoming his follower?" Gandhi replied, "Oh, I don't reject Christ. I love Christ. It's just that so many of you Christians are so unlike Christ. If Christians would really live according to the teachings of Christ, as found in the Bible, all of India would be Christian today." In his brief online article for *Christianity Today*, entitled "Mahatma Gandhi and Christianity," Samuel (2008) shares some of the story behind this well-known quote:

> Gandhi's closeness with Christianity began when he was a young man practicing law in South Africa. Apart from being attached with the Christian faith, he intently studied the Bible and the teachings of Jesus, and was also seriously exploring becoming a Christian, which led him to his discovery of a small church gathering in his locality. These strongly entrenched Biblical teachings have always acted a panacea to many of India's problems during its freedom struggle. After deciding to attend the church service in South Africa, he came across a racial barrier; the church barred his way at the door. "Where do you think you're going, kaffir?" an English man asked Gandhi in a belligerent tone. Gandhi replied, "I'd like to attend worship here." The church elder snarled at him, "There's no room for kaffirs in this church. Get out of here or I'll have my assistants throw you down the steps." This infamous incident forced Gandhi to never again consider being a Christian.

While not as offensive as the overt racism that a South African church elder expressed to Gandhi, it is likely that the separateness that we, as Seventh-day Adventists, tolerate in

our midst and exhibit before our friends and neighbors on a local level could be equally as damaging. It is highly likely that the proposed model, which necessitates the dissolving of both the state and regional conferences and the merging of the churches of both conferences into several smaller conferences based on natural ministry areas, would positively impact the public perception of the Adventist Church—as it would also minimize our racial division.

I must share my own experience in Birmingham, Alabama, as someone who was new to Christianity and the Adventist Church, where I encountered the Adventist version of "separate but equal" for the first time. As God was revealing life-changing truth, in the context of the Adventist message, that provided answers to the great "why" questions of my life, I discovered, to my shock and chagrin, that this church that I was growing to love and respect was separated along racial lines. As an individual who whole-heartedly embraced the teachings of Martin Luther King, the irony of the situation of being in, of all places, Birmingham, glaringly called to mind a particular section from King's dream speech (1963), where he said:

> I have a dream that one day the state of Alabama, whose governor's lips are presently dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers.

How could the Seventh-day Adventist Church, of all institutions, not be living out King's dream, when so many segments of society are fully integrated?

I was, to say the least, taken aback by this situation of racial division, and I nearly decided to not join the Church. Even though I later came to appreciate, to some extent, the arguments evidencing some positive aspects of this separation and revealing that there

were perhaps valid reasons for its existence, I could not help but think, even as a babe in Christ, that this was not the way God intended things to be.

Although I am sensitive to the feelings of African-American Adventists who see separate regional and state conferences as necessary and good, I cannot help but think that if I, as someone born at the tail end of the baby boom, was troubled by this—and nearly turned away from Seventh-day Adventism because of it—how much more is it going to be a barrier to a member of the postmodern generation who is even more steeped in the righteous concept of color-blindness?

How is the local church to be effective in this present age? Veith (1994) eloquently uplifts the high calling and present truth of what church could, and should, be, teaching and modeling to the communities where God has placed us, when he postulates:

> In the Church, people of all cultures and stations are unified with each other because of their common relationship to Christ. For all the postmodernists say about multiculturalism, the universal Church, spread through history and throughout the globe, is the one true multicultural institution. (p. 88)

This is a powerful truth that the Church has, for too long, failed to fully live up to or embrace. Perhaps it is time, for the sake of our public witness at the very least, that we get beyond whatever it is that leads us to believe that institutional division based on race is a good thing and instead come together on every level of church organization, especially the local one. If we are to effectively reach the postmodern world, it seems imperative that we do so. And it seems that, if the proposed model would be adopted, North American Adventists would be better able to effect such a change. Such a move towards full integration at the conference and local church level would clearly signify to the watching world that we are one in more than name only, and that we are serious about fulfilling Christ's call for unity—even across racial lines.

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Summary

If the concept of local conference in the NAD was redefined away from *both* state and regional conferences and toward mini-conferences—defined by natural ministry areas essentially corresponding to major metropolitan regions/media markets—then the organizational structure of the church would more effectively foster a spirit of cooperation, and be more aligned with the values that we espouse as Adventists. As many of the necessary support functions for all the resulting conferences are transferred to and performed by union-wide entities, it is projected that the resulting administrative costs could be substantially lowered through savings due to economies of scale. Furthermore, as the bulk of tithe generated in each of the new conferences stays within the ministry area, to be directed by local leaders familiar with the community, it seems probable that the ministry effectiveness of the local churches would improve.

Also, as the Adventist Church projects a more impactful and inclusive presence in the communities being served by these conferences—through enhanced community service efforts, a coordinated system of schools, and consistent area-wide evangelism efforts that likely would include substantial media components—it seems reasonable to expect that the public perception of the church should improve, resulting in more effective soul-winning.

CHAPTER 5

ISSUES ARISING FROM A MOVE TOWARD COOPERATIVE

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The focus of this study is inter-congregational cooperation between neighboring local churches within the organizational structure of the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We have explored the theological foundations supporting a collaborative organizational framework for the Church. We have reviewed literature related to the general concept of cooperation, as well as cooperation within the church setting in particular. In the previous chapter (Chapter 4) we introduced a model for organizational reform designed to intentionally foster greater inter-congregational cooperation in the context of the NAD—expressly the model focused on Adventist churches in the state of Florida, excluding the Florida panhandle. In this chapter, we want to address a few of the issues likely to arise if such a model for reorganization were to be considered for actual implementation.

Change is usually difficult, and obviously a move in the direction of the proposed model for reorganization of Church structure presented in this study would involve a great deal of change. In this chapter, we first identify and briefly discuss some factors that may present a challenge to efforts to increase inter-congregational cooperation, and/or the implementation of a model of conference realignment designed to foster inter-congregational cooperation. We will then discuss, at length, the interplay of missiological

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particularity and community identity in the context of the proposed reorganization. This question of missiological particularity vs. community identity, to a large extent, lies at the heart of any move towards greater inter-congregational cooperation and represents one of the primary challenges to conference realignment. We will then, for purposes of comparison, examine the experience of the Methodist Church in dealing with questions of race. Finally, we will examine some of the biblical evidence that might inform our understanding regarding issues of ethnic separation and unity in diversity within the church context.

Out of Two, Many: Some of the Challenges
of Conference Realignment

Wheatley (2005) offers hope that the NAD can change as we move into the future, as she discusses the ability of an organization to thrive in the face of change from within the system:

> If we think of organizations as living systems capable of self-organizing, then how do we think about change in these systems? The strategy for change becomes simpler and more localized . . . Localized change activity does not mean that the organization spins off wildly in all directions. If people are clear about the purpose and real values of their organization, their individual tinkering will result in system-wide coherence. In organizations that know who they are and mean what they announce, people are free to create and contribute. (p. 68)

Wheatley postulates that, if there is general coherence to the values, principles, and purposes of the organization, then the initiation of change from within will not be a threat to unity. Freedom to think outside the box, "individual tinkering" Wheatley calls it, will only enhance coherence if there is general buy-in to the values of the organization. Local change does not have to be destructive of overall unity. Wheatley believes it is only within a system where unity is based primarily on control that the advent of freedom and localized grassroots innovation will be a threat to unity. However, if unity within the

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organization is based primarily on conformity, then empowering the leaders on the local level likely may be a threat to cause things to spin out of control. In a command and control environment, a loss of control typically leads to anarchy. However, in a system where collaboration, freedom, and coherence to core organizational principles are the basis for unity, then change and local empowerment generally enhances unity—this unity finds its expression in a diversity of approaches, which only serves to makes the organization itself stronger, more resilient, and better able to adapt to change.

In an organizational structure that is more of a top-down, command and control type of system, innovation tends to be suppressed in the name of unity. This situation can stifle creativity and cultivate an environment where leaders feel compelled—or perhaps perceive it as a matter of institutional loyalty—to function as agents of maintaining the status quo. Such an environment is not likely to attract our best and brightest into leadership positions. Bell (2003) points out what he perceives to be a disconcerting trend within the NAD:

> In North America, in a church movement maturing deep into its second century, it is increasingly hard to find young men and women steeped in the life of the church through two or more generations interested in church leadership. When they do commit themselves to life service they too often sense a need to escape the weight of church organization in order to achieve their vision of a dynamic growing church. (p. ix)

Bell would seem to be saying that, more and more, it is individuals who come into the church from the outside as converts that are willing to assume church leadership roles—i.e., only those who don't know any better and/or are not aware of the oppressive nature of "the weight of church organization." Have the systems of the Church— established by our pioneers to better facilitate Adventist members and local Adventist congregations in fulfilling the Great Commission—become so oppressive as to cause

talented individuals to forego church service? Even if it is merely the perception of some

that church organization is something to be escaped, then there would seem to be grounds

for moving quickly to modify the organizational system for the good of the Church and

for the sake of its God-given mission. The change that is specifically proposed in this

study is a movement away from large geographical conferences toward smaller

conferences corresponding to territories that more closely approximate natural ministry

areas. In the case of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the state of Florida (excluding

the Panhandle), this translates into a move from two to ten, that is, from Florida

Conference and Southeastern Conference toward ten mini-conferences, each focused on

serving a major metropolitan area.

Change is Hard

This brings us to the first challenge of implementing conference realignment. The

first challenge inherent in this approach is the simple fact that it involves . . . well . . .

change! Anecdotally speaking, many Adventists seem to relish change as much as they

do a root canal procedure. Many may even believe that change in relation to church

organization is tampering with a God-given plan that had the approval of the prophet

herself. Indeed, Ellen White did approve the current system that was implemented in

1901-1903 and that has remained virtually unchanged until the present day, but the

simple and frank question that needs to be asked is, "Was this approval perpetual?"

By this I mean, if the Adventist pioneer, Ellen White, were alive today, would she

approve of our current organizational circumstance? Would she say, "Well done, you

have meticulously stuck to the model that God gave to us over a century ago" or would

she instead say, "What is the matter with you people? Why are you clinging to this

system that is no longer serving the needs of the church and is impeding the fulfillment of the mission? Has God not revealed a better way for today?" We need to ask ourselves, "Would she resist change or be an agent of change in this matter?" Beach (2007) says:

Seventh-day Adventists need not be dogmatic about church structures. They are important and, in God's providence, have served us well. We are a pragmatic church; we use what works. Experience has shown that our structure has served us effectively, but it is not sacrosanct. (p. 47)

Oliver (2007) states it even more plainly:

Ellen White was a loyal supporter of the organization, but was never prescriptive of its organizational form. She was willing to change. Hers was an advisory rather than a definitive role. She allowed the representatives of the church to shape the structures, both in 1863 and in 1901-1903. (p. 25)

Clearly, the position of these two Adventist historians is that Ellen White was not prescriptive as to the form of organizational structure. She embraced change when change was necessary and in the best interest of the church. As Beach says, "Our [current] structure has served us effectively, but it is not sacrosanct." We in the NAD find ourselves at a crossroad of decision. Will we fastidiously hold to the long-standing form of church organization, even at the expense of the Church's mission, or will we embrace changes in organizational structure? Are we willing to change and streamline the way we do things in the interest of reclaiming our identity as a mission-driven movement?

A Question of Logistics

A second challenge inherent in the proposed reorganization is a logistical one. The simple fact is that the majority of the property the Church holds, including all of the schools within each conference and all of the local church buildings throughout the NAD, are "owned" by the various local conference associations. So much of the legal aspects of

organization are tied to the current conference demarcation. There surely would need to be some real logistical heavy lifting required in the process of sorting out the transfer of property ownership from the current conference title-holders to the newly established mini-conferences. While not likely to be easily accomplished, it is likewise probably not an insurmountable task if there is merely the will to do so. Alternatively, a plan might be found that could leave the current conference associations in place to hold legal title, without frustrating the proposed model's goal of increased local autonomy.

If such a system could be established, giving greater decision-making authority to the newly created conferences, while at the same time retaining legal ownership in the larger associations, then additional checks and balances would thus be built into the system. Therefore, any increased potential for schisms that might arise when land and property ownership is entrusted totally to smaller conferences—smaller entities arguably might be more susceptible to manipulation by a few misguided individuals—could be blunted and minimized. A comprehensive investigation of these issues is deemed necessary. However, it is best left for those (i.e., lawyers, CPAs, treasurers, and trust officers) who have more experience and greater expertise in such matters. Therefore, it is considered beyond the scope of this study to offer more than this cursory consideration of this particular issue.

A Matter of Politics

Another challenge is found in the political realities of the current organizational structure itself. In the context of a system that has worked well in the past and is long established, it is difficult for many to embrace change. We are prone to endure under the current system, even while acknowledging its shortcomings and limitations, rather than

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venture into the uncharted territory of adopting a new model. In the context of NAD

church polity, it needs to be understood that, if the model proposed in this study were to

ever be seriously considered for implementation in its current organizational

configuration, the leaders of the various Church organizational entities would likely have

to play a significant role in promoting such changes for them to happen.

The Political Realities of Implementing
Structural Change

If structural change is to occur within the NAD, then current conference, union,

and division leaders within the NAD would ultimately, at some point, have to initiate a

vote for reorganization. An affirmative vote in such a case may entail negative personal

consequences for some individuals currently in positions of authority—a vote for

reorganization essentially could be a vote cast against one's own narrow self-interest.

Change in organizational structure means personal change for those who currently hold

the positions that would be affected by the change, it is that simple. They might literally

be voting themselves out of office. This political reality seems likely to pose a challenge

for implementation of any lasting change to NAD organizational structure. Rogers (2005)

reports a humorous, yet insightful, exchange that occurred in the midst of a pivotal debate

during what proved to be an important October 11, 2005, Annual Council meeting:

> Turkeys don't vote for Christmas and department directors won't vote themselves out
> of office," an Annual Council delegate from Britain, Ian Sleeman, said in response to
> views that would protect status quo in church structures and ministries. His comments
> came as part of a discussion on a recommendation to set up the Commission on
> Ministries, Services and Structures that was voted by delegates Oct. 11 at the
> Seventh-day Adventist Church's world headquarters.

"Turkeys don't vote for Christmas" was Sleeman's way of saying that conference, union,

and GC leaders are not likely to support change that would affect their continued

employment. In one sense, he has a point; effecting change is hard enough under circumstances of politics as usual, but extraordinarily hard in the context of the Adventist Church.

In the case of the Commission on Ministries, Services and Structures which was set up with that October 11, 2005, vote (as well as the Union of Churches sub-committee that was subsequently formed by the commission, and whose final report to the commission recommended the expansion of the Union of Churches concept to all GC divisions), any such structural change would require the approval of several conference, union, division, and GC constituencies and committees—bodies over which the individual administrators at all these levels would be able to exercise substantial influence either for or against the proposed changes.

Union of Churches Model

Another political reality to be considered in relation to the implementation of the model proposed in this study is the fact that the GC has already progressed quite far down the path towards a wider implementation of the Union of Churches model. Regarding this expansion of the Union of Churches model, while there are certainly drawbacks to a move to this model, there also seem to be aspects of the concept that have merit and warrant further examination.

The outline of the basic concept, as proposed in the report of the Union of Churches Sub-committee to the Commission on Ministries, Services, and Structures (2007, p.1), is as follows:

It is proposed that a union of churches be defined as a constituency-based organization consisting of local churches, within a defined geographical area, that has been granted, by a General Conference Session, official status as a Seventh-day Adventist union of churches. It will inherit the combined functions of a local field and

union. A union of churches shall not have any subsidiary units that fulfill local conference administrative functions. A union of churches will therefore be the middle organization of a three tiered constituency model—(1) local church, (2) union of churches and (3) General Conference and its divisions. A union of churches is not considered a component of the current four tiered constituency model—(1) local church, (2) local conference/mission, (3) union conference/mission, (4) General Conference and its divisions.

The rationale for the Union of Churches model is that it would eliminate overhead and flatten the organizational structure of the Church, which may or may not prove to be the case. In interviews with Cristian Dumitrescu (2007), Alberto Guaita, President the Seventh-day Adventist Spanish Union, discussed his experience as leader of a Union of Churches and makes the case for the wider adoption of the Union of Churches model. Dumitrescu asked the question, "Is a Union of Churches more missionary efficient?" Elder Guaita responded:

> First, there are more funds available for mission that otherwise would be used to pay the administrators. Second, there is a closer relationship between the administrators and the church, the administrators are more in touch with the local churches and members, visiting them every Sabbath. In the traditional role, the union Conference is just a link between the local conferences and the General Conference. In some countries the Union of Churches model is a solution, but in Unions with 70,000 members and [several] conferences it is more difficult to implement such a model. (p. 110)

He also shared this revealing insight:

> The Spanish Union is not a Union of Conferences but a Union of Churches . . . the General Conference is interested in Union of Churches, and their advice for us is to maintain the actual structure for financial reasons. Unfortunately, the Adventist Church has become heavy with administrative machinery, with many people occupying positions at different levels. This creates a financial burden, with pastors who have to devote their time to administration. The Union of Churches has been the exception in the past, but has become a model for the future. It is easier to work with a few more people involved in administration at the Union level than to have many more people employed at several conferences. There are five Unions of Churches in Europe. There is also the precedent of creating two Unions in Germany, but it is very difficult to reverse the process now. But there are other Unions who are considering the Union of Churches as a future model. (p. 110)

That change is currently needed in structure of the NAD would seem to be self-evident, and finds apparent confirmation in this present GC-level decision to promote the expansion of the Union of Churches model to the various divisions of the GC. However, as such a change is contemplated, it is important that a full understanding of what might be the end result of this particular change process be considered.

While the expansion of the Union of Churches concept, in one sense, could be said to be "flattening" the Adventist organizational structure by compressing four constituent levels down to three, it would likely do little to alleviate the sense of distance between the local church and the higher organizational levels of the Church. Also, there appears to be little in the design of the proposed Union of Churches model to empower greater local decision-making authority and little intention to foster greater genuine and sustainable inter-congregational cooperation. Merging two constituent levels into one is likely to be a more efficient form of church governance, which may even result in a more effective form of administration, but it likely would also create unintended problems of its own. Authorizing a structure that bypasses and circumvents the regular organizational structure currently in place is something that the Church needs to carefully consider. It seems an unnecessarily radical solution to the problem it is intended to solve, namely, that of excessive administration and the corresponding waste of resources. While the compression of the four constituent levels of the current organization into three—which the full adoption of the Union of Churches model would affect—likely would result in greater efficiency, it also could result in greater concentration of decision-making authority in the hands of a few individuals at the Union of Churches and/or GC level. It may seem logical that, as Elder Guaita says, it would be "easier to work with a few more

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people involved in administration at the Union level than to have many more people employed at several conferences," it may not be prudent. Efficiency gained at the cost of a reduction in the democratic process does not seem to be a wise trade-off.

This Union of Churches model may, in fact, constitute the danger of consolidation of decision-making power in the hands of too few individuals about which we were warned, when White (1985) wrote:

It has been a necessity to organize union conferences, that the General Conference shall not exercise dictation over all the separate conferences. The power vested in the Conference is not to be centered in one man, or two men, or six men; there is to be a council of men over the separate divisions. (p. 27)

Besides this, admittedly hypothetical, perception of the Union of Churches model as a move toward centralization, there are other plausible political aspects of a move towards the Union of Churches model to consider. For example, if the Union of Churches model were currently in operation in the NAD—with the recent action of the Union Conference(s) affirming gender-neutral ordination in mind—one can envision a situation developing where several local churches, that may disagree with a decision of their respective union, banding together and appealing to the GC to accept them as a Union of Churches in order to opt out of their local conference and their Union. This situation could have the potential for fragmentation and destructive disunity. Perhaps, an alternative solution which addresses the failures of current structure in a more direct fashion then the Union of Churches model (capable of achieving the greater efficiencies promised by the Union of Churches model, while maintaining the check on consolidation of power provided by the four constituent levels) may yet be achievable. Perhaps a model that simply redefines the concept of local conference toward smaller, more ministry-focused entities, while leaving union conferences in place.

As was stated earlier, constituencies and committees at all organizational levels,

themselves, in turn, influenced by the individual leaders elected and entrusted with

certain executive authority concerning these self-same organizational levels, will, in the

final analysis, ultimately be the ones who would bring about a vote for expansion of the

Union of Churches model—or, for that matter, reorganization of any kind to happen.

Change in organizational structure means personal change for those who currently hold

the positions of authority that would be affected by the change. This political reality

seems likely to pose serious challenges to implementation of any lasting change to NAD

organizational structure, because after all, turkeys don't vote *for* Christmas.

The Biggest Challenge: Missiological Particularity
vs. Community Identity

Another issue arising from the conference reorganization proposed in this study is

perhaps the most challenging and sensitive of all. Merging two conferences into ten, as

proposed in this study, involves more than the run-of-the-mill political issues—because

the two conferences in questions, which cover essentially the same territory, are,

historically speaking, separated along racial lines. Pollard (2000, p.111) gives voice to a

very pertinent question relevant to the situation of this separate conference structure

going forward into the future when he asks, "How will ethnic groups (i.e., Anglo, Asian,

Latino, African, etc.) balance the need for same-race particularity in mission with the

biblical mandate to be cross-cultural in our outreach (Matt. 28:18-20)?" Another relevant

question, in a vein similar to Pollard's, but more specifically related to the situation in the

NAD, would be, "How are African-American Adventists to balance the effectiveness of

same-race particularity in mission with their identification as part of the wider

community of Seventh-day Adventists?"

Unity in Diversity

First of all, it seems appropriate that we start our discussion with an

acknowledgement of the oneness that all believers, regardless of race, age, gender, or

ethnicity, find in Christ and the unity that we all, as Adventists, share in our common

purpose and mission found in the proclamation of the Three Angels' Messages. Paulsen

(2011) reflects on this beautiful and dynamic unity in the following manner:

> The smallest congregation in rural North America has direct ties to a house church in Cambodia, a café in the Netherlands, and a congregation in the remote highlands of Papua New Guinea. We have an essential 'sameness'—a common spiritual DNA— that you will always find if you dig beneath the surface differences of culture and nationality. (p. 92)

We are truly all Adventists and that is a bond that is enduring, powerful, and incumbent

upon us to preserve. We should endeavor to overcome what may separate us, and instead

find in what we have in common a deeper understanding of each other.

The Church is strongest when we honor and respect individual and/or group

diversity within the context of maintaining and celebrating the unity that our shared

message and mission provides. In many ways, we are a spiritual equivalent of

McDonald's. Essentially, one can go into a McDonald's in Beijing and order a Big Mac

and fries, and it will be a Big Mac and fries! There likely will be some very unique items

on the menu along with the Big Mac, but the Big Mac you get will be exactly the same

sandwich that you could order in any town in America. McDonald's goes to great lengths

to insure that this is the case. How is the Adventist Church in many ways the spiritual

equivalent of McDonald's? This is true in the sense that, while there are clearly

substantial cultural differences between Adventist believers around the world, it is

likewise the case, as Paulsen (p. 92) says, that there is "an essential 'sameness'—a

common spiritual DNA—that you will always find if you dig beneath the surface

differences of culture and nationality." You will find variation in style and expression

from one locale to another within the church context, but the core message and

fundamental beliefs are intentionally the same. This fact seems to makes us quite unique

in the Protestant Christian context, and even the Catholic Church does not seem able to

boast of such a global uniformity of message and beliefs. This reality is vital for the

Church, and worth doing what we can and must do to preserve it.

The Rationale for Regional Conferences

One quickly recognizes the sensitive nature of the issues involved when

discussing regional conferences and the racial history of the Seventh-day Adventist

Church in America. However, we cannot afford to shy away from discussions that are

needed, simply because they are difficult or uncomfortable. One approaches this topic

with a great deal of humility and delicacy, because it would be extremely presumptuous

for anyone—especially someone who was not there on the receiving end of the racial

discrimination—to feel in any way qualified to address the issues related to race in the

Church and the experience of African-American Adventists. Therefore, our modest hope

is that our discussion might fairly and accurately reflect the history pertaining to the

issues of race in the Adventist Church, and simply share potential options related to

where we may choose to go from here.

Regarding regional conferences, Johnson (2007) gives a meaningful description

of the positive role that regional conferences have played in the development of North

American Adventism, while also pointing out their limitation regarding the resolution of

the larger issues related to race that the organization of separate conferences was intended

to address:

> Since the formation of regional conferences, in which Black pastors can attain administrative and departmental positions, the work among African Americans has greatly expanded. Much good has clearly been accomplished through powerful gospel preaching, effective social ministries, and other means of outreach. They have served an important purpose. Sadly, because we have never worked through and resolved many of the underlying issues that gave birth to regional conferences, prejudice, tension, and mistrust remain a serious problem. (p. 131)

He also gives a concise synopsis of the conditions within the Adventist Church in

America in the first half of the twentieth century that led up to the establishment of

regional conferences:

> Regional conferences were established in the mid-1940s as a result of the deep-seated prejudice that oppressed and marginalized Black members and pastors within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. There were two main issues involved, among many others: leadership and resources. It was, tragically, very difficult for qualified Black pastors to enter leadership positions in the denomination at the conference level and above. . . .Neither could they have adequate input regarding the allocation of personnel and financial resources. As a result, tensions escalated, and the work among African Americans suffered. (p. 131)

A History of Racism

It must be stated that Johnson's assessment does not begin to adequately describe

and convey the indignities that African-American Adventists endured at the hands of

their White Adventist brothers and sisters. Baker (1995) offers a fuller description of the

general mistreatment perpetrated upon Black Adventists by their beloved Church:

> White Adventist congregations and administrative leadership positions were rarely accessible to Blacks prior to the 1940s. The first Black person to work at the General Conference was the director of the Negro Department. Neither he nor Black visitors to the General Conference were permitted to eat in the Review and Herald cafeteria (the eating place for the General Conference workers at the time). Segregation was the norm for the first half of the 1900s. Across the United States the denomination's schools and institutions did not yet have an equitable admissions policy. (p. 12)

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Johnson articulates the only appropriate response to such a dark period in Adventist history when he says, "The many instances of racism against Black members within the Adventist Church during that time should grieve every member's heart" (2007, p. 131).

This shameful history of repeated racial discrimination and unchristian treatment of African-American Adventists by the members and institutions of their church reached its climax in October, 1943, when a certain Mr. Byard took his wife, Lucy, to the Washington Adventist Sanitarium in Takoma Park, Maryland, for medical treatment. Mr. Byard and his wife were Seventh-day Adventists of African-American descent, but both had very light complexions. Because she was clearly gravely ill, Lucy Byard was brought by an ambulance and was admitted immediately without hesitation. But before treatment was actually begun, her admission form was reviewed. When her racial identity was discovered, she was told a mistake had been made.

Without further examination or treatment of any kind, she was unceremoniously wheeled into a hallway, where she remained while the hospital staff sought an "appropriate" hospital to which to transfer her. She was eventually transferred by automobile–*not even an ambulance*–to the Freedman's Hospital where she soon died of pneumonia. A condition that likely worsened while she was left languishing in the hallway of the Adventist hospital with only a thin hospital gown for warmth (Fordham, 1991, pp. 66-83).

This incident, combined with the numerous cases of similarly egregious racial discrimination and neglect, brought to a head the crisis that had been developing over many years, and would ultimately lead to the establishment of the first regional conference the following year.

The immediate upshot of this shameful act of racism and unchristian indifference to the suffering of a fellow Adventist was the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Worldwide Work Among Colored Seventh-day Adventists, an organization which was hastily formed the following Saturday evening, October16, 1943, by leading lay members of Ephesus Church in Washington, DC.

The circumstances of this organization's formation are, in themselves, an illustration of the White Adventist Church leaders' failure to comprehend the depth of feeling aroused among Black Adventists by the treatment of Mrs. Byard. To quiet the brethren, Elder W. G. Turner, an Australian and President of the North American Division, went to the Ephesus Church the very next Sabbath after Mrs. Byard's death, October 16, 1943. He chose as his text 1 Peter 4:12: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as though some strange thing happened unto you." He had hardly sat down after completing his message when James O. Montgomery stepped to the front of the congregation and began to speak.

Montgomery, who was sitting near the front of the church, placed his violin in the seat he occupied near the organ, stepped up front and declared: "Think it not strange? Yes, I think it is very strange that there is an Adventist college nearby to which I cannot send my children. Yes, I think it is strange! A denominational cafeteria [at the Review and Herald] in which I cannot be served, and now this incident. I think it mighty strange." Among other things, he said in his speech: "I am not prepared to hear you say 'servants obey your masters,' meaning the General Conference is our master" (Justiss, 1975, p. 43-44).

Integration Verses Separation with Power

Understandably, righteous indignation was aroused among the Black Adventist

community. However, a question arises regarding the ultimate outcome resulting from

this outrage, namely, "Was it the Black Adventist leaders who requested separate

conferences at this time or did they desire full integration as the preferred alternative?"

Adventist historian George Knight (2001) offers this assessment:

> Because of delays in moving her [Lucy Byard] to Freedman's hospital, she died of
> pneumonia. An incensed Black Adventist community correctly saw Byard's death as
> a martyrdom to the policy of racial exclusion. Her death and the blatant racism
> underpinning it became a stimulus for reform. The ideal reform, of course, would
> have been full racial equality. That was certainly the desire of the majority of Black
> Adventists. But neither White Adventism nor the nation that headquartered the
> denomination was ready for the solution. Racism was still rampant in schools, the
> armed forces, and regrettably, the Adventist Church. In that loaded context more
> Black leaders began to look toward separate conferences as the best solution in what
> appeared to be an impossible situation. (p. 149)

It should be noted that the stated goal of the National Association for the

Advancement of Worldwide Work Among Colored Seventh-day Adventists was the

complete integration of Blacks into the institutions of the Church, and not the formation

of separate Black conferences. This group of prominent Black Adventist lay leaders was

clearly calling for the end of racially discriminatory practices in the Seventh-day

Adventist Church. That this was their initial position is shown by the tone of a short

pamphlet that the chairman of the association, Joseph T. Dobson, published on behalf of

the organization in April, 1944 (cited in Baker, 1996, p. 2/10-2/16). The document—

entitled *Shall the Four Freedoms Function Among Seventh-day Adventists?*—begins by

stating that "the present policy of the White Adventists in responsible positions will not

stand the acid test of the Judgment" (p. 2/10). The grievances cited in the document,

among others, as examples of this unchristian treatment, included that "colored people

are not admitted generally to our institutions as patients, students and nurses…. academies that might accept colored students are not easily accessible …. There is no standard satisfactory creditable academy for our colored youth …. The 'quota' Policy of our institutions of higher learning with its limitations of equal opportunities for our colored youth to obtain a Christian education is indefensible …. There are no negroes so far as we know on staffs of Adventist institutions (p. 2/11). There is a policy of evasion and futile appeasement relative to our work …. Negroes do not have adequate representation on committees at all levels–local, union, and general conferences," (p. 2/12). The policy in the field of employment is unfair, partial and un-Christlike …. The policy in spiritual matters is too one-sided and narrow" (p. 2/13). (For the complete text of this 7-page document, see Appendix D.) The theme throughout the *Four Freedoms* document is a call for full integration. However, even the members of this important group ultimately acquiesced to the creation of separate conferences "as the best solution in what appeared to be an impossible situation" (Knight, 2001, p. 149). Penno (2009) describes the events in the following manner:

> The Byard tragedy compelled Black Adventists, during the Spring Council the following year, to demand full integration of all Adventist institutions. Rather than accede to this demand, the General Conference Committee voted to establish "colored conferences" with Blacks serving as leaders. The organizational segregation thus created was purposely based on ethnic lines, for the Committee action that created the regional conferences used the terms "colored conferences" and "white conferences. (p. 24)

Bull and Lockhart (1989), as outside observers of our Adventist family, offer this insightful explanation of how we arrived at our present situation regarding race:

> There have always been two poles in the history of the Negro in the United States. One is the push for integration and equal rights. The other, the desire for separation and withdrawal from White society. Integration is perhaps the initial goal, but if competition becomes too fierce and the White majority proves too intransigent, Blacks are likely to see separation as the best way forward. Segregation is then seen

as the answer to discrimination. Certainly, in the Adventist case, Blacks proposed regional conferences after they felt integration was an unobtainable goal. (p. 202-203)

Penno (2009) describes how the segregated structure of the Adventist Church in America remained in place, even in the face of general integration in society during the Civil Rights Movement:

> In response to the Civil Rights Movement and several discrimination lawsuits against the church, official actions by the General Conference Committee in 1965 and 1970 belatedly institutionalized the integration that Blacks had sought 30 plus years earlier. But by then the regional conferences were firmly established, and neither Black nor White leaders were disposed to attempt any change concerning the organizational segregation that now existed. Though theoretically a person of any ethnic background could hold any office in any conference, the practical reality was that only Blacks served in regional conferences and predominantly Whites served in the others. (pp. 25-26)

Rock (1984) recasts this question of missiological particularity vs. community identity in terms of "racial freedom vs. institutional loyalty," which he refers to as "the dilemma for Black Adventists." He addresses the issue of race separation through the prism of "self-determinationism," which he describes as possessing the following attributes:

> Self-determinationism builds its own nationhood; retains its own funds; respects its own culture. It rejects the notion that non-Whites are, or can be, a part of America's 'melting pot,' and values the 'salad bowl' motif instead. Self-determinationists accept the testimony of the centuries regarding Black/White relations and waste no time or energy on social projects which attempt to defy the ancient logic that 'birds of a feather flock together.' And yet, self-determinationism is comfortable with cross-cultural fertilization. It eschews all vestiges of racial discrimination and welcomes the stranger within its gates with the title 'brother' . . . Self-determinationism adopts pluralism as its associational model and regards ethnicity as a legitimate form of cultural expression. It recognizes that being outnumbered, it will often be outvoted, but knows that its desire for freedom are better served as an outvoted ethnic entity than as an accommodated, unorganized minority. It pulls parts of Black society into duly represented political units that give accurate expression to their needs. (p. 154-155)

Rock continues this line of reasoning by stating his belief that:

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The history of Black regional conferences demonstrates the primary structural benefits of the principles of self-determination to be the following: 1) it decreases the loss and attrition of highly capable Blacks by encouraging their participation in and for the Black community; 2) it increases the relevancy of planning in and for the Black community by placing community direction in the hands of indigenous leaders; 3) it provides concentrated political power through group governance; 4) it reduces Black frustration by promoting realistic objectives; 5) it provides authentic results in that its efforts are made, as Bonheoffer would say, 'in correspondence with reality'—and not abstraction. (p. 155)

Rock states his general belief that, in the establishment of regional conferences, Black Adventist leaders at the time chose "separation with power" over "segregation without power." In other words, Black Adventist leaders—seeing that the racism prevalent in the Church at the time would not allow for full integration—accepted the formation of regional conferences which allowed for Black leaders to exercise power in overseeing the work among Black Adventists, rather than settling for the status quo of being a minority within a unified organizational structure that did not allow for their full participation. Regarding the issue of separation, Rock makes, "a final observation regarding the primary characteristics of Black Seventh-day Adventist leadership is that all wish to be understood as pursuing freedom while maintaining absolute loyalty to the church" (p. 155). This loyalty of Black Adventists to the Church, in spite of the vile treatment inflicted upon them, is remarkable, and perhaps a testament to the truth, power, and force of attraction found in the Adventist message.

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The Homogeneous Unit Principle and
Regional Conferences

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Rock's statement that, "Self-determinationists accept the testimony of the centuries regarding Black/White relations and waste no time or energy on social projects which attempt to defy the ancient logic that birds of a feather flock together," (Rock, 1984, p. 154) is very telling of his views on integration and church growth, and shows

him to be in harmony with the church growth principles of Donald McGavran and C.

Peter Wagner. McGavran (1990) introduces his Homogeneous Unit Principle (HUP) in

the following manner:

> People like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers. This principle states an undeniable fact. Human beings do build barriers around their societies. More exactly we may say that the ways in which each society lives and speaks, dresses, and works, of necessity set it off from other societies. The world's population is a mosaic, and each piece has a separate life of its own that seems strange and often unlovely to men and women of other pieces. (p. 163)

McGavran supports his theory with sociological data which indicates that people

naturally congregate with those whom they see as similar to themselves. Based on these

theories of association, McGavran concludes that:

> Human beings are born into thousands of very different societies, separated from each other by many barriers . . . For the sake of convenience; we talk about these as homogeneous units. Some are linguistically, some ethnically, some economically, and some educationally different from the others. The term homogeneous unit is very elastic. (pp. 164-165)

The homogeneous unit principle (HUP) carries within it the idea that, for the sake

of evangelism, churches should be composed of a single sociologically similar group. As

McGavran argues, "Church planters who enable unbelievers to become Christians

without crossing such barriers are much more effective than those who place them in

their way" (p. 168). McGavran asks—and answers—the following rhetorical questions:

> Must we conclude that multiplying congregations largely of one kind of people is a step backwards? Must we resist it and declare that we want real Christians, who feel brotherly to all peoples, and who in their congregational structure and worship demonstrate that the two peoples concerned have actually become one in Christ? The answer to these questions must be a firm, though qualified, No. Multiplying churches largely of one kind of people is not a step backwards. It is an essential step forward. There is no other way in which the multitudinous pieces of the human mosaic can become Christian. (p. 261)

Based on his rationale for the HUP, we might reasonably expect that McGavran,

and/or his associate C. Peter Wagner, would recommend that denominational

organizational structure likewise be designed in such a way that it does not force

individuals to cross any of these sociological barriers. It also seems to follow logically,

that McGavran and Wagner—given their view that, "the world's population is a mosaic,

and each piece has a separate life of its own that seems strange and often unlovely to men

and women of other pieces" (McGavran, p. 163)—would seem to consider it perfectly

acceptable and normal that people sharing a common set of religious belief and

embracing the same denominational affiliation would, nonetheless, worship in racially

separated churches.

Therefore, it also seems reasonable to believe that they would likewise be

supportive of the racial separation inherent in the current regional conference system in

the NAD. It does not seem a great stretch of their theoretical framework to conclude that

they would view the homogeneous congregations operating in racially separated

conferences within the NAD as simply being an expression of the "mosaic" of the

Adventist faith in North America. This view is not unlike the recent move in the

American mindset away from the idea of the American melting pot (where all immigrant

cultures adapted and were merged into a single unified American culture) toward the

concept of an American mosaic (where each immigrant community maintains its own

unique individuality and yet somehow, together, these multitudinous cultures collectively

form a common culture of the United States).

Penno (2009) indeed postulates that one's position regarding the need for

regional conferences is a function of one's view of the Homogeneous Unit Principle:

> Theologians who espouse the HUP [homogeneous unit principle] would condone and
> encourage the regional conference system as the best way to reach African-
> Americans. Opponents would oppose it as a vestige of racism and as a denial of the

unifying power of the gospel and an affront to Jesus Christ who prayed for unity in his church. (p. 48)

However, Wagner (1978) seems to make a distinction between the congregational level and the inter-congregational level:

Within the framework of these two spheres of integration, the tensions between the biblical principles of unity and diversity can be resolved. We are all one in Christ—yes in the inter-congregational sphere. And tangible expressions of brotherhood and interdependence among Christians in this sphere need to be multiplied in our complex societies. If they were, they would become strong forces for healing many social illnesses . . . People-hood, cultural integrity, and the church as a "place to feel at home" can be maintained—yes in the intra-congregational sphere. Such a model preserves the ties that constitute "my people" while breaking down the unbiblical barriers between "us" and "them." (p. 18)

It appears Wagner might be more in harmony with our proposed model for inter-congregational cooperation than would be expected. In reality, there is nothing in the proposed reorganizational plan that would force local homogeneous congregations to integrate. The intention of the reorganization is not necessarily for all congregations to be multicultural, but rather to have all congregations (regardless of the racial makeup) within a ministry area collaborate in the work of proclaiming the Adventist message and collectively ministering to the people in their shared community. It is crucial to recognize that there is a basic truth in what the HUP advocates—people are in fact naturally more comfortable around people who are most like them. But does this reality—our natural inclination for "birds of a feather to flock together"—justify the codification of racial separation as the norm within our denominational organizational structure at any level? Or is it, perhaps, as Wheatley (2005) says,

We are using the instinct of community to separate and protect us from one another, rather than creating a global culture of diverse yet interwoven communities. We search for those most like us in order to protect ourselves from the rest of society (p. 45).

Present Attitudes Towards Separate Conferences

The centerpiece of Penno's study was a survey of all clergy in the South Atlantic

Conference (a regional "Black" conference), and the Georgia-Cumberland Conference (a

"White" or "state" conference), along with 500 non-clergy members (250 from each

conference). Penno states that:

> The purpose of this study is to describe the perceptions of Seventh-day Adventist
> clergy and members in the two conferences in the Southern Union concerning race-
> based organizational segregation in the church. The goal was to describe their
> responses and to compare and contrast the responses by ethnic background, age
> categories, and roles in the church (clergy and non-clergy). Is there a common view
> on the existing racial segregation, or do the members vary in their views on this
> matter? (Penno, 2009, p. 8)

Penno summarized the findings of his study in the following manner:

> The findings of this study indicate that the respondents are generally uncomfortable
> with the current conference system. This trend may reveal an ambivalence toward the
> homogeneous unit principle espoused by McGavran (1990), Wagner (1979), and
> others, and may call for a reevaluation of that principle. The respondents saw the
> Bible and Ellen White as directing the church toward integration. They also were
> open to diversity of worship styles within the church. Furthermore, the respondents
> indicated that they believe that the current system hinders the church's mission and its
> witness of the church to the surrounding culture. Respondents also indicated that
> merging conferences would save money. Thus, there seems to be at least a
> willingness to discuss the elimination of ethnic-based conferences (Black and White)
> and the formation of multicultural conferences. This study did not discover any strong
> opposition to the investigation of the idea of merging state and regional conferences.
> (Penno, 2009, pp. 179-180)

He draws the following conclusions from the data presented in the study:

> The members of various ethnic backgrounds and ages are open to the idea of
> changing the race-based organizational structure in the Adventist Church. No matter
> what their role and position in the church, they are not comfortable with the current
> system. They strongly see God calling the church to integration, and they believe that
> the success of the church's outreach to its surrounding culture demands change. There
> are concerns about how the leadership positions would be equitably distributed in an
> integrated church, but those surveyed see the benefits outweighing these concerns.
> (Penno, 2009, p. 175)

It appears from Penno's research that present attitudes on both sides of the racial divide are much more open to a move towards full integration than was generally thought to exist previously.

The Methodist Experience in
Matters of Race

The history and organizational structure of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is quite similar to that of the Methodist Church in numerous ways, one being how the two churches attempted to resolve issues of race in America. There is, however, one very important circumstantial difference that led to a significant difference in outcome. Unlike the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which was incorporated in 1863, the roots of the Methodist Church in America were planted well over a century before the Civil War. Thus, the Methodists had to confront the issue of slavery leading up to the war, while Adventists only had to deal with the issue of race in the aftermath of the Civil War. Greene (2009) shows the significance of this fact in relation to development of the Methodism among African-Americans:

> The First Great Awakening in the 1740's and the resistance of Methodists to slavery was conveyed formally in the initial General Rules written by Wesley in 1743 and in the rules voted at the 1784 Christmas Conference. The anti-slavery position by Methodists lured Blacks, whether slaves or free, into the ranks of the church. Methodism called Blacks to encounter the Second Great Awakening and to actively oppose the slavery system. (p. 6)

Ferguson (1983, p. 204) points out that, "the Christmas Conference declared that every member must free his slaves within twelve months. There was no equivocation and there was to be Methodist thoroughness in carrying out the order." However, the local Methodist preacher and the layman in the South did not accept these rules against

slavery, and "Six months after the rules were made they were suspended—in spite of Bishop Coke's insistence that they remain in force."

In the 1800s, prior to the Civil War, the Methodist Church continually struggled to find consistency regarding its position on slavery and, by extension, the nature of the relationship between Methodists, North and South. The political, social, and ethical questions regarding slavery produced such intense internal conflict within the Methodist Church that it led to the majority of African-American Methodists leaving the Methodist Church, the resulting establishment of three Black Methodist denominations, and the splitting of the White Methodist Church into North and South. In contrast, the Adventist Church, being officially organized in 1863, thus avoided the complete separation of Black Adventists from the Church and/or the split of Whites in the North and South over the issue of slavery, which was quite a different experience from the Methodists, to say the least.

Of the three major Black Methodist denominations established during this time, the African Methodist Episcopal Church (established in 1816) remains the largest of all African-American Methodist denominations, with a current membership in the United States of 2.51 million. The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (established in 1821) is the second largest of the Black Methodist denominations, with a membership of 1,432,795 million in America. The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (originally the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, which was established by mutual agreement of White and Black members of Methodist Episcopal Church, South—itself a separate denomination that was established in 1844 when Southerners split from the Methodists in the North over the issue of slavery)—was the smallest of the three Black Methodist

denominations, with a current membership of 858,670 in the United States (World

Council of Churches, 2013). For the sake of comparison, of the recorded 7,774,420

members of the United Methodist Church in the United States in 2008, only 5.8 percent,

or 450,916, were identified as African-American (Hahn, 2010). Clearly, as a legacy of the

Methodist Church's policy actions (or inactions) regarding slavery—along with its post-

Civil War treatment of African-American Methodists—the majority of Blacks who call

themselves Methodists are members of denominations that are not connected with the

successor to the original Methodist Church (i.e., not part of the United Methodist

Church).

There was generally an uneasy acquiescence to the continuation of slavery on the

part of the Methodist Church prior to the Civil War. However, when, in 1844, the

General Conference stood firm and required then GC President, Bishop J. O. Andrew, a

Georgian who owned slaves, to "desist from the exercise of his office" until he freed his

slaves—which was an illegal act under laws of Georgia at the time—Southern Methodists

were infuriated and left to form their own denomination (Mead & Hill, 2001, p. 227). The

Methodists' handling of the slavery issue resulted in the worst of possible outcome—the

majority of Black Methodists left to create their own associations, and White Southerners

left as well. Even after the Civil War, there was little hope of reconciliation between the

Black and White Methodists. As Hudson and Corrigan (1992) describe it:

> It is scarcely surprising that the defeat of the South should have been accompanied by
> the withdrawal of most Blacks from White-controlled churches. For one thing, the
> mere act of leaving was a symbolic expression of their new freedom. Furthermore,
> few congregations were prepared to give Blacks any different status than they had as
> slaves. They were still expected to sit in the back seats or the gallery and were given
> no voice in church affairs. Even had the churches pressed for some tangible
> integration, it is unlikely that the mass of Blacks would have gone along. (p. 220)

Meanwhile, beginning soon after the Civil War and continuing well into the first

half of the 20th century, a persistent desire among White Methodists to effect the

reunification of the two halves (North and South) of the former Methodist Episcopal

Church led to a series of compromises that can only be described as essentially racist in

nature. Greene (2009) points this out when he highlights an important distinction between

how and why the Adventists and Methodists established racially separate conferences:

> Predominately Black [Adventist] Regional Conferences voted into existence in 1944
> were instituted differently from the way the Central Jurisdiction was established in
> the Methodist Church in 1939. The first difference was that predominately Black
> Regional Conferences bore the same relationship to the organization's structure as
> predominately White SDA Conferences. Predominately Black Regional Conferences
> were a part of the same Seventh-day Adventist Union Conferences (union refers to a
> united body of conferences within a larger geographical territory; example, Illinois,
> Indiana, Michigan, local and Wisconsin local comprise the Lake Union Conference)
> within the same geographical area. The Black Central Jurisdiction, however, was
> composed of nineteen Black Annual Conferences spread out across the United States
> in various geographical locations. (p. 234)

Greene goes on to further explain the significance of the establishment of the Central

Jurisdiction in the Methodist Church in 1939:

> Prior to the changes that occurred from the Plan of Union uniting the Methodist
> Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the Methodist
> Protestant church, Black Annual Conferences and White Annual Conferences had the
> same relationship to the governing body. The Central Jurisdiction was based solely on
> racial exclusiveness and racial segregation. Five of the Methodist Jurisdictions, the
> Northeastern, Southeastern, North Central, South Central, and Western were
> instituted geographically, not racially. The racially segregated policy of the Central
> Jurisdiction was adopted into the constitution of the Methodist Church. For the first
> time in Methodist Church history there was an authorized policy of racial segregation
> in large measure based on the 1896 Plessey v Ferguson decision of "separate but
> equal." The [Seventh-day Adventist] proposal which came from the General
> Conference President Elder J. L. McElhaney at a special pre-spring Council meeting
> was that the Black Regional Conferences would have the same status and relationship
> as White Conferences in their various unions. (p. 234-235)

Greene gives a good overview of the Methodist experience in the 20th century regarding

matters of race:

The consequence of the church reunification of 1939 was the establishment of the Central Jurisdiction (a racially separate Black entity which was formed for all Black annual conferences and missions in the United States in 1939). In 1968, the Central Jurisdiction/Black Annual Conferences were [officially] eliminated in the newly created United Methodist Church as a result of the union of the Evangelical United Brethren Church and The Methodist Church.

Smith (2012), in a brief article, describes the first step in the elimination of the Central Jurisdiction as follows:

On Saturday, August 19, 1967, the all-Black, segregated Central Jurisdiction of the Methodist Episcopal Church elected its 14th and final Episcopal leader, Bishop L. Scott Allen. This election and the ensuing service of consecration were the final acts to be performed by the jurisdiction. At midnight, that Saturday night, the Central Jurisdiction ceased to be, ending the period of open segregation of the races in the Methodist Episcopal Church. A sad chapter in Methodist history was now closed.

Thus, the racial history of the Methodist Church is significantly different from the experience of the Adventist Church, resulting in the situation where the majority of Black Methodists split from the Church to form African-American Methodist denominations; whereas virtually all of the African-American Seventh-day Adventists remain solidly part of the wider SDA Church.

Even in the face of the systematic racism within the Adventist Church organization during most of the 20th century, the vast majority of Black Adventists did not seriously consider separating from the Church with which they had a strong personal identification. Separate conferences yes, but not a separate denomination, was the noble stance of those who were being oppressed, and one for which we can all praise God.

It is ironic that the Methodist Church, which, in its heart of hearts, opposed slavery, ended up with the majority of Black Methodists leaving the denomination and with racist policies set in place that marginalized those Blacks who remained in the denomination. However, another distinction between the Methodists and the Adventists is the fact that, with the formation of the United Methodist Church in 1968, the concept of

separate but equal conferences was discarded by Methodists as a vestige of a racist past. The Adventist Church, on the other hand, has not yet come to this conclusion regarding racially separate conferences.

**Separate Conferences and Public
Perception of the Seventh-day Adventist
Church**

We may look to the Homogeneous Unit Principle of McGavran and Wagner as being an effective model for church growth that is based on sound sociological data. Yet, we also need to realize that times change and people's feelings towards associations in general and racial integration in particular, also change. Furthermore, if effectiveness of a principle were *the* deciding factor, there are a lot of methods and models that the Adventist Church could employ that would likely prove to be more effective, but, perhaps, not pass the test of being biblical, moral, and/or ethical. We, as Seventh-day Adventists, would be wise to accept that some methods that promise to be very effective in winning individuals to the church, and that are indeed used "effectively" by others, are not open to us because they are not in harmony with our values and beliefs.

An additional consideration is what organizational structure says to others. Is the current structure of racially separate conferences a good witness? Parker (2004), who studied the Adventist Church's movement toward heterogeneous congregations in South Africa, points to the ironic reality that it was the American-born leaders of the GC who condemned South African apartheid, and racial separation in the South African Adventist Church, while at the same time maintaining racial separation in the North American Adventist Church:

> In the mid-eighties, in response to a swelling cry to deal with the apartheid situation in South Africa, the Seventh-day Adventist Church president finally sent out a

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statement condemning apartheid and racism. However, it was not until 1999 that a race relations summit was held at which the North-American Division made a concerted attempt through plenary sessions and working groups to come up with identifiable ways to combat racism. However, in spite of these "bold initiatives" as they are called, the church in America still remains divided into two major camps, one "White" and the other "Black." Regional (Black) conferences still exist and seem destined to continue for some time. (p. 66)

Parker implies that the GC leaders were being somewhat hypocritical in insisting on desegregation of the South African Adventist Church, when they have yet to take any real step to end the practice in America. It is hard to argue with his reasoning, and the doubt that our present structure casts on our sincerity and integrity should be a serious consideration as we look to the organizational future of the NAD.

Norman (2003) shares his perception of the current generation's views related to race and multiculturalism and discusses the expectations a typical postmodern, attending an Adventist church, is likely to have regarding the way we do church organization:

[The postmodern] believes that people should be accepted for who they are. She requires no less from her church than she does from her society. She comes to church expecting the gospel of love to be exhibited across generational, racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and gender lines . . . Hence, if church is to draw [her] and her friends, it must reflect an inclusive diversity, allowing all to work, play, and worship together. Thus, worship and church is not Afro-American, Hispanic, Caucasian, or feminist. Rather, it is diverse groups brought together by God under the Holy Spirit to reach out and include every person, regardless of their ethnicity, race, or gender. This blended diversity in the local congregation is essential if the church hopes to attract [the postmodern] generation in significant numbers. (pp. 130-131)

Could it be that societal changes have rendered McGavran's Homogeneous Unit Principle null and void—that it is no longer applicable and that homogeneity itself, with its accompanying lack of integration, is now the true barrier to people coming to Christ? If so, then the paradox is that, if we are to reach the modern mind, then we need to live up to our high calling of unity in diversity and we need to start "practicing what we preach," particularly in matters of race. The postmodern will simply not accept as truth that we are

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one in Christ, when on Sabbath morning we worship Him in congregations that are distinctly separated along racial lines.

Biblical Counsel Regarding Ethnic
Separation

A few biblical passages would seem to inform our current situation. Many individuals who advocate for separation point to the experience of Abraham and Lot. When Abraham's servants and Lot's servants began to quarrel over the scarce water and feed for their livestock, Abraham suggested that he and Lot should separate for the sake of their continued relationship and in the interest of maintaining peace between their two groups (Gen 13:6-11). That this choice effectively ended the conflict between Abraham and Lot and prevented its escalation cannot be seriously questioned. However, the mere effectiveness of the solution alone is not necessarily proof of its being the preferred option.

Other biblical passages might help to better inform our understanding regarding racial separation. First, in Acts 2, the very beginning of the church, we see new believers—Jewish converts from "every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5)—were "added to the church" (Acts 2:41, 47). The thousands who repented and were baptized on that day of Pentecost were from various regions of the Roman Empire, spoke different languages, had different cultural customs and mores, yet God, in a very dramatic expression of His desire for unity; saw fit to orchestrate the blending of all these diverse individuals into the one church fold.

As the 6th chapter of the book of Acts reveals, the oneness of this mixed multitude was not without issues that challenged the unity in diversity that God had ordained and established for the Church. The "Hellenist" believers, that is, the Greek-speaking Jews

who were not from Judea, felt that there was unfairness in the distribution of support for

their widows in relation to those of "Hebrew" descent. How did the church respond? Did

the Hellenists separate from the Hebrews and form their own church? Did the Hebrew

leaders of the church encourage them to separate from them to form their own Hellenist

work? No, the Church worked it out *together*—the grievances of the Hellenist were

taken seriously, and seriously addressed. The solution was what one might call the first

example of affirmative action in the history of the Church. Leaders from among the

Greek believers were *intentionally* chosen to serve. The experience of Stephen

subsequent to his selection as one of these first seven deacons (i.e., servants) shows that

these officers were not merely consigned by the Apostles to the task of collecting the

offerings and passing out bread. They are best seen as genuine spiritual leaders on a par

with the Apostles. The inference we could draw from the problem presented in Acts 6,

and the solution chosen by the Church, is that God is calling us to full integration rather

than separate but equal.

We seem called to choose full integration in spite of any of the problems that

likely will arise within the church from such an approach or, for that matter, any potential

for decreased evangelistic effectiveness that is prophesied by those who want to maintain

the *status quo*. As the Apostle Paul informs us, "You are all sons of God through faith in

Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is

neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for

you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and

heirs according to the promise" (Gal 3:26- 29). McGavran (1990) interprets Galatians

3:28, in the following manner:

The Scriptures affirm that in Christ there is "neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female" (Gal. 3:28); but this is true only for those who, being baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. It is the fruit of the Spirit, not a prerequisite for salvation . . . Furthermore the last phrase in the text (that in Christ "there is neither male nor female") must be taken into account. It certainly does not mean that in order to become a Christian one must adopt a manner of life as if sex differences did not exist, or that churches that deny ordination to women are not part of the true church. Nor must the first phrase be made to mean that, to become a Christian, one must act as if class and race differences do not exist. (p. 169)

Elsewhere, McGavran, commenting on Ephesians 2:14-15, makes the point that "It must be noted that Jesus creates one new man in place of the two 'in Himself.' Jews and Gentiles—or other classes and races who scorn and hate each one another—must be brought to Christ before they can be made really one" (McGavran, 1990, p. 175). Does one cease to be a Jew or Greek, or can you? Does one cease to be male or female? Obviously, the answer is no, praise be to God. Does one cease to be slave or free? In other words, does our new life in Christ tangibly change our economic conditions or social status? No and Yes. In the larger world of society, we are still the same and, yet, in the eyes of God—and hopefully in the eyes of our fellow believers—the particulars of our race, gender, ethnicity, age, or economic/social standing cease to be the defining factors as the measure of our worth. Do we need to renounce all that we are? No, but the Apostle's point is that we must allow our oneness in Christ to overrule all the other factors by which we may choose to identify ourselves or others.

McGavran argues that to expect the unbeliever to join in worship or ministry with someone of different race is too much to ask. For him, oneness on such a level demands spiritual maturity and therefore is something we only experience "in Christ"—and therefore not to be placed as a "burden" upon, or erected as "barrier" in the way of those coming to Christ. The unanswered question contained within this argument is, "When and how does a church grow up to the point where we are capable of full integration?"

Also, if McGavran is correct and the individual believer must grow to the point of getting beyond the natural tendencies to desire the company of only those most like him/her, then it would seem a real impossibility for this growth to occur in a situation where the congregation is purposefully kept in a perpetual state of homogeneity. In other words, if we do not uphold the standard and high calling of oneness, unity, and full integration from the beginning, then when do we introduce it?

Perhaps McGavran never really expects God's people to overcome this natural tendency to want to be with those that are most like us. However, the truth seems to be that seeking to fulfill God's ideal for unity in diversity, particularly at the level of the local church and the wider ministry area, is the high calling that the Bible is advocating. Furthermore, we would be wise to understand that such a *choice* (and it is indeed a choice) produces the richest of blessings in us as we live in relationship to one another— as we learn from those who have a different perspective and experience from ours . It seems, in light of such a biblical imperative, that full integration should be something that we wholeheartedly embrace and that we teach to and model before those who are newly coming to Christ. Furthermore, can one really argue that such an example of unity is not something that those of us who have been in the church for years should be modeling before the new believer and the world? After all as Jesus said:

> For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others?* Do not even the tax collectors do so? (Matt 5:46-47)

Wheatley (2005) describes the healing power for the Church to be found in fully coming together and breaking free from our limited circle of "us" to embrace and join in fellowship with "them" as well:

There is a powerful paradox here. If we are willing to listen for diverse interpretations, we discover that our differing perceptions most often share a unifying center. As we become aware of this unity in diversity, it changes our relationships for the better. We recognize that through our diversity, we share a dream, or we share a sense of injustice. Then magical things happen to our relationships. We open to each other as colleagues. Past hurts and negative histories get left behind. People step forward to work together . . . As we discover something whose importance we share, we want to work together. (pp. 80-81)

If we chose to separate on the level of real ministry to our shared community (i.e., on the local church and conference level) and settle for just maintaining unity on the higher administrative levels (i.e., the union and GC), then we will be foregoing the full blessings of God's plan for unity in diversity.

Johnson (2007) powerfully describes the situation in the NAD regarding race relations and the continuation of regional conferences:

Sadly, because we have never worked through and resolved many of the underlying issues that gave birth to regional conferences, prejudice, tension, and mistrust remain a serious problem. During my thirty years as an Adventist, I have seen little coordination between churches in the state conferences and regional conferences, even when they are located in the same area. I have witnessed only a few situations in which leaders from the different conferences chose to collaborate or strategize together. I am not aware of many initiatives currently being undertaken to build bridges between the two. This reality should concern *all* church members and leaders at *all* levels. (p. 131-132)

If we are ever to become one, as the Lord desires, we must find a way across the racial divide and begin to work together on the local level to fulfill our common mission. Separate conferences, while effective in the past, now function as barriers to inter-congregational cooperation.

Summary

Change is a process that holds out the promise of renewed passion and improved performance, but it is also a process fraught with perils. Factors that are likely to present a challenge to efforts to increase inter-congregational cooperation, and/or the

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implementation of a model of conference realignment designed to foster inter-congregational cooperation were identified and explored.

The first of these challenges presented is simply the natural resistance to change of any kind, particularly change of a more fundamental nature. In the context of change to Adventist organizational structure, there is the additional resistance generated by the fact that Ellen White personally approved of the current structure when it was implemented in 1901-1903.

A second challenge inherent in the proposed reorganization is a logistical one—related to the fact is that the majority of the property the Church holds, including all of the schools within each conference and all of the local church buildings throughout the NAD, are "owned" by the various local conference associations. While sorting out this issue in the implementation of conference reorganization would likely be complicated and time consuming, it would seem not to be so insurmountable as to prevent conference reorganization.

A third challenge is found in the fact that leaders of the various organizational levels of the Church, in the final analysis, will ultimately be the ones who have to call for any vote for conference reorganization to happen. Such a change in organizational structure likely would mean personal change for those who currently hold the positions that would be affected by the change. While within the SDA system, authority ultimately resides in the members—and through the delegate process decision-making authority resides in the representative bodies elected by the members, whether constituency or executive committee—the practical political reality is that those individuals invested with administrative authority are able to exert significant influence on the process. This

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political reality seems likely to pose a challenge for implementation of any lasting change

to NAD organizational structure. The problem with this is that leaders, in the absence of a

strong grassroots reform movement, will likely never call a constituency meeting or

executive committee to make such a decision. As Wheatley (2005) comments,

> Old ways die hard. Amid all the evidence that our world is radically changing we
> retreat to what has worked in the past. These days, leaders respond to increasing
> uncertainty by defaulting to command and control. Power has been taken back to the
> top of most major corporations, governments, and organizations, and workers have
> been consigned to routine, exhausting work. (p. 64)

The proposed reorganization would entail greater decision-making authority being given

to leaders on the local level, and it remains to be seen whether or not the current leaders

would embrace such a change in numbers sufficient to approve the implementation of the

reform.

Last, but certainly not least, the primary challenge to the proposed

reorganization—a challenge discussed at length in this chapter—involves the interplay of

missiological particularity and community identity in the context of the proposed

reorganization. This question of missiological particularity vs. community identity, to a

large extent, lies at the heart of any move towards greater inter-congregational

cooperation within the NAD organizational structure and, ultimately, centers on the issue

of whether or not to continue the current system of parallel race-based conferences. We

have seen that the advent of regional conferences has been beneficial to the growth of the

Adventist Church among African-Americans, and a blessing to the Church as a whole. It

also seems clear that the Homogeneous Unit Principle advocated by McGavran and

Wagner appears to support the continuation of racial separation in local congregations,

but it remains unclear whether or not the HUP can be used as a rationale for the

continuation of the conference level segregation inherent in the present NAD structure.

However, it is unclear whether this principle is still applicable in the postmodern world we find ourselves facing in the present age. Furthermore, there is the question of the nature of the witness we present to the world in maintaining a racially segregated, separate but equal, dual conference structure.

Finally, we examined the experience of the Methodist Church in America and their attempts to deal with the same issues. The pre-Civil War years found the Methodists struggling to come to grips with the evils of slavery, which resulted in the majority of Black Methodists leaving the church and forming Black Methodist denominations. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, not being officially organized until 1863, did not have a corresponding experience and, therefore, the vast majority of African-American Adventists remain solidly part of the wider Seventh-day Adventist Church. One final note, a cursory exploration of select biblical passages seems to support the idea that full integration and unity in diversity, and not racial separation, is the state of affairs favored by God for His Church.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the study, which includes: a statement of the

problem, an outline of the purpose of the study, an overview of the literature reviewed,

and a review of the methodology used. It includes conclusions drawn from textual

research, along with those drawn from analysis and interpretation of financial data and

membership growth statistics concerning the Southern Union, Southeastern Conference,

and the Florida Conference—as well as reflection pertaining to those conclusions. This

chapter finishes with practical recommendations, along with recommendations for future

research related to organizational structure and inter-congregational cooperation.

The Problem in Context

The two major issues addressed in this study are: the correlation of local SDA

church effectiveness to the level of cooperation/collaborative activity among neighboring

SDA churches, and the type of NAD organizational structure that would serve to

maximize such cooperative activity.   Throughout the NAD, evidence of genuine,

effective, and/or practical cooperation between neighboring Seventh-day Adventist

(SDA) churches is scarce—even within local conferences there does not seem to be a

great deal of effort given to fostering inter-congregational cooperation. Neighboring

Adventist churches give the impression that they view themselves more as being in

competition with each other than they see themselves called to mutual cooperation.

Furthermore, it appears that the organizational structure and policies of the NAD and Southern Union—as well as those of the Florida Conference and Southeastern Conference—provide little incentive or opportunity for cooperation between neighboring SDA churches, and in some cases, may actually unintentionally hinder such collaboration.

The impediments to collaboration, perceived to be inherent in the current organizational system, is exemplified by the case of neighboring SDA churches in Florida that are part of different local conferences that operate in that same local geographical area—i.e., one is a Florida Conference church, and the other is part of the Southeastern Conference. In actuality, they have little or no connection with each other on a practical organizational level. The result is that neighboring Seventh-day Adventist churches in any given ministry area—churches that share the same mission territory and in fact may literally be a few city blocks apart—often find that the existence of concurrent conference organizational structures effectively inhibit coordinated strategic planning, collaborative area-wide ministry, or joint outreach efforts between their churches within their shared mission territory. Current organizational structure within the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (NAD), consisting, as it were, of state-wide local conferences and overlapping regional conferences may actually hinder, rather than facilitate, collaboration within a given ministry area when such collaboration would need to occur across conference jurisdictional demarcations.

If conference-level organization does not have the goal of maximizing collaborative activity between neighboring SDA congregations as a priority, then it is likely that little or no collaborative activity will take place—thus limiting the church's

ability to capitalize on, or benefit from, the results of inter-congregational cooperation,. If NAD/local conference organizational structure does not place emphasis on inter-congregational cooperation, it is anticipated that the resulting situation within the NAD will be one of a less than optimal level of ministry effectiveness and/or community impact at the local church level. Furthermore, the prospect that certain characteristics of current NAD organizational structure—specifically, those that reinforce racial or cultural separation—may demonstrate a lack of unity that in actuality may be a contributing factor to a condition of limited and/or negative general public awareness of the Adventist Church.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate a possible correlation between cooperation levels among neighboring SDA churches and the level of both local church effectiveness and positive public awareness of the Adventist Church. The goal was to explore the potentialities to be found in making changes in church organizational structure for the purpose of increasing cooperation among all Adventist churches within any given ministry area located within the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. In the process, the feasibility of effecting such changes was explored.

Methodology

The primary method of inquiry employed in this study was textual theoretical academic research. Additionally, data related to social demographics, growth history, and the financial situation of the NAD was collected from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists— along with data for the Southern Union, the Florida Conference, and the Southeastern Conference, in the interest of determining the

feasibility of any proposed reorganization plan for the NAD. Similar data about the Methodist Church was also obtained and analyzed for purposes of comparison. The nature and level of current collaborative effort among neighboring Seventh-day Adventist churches was also investigated.

Therefore, this study consisted of textual theoretical research of primary and secondary sources, and/or analysis and interpretation of the collected statistical data, in the following areas:

1. Theological reflection centered on the concept of cooperation, developed through the exposition of three general biblical themes. First, biblical teachings related to the nature, scope and purpose of church organizational structure was studied. Second, the concept of cooperation and unity within diversity in the church setting as a biblical principle was examined. Third, the biblical emphasis on the local church as the center of ministry and missionary outreach activity was explored.

2. Current literature was reviewed, including books and articles on leadership and organizational theory, systems theory, Adventist organizational history, especially related to African-American Adventists, as well as the experience of the United Methodist Church in developing cooperative structures in their context.

3. Data related to social demographics, growth history, and the financial situation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America was collected from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, along with data from the Florida Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and the Southeastern Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, for the purpose of determining the feasibility of any proposed reorganization plan for the

NAD. Similar data about the Methodist Church was also obtained and interpreted for purposes of comparison.

4. The nature and level of current collaborative effort among neighboring Seventh-day Adventist churches was discussed.

5. The Methodist Church in North America was studied for the purpose of identifying organizational principles and structures that are employed by the Methodists to further regional, inter-congregational collaboration. This particular line of inquiry was undertaken in an effort to inform the Adventist context.

6. Strategies for fostering and encouraging effective regional collaborative efforts among Seventh-day Adventist churches in North America were explored. Factors that are both helping and hindering in this process were identified, analyzed, and discussed. Possible alternatives were presented.

Ultimately, the study employed a systems theory approach in an attempt to discover what, if any, changes in church organizational structure within the NAD, particularly on the local conference level, would contribute to an increased level of cooperation among the several churches, with the expectation that such an increase in collaboration would result in greater efficiency and effectiveness.

Discussion in the Context of Literature Reviewed

The overall focus of this study was cooperation, particularly the potential benefits of cooperation as an organizing principle for the structure of the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (NAD). Like Hansen, (2009, p. 49), who observed the rarity of collaboration naturally occurring in organizations as well as the tendency for the erection of barriers blocking people from collaborating, this study

highlights the need for intentionality within the organizational structure of the NAD to foster cooperation.

The apparent loss of control and the greater inefficiencies inherent in more cooperative organizational models are often held up as reasons for rejecting greater collaboration in the workplace, but Sawyer (2007, p. 7) makes a compelling case for the power of collaboration. Tapscott and Williams (2006) observed that, throughout history, corporations have organized themselves according to strict hierarchical lines of authority, which they describe in the following manner: "Everyone was a subordinate to someone else – employees versus managers, marketers versus customers, producers versus supply chain subcontractors, companies versus the community. There was always someone or some company in charge, controlling things, at the 'top' of the food chain" (p. 1).

It would seem that Tapscott and Williams see subordination rather than cooperation as the norm in traditional corporate organizational structure. They freely acknowledge that the idea of organizations based on principles of cooperation and collaboration challenging the traditional corporation as the primary engine of production sounds like a fantasy. "So deeply embedded in the fabric of society have these lumbering industrial-age creatures become that we would scarcely recognize a world without their monopoly over production" (p. 55.) But this is exactly what they propose. Their supposition that a move toward cooperation is a real break with the near universal historical norm of employing coercive command and control approaches as the basis for organizational relationships is quite telling. That little emphasis was placed on cooperation throughout the corporate history of America seems to be confirmed by O'Brien's (cited in Senge, 1990, p. 181) explanation that traditional organizations are

organized around principles of managing, organizing, and controlling. Sadly, this approach appears to also find a parallel in the Adventist Church context.

Blanchard, Carlos, and Randolph's (1999, p. 3) argument that empowerment is crucial for the long-term success of any organization, coupled with Lencioni's (2006, p.viii) belief that overcoming the structural challenge of departmentalism and other barriers to cooperation within an organization is vital to long-term success, offers encouragement for the Adventist Church to seek structures that foster cooperation at all levels. Senge's (1990, p. 287-288) clear understanding that collaborative organizations, supporting cooperation and interdependence will, increasingly, be 'localized' organizations—extending the maximum degree of authority and power as far from the 'top' or corporate center as possible—is perhaps the greatest lesson needing to be learned by Adventist Church leaders. Localness means moving decisions down the organizational hierarchy, and means unleashing people's commitment by giving them the freedom to act, to try out their own ideas and be responsible for producing results. The structure, policies, and practices of the NAD need to be in harmony with the objective of unleashing the creative power of cooperation.

The understanding is that churches are the most complicated of human organizations, best viewed as living systems, calls for a nuanced understanding centered in a system analysis approach (Herrington, Bonem, & Furr, 2000, p. 145). Such an examination reveals that change in the organizational structure of the SDA Church is inevitable, and that a change urgently needed is a general movement toward collaboration and decentralization. Recognition of the value of cooperation, coupled with a renewed appreciation for the primacy of the local congregation as the center of ministry and

evangelism, is seen as a key element of any changes in the organizational structure of the NAD. All of this starts from the perspective that the application of systems analysis to the organizational structure of the NAD is an effective and valid approach toward a greater understanding and, ultimately, the better fulfillment of the mission to which God has called His church.

Experience of the Methodist Church
in North America

Koehler (1997, p. 24) states that the United Methodist Church, which began as a movement and a loose network of local societies with a shared mission, has grown into one of the most carefully organized and largest denominations in the world. The reality is that the organizational structure of the Methodist Church is very similar to that of the Seventh-day Adventist Church—the parallel four constituent organizational levels and similar nomenclature being just one prime example (*Book of Discipline*, p. 24-34). This comparison could be viewed as somewhat alarming for the future of Adventism, in light of the fact that Langford and Willimon (1995, p. 32) observe that "The United Methodist Church in its present form is one of the most hierarchical, bureaucratic churches in Christendom." They also offer the assessment that a major reason for the Methodist denomination's decline is "an unstated, but nevertheless real, prejudice against the local church" (p. 33). Their appraisal of the situation in the Methodist setting and their proposals for changes, focused on decentralization and a rediscovery of the primacy of the local church and its mission, should serve as a wake-up call for the Adventist Church.

The history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is also quite similar to that of the Methodist Church in numerous ways, one being how the two churches attempted to resolve issues of race in America. There is, however, one very profound circumstantial

difference regarding race that led to a significant difference in outcome for these two churches. Unlike the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which was incorporated in 1863, the roots of the Methodist Church in America were planted well over a century before the Civil War. Thus, the Methodists had to confront the issue of slavery leading up to the war, while Adventists only had to deal with the issue of race in the aftermath of the Civil War. Greene (2009, p. 6) shows that "the anti-slavery position by Methodists lured Blacks, whether slaves or free, into the ranks of the church," which resulted in significant numbers of African-Americans coming to identify themselves with Methodism.

Ferguson (1983, p. 204) points out the difficulty that the Methodist had in enforcing their opposition to slavery prior to the Civil War when he states that, "The Christmas Conference declared that every member must free his slaves within twelve months. There was no equivocation and there was to be Methodist thoroughness in carrying out the order." However, the local Methodist preacher and the layman in the South did not accept these rules against slavery, and "Six months after the rules were made they were suspended—in spite of Bishop Coke's insistence that they remain in force." Throughout the pre-War period, the Methodist Church continually struggled to find consistency regarding its position on slavery and, by extension, the nature of the relationship between Methodists North and South.

The political, social, and ethical questions regarding slavery produced such intense internal conflict within the Methodist Church that it led to the majority of African-American Methodists leaving the Methodist Church, the resulting establishment of three Black Methodist denominations, and the splitting of the White Methodist Church into North and South. Thus, one legacy of the Methodist Church's policy actions (or

inactions) regarding slavery, along with its post-Civil War treatment of African-American Methodists, is that the majority of Black who call themselves Methodists are members of denominations that no longer are part of the successor of the original Methodist Church (i.e., not part of the United Methodist Church). The Methodists' handling of the slavery issue resulted in the worst of possible outcome—the majority of Black Methodists left to create their own associations, and White Southerners left as well.

Meanwhile, soon after the Civil War and well into the first half of the 20th century, determined desire among White Methodists to effect the reunification of the two halves of the former Methodist Episcopal Church—North and South—led to a series of compromises that can only be described as essentially racist in nature. The prime example of racial segregation was establishment of the Central Jurisdiction in the Methodist Church in 1939 to oversee all of the Black annual conferences in America (Greene, 2009, p. 234)

In contrast, the Adventist Church, being officially organized in 1863, avoided the complete separation of Black Adventists from the Church and/or the split of Whites in the North and South over the issue of slavery, which was quite a different experience from the Methodists, to say the least. Thus, the racial history of the Methodist Church is significantly different from the experience of the Adventist Church, resulting in the situation where the majority of Black Methodists split from the Church to form African-American Methodist denominations; whereas virtually all of the African-American Seventh-day Adventists remain solidly part of the wider SDA Church. Even in the face of the systematic racism within the Adventist Church organization during most of the 20th

century, the vast majority of Black Adventists did not seriously consider separating from the Church with which they had a strong personal identification.

It is ironic that the Methodist Church, which fundamentally opposed slavery, ended up with the majority of Black Methodists leaving the denomination and with racist policies set in place that marginalized those Blacks who remained in the denomination. However, another distinction between the Methodists and the Adventists is the fact that, with the formation of the United Methodist Church in 1968, the concept of separate but equal conferences was discarded by Methodists as a vestige of a racist past. The Adventist Church, on the other hand, has not yet come to this conclusion regarding racially separate conferences.

Organizational History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Aufderhar (1986) makes the profound observation that, "Our organization becomes perverted when resources are diverted into 'good' enterprises not central to the mission of the church" (pp.12-14). Oliver (2007) concludes that present organizational structures within the Adventist Church are "reducing the effectiveness of the local church to a critical extent" (p. 21), and proposes a move away from "authoritative and bureaucratic models of leadership" in order to both reduce costs and increase flexibility (p. 27). Bull and Lockhart (2007), two non-Adventists who studied Adventism in America, describe Adventism as "A centralized society that accords its leaders absolute authority," and one that is "prefers controlled by central planners instead of local members" (p. 122). This is an interesting and somewhat ironic characterization when considered in light of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's commitment to a representative system of governance.

Their conclusion, if not merely rejected out of hand, might serve to inform one that, within the Adventist context, centralization of authority may, in fact, be undermining the very foundation of our representative organizational structure. In this context, collaboration loses its innovative power because there is not the corresponding decentralized decision-making process to go along with an espousal of collaboration as a guiding principle.

Knight (1995), after observing that institutionalism is sapping the life out of the church, diverting resources from mission-minded action to maintenance of the status quo, and placing greater emphasis on respectability than effectiveness (p. 23), later concluded that, "Given the erosion of 'brand loyalty,' it is probable that the option of maintaining the status quo in church organization will increasingly become economically unfeasible" (2001, p.168).

All of this confirms that fundamental change is currently needed in the structure of the NAD; change that increases collaboration on every level, promotes decentralization and empowerment, and applies systems thinking to the process of determining just what Seventh-day Adventist organizational structure should look like in order to accomplish its God-given mission.

The history of the Adventist Church in dealing with race, and the subsequent establishment of race-based Regional Conferences, was deemed worthy of particular attention. Regional conferences were established in the mid-1940s as a result of the deep-seated prejudice that oppressed and marginalized Black members and pastors within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America (Johnson, 2007, p. 131).

This shameful history of repeated racial discrimination and unchristian treatment of African-American Adventists by the institutions of their church reached its climax in October, 1943, when Lucy Byard, a light-skinned Seventh-day Adventist of African-American descent, was refused treatment when her racial identity was discovered. She was unceremoniously transferred to the Freedman's Hospital where she soon died of pneumonia (Fordham, 1991, pp. 66-83). This incident, combined with the numerous cases of similarly egregious racial discrimination and neglect, brought to a head the crisis that had been developing over many years, and would ultimately lead to the establishment of the first regional conference the following year.

That Regional Conferences, in spite of the inherent racism that led to their establishment, have been a blessing to the Church by furthering and expanding the work among Blacks in North America is beyond dispute (Johnson, 2007, p. 131). However, serious questions remain regarding the wisdom of continuing with a structure of separate race-based conferences into the future.

Conclusions

This section is organized according to the four research questions addressed in the study. Conclusions will be expressed regarding a possible correlation between the level of inter-congregational cooperation prevalent in the NAD and the overall effectiveness of local Adventist congregations. The possible correlation between said lack of cooperation and the general public perception of the SDA Church in North America will also be addressed. The final set of conclusions will examine the form of organizational structure for the NAD that seems most likely to remove structural impediments to cooperation, while facilitating an approach to ministry based on cooperation among neighboring

Seventh-day Adventist churches. These conclusions, based on the results of the textual research conducted in the course of this study, will be presented in response to the four core questions that served as the basis for the study. These four questions are:

1. What is the relationship between levels of collaboration/cooperation among neighboring SDA churches and their ministry effectiveness?

2. What is the relationship between levels of collaboration/cooperation among neighboring SDA churches and positive general public opinion of the Adventist Church?

3. Does the current organizational structure of the NAD foster or hinder levels of collaboration/cooperation among neighboring SDA churches?

4. What form of NAD organizational structure would maximize levels of local collaboration/cooperation among neighboring SDA churches?

Based on the research findings of this study, the conclusions related to the concepts at the center of each of the four core research questions are as follows:

Inter-Congregational Cooperation and the Effectiveness
of the Local Adventist Church

The typical local SDA church in the NAD rarely has the resources on hand that allows it to develop and sustain ministries that could produce dramatic results. Adventist churches find it difficult to establish, fund, and maintain local SDA elementary and/or secondary schools. They also are not consistently able to engage in sustainable, effective evangelism or large-scale community service operations. An organizational model that is more flexible, more collaborative, and, more importantly, empowers greater decision-making authority closer to the point of the action, should result in greater effectiveness of the local churches in the NAD, along with greater impact and effectiveness of the

churches collectively in each Ministry Area, as local conference structure fosters

cooperation between churches and also organizes collaborative activity among them.

The evidence seems to support the idea that the NAD organizational structure is

top-heavy. As an example, in 2010 the Florida Conference (FC) reported expenses

directly related to Administration & Conference Office Operation/Maintenance of

$3,991,307.69, along with additional administrative expenses for the Florida Conference

Educational Department of $997,682.94 (Florida Conference, 2011). Thus, the combined

total of conference general administration expenses and additional educational

department administrative expenses for the year 2010 was $4,988,990.63, or 10.37

percent of the entire annual Florida Conference tithe income for 2010.

If this ratio holds true and proves to be similar in other conferences beside Florida

(i.e., conference administrative expenses are currently running at approximately 10

percent across the board throughout the NAD), then it seems plausible that the

implementation of the organizational model proposed in this study would likely result in

substantial conference administrative cost reductions as well as greater local church

effectiveness.

It is probable that great savings would be realized within the Sothern Union

through the consolidation of treasury, HR, payroll, health insurance, and other logistical

support functions of all local conferences at a union-wide service center. Safeguards

would need to be put in place to ensure that these union-wide entities would merely serve

in a support role with decision-making authority residing unequivocally with the

conference leaders and constituencies. It is imperative that everything possible be done to

prevent a migration of decision-making power and authority away from the local churches and conferences toward the unions or the GC.

The idea is that, through economies of scale savings and the elimination of duplicate departments performing essentially the same task, the proposed model should result in greater resources being available for programs, plans, and community service/outreach activities within each ministry area and in each local congregation. The goal of this aspect of the proposed model would be to garner the benefits of the consolidation of logistical functions on a larger scale, while at the same time maximizing the decentralization of decision-making authority to a level that is perceived as being better correlated to natural ministry areas.

As the leaders of these new smaller conferences are freed of much of the burden of overseeing administrative and logistical support functions, they will, in turn, be empowered to focus more on developing collaborative work in their respective ministry area rather than spending the larger portion of the time fulfilling administrative activities. Consequently, freeing conferences from the need to maintain their own support departments will not only result in financial savings, but also enable these conferences to focus on greater inter-congregational cooperation.

Furthermore, as the leaders of the NAD give greater priority to fostering inter-congregational cooperation, and churches are organized into smaller conferences that make collaboration between neighboring churches feasible, one is led to conclude that such an organizational structure should be more efficient and effective.

Inter-congregational Cooperation and Public
Perception of the NAD

The intention of this section is to attempt to answer the question, "How would this model affect the public perception of the Adventist Church?" The community awareness of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not stellar. This is evidenced by a 2003 survey conducted in North America, which reported that 44 percent of those surveyed had never heard of Seventh-day Adventists, and, of those who had heard of Seventh-day Adventists, only two-thirds could provide further information.

Surprisingly, 15 percent of all respondents confused Adventists with either Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses, and, while one-third of the respondents expressed a favorable opinion of SDAs, one in five had a negative opinion. Most alarmingly, 62 percent of adults born after 1964 knew nothing of Seventh-day Adventists (Bull & Lockhart, 2007, p. 1). Paulsen (2011), referring to his experience as leader of the global Adventist Church in dealing with public perception of the church, confirms that, "When you talk to the secular media about the Seventh-day Adventist Church, you quickly discover two realities: most journalist have little to no knowledge about who we are and what we stand for, and when a reporter does know something about Adventists it's usually defined by the ways we differ from 'mainstream' Protestantism" (p. 91). This seems to be a clear sign that we have failed to adequately engage the public or effectively define what it means to be a Seventh-day Adventist.

Norman (2003) plainly states that:

The rise of postmodern world view has altered the rules of engagement to which the church must adhere in sharing the gospel. Failure to understand this has lessened the church's ability to speak relevantly and effectively to the needs of young people. (p. 12)

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It is supposed that the proposed model, which necessitates the dissolving of both the state and regional conferences and the merging of the churches of both conferences into several smaller conferences based on natural ministry areas, would positively impact the public perception of the Adventist Church. Such a change would also minimize our racial division, as well as enable local churches, individually and collectively, to have a greater impact on the local community.

Given Norman's (2003, p. 131) conclusion that "blended diversity in the local congregation is essential if the church hopes to attract [the postmodern] generation in significant numbers," this study concludes that, for the sake of our public witness at the very least, we need to move beyond whatever it is that has led us to accept institutional division based on race as a good thing and instead embrace the goal of full integration on every level of church organization. The proposed model attempts to deal with the problem of racial separation through a structure that unites all local congregations, regardless of their respective ethnic composition, in a single conference focused on developing and fostering collaborative activities for their shared ministry area.

If we desire positive public perception of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America, and want to effectively reach the postmodern world, it seems imperative that we exhibit unity across all lines or barriers. It seems that if the proposed model would be adopted, North American Adventists would be better able to effect such a change. Such a move towards full integration at the conference and local church level would clearly signify to the watching world that we are one in more than name only, and that we are serious about fulfilling Christ's call for unity, even across racial lines.

Some may look to the Homogeneous Unit Principle of McGavran and Wagner as being an effective model for church growth that is based on sound sociological data. Yet, there is a need for realization that times have changed and people's feelings towards associations in general and racial integration in particular, has also changed. Consideration should be given as to what our organizational structure says to others. Is the current structure of racially separate conferences a good witness?

Parker's (2004) implication that GC leaders were hypocritical when they insisted on desegregation of the South African Adventist Church, while not taking any real steps to end the practice in America is a case in point. It is hard to argue with his reasoning, and one is made painfully aware of the doubt that our present structure casts on our sincerity and integrity. The witness of how we are organized and the effect on public perception of the Adventist Church should be a serious consideration as we look to the organizational future of the NAD.

A reasonable conclusion could be that societal changes have rendered McGavran's Homogeneous Unit Principle less applicable and that homogeneity itself, with its accompanying lack of integration, is, in fact, now a real barrier to people coming to Christ and a source of negative perception of the Adventist Church. If this is so, then the ironic present truth seems to be that, if we want to reach the modern mind, then we, paradoxically, need to live up to our high calling of unity in diversity and we need to start practicing what we preach, particularly in matters of race. The postmodern will simply not accept as truth that we are one in Christ, when on Sabbath morning we worship Him in congregations that are distinctly separated along racial lines.

NAD Organizational Structure and Inter-
congregational Cooperation

The reorganization outlined in this chapter by its very nature is designed to foster inter-congregational cooperation. By recasting conference decision-making authority to the level of the ministry area, this model essentially transforms the local conference from a command and control hierarchical entity into a collection of ministry teams. The congregations that reside in this ministry area (i.e., are part of the conference) would have real incentive to collaborate with the other churches in the conference. They would have a shared identity and a common purpose and mission. Friedman (2007) shares a keen insight that, "Individuals function not out of their own personalities or past, but express that part of their nature that is regulated by the emotional processes in the present system" (p. 198). Our present system unintentionally inhibits inter-congregational cooperation, whereas the proposed system is intentionally designed to foster it and maximize the positive aspects of a collaborative organization.

Hamel (2000), a renowned business author who coincidentally has an Adventist background, offers a cautionary tale of the negative power of "the system" that we would do well to take to heart:

> Interview successful revolutionaries in large companies, and you'll hear a familiar refrain: 'I succeeded despite the system.' All of them know that 'the system' is there to frustrate the new, the unconventional, and the untested. Management systems are designed to enforce conformance, alignment, and continuity. We would be horrified if employees said they managed to deliver quality products and services 'despite the system.' We should be horrified that employees have to produce innovation 'in spite of the system.' (p. 292-3)

If there is any cooperation going on presently, especially between neighboring churches from different conferences, it is occurring "in spite of the system," not because of it.

Bolman and Deal (2003) describe structure in the following manner: "Like an animal's skeleton or a building's framework, structural form both enhances and constrains what an organization can accomplish. (p. 46). "Like an animal's skeleton or a building's framework" is a very powerful way of illustrating the power, for good or for ill of organizational structure. Applying similar concepts to the church setting, Stetzer and Rainer (2010) observe:

> The local church is God's platform for His glory and His chosen delivery system for the gospel. Every church has a system (way of doing things). Systems exist whether they are intentionally put in place or not. Each system has written rules but even more powerful, unwritten rules that every insider knows by heart. If relationships are God's chosen delivery system for evangelism and discipleship, then they are worthy of our highest focus and intentionality. Relationships are the proverbial 'hill to die on.' But intentional and relational are difficult to wrap our arms around. (p. 120)

The Church System was intended by Christ to be "intentional about being relational," but how can it possibly be relational if is not first intentionally designed to foster collaboration? The conclusion that seems clear is that the current organizational structure in the NAD does not have inter-congregational cooperation as a high priority.

A NAD Organizational Structure Designed to Foster Inter-congregational Cooperation

In contrast to the current NAD structure, the model for conference reorganization proposed in this study has inter-congregational cooperation as its overriding priority. Hoover and Valenti (2005) observe that, "A systemic approach to leadership is not only effective in enhancing individual leadership performance in every nook and cranny of the organization, it also provides the foundation and the methods for building strong and effective leadership teams, which are the core of any effective and dynamic organization" (p. 25). It is too often the case that, within the Adventist system, we are better at building silos then we are at building teams. However, if we take Christ's call for unity among His

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followers seriously, and believe what the Bible says about the manifestation of the Holy

Spirit in a diversity of gifts distributed among the various individuals within the church,

then working together as a team would seem to be an essential activity. Manifesting this

principle of collaboration at all levels of church organization would not seem to be

optional; rather it appears to be an imperative from God Himself. We are the Body of

Christ, if we cannot collaborate and find a way to develop tangible unity on the local

level, regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender, then we have failed to fulfill the high

calling of Christ for His Church, no matter how successful we may appear to be

according to our own metrics. The proposed model has such a spirit of collaboration as its

goal.

Collaboration is vital to the church fulfilling its mission and God-given purpose.

However, this collaboration must be of the right kind—the right kind being collaboration

motivated by a desire to empower individuals at all levels of the organization, particularly

those on the frontlines. Hansen (2009, p. 18) points out the ironic tendency to move

toward greater centralization even as an organization espouses collaboration. His answer

to this dilemma is what he calls "disciplined collaboration" which "helps you avoid one

of the greatest sins of collaboration: in the quest for collaboration across the enterprise,

leaders sometimes centralize decision making, and information flows to the top of an

organization pyramid, where a few managers rule. In the name of collaboration,

decentralization goes down." Collins (2001) seems to support this idea of "disciplined

collaboration" when he advises:

> Avoid bureaucracy and hierarchy and instead create a culture of discipline. When you
> put these two complementary forces together—a culture of discipline with an ethic of
> entrepreneurship—you get a magical alchemy of superior performance and sustained
> results. (p. 121-122)

Clearly, collaboration is the key to a successful organizational structure, particularly in the Church setting, and this collaboration must also be intentional about empowering leaders at all levels. That disciplined collaboration is a noble goal and an ideal model is affirmed by Tisch, in what he describes as the "Power of We" approach: "It's an approach to leadership that is not divisive, but unifying; not competitive, but collaborative; not based on a zero-sum philosophy of scarcity, but on abundance—the economics, intellectual, and spiritual abundance that human beings can produce when their talents and energies are unleashed" (Tisch, 2004, p. 1).

It is imperative that the structure and policies of the organization, along with the tone set by organizational leaders through their words and actions, support and model cooperation. Unfortunately, we, as Seventh-day Adventists in North America, seem susceptible to the worst aspects of tribalism, showing ourselves to be unable, or unwilling, to model "disciplined collaboration" across boundaries, borders, and/or barriers (real or imagined) within the Church. Wheatley (2005) would seem to be speaking directly to us when she says

> We are using the instinct of community to separate and protect us from one another, rather than creating a global culture of diverse yet interwoven communities. We search for those most like us in order to protect ourselves from the rest of society. Clearly we cannot get to a future worth inhabiting through these separating paths. (p. 45)

As Hansen (2009) profoundly points out:

> When leaders preach teamwork, they may just get what they ask for – the wrong kind of teamwork. When managers start instilling teamwork in their own units and not across the rest of the company, it leads to pockets of local teamwork, but not companywide collaboration. The company becomes 'teamy' but not collaborative . . . When leaders give a sermon about the value of teamwork to the troops, and then ignore it themselves, they are not promoting collaboration . . . To unite a company, the top team needs to be united, too. Top executives need to practice the value of teamwork that they preach. (p. 84-85)

This seems to be an apt description of the situation in the Adventist Church in the NAD. Organizationally and institutionally, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is without a doubt a worldwide church that cooperates in its effort reach the human race with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Adventist Message. We have systems in place—systems of tithe sharing, networks of medical and educational institutions, global publishing, global media, etc.—that work together to further the mission of the Church.

However, on the level of the local church, relationally speaking, we do little organizationally to foster cooperation. One might say that we all but ignore the personal/relational aspects of a collaborative community in regards to the several congregations that constitute a local ministry area. Hansen seems to be speaking to our situation, in that conference-level leaders, and the organizations that they lead, need to offer more than mere lip-service to the concept of collaboration. The system of the church, particularly at the conference level, needs to foster disciplined cooperation, not by accident, but by design. Again, personal/relational cooperation and collaboration at all levels is a main purpose of the systems design of the organizational model proposed in this study.

If we desire an organizational structure that is collaborative in nature; then it seems to follow logically that the optimum organizational structure would, of necessity, also be more horizontal in nature, allowing for greater decision-making authority on the local level. Bell (2003) appears to advocate the position that the organizational structure of the NAD should be more horizontal, with greater decision-making authority vested in the local leaders:

I deeply feel the mission of the church would be better served by investing decision making processes, creativity, vision, and value in the pastors, teachers, and

membership on the local level. They simply need to be empowered to lead and valued, in real terms, as much as their counterparts in organizational leadership . . . Local schools and churches with their leaders too often settle for limited effectiveness and effort. Within systems where resources of creativity and empowerment are held apart from the local context, disillusionment, discouragement, or complacency are noted. Rather than flourishing, mediocrity becomes acceptable. (p. viii-ix)

Ostroff (1999) seems to confirm Bell's conclusion when he states, "The principal benefit of decentralization is that it strengthens the link between decision authority and local knowledge . . . Decentralized firms are better able to take advantage of local knowledge within the organization" (p. 70). In the case of the church, who knows better the needs of the community, and what resources and programs are needed to reach them, than the individuals who live and work in the community?

One size does not fit all, and plans and programs sent down from a conference office that is far removed from the point of contact are not likely to be the most effective. Therefore, the Adventist Church would perhaps be benefited by a move away from command and control structures and toward one that embraces openness and empowerment, particularly for those on the frontlines of ministry. One is reminded that Christ's call to leadership is, beyond a doubt, a "call to serve." Ostroff (1999) makes this observation:

In vertical organizations, people often use information to control others and protect themselves or their turf, not to support the frontline employees and improve the company's performance . . . In horizontal organizations, by contrast, information flows freely wherever it is needed. Information is the indispensable fuel that drives the value proposition and empowers people to do their best work. (p. 209)

Freedom, cooperation, and empowerment of local leaders are crucial elements for an effective system of church organization. One might reasonably conclude that a less hierarchical and more horizontal structure is needed for the Church to achieve its full potential and successfully accomplish its God-given mission.

Essentially, the organizational structure of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, with its four constituent levels, was designed to allow for a very high level of decision-making authority to reside at the local church level. Our organizational structure is intended to be bottom up. We understand that our organizational structure was created to support the local churches in fulfilling their mission to evangelize their communities. Organizational structure is not primarily the issue.

The issue is essentially centered on organizational behavior. We state and affirm our understanding that the higher levels of the organization exist to serve the local church, but we increasingly act as though the local church exists to service the hierarchy of the Church. In reality, conference officers are not actually accountable to the higher organization, but rather are, in fact, accountable to their constituency, and are to cooperate with the union and hold the union leaders accountable. The reluctance to effectively fulfill the trustee roles built into the current system—in the form of membership on local church boards, conference or union executive committee, and conference or union constituencies. As Greenleaf states:

> Trustees are accountable to all parties at interest for the best possible performance of the needs of all constituencies—including society at large. They are the holders of the charter of public trust for the institution. (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 97)

Perhaps because they have come to feel that their voices will not be heard—that they are merely a rubber stamp—or simply because they do not have access to the needed information and/or are otherwise challenged by the level of commitment required to effectively serve in a trustee role, the "best and the brightest" members throughout the NAD seem to adverse to accepting such responsibility. The result is a general lack of constructive accountability and/or direction from the various constituencies to the corresponding denominational leadership. This situation is a serious indication of a

breakdown within the structure of the NAD that carries worrisome implications for the organization. Being essentially the constituencies of the union, conference leaders are called upon to serve as trustees of the operation of the union—not merely follow direction from the Union leaders.

The abdication of this role has had a deleterious effect on the organizational integrity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is awareness and behavior, not structure that is the heart of the problem. Therefore, while the model proposed in this study does little to change the four constituent level structure of the Adventist Church, other than geographically redefining the size and scope of the local conferences, this subtle modification attempts to restore the stated purpose for organizational structure in the NAD. It seems better aligned with the goal of bottom-up governance for Adventist organizational structure than does the current system, which seems to be resulting in greater consolidation of power and decision-making authority in fewer and fewer hands at the top of the organization.

Practical Recommendations

This study explored the topic of inter-congregational cooperation within the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The research conducted in the course of this study suggests the following practical recommendations:

1. Conference Reorganization—In order to foster greater inter-congregational cooperation, the concept of local conference should be redefined away from both state and regional conferences and toward conferences defined by natural ministry areas—i.e., Greater Tampa Bay Area—which would continue to operate as constituent members of their respective union conference. There is a reasonable expectation that greater

efficiency, increased effectiveness, and improved public awareness/opinion will be the result of such a change. It is, therefore, the recommendation of this study that such an organizational structure be implemented, at least on a trial basis in at least one identifiable "ministry area" in the NAD.

2. Challenges to reorganization—Prior to any implementation of the proposed organizational model, it will be necessary to identify challenges to the implementation of the reorganization plan. Special attention will need to be given to issues related to the following:

Division of property and capital—Any reorganization will have to develop detailed plans for the smooth transfer of ownership of property and other financial resources from the current conferences to the newly created conferences. This will likely involve complex legal, financial, governance, and human resource issues. It would be advisable for Union leaders to create a panel(s) of experts to assist in the formulation of reorganization plans

Schools and Other Institutions—Conferences currently oversee large educational systems within their respective territories. Many also have youth camps and/or retreat facilities that belong collectively to all of the constituent churches, but obviously would fall into territory of only one of the new conference created by the sub-division of the current conference. Many conferences currently have relationships with Adventist hospitals (and other Adventist institutions in their territory. It is imperative that disposition of these systems and facilities be done in a way that is equitable to all parties concerned and also safeguards the long term success and viability of the institutions.

Employee Transitions—Adoption of the proposal on a NAD-wide basis will admittedly result in massive upheaval in current employment status such as never seen before. With the disbanding of virtually all of the current conferences in the NAD and the establishment of a multitude of new conferences in their place, it is not a stretch to say that the employment status of nearly all of the denominational employees at the local church and local conference level in the NAD would be affected by the realignment. Thought must be given as to how the continuity of medical, retirement and other benefits will be maintained and assured. With the establishment of union-wide entities to provide logistical support for the new created mini-conferences as outlined in the proposal, it is possible that the best solution might involve pay and benefits for the employees of all the conferences coming through a union-wide entity.

Race relations—Clearly, a proposal that calls for the folding of all churches within a ministry area into one unified conference would necessitate ending the practice of race-based conferences. If the model proposed in this study were implemented, careful thought would need to be given to minimizing the potential negative effects of this transition, upon African American denominational leaders. It is expected that the greater opportunities for new conference leadership positions (e.g.—adoption of the proposal realignment model in Florida would result in the establishment of 10 conferences where there currently exists only 2) should more than offset the effects of the likely elimination of current regional conference leadership positions caused by the move away from the current structure of state and regional conferences towards the multiple ministry area conferences called for in the proposal. However, careful attention will need to be paid to insure that the results are, at the very least, race neutral.

While these issues are serious and would clearly be challenging to navigate

successfully, it is the position of this study that they are not insurmountable. If the

members of the NAD simply have the political resolve to effect such a change, then these

issues can and will be resolved as well.

3. Employing Union of Churches Model for a Pilot Program—A metropolitan

area within the territory of an existing conference (or conferences) could be given

practical autonomy to operate according to the principles proposed in this study. This

newly created entity would have control of the tithe generated within its territory, oversee

pastoral assignments, coordinate all inter-congregational ministry activities within its

ministry area, and have the authority to elect leaders for the organization. With the

current GC initiative regarding employment of Union of Churches, perhaps such a pilot

project to test the viability of the proposed model could be accomplished under the

auspices of this Union of Churches model. Churches within the specific region could be

brought together from their respective current conferences and merged into a mini-

conference—recognized as a Union of Churches under the jurisdiction of the NAD—and

thus empowered to employ the precepts of this model designed to foster inter-

congregational cooperation throughout the ministry area.

It must be noted that such a pilot program would not address the effectiveness or

viability of the model in sparsely populated areas with little or no Adventist presence.

However, if the model does prove to be effective in a metropolitan area, a future pilot

program could be established to determine if it would be effective in a rural setting as

well. While the Union of Churches is not seen by this study as the preferred form of

reorganization for the long term, it nevertheless may provide a short-term opportunity to

test the merits of the model of reorganization proposed in this study in a small pilot program.

4. Exploration of Racial Integration—Meaningful improvement in inter-congregational cooperation will likely require movement toward greater racial integration on the conference level within the NAD. Based on Penno's (2009) conclusions that, "There seems to be at least a willingness to discuss the elimination of ethnic-based conferences (Black and White) and the formation of multicultural conferences" and that he "did not discover any strong opposition to the investigation of the idea of merging state and regional conferences" (p. 180), one might conclude that there is presently an opportunity to pursue a reorganization plan that unifies churches from both the state and regional conferences within a given ministry area. It may, in fact, be politically easier to merge state and regional churches into several smaller unified conferences (as recommended in the model proposed in this study), rather than merging the two large conferences into one even larger unified conference. Regardless of whether or not the model proposed in this study is adopted, racial integration within the conference structure of the NAD should be immediately pursued as a top priority.

Recommendations for Future Research

The model proposed in this study calls for a reorganization of the current conference structure in Florida from the two current overlapping, ethnic-based conferences (Southeastern and Florida) into ten smaller integrated conferences, each of which would be charged with working collaboratively to effectively reach the people within their respective ministry area. While efforts were made to conduct a thorough

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investigation of the matter, it must be acknowledged that many questions remain. A few areas that are deemed profitable for future study are:

1. Potential Benefits of Consolidation of Logistical Support Functions—The model proposed in this study, calls for union-wide service entities to be created to collectively handle HR & payroll, accounting, treasury, and other such functions for all of these newly created mini-conferences that would oversee the several Ministry Areas throughout the state of Florida. This newly created union-level logistical support entity (or entities) would have no decision-making authority—they would not control funds, make hiring decisions, or develop or influence the planning of the work in the conferences—but merely perform the administrative and logistical support functions for the new streamlined local conferences. For this service, this union level entity should receive a percentage of the tithe income from the several conferences, an amount that would need to be mutually agreed upon, but expected to be substantially less than the 10 percent currently expended on conference administrative functions.

This remuneration out of tithe funds would be separate from, and in addition to, the current level of conference tithe funds that are sent to support the Southern Union operations, Southern Adventist University, and other entities funded by the Southern Union. By consolidating treasury, accounting, HR, payroll, and other support functions at the union level, it is believed that it would be possible to eliminate much duplication and wasteful overhead through economies of scale. While it seems reasonable to suppose that the probable savings from such a change could be substantial, attempting to ascertain the actual level of cost savings to be realized through consolidation of conference support functions at the union level is beyond the scope of this study, and would seem to be a

fruitful area of study for anyone familiar with conference and union funding and possessing expertise in the area of accounting and budgeting.

2. Role of Conference Leaders—In the model proposed in this study, local leadership teams elected by the constituent members in each of these newly created mini-conferences would make hiring decisions, oversee the distribution and use of the tithe income within their area, coordinate the collaborative activity within the ministry area, and function as the constituent units to their respective union. Thus, having autonomy and control in these and other vital matters, but jettisoning the need to maintain individual support departments, it is believed that these conferences would be streamlined and thus more nimble and better able to respond quickly to ministry opportunities in their area. In fact, the president and other officers of these conferences could be local church pastors, elected by the constituency of the "conference" and agreeing to serve in the additional role of conference leaders while continuing to pastor their church.

The expectation is that, without the heavy administrative burden that now currently consumes such a large portion of conference resources—as well as a large portion of conference official's time and energy—the leaders of these mini-conferences would instead have a greater ability to focus entirely on the task of reaching individuals residing in their ministry area. In short, the greater portion of tithe generated in a particular ministry area would stay in that area to be administrated by a local leadership team familiar with the needs of the community. Further study regarding the possibility and feasibility of such a redefinition of the roles of conference leaders, towards increased area-wide ministry leadership and planning role and with an accompanying reduced administrative responsibility, would seem to be a productive area of study.

APPENDIX A

Ministry Area Table

Ministry Areas Table

Ministry Area	County	City	Southeastern Conference	Florida Conference	Members (2010)	Tithe (2010)
Avon Park	DeSoto			Arcadia SDA	57	71,313.24
	Glades					
	Hardee	Wauchula		Wauchula SDA	31	13,087.09
				Wauchula Spanish	48	44,933.89
	Highlands	Avon Park	Fil-Am Int'l		66	33,179.52
			Frostproof Spanish		101	50,774.72
			Ridge Area		181	90,992.32
				Avon Park SDA	928	1,316,214.17
				Avon Park Spanish	294	164,258.44
		Lake Placid		Lake Placid SDA	58	91,776.72
		Sebring		Sebring SDA	105	82,806.50
				Sebring Spanish	199	246,488.05
	Okeechobee	Okeechobee		Okeechobee SDA	104	80,174.45
	Osceola	Kissimmee	Mt. Zion		281	141,264.32
				Buenaventura Lakes	120	58,197.51
				Celebration SDA	87	91,300.29
				Kissimmee SDA	183	178,754.11
				Kissimmee Spanish	258	165,213.27
		Poinciana	Poinciana SDA		208	104,565.76
				Poinciana Spanish	204	90,256.09
		St Cloud		Shuler Memorial	87	49,966.34
	Polk	Bartow	Ebenezer		16	8,043.52
		Ft. Meade		Ft. Meade SDA	51	62,804.95
		Frostproof		Frostproof SDA	45	80,928.00
		Haines City		Haines City Spanish Co	85	32,750.68
				Lakeview SDA	62	45,874.21
		Lakeland	Ewing Memorial		150	75,408.00
			Lakeland Spanish		46	23,125.12
				Lakeland SDA	338	235,443.57
				Lakeland Spanish Co.	30	19,811.41
		Lake Wales		Lake Wales SDA	115	95,305.81
		Winter Haven	All Nations		49	24,633.28
			Smyrne Haitian		118	59,320.96
				Winter Haven SDA	245	214,578.37
				Totals:	**4950**	**4,143,544.68**
Ft. Lauderdale	Broward	Coral Springs		Coral Spg.Worship Ctr.	446	191,799.16
		Dania	Ebenezer		214	107,582.28
				Dania Spanish Co.	65	64,501.46
		Deerfield Bch.	Beer-Sheba French		309	155,340.48
			Deerfield Beach		343	172,432.96
				Brazilian Chapel SDA	207	155,539.51
				Temple Adventiste de DB	112	25,777.54
		Ft. Lauderdale	Bon Samaritain		477	239,797.44
			Lighthouse		611	307,161.92
			Mt. Olivet		1254	630,410.88
			New Hope		398	200,082.56
			Pilgrim's Spanish		77	38,709.44
			Rays of Light		116	58,315.52
			Shekina French		218	109,592.96
			New Life Company		36	18,097.92
				Ft. Lauderdale SDA	285	193,202.56
				Ft. Lauderdale Spanish	163	200,588.96
				Royal Palm SDA	116	71,651.28
		Hallandale	Sychar French		124	62,337.28

Ministry Area	County	City	Southeastern Conference	Florida Conference	Members (2010)	Tithe (2010)
		Hollywood	First Ephesus		144	72,391.68
				Beth Tehillah Vetikva	4	11,316.03
				Hollywood SDA Company	106	86,126.96
				Hollywood Spanish	334	184,243.63
				Romanian SDA Temple	96	17,815.00
				Saving Grace SDA	75	78,372.41
				Temple of the Advent	115	105,025.64
		Lauderdale Lks		Ambassador	347	316,828.47
		Lauderhill		Lauderhill SDA	999	766,406.97
		Margate		Margate SDA	103	132,918.24
				Margate Spanish	263	223,254.82
		Oakland Park		Brazilian Temple	423	487,192.68
		Pembroke Pines	Pines SDA		229	115,122.88
		Plantation	Sinai French		1296	651,525.12
				Plantation SDA	512	651,481.10
				Zion Advent SDA Co.	45	121,192.98
		Pompano Bch.	Bethlehem French		376	189,022.72
			Ebenezer French		344	172,935.68
			Salem		238	119,647.36
				Pompano Beach SDA	273	276,136.16
		SW Ranches		Covenant	156	279,975.39
		Sunrise	Morning Star		77	38,709.44
				Sunrise SDA	328	287,227.59
		Tamarac		Eliathah	516	377,848.50
				Totals:	12,970	8,765,639.56
Gainesville/ Ocala	Alachua	Gainesville	Bethel		327	164,389.44
				Gainesville SDA	390	367,397.68
				Gainesville Spanish	142	114,716.98
		Hawthorne	Zion Hill		124	62,337.28
		High Springs		High Springs SDA	148	199,468.88
	Citrus	Crystal River		Advent Hope Co.	41	6,631.50
		Hernando		Hernando SDA	113	148,198.64
		Homosassa		Homosassa SDA	55	55,419.56
		Inverness		Inverness SDA	116	122,558.16
	Gilchrist	Bell		Jennings Lake SDA	45	73,749.54
	Hernando	Brooksville		Brooksville SDA	82	49,345.62
		Spring Hill		Spring Hill SDA	181	173,937.74
				Spring Hill Spanish	108	100,881.68
	Lake	Leesburg	Mt. Pleasant		69	34,687.68
				Leesburg SDA	134	89,498.37
				North Lake SDA	106	205,460.38
		Mount Dora	SEC Church		65	32,676.80
				Mount Dora SDA	649	207,781.23
		Clermont		Clermont SDA	228	166,418.68
		Lady Lake		Lady Lake SDA	150	168,297.14
		Sorrento		Sorrento Spanish Co.	66	44,051.59
		Umatilla		Umatilla SDA	137	345,067.82
	Levy					
	Marion	Citra	Citra		24	12,065.28
		Dunnellon		Dunnellon SDA Co.	59	85,360.03
		Marion Oaks		Marion Oaks SDA	64	78,330.07
				Marion Oaks Spanish	173	126,928.58
		Ocala	Shiloh		494	248,343.68
				Belleview SDA	159	137,830.05
				Ocala SDA	283	334,656.26
				Silver Springs Shores	318	191,813.61
	Sumter	Bushnell		Bushnell SDA	48	36,769.76
				Totals:	5098	4,185,069.71

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Ministry Area	County	City	Southeastern Conference	Florida Conference	Members (2010)	Tithe (2010)
Miami- Dade	Miami-Dade	Biscayne Park	Filadelfia Spanish		48	24,130.56
		Carol City	Mt. Pisgah		700	351,904.00
				Carol City Spanish	267	189,980.18
		Cutler Bay		South Dade Spanish	92	111,276.16
		Florida City	Bethel		221	111,101.12
		Hialeah	Hialeah West Sp.		89	44,742.15
			Pilgrim's Spanish		741	372,515.52
				Hialeah Spanish	1015	373,005.16
				Hialeah Springs Sp.	366	231,766.46
				Northwest Dade	253	244,947.78
		Homestead	Trinite		214	107,582.08
				Homestead	111	35,494.85
				Homestead Sp.	196	140,448.92
		Kendall		Kendall SDA	217	153,492.44
				Kendall Spanish	310	155,327.30
		Miami	All Nations		72	36,195.84
			Alpha-Agape		470	236,278.40
			Beree French		293	147,296.96
			Bethany		1182	594,215.04
			Bethel French		87	43,736.64
			Coconut		83	41,725.76
			Country Garden Sp.		106	53,288.32
			Cutler Ridge Sp.		58	29,157.76
			El Buen Redil		58	29,157.76
			Ephesus Spanish		117	58,818.24
			Faith Company		55	27,649.60
			Galilee French		34	17,092.48
			Hebron French		379	190,530.88
			Horeb French		542	272,474.24
			Jerusalem French		982	493,671.04
			Lebanon		174	87,473.28
			Mission Station		43	21,616.96
			Northside		997	501,211.84
			Peniel French		333	167,405.76
			Perrine		433	217,677.76
			Philadelphie French		487	244,824.64
			Shalom French		136	68,369.92
			Tabernacle		906	455,464.32
			Zion French		882	443,399.04
				Bradmore Spanish	127	59,062.60
				Ebenezer	365	141,075.74
				Eden	775	180,828.85
				Miami Central Spanish	1295	371,555.23
				Miami Korean SDA Co.	30	14,973.40
				Miami Temple SDA	1295	891,051.98
				Morija French SDA Co.	91	15,014.25
				New Community	142	115,220.40
				Norland SDA	860	263,379.17
				North Miami Beach	120	113,318.04
				North Miami	1025	206,395.20
				North Miami Spanish Co.	60	62,817.15
				Northwest Miami Spanish	60	109,519.51
				Shiloh SDA	86	84,251.76
				West Dade Spanish	56	52,956.14
				Westchester Spanish	848	366,442.22
		Miami Beach		Miami Beach 1st Spanish	92	92,885.87
				Miami Central Brazilian	121	108,450.18
		Miami Gardens		Maranatha	1857	715,733.03
		Miami Springs		Miami Springs SDA	495	486,135.68
				Miami Springs Span. Co.	43	36,272.53
		North Miami		Shekinah French Co.	159	21,710.75
		Opa Locka	Lily of the Valley		44	22,119.68

Ministry Area	County	City	Southeastern Conference	Florida Conference	Members (2010)	Tithe (2010)
				Opa Locka Spanish	135	36,936.02
	Monroe	Key Largo		Key Largo SDA	21	59,590.40
		Key West		Key West SDA	8	8,728.00
			Southern Most SDA		41	20,611.52
		Marathon		Marathon SDA	31	36,619.20
				Totals:	**24031**	**11,820,101.66**
NE Coastal Florida	Bradford	Starke		Starke SDA	33	33,056.57
	Brevard	Cocoa	Bethel		91	45,747.52
				Cocoa SDA	119	141,085.11
		Melbourne		Melbourne SDA	373	393,701.33
				Melbourne Spanish	251	187,015.69
		Palm Bay	Palm Bay		543	272,976.96
				South Brevard SDA	153	119,163.08
		Titusville		Titusville SDA	173	147,298.34
	Clay	Orange Park		Orange Cove SDA	133	110,419.51
	Duval	Jacksonville	Advent Hope Por.		33	16,589.76
			Breath of Life		159	79,932.48
			Ephesus		618	310,680.96
			First Coast		52	26,141.44
			Shekinah French		50	25,136.00
				Jacksonville First SDA	248	291,162.45
				Jacksonville Mandarin	751	426,577.23
				Jacksonville Southport	214	221,157.57
				Jacksonville Spanish	158	115,193.28
				Renacer Span.Company	65	26,078.37
	Flagler	Palm Coast		Palm Coast SDA	250	245,219.95
				Palm Coast Portuguese	113	65,152.77
	Nassau					
	Putnam	Interlachen		Interlachen SDA	55	16,657.65
		Palatka	Bethany		65	32,676.80
				Palatka SDA	138	41,466.92
	St. Johns	St. Augustine	Berea		57	28,655.04
				Saint Augustine SDA	170	123,957.41
	Volusia	Daytona Bch.	Mt. Calvary		125	62,840.00
				Daytona Beach SDA	337	592,809.20
		Deland	Emmanuel		75	37,704.00
				Deland SDA	178	156,839.66
				Deland Spanish Co.	68	34,102.20
		Deltona		Deltona SDA	272	303,753.86
				Deltona Spanish	350	340,779.55
		New Smyrna		New Smyrna Bch. SDA	60	91,974.33
		Orange City		Debary-Orange City	126	119,897.69
				Totals:	**6656**	**5,283,600.68**
Orlando	Orange	Apopka	Maranatha		275	138,248.00
			Mt. Olive		140	70,380.80
			Sheeler Oaks		343	172,432.96
				Apopka SDA	777	872,498.92
				Apopka Spanish	249	196,730.52
				Apopka Haitian Co.	74	25,142.50
				Florida Living SDA	90	246,562.86
				Forest Lake SDA	3550	4,636,806.41
				Plymouth-Sorrento Co.	112	173,780.38

Ministry Area	County	City	Southeastern Conference	Florida Conference	Members (2010)	Tithe (2010)
		Lk. Buena Vista	Lk. Buena Vista Sp.		62	31,168.64
		Ocoee		Silver Star Spanish	157	77,488.10
		Orlando	Beracah I French		294	147,799.68
			Beracah II French		763	383,575.36
			Bethel		86	43,233.92
			Comm. Brasileira		55	27,649.60
			Guilgal French		1042	523,834.24
			Genesis Spanish		161	80,937.92
			Mt. Sinai		1374	690,737.28
			North Orlando		812	408,208.64
				Bethel Eglise Haitenne	395	90,032.52
				East Orlando Span. Co.	61	58,289.26
				Emmanuel	214	66,553.27
				Fl. Conference Church	536	1,241,755.32
				Florida Hospital SDA	988	991,580.03
				Orlando Brazilian	120	89,526.36
				Orlando Central SDA	499	273,848.88
				Orlando Filipino	214	302,162.39
				Orlando Spanish	731	316,950.86
				Orlando Vietnamese	140	22,880.00
				Pine Hills SDA	360	264,125.35
				Simple Church SDA Co.	16	38,141.47
				South Orlando SDA	142	85,924.81
				South Orlando Spanish	84	43,807.04
				University SDA	218	100,835.99
				Vineyard SDA Co.	58	51,119.88
		Winter Garden	Winter Garden Sp.		142	71,386.24
		Winter Park	Patmos Chapel		1135	570,587.20
				Kress Memorial	631	308,347.51
				Winter Park Spanish	492	311,579.23
		Windermere		Windermere SDA	139	68,969.52
	Seminole	Altamonte Spgs		Altamonte Springs	606	385,955.06
				Forest City Spanish	1319	859,087.69
		Longwood		Longwood Spanish SDA	82	76,516.83
				Markham Woods	1066	1,099,098.90
				Orlando Central Korean	238	179,885.90
		Sanford	Mars Hill		200	100,544.00
		Winter Springs		Winter Springs Spanish	121	75,206.71
				Winter Springs SDA	718	908,613.05
				Totals:	**22081**	**18,000,528.00**
Palm Beach/ Vero Beach	Indian River					
	Martin	Indiantown		Indiantown Spanish	102	100,174.88
	Palm Beach	Belle Glade	Morija Haitian		76	38,206.72
			Trinity Temple		43	21,616.96
		Boca Raton	Boca Raton Spanish		128	64,348.16
		Boynton Bch	Bethanie French		480	241,305.60
				Boynton Beach SDA	153	85,963.00
		Jupiter		Jupiter-Tequesta SDA	129	164,299.40
				Jupiter Spanish Company	34	25,533.67
		Delray Beach	Daughter of Zion		589	296,102.08
			Ephesus French		419	210,639.68
				South Palm SDA Co.	50	22,120.00
		Greenacres		Temple Adventiste de	127	30,198.69
		Lake Worth	Ebenezer French		344	172,935.68
				Lake Worth Spanish	160	58,664.85

Ministry Area	County	City	Southeastern Conference	Florida Conference	Members (2010)	Tithe (2010)
		Loxahatchee		Communities West	166	134,981.55
		Rivera Beach	Bethel French		340	170,924.80
			Rivera Beach First		285	143,275.20
			Royal Palm Beach		156	78,424.32
		West Palm Bch.	Ephesus		971	488,141.12
			Shiloh French		164	82,446.08
				Macedonia French Co.	57	8,650.00
				Northwood Spanish Co.	57	22,420.15
				Palm Springs SDA	129	143,129.85
				West Palm Bch 1st SDA	629	236,341.51
				West Palm Bch Spanish	439	210,932.77
	St. Lucie	Fort Pierce	Macedonia SDA		174	87,473.28
			Mitspa French		235	118,139.20
				Ft. Pierce SDA	478	165,850.39
				Treasure Coast SDA	140	109,907.69
		Port St. Lucie	Port St. Lucie 1st		228	114,620.16
				Gethsemane	115	68,243.20
				Midport SDA	219	154,608.32
				Victory SDA Company	96	79,037.04
		Vero Beach		Vero Beach SDA	71	88,952.86
				Vero Beach Spanish	65	109,694.00
				Totals:	**8048**	**4,348,302.86**
SW Florida	Charlotte	Englewood		Englewood SDA	28	123,855.00
		Port Charlotte	Bethanie French		102	51,277.44
			Faith		85	42,731.20
			Port Charlotte Sp.		33	16,589.76
				Compass Communities	19	18,080.98
				Port Charlotte SDA	767	649,525.64
		Punta Gorda		Punta Gorda SDA	135	65,582.37
	Collier	Immokalee	Gailee French		47	23,627.84
		Naples	Golden Gate		129	64,850.88
			Mahanaim French		312	156,848.64
				Bethesda Corkscrew Co	67	11,578.18
				Elim French Haitian	239	86,722.40
				Naples SDA	294	255,923.81
				Naples Spanish	138	86,251.66
	Hendry	Clewiston	Clewiston		94	47,255.68
	Lee	Bonita Spgs.		Bonita Springs SDA	84	54,113.17
		Cape Coral		Cape Coral SDA	99	93,866.94
		Ft. Myers	Eden Restaure		202	101,549.44
			Peniel		211	106,073.92
				Ft. Myers SDA	500	306,175.40
				Brazilian Temple Mis'n	10	3,473
				Ft. Myers Shores SDA	94	41,491.37
				Ft. Myers Spanish	229	183,356.43
		Lehigh Acres		Bethesda French Co.	106	64,885.33
				Lehigh Acres SDA	318	323,107.32
				Totals:	**4342**	**2,978,793.80**
Tallahassee	Baker					
	Columbia	Lake City	Macedonia		55	27,649.60
				Lake City SDA	143	218,921.80
				Lake City Spanish	78	54,316.31
	Dixie	Cross City		Cross City SDA	65	56,491.03

Ministry Area	County	City	Southeastern Conference	Florida Conference	Members (2010)	Tithe (2010)
	Franklin					
	Gadsden	Quincy	Mt. Olive		46	23,125.12
	Hamilton	Jasper		Jasper SDA Company	47	48,777.18
	Jefferson					
	Lafayette					
	Leon	Tallahassee	Fellowship		75	37,704.00
			Maranatha		343	172,432.96
				Tallahassee First SDA	239	184,988.22
				Tallahassee Spanish Co.	94	47,807.92
	Liberty					
	Madison	Madison		Madison SDA	22	42,656.30
	Suwannee	Live Oak	Nazareth		26	13,070.72
				Live Oak Co.	81	62,730.28
	Taylor	Perry		Perry SDA	67	26,315.27
	Union					
	Wakulla	Crawfordville		Crawfordville SDA	96	42,816.41
				Totals:	**1477**	**1,059,803.12**
Tampa Bay	Hillsborough	Brandon		Brandon SDA	410	339,067.19
				Brandon Spanish	193	155,546.41
		Lutz		North Tampa Spanish Co.	67	52,419.78
		Plant City	Emmanuel		124	62,337.28
				Plant City SDA	113	71,289.87
				Plant City Spanish Co.	66	33,157.72
		Tampa	Bethanie French		304	152,826.88
			Emmanuel Spanish		208	104,565.76
			First University		91	45,747.52
			Mt. Calvary		1143	574,608.96
			Progress Village		308	154,837.76
			Town & Country		93	46,752.96
			Westside		101	50,774.72
				Carrollwood	206	87,821.24
				Palmetto-Tampa Spanish	85	42,237.37
				Salem SDA Company	75	37,134.69
				Tampa First SDA	641	465,281.98
				Tampa Korean	112	47,834.42
				Tampa Spanish	360	225,095.36
		Riverview		Riverview SDA	103	136,628.80
		Thonotosassa	Thonotosassa		69	34,687.68
		Wimauma		Wimauma Spanish	98	36,706.75
	Manatee	Bradenton	Beracah 1st Haitian		135	67,867.20
			Mt. Gilead		92	46,250.24
				Bradenton SDA	323	436,704.53
				Bradenton Spanish Co.	38	37,315.45
		Palmetto		Palmetto SDA	264	315,428.34
	Pasco	New Pt. Richey		Beth- El Shalom of NPR	18	29,366.96
				New Port Richey SDA	304	458,599.89
		Wesley Chapel		Wesley Chapel SDA	110	145,343.39
				Wesley Chapel Spanish	30	30,067.14
		Zephyrhills		East Pasco SDA	449	609,179.20
	Pinellas	Clearwater	Bethlehem		101	50,774.72
		Palm Harbor		Palm Harbor SDA Co.	86	16,831.50
		St. Petersburg	Elim		409	205,612.48
				All Nations	236	188,901.56
				Beth-El Shalom of St. Pete	16	33,712.02
				Clearwater SDA	320	317,551.11
				Clearwater Spanish	115	97,696.10
				Pinellas Spanish	92	81,688.83
				St. Petersburg SDA	343	311,188.73

Ministry Area	County	City	Southeastern Conference	Florida Conference	Members (2010)	Tithe (2010)
	Sarasota	Sarasota	Mt. Sinai		113	56,807.36
				Sarasota SDA	192	199,214.19
		North Port		North Port SDA	133	147,829.02
		Venice		Venice SDA	98	87,259.48
				Totals:	**8987**	**6,928,550.54**
	Conference Totals:	**Membership**	**Tithe Income**			
	Florida Conference	59998	$ 48,087,828.37			
	SE Conference (in FL)	38642	$ 19,426,106.24			
	Combined Totals	98640	$ 67,513,934.61			

Appendix B

Ministry Area Map

Appendix B: Ministry Areas Map—Florida

Legend:
- Tallahassee
- Gainesville-Ocala
- NE Coastal Florida
- Tampa Bay
- Orlando
- Avon Park
- Palm Beach-Vero
- SW Florida
- Ft. Lauderdale
- Miami-Dade

Appendix C

Union of Churches Documents

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST® CHURCH

Reasons for Considering Adjustments to Seventh-day Adventist Church Ministries, Services and Structures

Presented to the
Commission on Ministries, Services and Structures
by
Lowell C Cooper

Introduction

Change is constant and inevitable. On a global scale the ways that people and organizations conduct their activities and define their relationships varies with the passage of time. Every organization and individual is affected in some way or another by changes beyond their control. Similarly, the environment in which the Church lives out its mission is dynamic, not static. The forces of change are ever at work. One of the tasks of leadership is to anticipate, monitor and respond to change while ensuring that the Church is anchored to those realities that do not change. The response to change may be proactive or retroactive. The greatest risk lies in ignoring or not recognizing that change is occurring.

Seventh-day Adventists often express pride in their church organization and structure. The features of denominational organization were adopted over the course of several decades and represented a culmination of careful, prayerful study combined with the pragmatism of experience. The macro developments in organizational structure occurred in the first 50-60 years of denominational life. This set the template for organizational patterns and relationships—a template that has not changed significantly during the past 100 years.

It is not unnatural for persons to ask questions about the reasons for and necessity of present organizational structure. Some among those who have studied denominational history suggest it is once again time for the Church to review its structural features in light of significantly changed circumstances since the early 1900s. At the same time many Seventh-day Adventist members hold to the view that present denominational structure has been divinely inspired and therefore is appropriate and adequate for all time. Such persons may regard any large-scale review of denominational structures to be unwarranted and ill-advised. Thus it is important for Church leadership to carefully identify and articulate how and why a review of organizational structures and procedures is part of denominational stewardship.

This presentation identifies some basic assumptions about Seventh-day Adventist Church organization and lists several reasons why the Church should now be engaged in a review of

ministries, services and structures.

Basic assumptions

1. **The Church's core values of a worldwide mission and worldwide unity call for a global identity and structure.** The Seventh-day Adventist Church must be, and will continue to be, one world Church with strong linkages among all its parts—from local Church to General Conference. Any structural revision must preserve a sense of ownership and responsibility for mission at the local level along with a sense of identity as a worldwide family engaged in fulfilling the Gospel Commission on a global scale. The connectedness of the Seventh-day Adventist Church must remain theological, structural, and experiential.

2. **Neither designs in corporate business nor government provide an adequate model for Seventh-day Adventist Church structure. The precise arrangement of denominational structure will have to be planned and adopted by the membership.** Some elements of denominational organization may be analogous to certain features of business or government. However, the fundamental characteristic of Church organization is the preservation of a dynamic and voluntary relationship of mutual service and support for the growth of God's kingdom. The New Testament (1 and 2 Corinthians, 1 and 2 Timothy, etc.) does contain some specific guidance on the organization of a local Church but has relatively less guidance on how a multitude of local churches express their collective identity and collaboration. Bible imagery (including such expressions as shepherd and sheep, body of Christ, vine and branches, household of faith, family of God, building, bride of Christ) provides insight regarding relationships and attitudes that should characterize the Church but these do not provide definitive guidance on the shape of a global structure.

3. **The local church and the world church (i.e General Conference Session) are indispensable elements of denominational structure.** Other expressions of structure such as local missions/conferences, union missions/conferences, institutions, and the General Conference office with its divisions must be rationalized and established or modified in terms of their efficiency and effectiveness in facilitating mission and strengthening unity.

4. **The range of environments (geopolitical, cultural, economic, religious) to which the Seventh-day Adventist Church must relate will require some flexibility in organizational structure.** A rigid organizational template may not always be the best way to facilitate mission and unity. Structural arrangements considered essential in some areas may not be appropriate in all areas of the world. The cohesiveness of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not due to structure alone. In fact, denominational structure must be seen as the servant of unity rather than its master.

The connectedness of the Seventh-day Adventist family worldwide arises from several elements of denominational life. These include among other things a shared commitment to a Bible-based theology and understanding of mission; theological education and credentialing/ordination of ministers predicated on a shared faith; a Church Manual both prescriptive and descriptive of local Church life and operations; a more-or-less standard pattern for establishing and operating denominational entities; and a system of discipline for those members or organizational entities that fall outside of established boundaries.

5. **Revising/adjusting structure does not automatically mean that increased resources will be available for organizational mission.** Church members everywhere deserve a clear understanding as to how denominational structure encourages, facilitates and sustains mission and unity. Revising denominational structure must result in greater effectiveness

and/or increased efficiency. This does not happen automatically. Deliberate strategies will have to be employed to ensure that operational savings and efficiencies, if any, that flow from organizational adjustments are dedicated to mission accomplishment and strengthen the bond of unity in the Church.

Reasons for considering structural adjustments

1. **Organizational structure is necessary. It is also necessary to assess periodically the role and function of structures in a rapidly changing operational environment.** The rationale for a specific organizational structure must be relevant to circumstances, situations and current possibilities. Structures and vehicles used to accomplish certain purposes can become outdated. Are the multiple layers of denominational structure necessary today?

Some have voiced the perception that the multiple layers of denominational organization contribute to decreased efficiency in the use of resources and diminished effectiveness in communication and collective action. These perceptions, unless addressed, will increasingly impede the functions of present structures. Members around the world deserve explanations that reveal organizational transparency and a clear statement regarding how denominational structure fulfills our theological understanding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as well as how the structure facilitates mission and unity.

Over the last two or three decades there has been a rapid and widespread development of independent supporting ministries. In many ways these have been an enormous blessing to the life and work of the Church. However, it is also true that a considerable portion of church member support has been channeled through independent supporting ministries as a consequence of uncertainty regarding the effectiveness or efficiency of denominational structure to get the job done. It is true of non-profit organizations in general that their funding tends to favor project funding rather than the building of a great organization. However, it must be said that restricted giving (or project giving) misses a fundamental truth: the greatest impact on society requires first and foremost a great organization, not just a great program.

In many cases independent supporting ministries report significant programmatic accomplishments that may even overshadow what seem to be the accomplishments of the regular denominational structure. What is not always so clear is that many independent supporting ministries also rely heavily on church infrastructure rather than creating such infrastructure for their own needs.

Every organization has operational costs for education, leadership training, establishing a knowledge base, and creating conditions, experiences and events that keep an organization together. Organizational structure is necessary—and it must be portrayed as complementing mission rather than competing with it.

The tendency for infrastructure to proliferate is common to all types of organizations. It is the responsibility of leadership both to communicate the necessity of infrastructure and to exercise the vigilance that holds infrastructure accountable to the accomplishment of mission.

2. **Technological advances and organizational growth create opportunities and needs for reconfiguration of organizational structures and procedures.** The template for current denominational organization (though slightly modified through the years) grew out of the General Conference Session of 1901. Since then the Church has experienced dramatic growth in its membership and global presence. The Church has a worldwide presence and momentum that it did not enjoy in 1901. Marked advancement in travel and communication possibilities in recent decades creates new opportunities for organizational

connectedness. The Church must continually consider ways that denominational structure might more fully benefit from technology while extending its presence throughout the world? (For a stimulating and provocative introduction to how recent technological advances have impacted the world and the way organizations conduct business see *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century* by Thomas L Friedman, © Thomas Friedman 2005.)

3. **Maturity of national membership and regional structures permits and requires revision of roles and relationships within organizational structure.** The manner in which denominational structures rely on General Conference services changes over time as local capacity develops. The presence of a stable, trained and experienced Church membership base has increased the capacity for certain church programming functions to be addressed within the various cultures and regions of the world. At the same time certain General Conference-based ministries and services are essential due to the international scope of activity or to the global dimensions of the membership or employees involved. The role of the General Conference (and its divisions) in fostering unity and mission-focus is accomplished both through the administrative roles of General Conference officers and the ministries and services it provides to the world field.

 While the General Conference is indispensable (see Basic Assumptions #3 above) it must also be recognized that the degree of reliance on the General Conference office for ministries and services varies widely around the world. It is proper that the functions of the General Conference office be reviewed and revised from time to time in keeping with the changing needs of the field. When and if this is done it should be clear that revising a function of the General Conference does not reconfigure the role of the General Conference in session, or of the General Conference office and its divisions, as expressions of the global reality of the Church.

4. **Church structure needs a degree of flexibility in view of widely divergent circumstances. Further, a rationale is needed for developing new units of denominational structure or of right-sizing existing structures.** There is wide diversity in the size and operation of functionally equivalent denominational units. The membership of some local conferences exceeds the membership of some divisions. Membership of some local churches exceeds that of some local conferences/missions. How should these differences be addressed when defining an entity's role in the world Church? In light of the current size diversity among entities is there a better way of composing the regional and international dialog/decision-making bodies of denominational life?

To illustrate: Membership on various executive committees is largely determined by the classification of an entity. Since entities significantly vary in size the representation and/or participation of the membership is sometimes viewed as being disproportional. Although there has not been an expectation or a traditional practice that participation in Church life be determined by precise mathematical formulas it is important to periodically note, and if necessary revise, the patterns of membership representation and participation in global decision-making.

- Membership in the 500+ local missions and conferences ranges from 180 to 168,000. Fifty-six local conferences or missions have membership of less than 2,000. Should the representation formula be the same for a conference of 2,000 members as for a conference of 168,000 members?
- Sixty-one entities are described as "attached fields" and have different ways of being represented.
- Fourteen unions have membership less than 10,000 while seven unions have membership

of over 400,000.

5. **It is vitally important to preserve and strengthen the ability of the local church and the world church to remain in dynamic and effective communication.** The local church pastor is viewed as a key leadership link between denominational structure and church members. Yet there is relatively limited "systems-based, two-way" communication between the world church (i.e. General Conference) and the local church pastor. The prevalence of ubiquitous instantaneous communication systems is not utilized to the fullest advantage by the Church. Some might claim that technology offers, even to a local church, such a wide array of resource possibilities that the need for historic denominational structure, as a resource system, is becoming optional. The Church must address the question of how the local congregation and the world church remain in dynamic communication, obtain feedback and provide timely response. Most pastors have limited direct engagement with the decision-making bodies of the Church.

To illustrate: Five local churches generate just over one percent of world tithe. Among the five senior pastors of these churches:

- One is on the local conference executive committee
- One is on the union executive committee
- No one is on the division executive committee
- No one is on the General Conference executive committee
- No one was a delegate to the GC Session 2005

This illustration is not cited as an argument that these pastors should be on all the various layers of executive committees. But it does point out that relatively few local churches can exert significant impact on the whole denomination. The opportunities and methodologies available to an average-size congregation for quite independent participation in worldwide mission are many. This reality should be celebrated rather than mourned. But its existence also underscores the importance of a denominational structure that effectively engages the local Church and the world Church in dialog regarding mission. Such issues might be viewed as operational and procedural questions rather than structural questions. But an operational/procedural question cannot be resolved without examining the role and effectiveness of the structures involved.

Some possible questions in assessing the need for, and nature of, organizational change

1. How can structure more effectively facilitate both local flavor/initiative and global unity?

2. How many levels/layers of constituency-based structure are necessary?

3. What criteria should be used in establishing/maintaining mezzanine (between the local church and General Conference/divisions) units of organization

4. In the interest of mission and unity what roles of the General Conference and/or its divisions might be modified or enhanced?

5. Since consideration of change in organizational structure can be such a sensitive and draining experience (in terms of human and physical resources) how should a global discussion and decision-making process of organizational restructuring be carried out so as to ensure the highest possible degree of success?

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UNION OF CHURCHES
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMMISSION ON MINISTRIES, SERVICES
AND STRUCTURES
Submitted by the Union of Churches sub-committee:
Ryan, M L, Chairman; Parmenter, V B, Secretary; Graz, J; Lemon, R E; Wilson, J K;
Biaggi, G; Bruinsma, R; Ferriera, O; Frikart, U; Hankinson, D; Ketting-Weller, G; Mbio,
V; Nikolov, I; Palacio, J; Ruguri, B M

</div>

INTRODUCTION

The Commission has recommended a range of flexibility in denominational structure.
Several of the models described in the range can be implemented without additional
changes to policy. The Commission recognized that one of the models, the three
constituency based model, would require adjustments to present Working Policy.

Current General Conference Working Policy states that, "The Church does not encourage
the organizational arrangement termed union of churches; however, in special
circumstances seen as such by the divisions concerned and the General Conference, it
may seem to be desirable." The sub-committee was assigned the responsibility of
studying this policy to position the union of churches structure as an acceptable model for
addressing issues of mission advance and effective use of resources.

DEFINITION

It is proposed that a union of churches be defined as a constituency-based organization
consisting of local churches, within a defined geographical area, that has been granted, by
a General Conference Session, official status as a Seventh-day Adventist union of
churches. It will inherit the combined functions of a local field and union. A union of
churches shall not have any subsidiary units that fulfill local conference administrative
functions.

A union of churches will therefore be the middle organization of a three tiered
constituency model- (1) local church, (2) union of churches and (3) General Conference
and its divisions.

A union of churches is not considered a component of the current four tiered constituency
model- (1) local church, (2) local conference/mission, (3) union conference/mission, (4)
General Conference and its divisions.

PHILOSOPY

There is little argument that we live in an ever changing and diverse world which
includes differing religious environments; faster and more effective means of
communication; an ability to provide centralized financial management to large
geographical areas; tighter immigration laws; multiple currencies and increasing

1   restriction on the international transfer of funds; an expansion of education in many
2   neglected countries; rapid church growth in some countries and limited growth in others;
3   conflicts within and between nations; and the ability to travel long distances quickly and
4   cheaply.   Some of these factors prove to be a blessing to the church while others present
5   us with complex challenges.
6
7   In this setting the committee was asked to study the advantages and disadvantages of a
8   union of churches model as an alternative structural arrangement for the Seventh-day
9   Adventist Church. In order for a "union of churches" to be an acceptable model it must
10 respond to the realities of the world we live in and the needs of a church that is placed in
11 the twenty-first century.
12
13 There seems to be confusion in some areas of the world over the issue of church authority
14 and one of the most consistent perceptions expressed by church members is the statement
15 that the church is over governed. It needs to determined first of all whether this
16 perception is valid, even if in some areas only, and if it is, it needs to find alternative
17 structural options for those areas. If it is true only in some areas it needs to decide
18 whether different structural forms will suit those areas. It needs to be asked whether
19 these new structures will threaten the unity of the church or whether they will enhance it.
20 It must also be determined how the constituency might be fairly represented in the
21 decision making process of the Church.
22
23 Local churches, conferences and missions sometimes complain that too much money is
24 being passed on to other administrative levels, so much so, that they are finding it
25 increasingly difficult to fund their own operations and assist their institutions. Most of
26 their funds are used for maintaining the program, leaving very little in the budget for
27 evangelism and mission. However, if the only reason for altering the structure of the
28 church is for the purpose of saving money it may not be reason enough.
29
30   Alternative models for structure must foster unity. We cannot afford to isolate any
31 segment of the church community. Improved communication, additional financial
32 resources and fairer representation are just some of the cures for isolation.
33
34 More and more churches are faced with the reality of functioning without a pastor or they
35 may have to share their pastor with numerous other churches. Many believe that this is
36 due to the fact that so many of the pastors are caught up in administration. A new
37 structure that releases personnel resources into the field will help to meet the needs of the
38 churches but more importantly ensure a greater focus on mission. On the other hand,
39 while there is a perceived need for more pastors on the frontline, this must be kept in
40 balance with the need for laity to be actively involved in the mission and management of
41 the Church. It is perceived by some that in specific areas of the world the Church
42 continues to grow at a more rapid rate where the lay people are responsible for mission
43 and church pastors are limited in number.
44
45 The church of the future, because of emerging laws and regulations, needs to be able to
46 respond more readily to new restrictions. If the church is structured parallel with

1 government boundaries it will be much easier to establish rapport with government
2 bodies. (In cases where there is more than one administrative unit of the church within a
3 particular government boundary it should be determined how the church will best be
4 represented to the government body within that territory.) Whether we like it or not the
5 church must work closely with legal entities to protect our members' liberties as well as
6 our property and our rights to share the gospel.
7
8 Some areas of the world may benefit from a structure that is flatter than at present, with
9 less administrative units and/or less levels. An organization is needed that will be
10 responsive to mission and unity while avoiding unnecessary organizational proliferation
11 of administrative structure.
12
13 The selection of any model needs to be based on how it facilitates mission effectively and
14 efficiently. In selected situations the union of churches model may serve to reduce the
15 number of administrative units and facilitate a more effective distribution of financial
16 resources.
17
18 The following proposals revise the role and relationships of a union of churches in
19 denominational life and structure. The proposals include;
20
21   1. Amendments to General Conference Constitution and Bylaws.
22   2. Amendments to General Conference Working Policies in respect to
23   representation, finance, resource sharing, criteria and procedures for
24   establishing or discontinuing unions of churches.
25   3. A model constitution for a constituency-based organization.
26   4. A provision for unions of churches to have either mission or conference status.
27
28

1   CONSTITUTION AND BYLAW AMENDMENTS

2

3   **Introduction: The following amendments to General Conference Constitution and**
4   **Bylaws serve to recognize the place and representation of unions of churches in**
5   **the world organization of the Church.**

6

7   **ARTICLE IV—MEMBERSHIP**
8   **Sec. 1.** The membership of the General Conference shall consist of:
9   a. All ~~union conferences and union missions~~ unions and unions of churches, that have
10   been or shall be properly organized and accepted by vote of the General Conference in
11   session.
12   b. All of the following entities that are directly attached to the General Conference or a
13   division:
14   1) ~~Union of churches~~ Unions and unions of churches.
15   2) Local Conferences
16   3) Local mission and functional equivalents thereof provided they have two or more
17   officers and an executive committee, observe a schedule of regular constituency meetings
18   and have been properly organized.

19

20   **ARTICLE V—General Conference SESSIONS**
21   **Sec. 5.** The delegates to a General Conference Session shall be
22   designated as follows:
23   a. Regular delegates.
24   b. Delegates at large.
25   c. In case of financial exigency or other major crisis within the Church or in the
26   international arena, the Executive Committee may take an action to reduce the maximum
27   number of delegates to a particular General Conference Session. Such reduction shall then
28   be applied to both regular delegates and delegates at large.
29   **Sec. 6.** Regular delegates shall represent the General Conference's member union
30   conferences, union missions, unions of churches, member conferences, ~~and~~ and missions, ~~and~~
31   ~~unions of churches~~ as defined in Article IV, as follows:
32   a. Delegates representing union conferences and unions of churches with conference status
33   having division affiliation shall be appointed by the respective ~~union conference~~ executive
34   committee.
35   b. Delegates representing union missions and unions of churches with mission status
36   having division affiliation shall be appointed by the respective division executive
37   committees in consultation with the organizations concerned.
38   c. Delegates representing conferences and missions having union conference affiliation
39   shall be appointed by the respective union conference executive committees in
40   consultation with the organizations concerned.
41   d. Delegates representing conferences and missions having union mission affiliation shall
42   be appointed by the respective division executive committees in consultation with the
43   organizations concerned.

1   e. Delegates representing conferences and missions directly attached to divisions, shall be
2   appointed by the respective division executive committees in consultation with the
3   organizations concerned.
4   f. Delegates representing division institutions, the number of whom shall correspond to
5   the number of division institutions within each division, shall be appointed by the
6   respective division executive committees in consultation with the organizations
7   concerned.
8   g. Delegates representing union conferences and unions of churches with conference status
9   directly attached to the General Conference shall be appointed by the executive
10   committees of the respective attached union conferences entity.
11   h. Delegates representing union missions, conferences, and missions, and unions of
12   churches with mission status directly attached to the General Conference shall be
13   appointed by the General Conference Executive Committee in consultation with the
14   organizations concerned.
15   **Sec. 7.** Regular delegates shall be allotted on the following basis:
16   a. Each union conference shall be entitled to two delegates other than its president (who is
17   a delegate at large) without regard to membership size.
18   b. Each union mission shall be entitled to one delegate other than its president (who is a
19   delegate at large) without regard to membership size.
20   c. Each union of churches with conference status shall be entitled to one delegate other
21   than its president (who is a delegate at large) without regard to membership size.
22   d. Each union of churches with mission status is represented by its president who is a
23   delegate at large.
24   c. e. Each local conference shall be entitled to two delegates without regard to membership
25   size.
26   d. f. Each local mission* shall be entitled to one delegate without regard to membership
27   size.
28   e. Each union of churches shall be entitled to two delegates without regard to membership
29   size.
30   f. g. Each division shall be entitled to additional delegates based upon its membership as a
31   proportion of the world Church membership. The total number of delegates from all
32   divisions under this provision shall not exceed 400.
33   g. h. Delegates from each division, provided for under Sec. 7. f., shall be allotted to the
34   union conferences and union missions unions and unions of churches that are affiliated
35   with that division, based on each union's proportion of the division membership. Any
36   unallocated delegate entitlements under this process shall be allocated at the discretion of
37   the division executive committee.
38   h. i. Unused quotas of regular delegates allocated to unions and unions of churches may be
39   reallocated by the divisions.
40
41

1 **ARTICLE VIII—EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**
2 **Sec. 1.** The Executive Committee of the General Conference shall
3 consist of:
4 a. *Ex officio members*—1) Those elected as provided for in Article VI, Sec. 1. except the
5 director and associate directors of the General Conference Auditing Service and the
6 associate directors/secretaries of General Conference departments and associations.
7 2) Presidents of union conferences, presidents of union missions, presidents of unions of
8 churches, presidents of attached unions, …..
9
10 **ARTICLE VIII—AUDITING SERVICE AND AUDITS**
11 **Sec. 3.** The General Conference Auditing Service, ever sensitive to the country-specific
12 regulations governing the audits of denominational entities in a particular country, serves
13 as the denomination's preferred provider of auditing services for world divisions; ~~union~~
14 ~~conferences; union missions~~ unions and unions of churches; conferences; missions; ~~unions~~
15 ~~of churches;~~ affiliated services, organizations, and institutions of the General Conference
16 and every other administrative level; Adventist Development and Relief Agency country
17 and regional administrations and projects (not audited by external auditors); and special
18 funds. Exceptions to the above requirements shall be by specific action of the Executive
19 Committee.
20
21 **ARTICLE XVII—FUNDS**
22 **Sec. 1.** The funds of the General Conference shall be as follows:
23 a. A percentage of the tithe receipts of the local conference/mission/field shall be
24 forwarded through the union and division in accordance with the General Conference
25 *Working Policy.*.
26 b. A percentage, of the tithe receipts of the union of churches shall be forwarded ~~to~~
27 through the division in accordance with the General Conference *Working Policy.*
28 c. Regular mission offerings.
29 d. Special gifts. Proceeds from the maturities of planned giving designated for the General
30 Conference.
31
32

1 **POLICY AMENDMENTS**

2

3 **B** ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION*

4 **B 05 Organizational and Operational Principles of Seventh-day Adventist**

5 **Church Structure**

6 Organizational life and procedures in the Seventh-day Adventist Church are based upon

7 the following principles:

8 1. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a worldwide community of believers who

9 confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and who are united in mission, purpose, and

10 belief. The Church defines its internal governance as representative in form with

11 executive responsibility and authority assigned to a variety of entities and institutions and

12 their respective constituencies, boards, and officers through constitutions or articles of

13 incorporation, bylaws, and operating policies and guidelines.

14 2. Each level of denominational organization has a defined membership, also known as a

15 constituency. These constituency-based levels are The constituency based units are: local

16 church, local conference, union of churches with conference status, union conference and

17 General Conference. (Local missions, union of churches with mission status, and union

18 missions have several similarities to local and union conferences, however their operations

19 are defined by General Conference and division policies rather than by a constitution and

20 bylaws. Divisions are established as regional offices of the General Conference and are not

21 considered as constituency-based organizations. Unions of churches, (see B 85) have been

22 established in exceptional circumstances. However, this is not the standard pattern for

23 denominational organization. Institutions may also be described as constituency-based

24 but are not considered as a separate level of denominational organization.) Membership,

25 held in only one constituency at a time, carries the privilege of participation in the

26 deliberations and

27 decision-making of that particular constituency.

28

29 **B 10 Outline of Denominational Organization**

30 **B 10 05 Local Church**—A specific group of Seventh-day Adventist members in a

31 defined location that has been granted, by the constituency of a local conference/mission,

32 in session, official status as a Seventh-day Adventist church.

33 **B 10 10 Local Conference/Mission/Field**—A specific group of local churches, within a

34 defined geographic area, that has been granted, by the constituency of a union

35 conference/mission, in session, official status as a Seventh-day Adventist local

36 conference/mission/field.

37 **B 10 15 Union Conference/Mission**—A specific group of local

38 conferences/missions/fields, within a defined geographic area, that has been granted, by a

39 General Conference Session, official status as a Seventh-day Adventist union

40 conference/mission.

41 **B 10 20 Union of churches**--A group of local churches, within a defined geographical

42 area, that has been granted, by a General Conference Session, official status as a Seventh-

43 day Adventist union of churches.

1 **B 10 202 General Conference and Its Divisions**—1. *Divisions*—To facilitate its
2 worldwide activity, the General Conference has established regional offices, ...
3
4 **B 10 30 Variations in Administrative Relationships**— 1. For the purpose of fulfilling
5 the mission of the Church, division administrations are authorized to recommend
6 modified organizational structures and/or administrative relationships in situations which
7 do not involve the resizing of unions, as outlined below in paragraphs a. through c., or to
8 experiment with further modifications in territories where unusual economic, political,
9 geographic, religious, or demographic circumstances, or strategic purposes make normal
10 church organizational and administrative structures impractical or inefficient. In all cases
11 where alternative arrangements are implemented, the ~~four~~ interrelated constituent levels
12 of Church ~~organization~~ organization, as more fully described in this *Working Policy,* shall
13 be maintained, and the following fundamental principles for Seventh-day Adventist
14 organizational structure and relationships shall be preserved:.......
15
16 **B 40 20 Unions United in General Conference**—As the churches unite in the local,
17 mission, conference or union of churches ~~(or mission/field)~~ for mutual help and
18 cooperation in service, so the conferences/missions/fields grouped together unite in the
19 union conference or union mission. In like manner the unions, unions of churches and
20 entities directly attached to the General Conference ~~and attached fields (including unions~~
21 ~~of churches)~~ in all the world are united in the General Conference organization. For the
22 more efficient administration of the worldwide work, the organized unions, unions of
23 churches and any mission fields not included in the unions in great continental or
24 geographical sections are set apart by constitutional provision as divisions of the General
25 Conference.
26
27 **B 40 65 Attached Local Fields**—
28 ~~3. *Special Wage Scale Provision*— Because of the direct relationships between the~~
29 ~~division and attached local fields approved as unions of churches, and because the~~
30 ~~organizational responsibilities may be more involved than in a local~~
31 ~~conference/mission/field within a union, the percentage rates for officers and departmental~~
32 ~~directors of attached fields shall be approximately halfway between those of a local~~
33 ~~conference/mission/field and those of a union.~~
34
35 **B 60 05 Nomenclature and Status of Organizational Units**—......
36
37 One of two classifications, mission status or conference status, may be granted to certain
38 levels of denominational organization. In denominational structure, the family of local
39 churches may be classified as a local mission, local conference ,or union of churches with
40 conference or mission status. In similar fashion, the family of local missions/conferences
41 may be classified as a union mission or a union conference. In some areas of the world,
42 terms such as "field" or "section" are used instead of the term "mission." When such
43 terms are used, they refer to units having "mission" status.
44

B 65 21 Organizing New Unions of churches—1. If it is proposed to organize a new union of churches, the proposal shall be considered by the respective division executive committee at its midyear or yearend meeting, or at a division council. Proposals to organize groups of churches or missions/conferences into new unions of churches, or to reorganize a union mission or union conference into a union of churches, may be initiated by a group of missions/conferences, a union conference or union mission, a division, or by the General Conference.

2. When a group of conferences/missions initiates a proposal to organize a new union of churches the officers of the division and union/s shall consult with the officers of the organizations making the proposal.

3. When a union conference or union mission initiates a proposal to organize a new union of churches the officers of the division and General Conference shall consult with the officers making the proposal, including the officers of the conferences/missions.

4. If the division executive committee initiates and/or concurs with a proposal initiated elsewhere, and the conferences/missions to be formed into a new union of churches are part of an existing union conference, the division shall request the conferences involved to convene constituency meetings to consider the proposal and if there is concurrence to initiate appropriate dissolution procedures as per policy. In the event of a positive action by the constituency, or where the organizations involved are a part of an existing union mission, the division shall request the General Conference to appoint a survey team, including General Conference and division representation, to consider the merits of the proposal.

5. When the General Conference initiates a proposal to organize a new union of churches it shall request the division to consider the matter and in the event of division concurrence shall implement the processes outlined in 4. above.

6. Further consideration of a proposal to organize a union of churches will be discontinued when the specific proposal is not approved by:

   a. a constituency meeting action of any local or union conference involved in the proposal;

   b. an executive committee action of either the division concerned or of the General Conference Executive Committee.

7. The survey team, after its investigation, shall report its findings to the General Conference and division executive committees.

8. If, after considering the findings of the survey team, the division chooses to proceed with organizing the new union of churches, it shall record an action to this effect at its midyear, yearend meeting, division council or at a time when adequate representation is available, and forward its recommendation to the General Conference Executive Committee for consideration.

9. The General Conference Executive Committee shall consider the report of the survey team and the recommendation of the division and shall take the appropriate action.

10. In any situation involving constituency meetings pertaining to the establishment of a new union of churches the division shall oversee the process of constituency decisions, dissolution of entities, reorganization, determination of organizational status, adoption of constitution and bylaws/operating policies, clarification of operational obligations, and the selection of leaders.

1   11. The new union of churches shall be presented at the next General Conference Session
2   for acceptance into the sisterhood of member units.
3
4   **B 65 25 Organizing New Union Conferences (See B 75 20)**—1. If it is proposed to
5   organize a new union conference from an existing union mission or from within the
6   territory of an existing union conference, or to organize a union of churches into a union
7   conference, the proposal shall be considered by the division executive committee at a
8   time when a full representation of the unions and institutions in the division is present.
9   Proposals to organize groups of conferences/missions into new union conferences may be
10   initiated by the union, by the executive committees or constituency sessions of a group of
11   conferences/missions, by the division, or by the General Conference.
12   2. If the division executive committee favors the proposal, it shall request the union
13   mission/conference/union of churches executive committee to consider the proposal if it
14   has not already done so. In the event of a positive action by the executive committee, the
15   division shall appoint a study committee (see B 65 05, paragraph 2. above) to assess the
16   readiness for conference status of organizations involved in the proposal.
17   3. The study committee, in addition to its assessment role, or a team appointed by the
18   division executive committee shall assist the administration of the
19   conferences/missions/unions of churches desiring to be part of the new union conference
20   in their program of moving toward union conference status. In areas where it is
21   considered helpful, a union conference status candidacy period may be required.
22   4. When the division is satisfied that the proposed organization is ready for union
23   conference status, the division executive committee shall call a constituency meeting of
24   the current union mission and/or union of churches to consider the report and
25   recommendations of the study committee. In the event of an action by the constituency in
26   favour of proceeding with the organization of a new union conference, the division shall
27   submit a request to the General Conference for an on-site evaluation of the proposed new
28   union conference.
29   5. A survey team appointed by the General Conference Executive Committee, comprised
30   of division and General Conference personnel, shall make an on-site evaluation. If the
31   survey team is satisfied that the request is appropriate, it shall recommend union
32   conference status for the new organization to the General Conference Executive
33   Committee. In the event the organization is not ready for union conference status at the
34   time of the General Conference's evaluation, recommendations will be made and, after
35   suitable passage of time, a further evaluation conducted.
36   6. Upon the recommendation of the survey team, the General Conference Executive
37   Committee at its annual meeting, or at a General Conference Session, shall determine
38   whether or not to grant union conference status.
39   7. Upon the approval of the General Conference Executive Committee, the division shall
40   call a constituency meeting of the new organization as soon as possible in order to
41   organize the union conference. At this meeting a union conference constitution and
42   bylaws, patterned after the model in the General Conference and division working
43   policies, shall be adopted. Officers, departmental directors/secretaries, and the members
44   of the executive committee shall be elected according to provisions of the newly adopted
45   constitution.

1 8. If organization of a new union conference is approved by the General Conference
2 Executive Committee, it shall be received into the sisterhood of unions at the next
3 General Conference Session.
4 9. If a new union conference is formed from a union of churches or entities that include a
5 union of churches, plans should include the establishment of local conferences/missions
6 in accordance with General Conference Working Policy. See B 65 10, "Organizing New
7 Local Missions," and B 65 15, "Organizing New Local Conferences."
8 **B 75 11 Criteria for Union of churches Status**
9 Careful study shall be given to the advisability and adoption of "union of churches" status
10 and the readiness of the respective administrative entity or entities which seek this status
11 or before organisations of groups are advised to move in this direction.
12 The following criteria must guide this evaluation:
13 1. Leaders, employees, and members of an organization(s) for which union of churches
14 status is contemplated shall give evidence of possessing a clear perception of the
15 denomination's primary objectives which are to supply the spiritual needs of the church
16 and obey the Lord's commission, "Go . . . and preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15).
17 2. The membership, employees, and church leaders should give evidence that they
18 understand the worldwide character of the work and participate by assuming their share
19 of the financial responsibility.
20 3. The proposed union of churches must demonstrate that it is able to make budgetary
21 provision to adequately staff and care for the various lines of activity and, when
22 necessary, be ready to share its employees with other fields.
23 4. The union of churches shall demonstrate its ability to develop and administer a
24 balanced departmental and, where appropriate, a sound institutional program.
25 5. The union of churches shall demonstrate its ability to properly store the materials
26 specified in the records retention schedule as provided by the General Conference Office
27 of Archives and Statistics.
28 6. A spirit of unity shall prevail among the members, employees, and leaders of the field.
29 This unity shall be evident in the plans formulated and in the implementation of the same.
30 It shall be found between individual members and between the various organizations
31 within the proposed union of churches.
32 7. The membership, the ministry, and the leadership level shall give evidence of
33 understanding and accepting the established principles of denominational administration
34 and relationships between the various organizations. Leaders and committees shall
35 demonstrate a willingness to work in harmony with the working policies of the
36 denomination.
37 8. Confidence in, and loyalty to, the leadership of the denomination at all levels shall be
38 evident on the part of the membership. Employees and members shall respect the
39 decisions of responsible committees.
40 9. Administrative officers and committees shall demonstrate an ability to recognize
41 problems which affect the welfare of the work, and thus take steps which will resolve
42 these problems.
43 10. The major portion of the financial resources for the operating of organizations and
44 institutions shall be found within the territory of the proposed union of churches.
45 However, in locations where an institution and/or organization serves several unions of

1 churches, the major portion of the financial resources for operating the institution and/or
2 organization shall be provided within the territories of the entities served.
3 11. The proposed union of churches shall possess financial stability, having its operating
4 capital intact. It shall also have adequate resources to meet its financial obligations
5 promptly, including accounts payable to other denominational organizations.
6
7
8
9 **B 75 30 Process For Reviewing Status**—......
10
11 2. When the entity under consideration is a union conference/mission or union of
12 churches the decision to adjust status shall be made, after appropriate consultation with
13 the entity concerned and the division executive committee, by the General Conference
14 Executive Committee at a Spring Meeting or Annual Council.......
15
16 **B 80 Adjustments in Territory Of Organizations**
17 B 80 05 Territorial Adjustments or Resizing of Territories—If it is proposed to make
18 territorial adjustments between local fields or between unions, or to resize the
19 territorial.....
20
21 3. If the territory of a conference, a union of churches with conference status, or union
22 conference is involved, the administration of the next higher organization shall use its
23 discretion to examine constitutions and legal requirements to determine whether a
24 constituency meeting should be called and, if so, at what point(s) in the procedure.
25
26
27 <center>**B 85 Union of ~~churches~~ Churches**</center>
28 **B 85 05 Application/Definition**— ~~The Church does not encourage the organizational~~
29 ~~arrangement termed union of churches; however, in special circumstances seen as such~~
30 ~~by the divisions concerned and the General Conference, it may seem to be desirable. The~~
31 ~~designation, union of churches, may be applied in selected cases to describe a united~~
32 ~~organized body of local churches within a territory which would ordinarily be designated~~
33 ~~as an attached local conference/mission/field (see also B 40 70, paragraph 1.) but which~~
34 ~~operates under special conditions which are described in B 85 10, Criteria.~~
35 A union of churches is a constituency based organization consisting of a group of local
36 churches, within a defined geographical area, that has been granted, by the General
37 Conference, official status as a Seventh-day Adventist union of churches.
38 **B 85 10 ~~Criteria~~ Guidelines for establishing unions of churches**—1. ~~If an~~
39 ~~organization, which would ordinarily be designated as a local conference/mission/field~~
40 ~~currently has union conference/mission status, the criteria for applying the designation,~~
41 ~~union of churches, and not continuing that of union conference/mission nor applying that~~
42 ~~of local conference/mission/field, or organizations wish to apply for the status of a union~~
43 ~~of churches~~ A union of churches is the sole constituency-based administrative link
44 between the local church and the General Conference/division. ~~shall be the following:~~
45 ~~a. The organization has no subsidiary conference/mission/field organization.~~

<center>250</center>

1 ~~b. There is limited/no possibility that two or more viable subsidiary field organizations~~
2 ~~could be established within the organization's territory in the foreseeable future.~~
3 ~~c. There is no viable possibility of being incorporated into an existing or projected union~~
4 ~~organization in the foreseeable future.~~
5 ~~2. If an organization is currently a local conference/mission/field within a union, or if it is~~
6 ~~an attached local conference/mission/field, the criteria for being designated a union of~~
7 ~~churches shall include:~~
8 ~~a. All the points outlined in paragraph 1. above.~~
9 ~~b. Specific and demonstrable reasons for applying the~~
10 ~~designation, unions of churches, rather than continuing to be designated as~~
11 ~~a local conference/mission/field.~~
12 ~~c. Additional criteria as determined by the division and the~~
13 ~~General Conference.~~
14 Consideration regarding the establishment of unions of churches shall include the
15 following guidelines:
16
17 a. A clear demonstration that the new status will enhance the mission of the church in the
18 specific territory.
19 b. The establishment of a union of churches shall normally result in a reduction in the
20 number of organizational units, e.g. the combination of conferences/missions should
21 reduce the overall number of entities.
22 c. Its territory shall be made up of contiguous boundaries or be part of a single country.
23 d. The geographical boundaries shall not overlap another field or local
24 conference/mission or union conference, union of churches or union mission.
25 e. The population of the geographic area shall indicate a strong potential for growth of
26 membership together with an adequate number of churches to establish a new union of
27 churches.
28 f. While there should be a fair degree of flexibility in the way a union of churches is
29 organized there should be no sub-units with executive authority and/or treasury
30 accounting functions.
31 g. A union of churches may own and operate institutions.
32
33 **B 85 15 Authorization for Designation**—~~The designation, union of churches, shall be~~
34 ~~applied to an organization only by action of an Annual Council of the General~~
35 ~~Conference Executive Committee upon recommendation of the respective division~~
36 ~~committee.~~ If organization of a new union of churches is approved by the General
37 Conference Executive Committee, it shall be received into the sisterhood of member
38 units at the next General Conference Session.
39 **B 85 20** ~~Operating Provisions/Procedures~~ **Union of churches–Model Constitution**—
40 An organization designated as a union of churches with conference status shall ~~use the~~
41 ~~operating provisions/procedures applicable to attached local fields in the following areas:~~
42 follow the union of churches model constitution contained in the General Conference
43 Working Policy.
44 ~~1. *Election of Officers*—Officers and departmental directors of~~
45 ~~conferences/missions/fields attached directly to the division shall be elected in the same~~

1 way as for a local conference/mission/field, with the division organization taking the
2 place of the union organization in such elections.
3 2. *Representation on the Division Committee* — The president of the attached
4 conference/mission/field shall be a member of the Division Committee.
5 3. *Delegates to General Conference Sessions* — Representation at General Conference
6 Sessions for fields attached directly to the division shall be in harmony with the
7 constitutional provision.
8 4. *Tithe Percentages* — a. A local conference/mission/field passes on to the union
9 organization 10 percent of its tithe receipts, required tithe percentages/sharing, all
10 mission offerings, and such other funds as may be called for by the policies of the union
11 and division organizations, in harmony with this provision.
12 b. Conferences/Missions/Fields attached directly to a division shall follow the same plan
13 by passing on to the division organization 10 percent of their tithe receipts, required tithe
14 percentages/sharing, all mission offerings, and such other funds as may be called for by
15 the policies of the division organization.
16 5. **Special Wage Scale Provision** — Because of the direct relationships between attached
17 fields and the division, and because the organizational responsibilities may be more
18 involved than in a local conference/mission within a union, the following special wage
19 scale provisions shall apply:
20 a. The percentage rates for officers and departmental directors of attached fields shall be
21 approximately halfway between those of a local conference/mission/field and those of a
22 union.
23 b. No incumbent's salary shall be reduced, but no new increases shall be given to such
24 individual until his/her salary is in harmony with the new percentage rate for his/her
25 office.
26 c. The salaries of new officers and departmental directors shall be audited according to
27 the new percentage rates.
28
29
30 **FINANCIAL POLICIES:**
31
32 There are a number of financial policies that need to be addressed, at the conclusion of
33 the work being undertaken by the Tithe Commission, particularly as it relates to the
34 percentage of tithe that should be remitted from one organizational entity to another.
35
36 **Unions of churches shall remit tithe percentages and retirement fund contributions**
37 **as determined by the division. The union of churches retains the funds that would**
38 **normally remain with a local conference/mission plus those that would remain in the**
39 **union conference/mission except for any additional percentage determined by the**
40 **division.**
41
42
43
44 **It is proposed to add the following sentence into the middle of the paragraph above:**
45

1   **In setting its percentages, the division needs to make sure that the tithe percentages**
2   **to the General Conference (8% from NAD and 2% from other divisions) are**
3   **included.**
4

Appendix D

Regional Conference Historical Documents

SHALL THE FOUR FREEDOMS FUNCTION
AMONG SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS?

Those who slight a brother because of his color are slighting Jesus.
Southern Work, p. 9.

I.   Result of neglect of the colored people--the curse of sin on the church. *Southern Work,* p. 12.

II.   Estimate of the colored people as being

    A.   Brethren. *Southern Work,* p. 4.

    B.   Men capable of attaining eternal life as the white man. Ibid., p. 27.

    C.   Travelers to the same heaven to sit down at the same table as the whites. Ibid., p. 10.

    D.   Worshipers of the same God as the whites. Ibid., p. 6.

III.   Capabilities of the colored people: talent, T 9:202; ability, 9:202; quick perception and bright minds, T 7:229; reasoning power. *Southern Work,* p. 27.

IV.   Duty of the white Adventists

    A.   To repair as far as in their power past injury done to the colored people, 7:230.

    B.   To show "exact and impartial" justice to the Negro race.

    C.   To increase the force of colored workers, T 9:207.

    D.   To throw their influence against the customs and practices of the world.
        Southern Work. 2 34

V.   Solution: the love of Jesus a "dissipater of hereditary and cultivated prejudices. Ibid., p. 14.

THE OBSERVATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE
ADVANCEMENT OF WORLD-WIDE WORK AMONG
COLORED SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

THESIS: The present policy of the white Adventists in responsible positions will not stand the acid test of the Judgment.

I.   The policy in the educational and medical work is discriminatory and un-Christ-like.

    A.   Colored people are not admitted generally to our institutions as patients, students, and nurses.

1

1. The Washington Sanitarium refuses to admit colored people: The Byard case, Gaither case, the Clark case.

2. Colored girls are denied admittance to the Washington Sanitarium School of Nursing and some other schools open to the whites. As a result, they are forced to travel long distances to such schools as will accept them or undergo inconveniences at the risk of their souls at non-Adventist schools.

B. No academies like the Shenandoah Academy are available in the East for our colored youth.

C. Academies that might accept colored students are not easily accessible.

D. There is no standard satisfactory creditable academy for our colored youth.

E. A notorious example of injustice was the policy of Emmanuel Missionary College.

1. Colored students were assigned to the rear seat during worship at chapel.

2. Colored students were subjected to an unwarranted and humiliating form of segregation in having to wait for their meals until there might be a "quota" of colored students to fill a table.

F. The "quota" Policy of our institutions of higher learning with its limitations of equal opportunities for our colored youth to obtain a Christian education is indefensible.

G. There is inadequate supervision of our educational work by those who should be interested.

H. In contrast to the policy of the Adventists, many non-Adventist institutions admit colored applicants.

1. A SDA colored girl is pursuing nursing at Bellevue in New York City with no discrimination.

2. Catholic University accepts colored students.

I. There are no Negroes so far as we know on staffs of Adventist institutions. In contrast:

1. City College of New York City employs a full-time Negro psychologist who is a director of the Evening School.

2. Hunter College of New York City employs a full-time Negro professor.

3. The University of Chicago employs at least five full-time Negro professors as well as visiting professors.

2

4.   Harvard, Boston, Northwestern, New York, De Paul and Toledo employ Negro instructors.

J.   There is a policy of evasion and futile appeasement relative to our work.

1.   It is said, for example, that it is against public policy to have Negro and white patients in the Washington Sanitarium.

2.   It is said that colored patients would be objectionable to white patients, especially those from the Southern States.

3.   Non-Adventist institutions in Maryland use no such subterfuges.

a.   John Hopkins Hospital in Maryland accepts Negro patients.

b.   Sandy Spring Hospital in Maryland accepts Negro patients.

II.   The policy in the administrative sphere is discriminatory and un-Christlike.

A.   Negroes do not have adequate representation on committees at all levels--local, union, and general conferences.

1.   The Potomac Conference Legal Association (as well as the Union and General Associations) has no representation for the 16,000 colored constituents of Seventh-day Adventists.

2.   Deeds of churches and other properties are held by the Conference Legal Associations-deeds to institutions occupied by colored Adventists; yet no colored Adventist is a member of these associations.

3.   Appropriations made by many committees are proportionally inadequate to the needs of the colored work.

4.   There is not even one General Conference office filled by a colored person.

5.   Even the General Conference stationery (there may be another type) "unwittingly shows discrimination in the caption about the Colored Department and its Secretary is shunted down to the bottom of the letterhead and to the left. "Left" and "bottom" often have sinister connotations.

6.   The fact that there is a colored constituency should entitle it to at least one general conference administrative officer and colored supervisory officers with proper office personnel, equipment, and power.

7.   The financial contributions of the colored constituency warrants the carrying out of the statement under "6" above.

3

8.   The present disinterestedness on the part of the General Conference Committee as a unit calls for the presence of a General Conference officer who can sympathize with the plight of 16,000 colored Adventists.

B.   Funds are allocated so that monies from the colored constituency finance institutions where we derive no direct financial and economic benefits; in other words, our money is not used enough for our advancement.

1.   There is an over-emphasis and dramatization of "deficits" in the colored work.

2.   The reports of those continual deficits in the colored work are too vague and lacking in detailed information for unqualified acceptance on the part of the colored laity.

C.   We have no representative connected with the disbursement of funds from the colored constituency.

D.   The office of the Secretary of the Colored Department does not carry with it enough administrative authority, jurisdiction, and equipment. In the eyes of the laity, it seems to be in matters pertaining to the impartial progress of the colored group powerless to function adequately.

E.   There is no definite, detailed report of Negro funds and their disbursement.

1.   The colored people know nothing of the business organization, loss, profits, and expenses connected with the *Message Magazine*.

2.   There are no colored editor, circulation manager, and business manager of the only Adventist periodical devoted exclusively to the interest of the 13,000,000 colored people in the United States.

F.   The personnel in the administration of the colored work is not proportionate to the needs, demands, and interest of such work. For example, the colored work at large consists of evangelizing, teaching , and selling books.

III.   The policy in the field of employment is unfair, partial and un-Christlike.

A.   Negroes are not employed as stenographers in all divisions of work (local, union, and general), printers, linotype setters, shipping clerks, camp directors, secretaries over such departments as Missionary Volunteer Department, Army, etc., editors and members of editorial staffs.

B.   Negroes are not encouraged to find employment in the "work."

IV.   The policy in spiritual matters is too one-sided and narrow.

A.   Conference officials (general, union, and local) neglect to lay plans for the improvement of

4

the colored Adventists as a group.

B. Conference officials do not initiate, encourage, and foster dignified programs for the up-life of the colored constituency.

C. Conference officials visiting colored churches on the Sabbath preach sermons fostering conference objectives, e.g., Harvest Ingathering, Sabbath School, Big Week, etc.

D. Conference officials foster only institutes which have to do with bringing in money to the general treasury.

    1. Colporteurs enrich the treasury. (We admit they help to save souls).

    2. Lay workers' institutes emphasize the bringing in of souls, but these souls will bring in more tithes, more Harvest Ingathering funds, etc.

E. No dignified programs are offered, suggested, encouraged, emphasized for the improvement of our only sanitarium and college, or for the building of new academies, sanitariums, or colleges.

F. There are according to our knowledge no recreational camps for our many boys and girls.

G. Whites and coloreds do not worship together, although:

    1. The Bahais worship together.

    2. The Friends have a common meeting place.

H. Since white and colored eat without friction daily in the cafeterias of the Library of Congress, Union Station, National Art Gallery, Interior Department, and other government buildings, it is illegal to segregate the Secretary of the Colored Department for his meals.

V. These unfair practices embarrass the colored laity, form a definite obstacle to the spread of the message among colored people in the highways and byways, and also if we may paraphrase 2 Samuel 12:14 give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.

Recommendations:

Educational and Medical

    1. That Seventh-day Adventist sanitariums, hospitals, and educational institutions discontinue the unchristian policy of discrimination towards colored people.

    2. That the "quota" policy of our institutions of higher learning be discontinued.

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3.   That a standard satisfactory academy be opened for our colored youth.

4.   That qualified colored people be given opportunity to serve on faculties of our institutions of learning.

Administrative and Supervisory

1.   That colored people be given adequate representation on committees, at all levels-- local, union, and general.

2.   That adequate appropriations be made to meet the demands and needs of the colored people.

3.   That at least one General Conference Office be filled by a colored person.

4.   That funds from the colored constituency be allocated so that the colored people may derive direct financial and economic benefit.

5.   That colored people be appointed to supervise various phases of the work.

6.   That conference officials encourage our ministers and workers to be frank in declaring the needs of their own people. Otherwise, those who should be like Elijah, Esther, and Moses will become craven cowards.   -

7.   That the office of the Secretary of the Colored Department be given administrative authority, jurisdiction, and equipment.

8.   That the colored people be given detailed reports of the colored funds and their disbursement.

9.   That there be appointed a colored editor of the Message Magazine, with associate editors of either group, and a business manager so the colored people can be informed of the profits or losses of this magazine.

Occupational

1   That the number of colored people employed by the conferences be determined by some fixed ratio in all types of positions.

2.   That colored secretaries be appointed to foster the educational, social, and welfare work in all departments.

3.   That colored people be appointed as editors and on editorial staffs of Adventist periodicals.
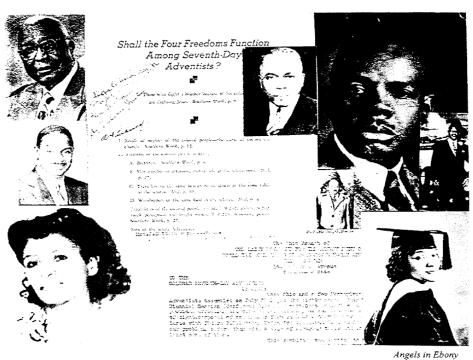
6

Spiritual

1. That there be no intimidations of our colored clergymen and workers supported by the conferences when they attempt to better the conditions of their brethren.

2. That the conference officials encourage our ministers and workers to be frank in declaring the needs of their own people. Otherwise, those who should be like Elijah, Esther, and Moses will be mere sycophants and craven cowards.

3. That conference officials be elected who through their knowledge of and interest in colored people can foster programs in their behalf.

4. That campaigns for colored work be given the prominence and dignity that are given to all other phases of the work.

5. That new and adequate academies and educational institutions of higher learning be erected for the Christian education of colored youth.

Copyright April, 1944

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Shall the Four Freedoms Function Among Seventh-Day Adventists?

Angels in Ebony
Justiss, Jacob

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PERSONAL OBJECTIVE
Simply to be the man God desires me to be,
where He needs me to be, and doing what He directs me to do.

HIGHLIGHTS OF QUALIFICATIONS
- 16 years of experience in full-time pastoral ministry, including both senior and associate pastor positions
- Director, Manasota Adventist Community Services (MACS)—a collaborative multi-church ACS organization operating in Manatee and Sarasota Counties, Florida
- Ordained to the gospel ministry by the Florida Conference in 2000

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE
2007 to Present
  Senior Pastor--Sarasota/Venice Seventh-day Adventist Churches, Sarasota County, FL
2001 to 2007
  Senior Pastor—Plant City/Wesley Chapel Seventh-day Adventist Churches, Hillsborough County, FL
1998 to 2001
  Senior Pastor—Hernando/Homosassa Seventh-day Adventist Churches, Citrus County, FL
1996 to 1998
  Associate Pastor—First Seventh-day Adventist Church of Tampa, Tampa, FL
1994 to 1996
  Student Assistant Pastor—Chikaming Seventh-day Adventist Church, Chikaming, MI
1992 to 1994
  Student Assistant Pastor—Ooltewah Seventh-day Adventist Church, Ooltewah, TN

EDUCATION
2007 to Present   Doctor of Ministry, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI
1994 to 1996   Master of Divinity, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI
1991to 1994   Bachelor of Arts in Religion, Southern College, Collegedale, TN
1982-to 1986   Bachelor of Science in Economics, Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA

PERSONAL DATA
- Birthplace & Date: Jeannette, Pennsylvania, December 30, 1961
- Status: Married 19 years (Kimberly)
                          Father of two (Cody—age 16 years and Bethany—age 7)
- Interests and Hobbies: Reading, *New York Times* Sunday Crossword, gardening,
                          DIY home repair/remodeling, travel, and sports of all kinds