range of attributes were identified under the heading of “practical”. These included:

- homemaking 102 responses
- music 81 responses
- craft and art 70 responses
- writing 5 responses
- recreation and sport 4 responses
- business/computing skills 4 responses
- other 20 responses

These profiles demonstrate that the responses received to the Taskforce’s survey represent the opinions and thoughts of a wide cross section of Adventist business and professional women in terms of age, marital status, geographical location and profession. The responses to the survey questions are made by highly educated, longstanding Adventist women who tend to attend church weekly.

II HOW ACTIVE IS SHE IN HER CHURCH?

The majority of survey respondents:

- currently hold church office (60.9%)
- have held church offices in the past (89.8%)
- are not a member of church related organisations (75.8%)
- have been on a church decision making committee (60.5%)

(Further information on pertaining to this summary can be found in Charts Twenty-three to Thirty of Appendix Two).

The majority of respondents currently hold church office and have done so in the past (Question 14 and 15). Charts Twenty-four to Twenty-six demonstrate the range of offices held by respondents both currently and in the past. The three major offices held by respondents previously were:

- positions dealing with children or youth 91 respondents
- positions of leadership such as Sabbath School Superintendent, Pathfinder leader, Sabbath School Division leader 89 respondents
- committee secretary or member 74 respondents
- positions involving teaching 47 respondents
- Deaconess 40 respondents
- positions involving music and singing 36 respondents
- Elder 13 respondents
- other 13 respondents

At the time of the survey respondents were holding the following church offices:

- committee secretary or member 59 respondents
- working with children or youth 36 respondents
- leadership positions 33 respondents
- positions involving music and singing 27 respondents
- teaching positions 18 respondents
- Deaconess 15 respondents
- other 12 respondents
- welfare 8 respondents
- Elder 5 respondents

Affirming Church Activities

Working with children and youth and/or involvement in Sabbath School are the church activities that give the majority of respondents the most pleasure (Question 19: Chart Thirty-two). The rather female stereotype activity of “practical” ranks second lowest (28 respondents) as an activity giving “most pleasure”. The more “upfront”
activity of public speaking gives pleasure to 11 respondents.

Not only do the majority of respondents consider the areas of Sabbath School and children/youth to be the activities giving them most pleasure, they also consider these activities to be the ones in which they make their best contribution (Question 20: Chart Thirty-three). The least number consider public speaking to be an activity which produces their best contribution (9 respondents).

**Involvement in Church Related Organisations**

As Charts Twenty-seven and Twenty-eight (Question 16) demonstrate, respondents tend not to be active members of church related organisations and associations. This tendency could be due to the absence of associations such as Forum and Association of Adventist Women (AAW) in many states of Australia and in New Zealand. It could also be due to the often full schedules of professional/business women many of whom fill a number of roles including wife, mother, daughter, professional, church officer, etc. For many such women, there is simply insufficient time to participate in organisations and associations.

**Participation in Church Decision Making**

The majority of respondents have participated in the church decision making process at one level or another although the actual type of decision making committees respondents have been part of varies considerably (Question 17: Charts Twenty-nine and Thirty). The majority (124 respondents) have been on local church boards, while 27 respondents have been a part of their local conference executive committee and four respondents have sat on local church nominating committees. Included in the category “Other” are:

- Longburn College Board
- School boards as Chair, Secretary and/or member
- Health Committee
- Conference nominating committee
- Conference session nominating committee.

Respondents have had less input into the decision making process in the higher levels of the church’s administrative structure: one respondent had been on a Union Conference Executive Committee and three respondents have been on the South Pacific Division Executive Committee.

In commenting on the question relating to participation in decision making, one respondent replied that she had recently been nominated to be on a Division committee but had to decline due to difficulty with child care (S207).

**Utilisation of Gifts at Church**

Close to half the respondents (48.8%) feel that they have had opportunity to utilise their gifts in church office (Question 18: Chart Thirty-one). A further 21% of respondents refrained from answering this question, leaving approximately 30% of respondents feeling that they have not had the chance to exercise their gifts in the church setting. When asked to explain or comment on this situation 17 respondents cited work commitments for preventing gifts being exercised to the fullest. A further 9 respondents felt that family commitments restrained them utilising their gifts fully. Twenty-one other respondents identified a number of other reasons for the under-utilisation of their gifts.

Comments made in relation to this question include the following:

**Work Commitments:**

Too much else on my plate (S061)

Full time work, precludes me from accepting more responsibility in church affairs
I find my work so demanding that I don’t have the time or energy necessary to fulfil church office duties (S153)

I’ve had the opportunities to be an elder etc. but time pressures worked against me. A professional woman in male dominated occupation has to be twice as good as a man to be considered almost as good - and that’s time consuming! (S123)

To some extent my participation is hampered by work activities, but I would welcome the chance . . . over the past four years I have seldom been asked to do anything by the church I belong to (S154)

**Family Commitments:**

I choose not to get too involved because of lack of time so keep those activities relating to teenage needs in conjunction with my own children (S167)

Am too busy to make further commitments until child is older (S168)

**Other comments included:**

- There is stereotyped thinking that men or others who have better social circumstances should hold these positions (S085)

- Have always had opportunities except preaching (S086)

- There are more women in our local church with leadership skills than men - but no women elders . . . I’ve been as “pushy” as I dare but I believe the church would be a more exciting place if women didn’t have to take a back seat (S159)

- Church offers ample opportunity to exercise gifts (S103)

- The reluctance of country people to think laterally and the fact that they are pretty content with their ways means that new people with new ideas and education are often ignored or opposed (S105)

- The church for me remains the only organisation I am currently involved in where by gifts are censored or subordinated and intellectual gifts are suspect (S213)

- The church can’t (or couldn’t) cope with original thinkers (S180)

- Was once an accredited local preacher in the Methodist Church in continual demand as speaker at numerous functions (CWA, WCTU, World Day of Prayer, etc.) but never in the SDA church (S134)

- Have gifts - have had opportunity but refused it as feel incompetent, or rather, unconfident (S173)

- I would rather say that it is the extent to which you apply the gifts that is problematic—the church usually accepts the gift, but the way you express it must be OK to those in decision making positions (S4a).

- In responding to this question 38 respondents simply stated they had not had the opportunity to undertake certain identified activities. These activities included as leadership (S175); missionary readings (S2a) and story telling (S025); song services (S2a); Deaconess, Elder (S001); use of organisational (S216) and administration (S017, S179) skills; taking the sermon (S026, S189); alternative evangelism to marginalised groups in society (S031); providing input relating to finance (S049); Adviser, Executive Board (S053).
III  HOW DOES SHE FEEL ABOUT HER CHURCH?

Having established the degree to which business and professional women are active in their local church, the survey then looked at respondent’s attitudes toward their church: how accepted they feel, consideration of leaving, alternative worship practices should they leave and changing attitudes toward church responsibility.

Part of the Church Family?

Respondents were asked if they “generally” felt part of their local church family (Question 21: Chart Thirty-four). The breakdown of responses to this question is as follows:

- always  42.8%
- frequently  25.6%
- sometimes  17.2%
- seldom  9.8%
- never  2.3%
- no response  2.3%

Respondents answering “Seldom” or “Never” to the question were asked to comment further - although many more respondents than those answering in these categories added comments and thoughts. The presence of cliques (8 responses), the unacceptance of creativity or individuality (7 responses) and the irrelevant, insular nature of church (7 responses) were most commonly cited reasons for not feeling part of their church family (see Chart Thirty-five). Specific comments included:

Cliques:

It is a fashion show and no-one talks to anyone except their social group (S004)

You are not made welcome by certain parties if you don’t meet “their standards” (S097)

Unacceptance of Creativity/Individuality:

People are very critical of people who are independent thinkers (S108)

It is too narrow thinking (S042)

We disagree with the way the church board has been dictating to the church and “throwing” members out because they dared to be individual (046)

Strong family orientation:

The church is very “family” and marriage oriented (S040)

A single woman who doesn’t fit into the stereotype of a chaste old maid isn’t desirable (S180)

Divorced women are ostracised to some degree by so called “normal” families and are more or less left to their own company or other sources of support (S201).

Worship Style:

I would like to see our services less formal... There needs to be much more singing and praise prior to the commencement of any service. The sharing of personal experience and the praying together makes worship come to life (S172)
The people have lost the sense of enthusiasm and joy as a corporate group (S051)

Other comments:

I am not outgoing enough (S205)

As I work shifts my lifestyle is not easily adapted to the church lifestyle (S192)

I am a professional woman working in a “foreign/taboo” area (psychiatry). I also see a huge need in society and a major discrepancy with respect with empathy in church function (S070)

In seeking ways to overcome this problem, the survey sought to determine appropriate steps that would enhance integration into the local church family (Question 21c: Chart Thirty-six). The most common responses were:

- a caring, accepting atmosphere 13 responses
- changes in attitude 10 responses
- changes in worship format 8 responses
- room for creativity and individuality 7 responses
- meet the needs of singles 2 responses.

Thoughts of Leaving the Church

The survey asked those currently worshipping regularly in an Adventist church if they had ever thought seriously about leaving the church (Question 22: Chart Thirty-seven). While such a thought had not been contemplated by 37% of the sample, approximately 56% of respondents indicated that leaving the Adventist church was an option they had seriously considered. As Chart Thirty-eight demonstrates, the three primary reasons given for considering such an action include:

- attitude 32 respondents
- unmet personal spiritual needs/ unfulfilling worship style 23 respondents
- theology 18 respondents

Specific comments made to this question include the following:

Attitude:

Pharisaic attitudes of church administration which are in conflict with Christ’s gospel of love and forgiveness (S139)

Having to answer to an organisation which at times has too much control over my life - especially in areas I consider to be matters of taste, not moral issues (S054)

Unmet personal spiritual needs:

I do not often get “fed” (S123)

I get little in the way of spiritual, intellectual or social stimulation from the church I currently attend, i.e. it does nothing to meet the needs that I have (S154)

Insufficient spiritual food (S077)

There is nothing there for me personally as opposed to theologically . . . I stopped attending five weeks ago (S067)

Most Adventist churches I’ve been to are basically spiritually dead. I don’t feel as though my needs for spiritual growth and food are met. I mostly find it shallow and unrealistic (S108)
Many times after attending church I would come away unfed, frustrated, disappointed, and often vowed it was time to cease going (S172)

**Unfulfilling worship style:**

The formal repetitive nature of worship (S210)

The church is stagnant and ritualised (S091)

The total lack of meaningful ministry often displayed (S118)

Lack of warmth and real sharing - allowing Holy Spirit to lead individually and as a body (S184)

**Theology:**

Questions about church doctrine (S127)

I became disillusioned with general attitudes of exclusiveness, “holier than thou”. Being so separate from the world that we fail to reach out (S109)

Because of the narrow mindedness on theological issues. The lack of true christian fellowship and nurturing of the flock (S097)

I sometimes doubt the fundamentals of Adventism (S088)

I did not want to be bound to a belief system by my social conditioning (S061)

**Other comments:**

Too traditional, non-thinking and didn’t provide any answers (S068)

Felt the church was not honest (S174)

Being an unmarried parent I feel that the church doesn’t cater for solo parents (S161)

The patriarchal management style in the church (S210)

There is no support for people going through separation and/or divorce from the church and the loneliness is terrifying (S201)

I no longer get the spiritual input I need from church. After so many years of study it is frustrating to go to church and hear ministers say things like “Although God’s plan was for male and females to be equal, after sin men were to be dominant” as the minister did last Sabbath. Going to church often feels like entering a social and intellectual time-warp (S071)

Sometimes it is all a bit cold (S114)

Little in common with most of the church membership. Slack approach in running the church (S115)

Church places too much emphasis on Sabbath. I don’t appreciate putdown of other Christian faiths - this is unchristian. Church approach to issues which I perceive to be removed from a personal relationship to God such as food and drink. Church is too in-bred (S089)

Lack of intellectual leadership; lack of mental stimulation (S179)

Insular attitude, lack of understanding, judgemental approach from some, quick to judge but generally slow to support (S101)
Male domination of the church generally (S105).

Just as theology was cited as a reason for considering leaving the church, so it was one of the factors responsible for 16 respondents remaining with the Adventist church (Q22c: Chart Thirty-nine). Other factors influencing respondents to stay are:

- Christian affirmation: 31 respondents
- Family needs met: 19 respondents
- Personal needs met: 12 respondents.

Comments offered by respondents to this question include:

**Belief in Adventist Theology:**

I felt I still had something to offer/stand up for (S003)

Strong belief in SDA church as having the characteristics of the remnant (S127)
Realised all organisations have problems and that the Adventist church is closest to my Bible beliefs (S152)

The SDA church is the only theologically sound one (S067)

**Fundamental belief in the beliefs of the SDA church (S072)**

Because the belief system I hold is best equated to Adventism particularly in being able to worship in a body on Sabbath (S184)

**Christian Affirmation:**

I know some beautiful Christians in the SDA church which kept my hope (S004)

In my heart I believe the SDA church to have the “true” message of the Bible and that first and foremost I am a Christian and a lover of Jesus Christ and a lover of others (S201)

Personal Christian life needs something to boost it though this in itself became/is becoming a problem as the “boosts” are becoming less frequent and meaningful (S179)

God’s love is steadfast and the church remains whether various doctrines become controversial or apparent Christians are discourteous and arrogant in their beliefs (S062)

As a convert to the SDA church, I know that there is nowhere else to go (S005)

Because whatever complaints I had about the people they were only half the story - God is the other half. He I believed would remain as the reason for my being an Adventist (S051)

Because I belong to Jesus not the church members, and would not let anyone’s attitude or actions deprive me of worship and church attendance (S030)

I felt that my, and my family’s, sociological environment was within the church and that my relationship with God was a personal matter that no-one could control or regiment, so I believe and interpret scripture according to my conscience - not necessarily according to some man-made fundamentals (S024)

I am firstly a Christian who fellowships at the Adventist church on Saturday (S109)
Family Needs Met:

Felt the church has much to offer children (S189)

I could not offer myself, my husband and children a better alternative (S125)

For appearances to family and employers (S162)

Am currently happy with structure provided for children in SDA church environment (S116)

It is still the best religion in which to bring up children. I believe in God and am learning to tolerate frustration (S105)

I sought the support of the church family to enhance my teaching of values to my children in today’s world (S061)

Personal Needs Met:

It is my church “family” - I know of no other place to go which would be better, so I cope with my “family’s” eccentricities (S021)

Because I belong and feel most comfortable there most times (S013)

Not ready to take that large a step (i.e. leaving) because the church is my family and I’m saturated with its culture. There are quite a few things about it which I like (S054)

Unable to survive without worship in a community (S014)

Because I did not want to leave . . . it was my world (S040).

Changes in Attitude over Time

The survey asked respondents how, if at all their attitudes toward the responsibilities that come with church membership have changed over the last few years (Question 23). Although 25 respondents stated that they had not experienced any changes in the last few years, 51 respondents replied that their awareness of their own responsibilities had increased. Other attitude changes included:

- a broader understanding of Christianity 24 respondents
- awareness of narrowness and a need for caring 23 respondents
- an increased responsibility to God with little or no increased responsibility to the Church 19 respondents

Comments to this question include:

A Broader Understanding of Christianity:

No longer bound to traditional Adventist obligations....I do it God’s way now (S003)

I have become more aware of my responsibility as a professed Christian (S163)

I am not committed to the church...I am committed to Christ and being Christ-like (S004).

The older I get the more I see it is important to be good Christians in all our dealings (S145)

Now I see responsibilities are blessings - for my Christian growth and for the service of others. My attitudes have changed probably more so within the context of growth - realising the privilege of service (S176)
Awareness of narrowness and a need for caring:

Became slightly disillusioned by some SDA Christians who profess Christianity but full of jealousy and hate. Overcame this problem by praying for them (S134)

I once believed firmly that the church administration was an instrument God used. I now feel that these people may be very insecure, but are very narrow-minded and intolerant - particularly of individuality and that individuality is God-given - like conscience (S040)

Attitude now much more caring and deepened (S156)
Feel we need to be closer as a people and more supportive of each other (S135)

Being in leadership opened my eyes to the church politics. I began to feel stifled and restricted as...any ideas not acceptable to the ministers and elders would not be permitted - this was particularly difficult and stressful in positions of youth leadership where innovative ideas and styles of leadership are needed (S4a)

I’ve stopped worrying about how others felt about what I said and did. If they don’t like what I do they won’t ask me to do it (ie. learnt to be true to myself) (S189)

Feel it becomes too much a “club” sometimes and am now glad for opportunity to be working in the open market place (S167)

As church members I feel we must be more caring to each other and then we can reach out better to those around us in the community (S120)

An increased responsibility to God/Christianity with little or no increased responsibility to the Church:

I still feel responsible to some extent for the nurturing of local members, but much less responsible for bringing “outsiders” into the church - only to Christ (S021)

Church membership means to me being part of the body of believers in Christ - not just the Adventist denomination - that has only grown the closer I come to know Jesus as friend and comforter and God the Creator as my only Father (S184)

More governed by internal control than external conventions of social norm (S031)

My attitudes have changed dramatically from duty based/guilt trip to wanting to do something for God that I believe is an effective use of my time (S152)

Have learnt and grasped the reality of the gospel and realise that being a Christian is more important than conforming to membership rules of a particular church (S146)

I feel I should be telling of the love and compassion of Jesus more (S009).

More aware of responsibility to be a good example, make strangers feel at home, and share my faith (S015)

I have realised that faithfulness, sharing and caring, with responsibilities to church members as much more important because relationship with the Lord has improved (S027)

I feel more financially responsible, though many times disagree with how it is spent (S039)

Increasing concern for mission outreach (S041)

As I have matured and my experience with the Lord has become of upper most
importance I now regard my church family and responsibilities much more seriously (S083)

Feel it is more important to approach people as a Christian in friendship personally rather than having to be involved in organised outreach which I feel often misses the mark - too contrived (S114)

Additional comments:

I have less energy and no longer want to make the commitment to change. So much is dreary and old hat (S151)

Certainly more cynical as experience on church board and school board has built up (S166)

I tend not to get involved because of the way the church treated me when my marriage broke up (S029)

I ... want to be more of a spectator....not be tied down...more interested in trying to meet people's needs where I have the skills and where I can (S054)

Probably degenerated in that I don't feel particularly responsible at all. How can you be responsible to an institution which in itself is often irresponsible (S179)

Whilst in heart, I feel affiliated with the church, I also feel a painful alienation increasing. Church membership was for most of my life very important and I gave all I could - but there is a discrepancy between realities and church awareness (S070)

I no longer feel that I have to get people to become “Adventists”, I’ve discovered that many people, Christians or not are much more interested in spirituality than many Adventists. I feel now that I have much more to offer by just being honest, caring etc. than by trying to convert (S071)

I believe this is God's remnant church and hopefully by being a member I will be an asset for the church and for God (S073)

More willing to take on church office and support church programs whenever I can (S072)

Realisation of responsibility to those about you in and out of church (S080)

I am somewhat disillusioned with ministers and elders who take the line of least resistance (and morally doubtful) in resolving intra church disputes (S115)

I have become more involved and hold responsibilities and enjoy church work/membership (S069)

I feel freer to hold my own views and trust that this is acceptable by others I care for (S107)

I basically see myself as a Christian who is currently attending an SDA church (S108)

Because I disagree with so much of church organisation I often wonder if I should be a member at all!! (S109)

Whereas once I loved to serve, now I am happy to sit back and watch others (S088)

Until recently I felt it was important to hold responsibilities if asked. Now because of savage opposition, and the atmosphere of the local church I play a very low key role (S093)
I feel a greater sense of urgency of doing all I can to share the love of Jesus in a troubled world. Also I feel time is running out FAST both for the world and for individuals (S096)

At the moment I am coping with two small children and marital separations. So at the moment I feel quite unable to contribute in any organising capacity (S212)

Following divorce and the resultant stigma within the church, I rarely attend church. I believe in the SDA church teachings (S101)

More and more reluctant, disillusioned (S205)

I now realise that sometimes it is “OK” (necessary) to say “No” to extra tasks (S203)

My attitudes have changed. I used to think, like so many others do, that the only way to serving God is through church membership and church office positions and I used to feel guilty if I didn’t attend church or take office each year. Now I believe that I can take a rest from church or church office but still serve in my personal and business relationships with others (S201).

Consideration of Alternate Worship Practices

Respondents were asked what their worship practice would be should they stop, or have stopped, worshipping in an Adventist church (Question 24; Chart Forty). While 20 respondents suggested that they would cease worshipping with Christians altogether should they leave the Adventist church, other respondents would worship:

- privately or with a few friends: 81 respondents
- with another Christian denomination: 78 respondents
- with a non-official Adventist oriented group: 54 respondents.

IV HOW DOES SHE MINISTER TO HER SECULAR WORK COLLEAGUES?

Having established who the Australian New Zealand business and professional woman is and considered how she feels about her church, the survey then looked at the ways in which these women minister to their secular work colleagues.

Social Profile

In summary, the majority of respondents tend to:

- have daily contact with their secular colleagues (74.0%)
- consider less than five secular colleagues to be friends (35.3%)
- have social contact with secular colleagues several times a year (44.7%)

(Further information relating to this profile can be found in Charts Forty-one to Forty-three of Appendix Two)

Identification of Needs

When asked if they had had an opportunity to identify the needs of their secular colleagues, approximately 60% responded in the affirmative (Question 30). Respondents nominated the following areas as needs they had identified in their colleagues (see Chart Forty-four):

- relationships: 56 respondents
- lifestyle: 50 respondents
- spirituality: 32 respondents
- personal validation: 31 respondents
- reason for existence: 23 respondents.

Comments pertaining to lifestyle needs specifically identified a range of subjects