
Unity And Ministry Through the Massification Of Adventism

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Abstract

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a history of ministering to people groups who have been fractured from their original congregations or social norms (demassification) and then renew their identity in Adventism (remassification). The unique needs of today's generations are a rapid remassification of youth groups who need to be discipled. The uniqueness of these youth, their need for parental influence, peer affirmation, and a horizontal leadership structure to enable future mentoring and ministry at minimal cost are a vital part of the cycle of ministry which appears to be currently nonexistent in many Adventist congregations.

Homogenous Massification of Adventism

To understand and fix what causes youth to leave the church, it is helpful to understand the process of how we have arrived at this juncture in Adventist history. The homogeneous (pressing together in oneness) massification of Adventism was formulated on the original concept of our church's vision and structure in the late 1800s. The early Adventist Church did not see itself as multiple congregations but rather as one "engaged movement" to take the message of the second advent of Jesus Christ to the world.

New church strategies that vociferously announce multiple campus churches are "going back to the future" for Adventism. The Adventist Movement was not formulated as single congregations (congregationalism) but rather a concept of satellite congregations within one body, especially following 1862. Originally, the Adventist Movement was largely an independent group of Christians from the New England states composed from various and diverse denominations. Early believers were the remnants of the "great disappointment" of 1843 and 1844. As the poem at the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor reads: "Give me your tired, your poor huddled masses yearning to breathe free; the wretched refuse of your teeming shores. Send these, the homeless, tempest tossed to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

The experience of individuals seeking their identity has been the story of God's people from Abraham's day, the New

Testament church, the history of the United States, the history of Adventism, and now, the history of Post Millennials.

Initially the early Adventist Movement was hesitant to write even a creed or a list of doctrines because they didn't want to be bound to other men's thoughts or resemble the church of the Middle Ages. This desire for individuality found coalescence and seemed to work for a short time in the emerging church. Then the diversification of organizational evolution met reality's need for structure. Adventism was facing fracture; splintering due to doctrinal issues of "the closed door," "tongues," the Sabbath, and other teachings. The believers needed to establish their identity. We must not lose sight of the fact that "culture is to the church what a soul is to the human body" (Lewis, 2005). Adventism was already developing its own culture. It is unique from other religious belief systems due to its history, heritage, and Biblical exposition. For much of the twentieth century Adventism addressed missions and ministry from this ubiquitous practice. This resulted in one worship style stemming from its European/New England roots. America is not composed of one people, but rather a melting pot of all people.

Adventism was a culture embracing the grand missionary movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In that culture "believing was considered applicable to belonging" (Lewis, 2005). Today's society want to belong before they will: decide to believe.

Adventism is a historic renovation of ecclesiastical hierarchy. It is a blended representative form of democracy

and presbytery leadership. Utilized to its fullest extent this structure has been able to flex and adjust to any needs or changes that the church institution has faced. To the extent that we can understand the way our world is changing, we can usually enhance our relevance, value, and even our personal and professional success. Now, again in these last days, youth ministry must modify, change, shift, and refocus by:

1. Defining the needs of each current youth grouping in the local church
2. Re-tooling the adult youth leadership to respond appropriately to those defined challenges
3. Discipling the youth to be actively involved in bringing their friends to Christ
4. Mentoring and coaching the youth to minister to the next generation

We can no longer say, “one size fits all.” As teens increasingly segment themselves based on lifestyles, personal preferences, and practices; the organization must customize its efforts to meet the needs of her youth.

Youth are looking for:

1. Identity
2. Value
3. Recognition

“Identity” allows young people to be unique from other generations or norms. They often enjoy generational art forms and attitudes which identify them as real people in an adult world. Age, influence, and convictions help dictate how a teen’s identity illustrates itself.

“Value” reaches the most basic need of humanity. All young people need to know they are precious, appreciated, highly esteemed, sought after; and truly wanted by those who cherish them.

“Recognition” is the affirmation of a teen by friends and family which elevates self-worth and enables teens to face the future with hope and confidence in themselves. This attribute must come from others. If the church does not give it, the youth cannot live it, and finally they will go where they receive it!

Demassification of Our Sub-culture

Industry understands the necessity of customization versus standardization. Youth ministry is now a product of age and requires us to also customize our approach. Everything in teens’ lives is customized to their needs. Standardization often follows institutionalization. This new order could be described by five characteristics and is parallel to the classical order mandates:

1. Customization will replace standardization.
2. Convergence of internal and external resources will supplant synchronization.

3. Integration of whole processes will displace specialization of tasks.
4. Delegation of authority and distributed production will succeed centralization.
5. Demassification will supersede large-scale production.

Such trends are illustrated by Burger King’s motto, “Have it your way.” We also observe this in the movie industry, automobile industry, and just about every aspect of contemporary life.

This is to acknowledge that whatever specific choices we make, the basic conception of our church will have to align with the reality of the new generations (Y and Z) in which we live and work; otherwise the church will die on the altar of irrelevancy.

Adventism grew out of the demassification of society as our sub-culture experienced “cell church” mitosis and expanded geographically, culturally, and to a large extent by gender throughout the world. In recent decades we have also demassified by age to the extent that youth ministry mirrors some of the attributes of adult ministry. As the adults have various Sabbath School classes, Men’s Ministry, Women’s Ministry, Single’s Ministry, etc., youth usually have Cradle Role, Kindergarten, Primary, Juniors, Tween, Teens, Youth, Young Adults, Little Lambs, Eager Beavers, Adventurers, Pathfinders, Teen Leadership Training, Master Guides, etc. All are segmented by age, not interest. As youth enter the mid-teen years of life, interest is a major component of their progression. The church endeavors to reach all segments of today’s culture.

Still, our ministry must accommodate the uniqueness of more sub groups/divisions because tomorrow we will have new generations with more subgroup identification needing individualized love, attention, and value. *The Big Moo* outlines what youth ministry is now facing. “In our fast-moving, media-crazed culture... Those who fit in now won’t stand out later. Those who follow the rules are never noticed—because the system has broken their spirit. There’s plenty of work for the undifferentiated masses, so you can have as much of that as you are willing to handle. The fast-rising stars are those who question authority and refuse to do what’s been done before”(Goodin, 2005). In other words only purple cows with a big moo stand out and get noticed. On the one hand post millennials do not want to stick out! On the other hand they crave personalized attention, affirmation, and consideration as outlined in the Youth 4 Youth surveys of the Mid-America Union. “If God, as we believe, is truly revealed in the life of Christ, the most important thing to Him is the creation that centers on loving fellowship, which in turn infects the world” (Beckham,

1997). Our youth are crying out for the fundamental need since creation—“Please love me.”

Transitional Massification

When a group of people demassify, the result in society will be for those with similar interests to be self-collated into sub-groups. This transition (massification) will be exhibited by desires, likes, fashions, values, education, handicaps, and perceptions considered unique. “The values of your culture—stated or unstated, thought out or unintentional—shape the feel, behavior, and attitude of a congregation more than anything else” (Lewis, 2005). As a sub-culture of the United States, Adventist youth have experienced the largest paradigm shift or transitional massification in recorded history. The brains of our youth have/are actually mutated in ways unprecedented and often unrecognized by local youth leadership. For example, we now have 1 in 150 children born with autism. How will the Adventist church respond to these children and their families? “Hereditry plays a highly important role in the form of basic learning abilities or behavioral repertoires, but we now have clear evidence that the environment can play a roll in shaping brain structure and in turn, learning behavior. It is the area of the brain that is stimulated that grows” (Healy, 1999). “In 1981, cable television entrepreneur Ted Turner appeared in Washington before a House subcommittee to give his comments about network programming. As a cable tycoon seeking government help in breaking the networks hegemony, he stood personally to benefit from criticism of the broadcasters. Nonetheless, his remarks were hailed widely as expressing what many Americans were thinking: “A large portion of our population is sick, and the major culprits are the tremendous television networks and the motion picture companies that are turning our young people into a society of lawbreakers, murderers, drug addicts, and perverts.” CBS, NBC, and ABC, Turner said, were producing a steady stream of imagery designed to elicit reactions from viewers (Knight, 1998). He further traced the changes in America’s value system and politically targeted issues regarding homosexuality, adultery, racism, the environment, animal rights, and political mores as well as defacing Christianity and religion as mentally illiterate extremists beginning in 1969. Our youth and children tend to replicate the values of our entertainment tantalized society. Do you suppose Adventist youth have been affected? This is where we stand, may God have mercy on our souls. The

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question remains, How can the church minister to these children of God’s supreme love?

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is missing three or four major ministry components in the cycle of ministry that keeps the back door closed. That is costing us this generation! Can you pick the missed opportunities out of the following cyclical sequence? This cycle includes: “the children’s programs, the dynamic youth programs to academy and high schools, the vibrant collegiate program, and the post-college young adult/newly weds programs” (Osborne, 2008). “Young adults tend to mimic the behavioral patterns of their parents” (Osborne, 2008). When young couples have children, young parents re-engage in church activities as their parents modeled for them.

“One reason congregations in the United States are in trouble is that they have a low percentage of engaged members... Only 29% (3 out of 10) people really care whether they are in attendance. It is belonging (engagement) that leads to believing (commitment). So if you want your members (youth) to become more spiritually committed help them become more engaged” (Winseman, 2007). We must be genuine in our love and affirmation of them as real people of value.

It appears approximately 66% - 75% of Adventist teens attend public high school rather than the Adventist parochial school system. The attrition rate of Adventist youth in public school may be as high as 80% (depending on conference and other variables). The church is not showing love to these Adventist students, and in return they

lose their identity with the Seventh-day Adventist Church (they do not identify with Adventist doctrine, organization, or fellowship). About the same percentage of Adventist youth who attend public high school attend public college. The result is that the “back door” of the church is open wider than the “front door” of the church. This overwhelming attrition rate is an indicator of a great spiritual problem that is death to the organization. We must close this door by immediately investing resources into lay-led loving ministry targeting public high and collegiate students if we are intent on closing the back door of the church for these age groups and having a future for this organization. It is my deduction that this organization, as we know it, cannot survive without these younger generations.

Remassification of Subcultures

As people or people groups find commonality with those of like issues, tastes, education, and design, they will

reform themselves into a coalescence of culture. This process can be referred to as remassification. The church must be ready to respond to each ministry opportunity. The newest culture group will tend to be the developing youth groups of society—although overlooked groups will surface.

The reaction to stimuli for demassification and remassification is a learned response by teens through the avenues of environment, parents, friends, media, and personal experience influence. There also may be physiological factors to consider.

The results from the Mid-America Union Conference Youth 4 Youth survey indicate that youth attend church basically due to parental influence, peer friendship, and the personal experience of fun/enjoyment. Teens, like churches, tend to be a cooperative group of individuals. "Crowds attract crowds. To create new missions that break out of the mold of the self-serving, survival-minded, family-run organizations, leaders must find a way to plant churches [youth ministries] that can pack out their meetings in a very short period of time. The primary difference between growing and declining churches [youth groups] is their attitude. Growing groups [churches] feel they have something worthwhile to offer to their community. Their high level of self-esteem provides the energy and strength to share the gospel of Christ with people in the community" (Gray, 2007).

One can conclude that with the dissolution of each or any one of these three stimuli (parental influence, peer friendship and personal experience) the attrition rate of teen attendance increases, attendance drops off and the youth may be permanently lost to the Kingdom of God.

"Even though youth may cease attending church related events, that does not indicate there will be a cessation of social activity."

Even though youth may cease attending church related events, that does not indicate there will be a cessation of social activity. Rather, it implies youth will remassify in their own like minded sub-groups with various facets of identification and characteristics.

They will meet at the high school prom, with another denomination's youth group, become part of a gang, etc. Once the teens reach out seeking for ministry and personal fulfillment, we have a precious few opportunities to secure the youth's interest and connect their identity in Jesus before they leave and make new alliances or new commitments.

Remassification Identifiable

We identify the general characteristics of our people groups as Boomers, Generation Xers, Generation Y, and Generation Z. Each has its own sense of values and unique characteristics with an acknowledged blending on some points. Ministry within the Adventist church tends to react slowly to the unique remassification of new ministry. We tend to respond in a post-traumatic fashion only after the opportunity for ministry is either past or nearly too late rather than grasp the change as a Divine sign for new advancement.

The issues of salvation have been obfuscated by religious rhetoric, and the youth have picked up on these motifs. In short, much of spirituality in America is Christian in name only. "We desire experience more than knowledge. We prefer choices to absolutes. We embrace preferences rather than truths. We seek comfort rather than growth. Faith must come on our terms or we reject it. We have enthroned ourselves as the final arbiters of righteousness, the ultimate rulers of our own experience and destiny. We are the Pharisees of the new millennium, and our youth have picked up on our predispositions" (Barna, 1998).

Due to our Adventist church model, which has many valuable merits, in the United States we tend to remain satisfied with the status quo instead of evaluating and modifying ministry to address the ever changing needs of the local Adventist teen's identity. It is this writer's opinion that we must provide ministry for the salvation of the current generation in the motif of relevant love.

Opportunity

Martin Weber's thesis regarding why Adventist preacher's young adults leave the church may give some validity to the surveys that Hurst collected from a cross section of youth during Mid-America Union youth events (see report at the end of this paper).

The results indicate that our youth are leaving because of:

1. The judgmental demeaning attitudes of the adults and parents (lack of love)
2. The bombardment of criticism the teens receive
3. The standards which the youth believe have no Biblical foundation
4. The lack of energetic, interactive ministry targeting their generation's uniqueness

As adults we need to do a reality check. The question is not if adults truly are judgmental and critical. The question is: Do the youth feel that is our attitude? Regardless of our defensive posture of denial, perception is their reality. If we want the youth to be a part of our church, they must perceive that we have a positive, loving, whole hearted attitude toward them and all other church members. Unkind talk

about them and about other people is driving our youth from their church, and it must stop.

I recommend the books: *The Likeability Factor: How to Boost Your Likeability Factor and Achieve Your Life's Dreams* by Tim Sanders (ISBN #: 9781400080502); *The Friendship Factor: Helping Our Children Navigate Their Social World—and Why It Matters for Their Success* by Kenneth Ruben (ISBN #: 9780142001899); *Sticky Church* by Larry Osborne (ISBN#: 9780310285083); *Reaching People under 40 While Keeping People over 60—Being Church for All Generations* by Edward H. Hammett (ISBN: 13:9780827232549). These are in the category of must read books for people who want to strengthen their relationships with youth and learn how to grow the church. A seminar that is ageless (8 sessions) is *Learning To Love*. Implemented, these Biblically driven concepts will revolutionize a church that wants to save its youth and turn its congregation into an affirming community of love.

Some congregations have become so polarized that the adults are willing for their children to leave the church rather than for the adults to allow change. “He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17). Scripture indicates that before the return of Jesus, a “wall” will have developed between fathers and their children. The Spirit of Revival will heal that disconnect, and fathers will again foster self-sacrificing love to their most cherished possession. Is it possible that the parents have eaten sour grapes, and the youth’s teeth are set on edge? This is a difficult concept to balance because youth of this age tend to want to live without any absolutes, without boundaries and barriers other than their own desires.

In the Youth 4 Youth survey at the end of this chapter, the youth give us positive feedback. They are hungry for genuine love from their parents and church members. They are thirsty for the friendship of their peers. Their hearts cry out for organized recreation, fun, and meaningful outreach projects.

New Intentionality (Vertical and Horizontal Local Church Networking) Proposal

Adventism is the most versatile form of responsible church organization in the world. Our resource network has been largely vertical network. The **vertical network** has been utilized as we propagate ideas, programs, resources, and personnel to train new models coming from the General Conference, division, union, local conference, and congregation to the youth leadership. This tends to insure the quality and integrity of the programs utilized.

In a rapidly changing world facing financial shortfalls and outstanding needs for ministry, the church cannot react fast enough to meet the immediate needs to the newly formed sub-culture group. By the time a new ministry is designed by the General Conference resource creators, the opportunity has already mutated and been lost.

The book *Leading Change* teaches that all change is driven by the “sense of urgency” (Kotter, 1997). The greater the urgency, the faster change can be realized. In youth ministry, adult sponsors must be trained in suspended judgment and how to recognize opportunities for ministry. The lack of trained infrastructure is preventing youth ministry from being the most effective. Our situation is of the most dire consequence.

Horizontal networking is a more immediate form of nurture and resource to the local church. As finances become tighter, it will become harder for local congregations to be visited by the conference youth director due to continued downsizing. The vertical infrastructure of Adventism has been reduced to “bare bones.” Local church youth leaders need to be networked together so they see themselves as a part of the whole body of the church. Members with excellently developed youth leadership talents and gifts must minister in their strengths. They should be encouraged to assist a sister church in their immediate area to develop the sister church’s youth ministry in every way possible. “Understanding your talents and strengths and those of the people you work with can dramatically improve your effectiveness and accomplishment” (Winseman, 2008).

“The only way to figure out how something can get done is to refuse to take your eye off what needs to be done. Don’t let how intimidate you” (Stanley, 2003). Such new direction will facilitate youth ministry to include more teens, better qualified adult youth leadership, and more interactive programming. Ultimately, it will allow youth the privilege to know Jesus and choose to give their hearts to Him.

“If we are serious about ministering to people, we could not have asked for a better place and time in history to be alive” (Barna, 2007).

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Survey of Some Attendees September, 2008

Question #1: What is retaining youth in the local Adventist Church?

1. Our youth department is designed and organized by younger up to date adults.
2. Younger adults are not against the music styles and ideas that youth have.
3. Family and friends ties youth to any blessing they do receive.
4. The habit of going.
5. For me church is like a second home where you know everyone and they know you. You can go there and everyone welcomes me with many hugs.
6. I know that the church is there for me if I'm struggling.
7. Friends keep youth in the church.
8. Parents keep youth in the church.
9. Our church just planted and our church is really cool.
10. I think a lot of kids go when they see their friends attending. So they want to attend to see what it's about and have some fun.
11. God is helping keep the youth in church by reaching out and showing them awesome stuff that make them want to stay. Youth also feel a real need for God.
12. My love fore Christ is the only thing keeping me in the Adventist Church. Sermons may not always be interesting, but I go for the environment.
13. Even though it is very minimal, adult involvement that know how to relate to youth is extremely important.
14. Make the youth as important as older folks.
15. Make sure that the youth are given the full opportunity to learn about the love of Jesus.
16. Awesome youth programs. When you do outreach plan fun things and get the youth involved...it gets them on fire for God.
17. Good parenting is a huge key and there's not enough of it.
18. Going to an Adventist school where kids my age are on fire for God helps keep my faith strong. I love that our church focuses on the Bible.
19. At my church everyone gets to know each other and we grow close.
20. Our youth program is really strong for Sabbath School and vespers.
21. Our summer youth program is also very strong and one of the best I've ever been to.
22. Young people's friends are keeping them in the church. They want to come to church to be with their friends.
23. Parents insisting on kids attending.
24. Fear of not making it to heaven if you don't go to church.
25. Having friends and socializing keep youth coming.
26. Parents and the love we have for God. Not everything is bad, so if you're strong enough a kid will stick it out and stay.
27. Our youth group keeps us coming. It is relevant, interactive, interesting and has talks/discussions regarding topics that affect our lives.
28. Church service do not seem relevant therefore they are boring with very little real interaction.
29. If people help you when a student has problems and help you be in different youth programs.
30. The adults keep us coming.
31. Some Adventist youth have a good relationship with God. Others stay out of fear that they will go to hell if they leave the church.
32. A strong belief that the youth will be with their loves ones who have died, a belief in God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.
33. Rules keep us in the church. Some of us are forced to follow or believe something for fear we may be outcast, misunderstood or forever condemned to doom.

34. Family and friends keep us coming.
35. Their true love for God. Kids need to have a real connection with the Father up above.
36. Our music, friends, outings develop a sense of belonging to the church.
37. Giving youth opportunities to lead and go to difference schools.
38. Friends keep youth in the church.
39. Friends, youth programs, music that speaks to kids.
40. Positive peer pressure. Having friends who are passionate about God and wanting to be more like Him.
41. Good friends and positive relationships keep youth in the church.
42. I think the reason I stay in my church is because I know everyone and feel comfortable with the members.
43. A good pastor.
44. Parents keep in church as does the school. We must experience the love of God.
45. Good influences in the church. People like the pastor.
46. Youth must feel welcome. We must feel that the church is OUR church by really being needed and a vital part of the church's ministry.
47. Parents pretty much have to find ways to keep the youth going to church until the kid's relationship with Jesus takes over.
48. I think that our relationship with God is keeping youth in the church.
49. Most youth stay in church because they have parents that make them. I stay for the music. I have found a way that I love to worship God and that is through playing bass.
50. I think the yearning for a good and healthy future life keeps us in the church. I want to have a healthy home as an adult.
51. For me it's the hope that we can get something going. That we can help design a youth program that includes us.
52. Youth attending church like...depends on the adults in the church. Some youth decide to leave, not because of the church, but because of the people in the church.
53. Personal choice is keeping youth in the church. A good church atmosphere really helps. Good parents and understanding leaders.
54. Youth stay when they really enjoy church people and feel safe praising God.
55. If you are in a really youth oriented church, the music and accepting loving friends keep the youth from leaving. The Adventist youth who stay and are strong, never give up on the friends, so youth stay because the people in some churches truly love them.
56. God's message and love. Many kids have been brought up with the Truth and feel like they already know it, so they won't be coming back. In some churches a variety of youth ministry is another reason for them staying.
57. Strong youth groups keep youth in church.
58. Adventist education is a strong keeper for some of us.
59. Good peers, role models and parents are a must.
60. I love the praising God and fellowship with one another.
61. The youth that stick it out and remain in the church get themselves more involved in the church with one another.
62. Friends and family loving God and each do fun activities and events together.
63. The fact that their friends keeping them coming to church and the youth feel comfortable attending church events.
64. When the adult members go out of their way to encourage youth involvement in the church, we really feel welcome and important to God as well.

Question #2: What is causing Adventist youth to leave the local church?

1. Conservative elderly people that criticize us.
2. Older folks never let it go if you do mess up so that you will never feel accepted there again.
3. Peer pressure is causing youth to leave.
4. Pushy grown ups spouting rules instead of a real message.
5. Church is boring and often we have non-existent youth programs.
6. The older people make you feel like a sinner and that you do nothing right.
7. Adults freak out over the smallest things like clothing (they need to worry about more important stuff).
8. People judging the youth the ways we dress.
9. Church is boring with songs from the 1800's that I've never heard.
10. Crazy old people with really strict views.
11. The majority of our views always seem to come from Ellen White.
12. People are constantly looking down and judging the youth.
13. A lot of people in the Adventist Church say things and act like they are holy, but you find out they are not real. Then youth don't want to attend because we think that is how all Adventists are.
14. They might think church is boring and maybe friends are leaving (like negative peer pressure). Youth may feel that God has deserted them.

15. I know of a few youth that have left or don't come regularly because they are involved in sports that take place on Sabbath.
16. Other youth do not attend because split families.
17. Adults and other youth criticize kids when they come to church making them feel uncomfortable.
18. Youth leave because we don't have enough youth directors or people involved in the youth program. Two or three people can only do a limited amount.
19. Adventist youth are confused about what they believe. Kids in my church grow up basically believing what their parents tell them so when they leave the house they don't know what to do or what to believe.
20. God seems to judgmental and we're not worthy to be in His presence...so it's not worth our time.
21. Financial issues cause the youth to leave. Finances have torn apart the church and made a lot of tension between members.
22. There is a lost of lying between members that destroys a sense of honesty and trust.
23. We do not bind together as a family in my church so guests only come once.
24. The music is old fashioned.
25. The sermons don't usually relate to us.
26. There aren't any youth my age.
27. The rules are too strict.
28. Youth don't think they are going to have any fun so they don't come.
29. Problems with the pastor.
30. The services are not interesting to youth; they are routine.
31. We do not have enough church activities.
32. It is a lot of strict rules where most of what you hear is what you can't do. Not being able to do things never attracts youth!
33. Like...rules are being thrown at them and the church is just one big house of rules! The Bible seems like a big handbook of rules.
34. All the focus is put on rules. We are criticized instead of accepted. Instead of showing us that God's love is unconditional the elderly adults push us away because of dress length, nail polish color and wearing jewelry. They need to focus on who we are inside.
35. There are absolutely no youth programs at church.
36. I go to a small church. They youth don't seem to be leaving.
37. Church services are sometimes not completely youth centered and interactive.
38. Youth are generally bored with the whole church scenario.
39. Adventist youth are hanging out with people they don't need to be around and it results in us putting God after everything else.
40. They think church is boring...it no longer interests them.
41. Youth feel unsupported and like they can't be a successful Christian.
42. The kids are leaving because of too many non-Bible rules that are being made.
43. The older people are so judgmental of the youth. Also not being understanding or caring to how we really feel. Adults just push our feelings aside.
44. Adults need to lead by example and start doing, not just talking about church.
45. The old members never like change; so it is just what they want church to be and the youth don't like it.
46. We don't feel excepted as we are and somehow feel judged by others which end up making youth seem unwelcome.
47. Kids lose their faith because of stuff that happens in their life and no one pay enough attention to realize and help them until it is already too late.
48. Young people leave because of rebellion against their parents, doubtful faith in God or drugs and gangs influence them out.
49. Adult pride is causing youth to leave. Some adults are so proud of what they do; who they are, and think they're the only ones who knows everything or what is right.
50. Kids are being misjudged and so are their intentions and actions. It's like the older people in the church don't care about the teen's feelings as long as they get their point across and are satisfied. Also the music in our church is only hymns. I really think it is not disrespecting God to praise Him with music different from that of the older people in the church.
51. People don't get along.
52. There is nothing that kids can feel a part of at church.
53. Worship service are so long doing the same service week after week that the service just starts getting boring.
54. Youth move to another town without an Adventist Church.
55. Public schools have event on Saturday that draws us out of the church.
56. Some members just need to learn to accept people and not judge them on outward appearances.
57. The elders of the church who don't listen and expect the worst from the youth.
58. Kids don't feel like they fit in and don't think anyone will help them fit in.

59. All of the rules like the keeping of the Sabbath.
60. The biggest issue in my church that causes the youth to leave is the traditional worship service. We get yelled at every time we do music that has percussion. Adults need to respect our culture just like they expect us to respect theirs.
61. Church is not very exciting for young people who are full of energy and vision.
62. When a youth group is as close as ours new kids do not feel welcome because of being too shy. They are left out. One friend left because she had heavy struggles and thinks God has abandoned her.
63. Youth leave the local church because the church does not have a strong youth program with young adults leading who have a good report with the youth.
64. We don't have enough events planned for the youth to keep us energized and looking forward.
65. Services are too traditional. We need something to keep us awake! Adults are too judgmental.
66. Youth are leaving because older people are not accepting the younger ones (clothing, hair, music, style, etc.). Even if we look a little odd or may not be perfect like conservative people; that doesn't mean we shouldn't be accepted into the church, cuz we too have and want to be with Christ.
67. Church has been such a routine that when the youth go out and experience other things church then becomes boring. When the teens start driving they quit coming.
68. Youth need more parental support and better attitudes towards youth.
69. Adventists are too strict, like with dress and the Sabbath. I lot of my friends just think it is weird and controlling.
70. Church only appeals to older people where I come from because they won't change. They say drums are of the Devil. It is hard to go and listen to a service where everything is meant for older adults and is boring. We like to enjoy things and it its miserable, why come back.
71. I think the church focuses too much on the rights and wrongs, and what you can and can't do. The kids who are not getting into the best stuff are almost shunned from church rather than welcomed. Parents are so focused on keeping their children away from bad influences that they don't realize how good it would be for the other kids to come.
72. Lack of enthusiasm for youth. There's no programming or anything for most youth; not even a good opening for them to participate in the worship service.
73. We feel forced to go to church as a little child...so as we grow older and become of age youth decide they will not attend any more.
74. Kids are not feeling welcome at all. Other people in the church are not making them feel welcome. Teens these days take criticism to heart and some people in the church easily judge them.
75. Adventist strictness like worshipping on the Sabbath (Friday sunset is when parties usually take place and kids don't want to miss that).
76. I think that the young people are dealing with all these pressures and going to church is boring so they don't enjoy it. We loose interest because some of the time what we are hearing doesn't relate to us and the older folks are scolding or lecturing us. We get annoyed with that and just want to be understood.
77. Youth feel pressured to be the perfect little Christian and may feel that the church is ministering to or helping them. Kid may feel like they don't need church anymore because they just got on their own.
78. Teens are under constant pressure and bored with the church. Youth need must be met and not have religion shoved down their throats.
79. Teens are naturally rebellious and dumb:>)
80. Kids feel like they are being judged. Sometimes it feels like adults try to force religion onto the youth. Adults should just share Jesus and not be bossy. Life should be joyful not like a prison, but more like a place where people want to come and have fun.
81. Maybe because teens feel pushed and that they don't really belong with the church.
82. Most youth leave the church because the older generation seems to judge them. At my church a lady told me leggings were not appropriate for church. If my mom hadn't made me come to church after that I would have not returned.
83. Unacceptence, boring services, judgmental attitudes on music styles, clothing, food.... too traditional. Tradition can be a good thing, but our church is immersed in it. We have the same service, prayers and everything.
84. Pushy condemning adults.
85. Lack of youth social interactions in small church cause youth to go somewhere else for the fellowship.
86. Non invigorating services are boring.
87. No close friends in our church.
88. Boring preacher
89. Established members in the church judging the youth.
90. Adults implying that they are better than other people in the community.
91. The adults don't like youth and show it by making rules that take the fun out of life. So youth do worldly things because the fun has been taken out of Godly things.

92. In some cases it can be the music of the church that causes a disconnect. All too often the pastor's sermons are irrelevant to the teens.
93. Many Adventist youth feel the church is full of nothing but "do not's."
94. To many churches are kinda judgmental to people. Adults look at them like why are you dressed like that or why are you here. It make the people feel like they shouldn't be there, so they leave.

Question #3: How can the local church help you save your friends for Christ? (In other words...what do you need that will help you reach out to your peers?)

1. We need a bigger voice in what happens (we are after all the future).
2. Separate worship service exclusively for youth.
3. By giving us a good environment to be able to fellowship and have fun and reach our friends by our actions.
4. Youth rallies
5. Something fun that we can go out and do.
6. Host football or basketball game night with worship afterwards.
7. I think if church did more youth activities other kids would want to come and have fun.
8. We could do some community outreach or help with community service or something.
9. We need youth that go out and relate with other youth and draw them in.
10. Friday night vespers with interactive games, food and Christian fun.
11. We need more people. When they come they must feel really welcome. My church needs to do more stuff as a family and not as individuals.
12. Something that grabs kids attention and is fun.
13. More activities that are fun but not forgetting just what ministering is about...more encouragement.
14. I need to know that God love me and is wanting a relationship with me so I can feel accepted. Then I will let my friends know about Him.
15. More fun enticing healthy activities and choice that I can bring my friends to.
16. We need more mission outreach projects where we can witness to kids our age. Old people don't affect me (preaching).
17. Our church's summer youth program is really awesome. Beside Sabbath school we need to do something else like play basketball, swimming, etc...
18. Youth rallies help...everyone seems to really like them.
19. We can give them Bible studies and talk about God in our lives.
20. More youth activities that we can invite kids from the community to attend.
21. Someone to come in and talk about more things that the youth would understand so we can go out and share it with others.
22. I need to find out who Christ is for myself before I can start introducing Him to anybody else.
23. Have Bible studies with them about what we believe. And be there to help them with their struggles in life.
24. By having the right words and how to say them at the right time to my friends and not be too preachy or pushy.
25. A little "how to" would help...to help others be must help ourselves first. How can we know what to do if no one tells us, before we make ourselves look like idiots? Adults must interact with us first.
26. More contemporary music, more understanding adults, better sermons, more youth our own age to encourage each other.
27. Create good youth programs, put more things in the service and maybe others will want to start being part of things.
28. Youth events are the most appealing to kids outside the SDA church.
29. Help in knowing what to say to other youth.
30. More programs where we lead out with youth and do things other youth would like. Like the praise team playing at the park, provide food, etc.
31. More teen stuff.
32. Church members need to make us feel like God is there for us and that we have a place in the church.
33. We need help knowing how to approach friends who are losing their faith or don't know about God.
34. Youth need to have a chance. Adults must trust that teens know how to reach other teens and then give us a chance to loose/fail.
35. Play a 'bring a friend day' where everyone could bring a friend and spread the word.
36. Open our arms to the community instead of just having our own little Adventist village.
37. We need programs that are more appealing to people our age. Stuff needs to be focused for our needs.
38. Other youth seeing the peace we enjoy helps them yearn for a better life.
39. A nice location for youth to gather (good sound system, seats, etc.) Also the support of the church behind us to back us up.
40. Arms that will reach out to the youth and make them feel like they are welcome no matter what. Acceptance REALLY!
41. I need to know that the adults in the church are willing to listen to me.

42. An influence that makes my friends want what I have.
43. Divine Intervention!!
44. Appealing church services with friendly people who are non-judgmental. Youth programs at the local church.
45. Set up some youth group and have youth rallies. Something to look forward to and draw their attention...up beat praise teams.
46. When churches have youth programs like a Toby Mac Concert or a Jars of Clay or even a Lecrae concert other youth become drawn. Music really draws the attention of kids, even the ones who are "lost" open up to music, if nothing else.
47. My church has a great youth Sabbath School and song service. It really is nice.
48. Fun activities outside of worship service...like concerts, mission trips. Youth outings with leader who do not condemn (openness).
49. Give Bible studies, pray with the youth and be there for them when they get down.
50. We need more activities that encourage the attending youth to bring their friends to attend (Game night, movie nights, etc.)
51. Talk to our friends and get them to attend our fun night, do outreach ministry.