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### A Systems Theory Analysis Of The Goshen Seventh-day Adventist Church's System Of Communication

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ABSTRACT

A SYSTEMS THEORY ANALYSIS OF THE GOSHEN  
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH'S  
SYSTEM OF COMMUNICATION

by

Clavour R. Tucker

Chair: Desrene Vernon-Brebnor

## ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Thesis

Andrews University

College of Arts and Sciences

Title: A SYSTEMS THEORY ANALYSIS OF THE GOSHEN SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST CHURCH'S SYSTEM OF COMMUNICATION

Name of the researcher: Clavour R. Tucker

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Desrene Vernon-Brebnor, Ph.D.

Date completed: April 2018

### Problem

The Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) is a complex and multilayered nonprofit organization (NPO), with carefully outlined policies and guidelines for almost every aspect of the organization. However, the philosophical or structural framework that guides communication within the organization is not clear. It is my hypothesis, having been a member and employee of the organization for almost 30 years, that not having such a structure has led to the creation of a fragmented culture of communication, which is observable in local congregations. This research assesses this phenomenon at the Goshen SDA Church, in Chicago, IL, and seeks to answer the following question: What is the system of communication at the Goshen SDA Church as perceived by the ministry

and department leaders, based on the systems perspective of organizational communication?

### Purpose

The purpose of this correlation study is to assess the current system of inter-departmental communication at the Goshen SDA Church, in light of the major tenets of the systems theory of organizational communication. The survey was designed to cover and collect data across five major sections, these are: (1) general information of the participants, (2) the independent nature of the ministries and departments, (3) the living or non-living nature of the churches' system of communication, (4) the open or closed nature of the system of communication, and (5) the interdependence and connectedness of the ministries and departments.

### Method

The data was collected using a self-administered, web-based survey hosted on SurveyMonkey.com, which also provided a detailed analysis of the collected responses. The data was then imported into SPSS, for further analysis with the aid of a data analyst, Laura Carrol, where association and regression tests were conducted. Descriptive statistics were then used to interpret the perceived reality of the leaders based on the recommendations of the theory.

### Conclusion

The study confirmed my assumptions and revealed a significant breakdown in the system of communication, among the heads of departments, at the Goshen SDA Church. The data also revealed that though by nature the Goshen SDA Church is a living and

open organism, the system of communication is more readily identifiable to that of non-living and closed systems. Other critical areas, such as interdependence, and connectedness were also perceived as poor among departments.

Andrews University  
College of Arts and Sciences

A SYSTEMS THEORY ANALYSIS OF THE GOSHEN  
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH'S  
SYSTEM OF COMMUNICATION

A Thesis  
Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

by  
Clavour R. Tucker

2018

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APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

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Stanley Patterson, Ph.D.

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Lynn Caldwell, MA

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Date approved

## DEDICATION

Yolande

For your unfailing support, motivation, and commitment, for being a constant source of encouragement during the darkest and most trying hours, it is my privilege to have you as my wife. You are the miracle of my life.

Goshen SDA Church

You have opened your hearts and accepted me as your own, and without question, you accepted the request to participate in this research. Your contribution to this study cannot be overstated, and it is my prayer that your experience in Christ will be greatly improved because of this.

The Seventh-Adventist Church

This research is birthed from my life and experience as a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is my hope that this research will inspire not just a conversation, but also an awareness of the importance of communication as a critical piece to the efficient sharing of the gospel of Jesus.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GST	General Systems Theory
NPO	Nonprofit Organizations
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is my honor to give credit unreservedly to those who have made this research possible. To God, or my Lord and Savior who through this process of research brought me into a new experience with Him. He has given me first-hand experience of His faithfulness for which I will forever testify. Dr. Desrene Vernon-Brebnor: I could never have asked for a better Chair. You are simply the best at what you do, and it is with a sense of privilege that I appreciate you for your sacrifice in this regard. Dr. Stanley Patterson: your motivation and thorough critique ensured not just a robust study but also a product to truly benefit our churches. Lynn Caldwell: you are truly a gift. Your insights brought much-needed direction to this study for which I am truly grateful.

Pastor Gordon Fraser: For your mentorship and willingness to open your congregation to participate in this study and provide consent to the study. Laura Carroll: You came into this research just when I needed you most, you were an oasis. Your data analysis expertise brought significant insights and perspective to my research and encouraged much-needed confidence. Emeka Buffong: Bro, we did it. For three months we were the last ones leaving the library, and in fact, the campus, it wasn't easy but it was worth it. Thank you, brother, for your patience, support, and commitment. Your presence truly provided much needed encouragement. My mom: Yvonne Higgins. You are named in this research, as in every breath of success I breathe, just because you are the reason.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Historical Background**

The Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church could be described as that consistent thread across various patterns in my life. Some would say I am as SDA as they come. I was born in a SDA Christian home, in a predominantly SDA Christian community, and country. Both my mom and dad were elders of our local congregation and were influential individuals across the Conference of SDA Churches. My mom taught and also served as the coordinator of the then community kindergarten school, while my father wore multiple hats: a farmer, building contractor, baker, conference evangelist, preaching and ministering across more than five parishes, or ‘States’ as known in the United States of America. We were raised with a certain love and pride, not just for our congregation and its vibrant presence in the community, but to be known as God’s people, God’s remnant people, the SDA Church.

This energy transitioned through my childhood where church services, though stipulated, were looked forward to. I did not care much about the structure nor the organizational flow of the church, we were just excited to be present. This period of observation and participation drew my attention to a few areas, particularly that of preaching. I did not know much about it then since I was only ten, but whenever I saw my father preaching and I observed the response of strangers and members, I was always

amazed. It wasn't long after that my mom observed my passion and started scripting ten-minute sermons for me to rehearse with her in preparation for children's day, and youth day events. Oh, it was the most exciting feeling, and I was hungry for more.

With time I became more invested in the daily operations of 'church life', with the majority of my young adult scenes devoted to youth leadership, community service, other forms of young adult ministry, including various leadership and church board positions. My perspectives changed, I no longer saw the church through the eyes of a ten-year-old anxious to attend services, but that the church was a rather complicated mechanism that no one seemed to understand, et individuals like my parents were doing their best to keep it afloat. I realized that as a youth leader there were numerous frustrations and annoyances that I was faced with, some of which though not major issues, were nonetheless complex.

Board meetings were often a mini war zone, with visible battle scars, and instruments of warfare. I could often hear those who were hurting, and see those who were rejoicing and, in some cases, I could see the leader of individual battalions. After replaying some of those scenarios, I realized that these unique confrontations were issues related to communication, some of which included poor communication between departments, lack of, or insufficient communication from the pastor or at times conference officials.

This confusion, however, did not ruin my desire to pursue my call to Gospel Ministry, in fact, in most cases, I was compelled by the defects of my church to be in a position of change. With that in mind, I moved into pastoral training and shortly thereafter was placed in the context I had observed all my life. It was here, while serving

as a Pastor for over four years that the deep underlying complications I had observed in my local congregation and wondered about, became frighteningly clearer. The insufficient and poor culture of communication that existed at the wider or local levels of the church organization were simply symptoms of the poor culture of communication that existed throughout the organizations' larger framework. It appeared to me that there was no clear philosophy, or research that guided our distribution, reception, analysis and valuing of information. There were, however, clear distinctions on the levels of power and leadership, there are even clear outlines on who can be ordained versus commissioned, but communication does not appear to be of great concern. It is often the case that various organizational levels of the church would send correspondences, events, and voted decisions to local churches with the assumption that they were being received with joy, when on the contrary, those correspondences, and voted decisions would create further dissonance between members and the church organization.

A few factors may have contributed to this, such as assuming that the establishment of a few communication channels mean the presence of communication. It could also be that members have a different understanding of their role in the process of communication, while administration, pastors including me, held members to communication standards without educating or informing them of such roles and responsibilities. This troubled me for years as I oscillated between the local conference and my constituency, and between the union and my local congregations. The experience inspired a deep appreciation for the science and art of communication.

## **The Problem and Research Question**

This research is designed to assess the system of communication at the Goshen SDA Church based on the experiences of the leaders of various departments and ministries through the following question: What is the current system of communication among departments at the Goshen SDA Church in comparison to the systems theory of organizational communication.

It is my belief that there is no clear system of communication designed to flow within the unique structure of the SDA Church's organization – a culture which lacks the systematic awareness to ensure effective communication. This breakdown in communication coupled with the political dynamics of the church organization has also impacted the culture of communication at the local or wider levels of the church.

## **Significance of the Research**

My experience in my local congregation as a member and as a pastor was not in any way unique to me but may be a cultural reality of the SDA organization across various Conferences and Divisions. This research however, is as a pilot initiative with the potential of inspiring future research. Research that is able to assess and possibly recommend a mode or model of communication relative to the unique organizational structure of the SDA Church, based on a scholarly critique and analysis of the recommended organizational communication model.

## **Goal of the Research**

One of the primary ambitions of this research is to begin an informed conversation regarding the need and importance of investing in our system of communication and culture as an organization. This study seeks to highlight the value of

investing in the systems of communication that may exist at the local levels of our congregation. It is my aim that the SDA movement may be better positioned to share the Gospel of Christ as a result of the improvements we make in the way we communicate as a church.

For pastors, church elders, and students who may view this research, it is my aim that you may begin to evaluate practical, yet scholarly models of communication that can be tailored for or to your individual congregations. An even greater aim is that the academic community finds value in this research and the unique application of the systems theory of organizational communication to the church setting.

### **Profile of the Research Context**

The Goshen SDA Church congregation can be considered a typical SDA Church in North America. With a membership of approximately 100-150 members, over 20 ministries and departments, weekly services (which may include one or two additional worship services), with a culminating community experience on the seventh-day of the week, or the Sabbath as known by the SDA community. The congregation is characterized primarily by African-Americans with two Caucasian families and three Caribbean families. There is also a clear majority female membership with an average female age of 38. In some respects, the congregation can be considered a commuter church as a large portion of its worshipers are not local members but individuals who travel to the location on Sabbaths.

### **Rationale for Research Context**

One might inquire as to why the church board is identified as the research focus and not the general church population and the response to this question is once again

based on the dynamics of the theory. The theory is primarily concerned with the relationship of key parts to each other and their environment, which in this case are the departments and their leaders since they essentially function as the parts within the organization. I do agree that in the context of the church, the general congregation, while they may not be given a specific task or voted responsibilities as the leaders of departments do, still in some way contribute to the general flow of the system. Nevertheless, the general population would contribute more effectively if the research was designed to compare the perception of the leadership versus that of the membership, but, in this pilot study, this was not the case.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Conference:* “A specific group of local churches, within a defined geographic area, that has been organized in harmony with General Conference and division working policy and granted, by action of a division executive committee at midyear, yearend, or division council meeting, official status as a SDA local conference/ mission/ field.” (Adventists, 2015-2016)

*Division:* “The General Conference has established regional offices, known as division 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. The division executive committee acts for the General Conference Executive Committee in the territory of the respective division.” (Adventists, 2015-2016)

*Organizational Communication*: “The extent to which meaning is created between individuals in an organizational setting, between individuals and organizations, and between organizations and societies” (Feldner & D’Urso, 2010, p. 156).

*System*: “A group of individuals who relate to form a whole” (Hall & Fagen, 1968)

*Systems Theory*: “merging parts, interconnections, and proposes that work together for the objective of the whole system” (Smith & Mireles, 2010). Recognizing that there are different systems theories, the term system theory is used in this paper in the context of organizational communication.

*Union*: Unions embodies a number of conferences/missions within a larger territory. (Adventists, 2015-2016)

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Chapter Overview**

In this section, I review the theoretical framework behind the research, followed by a discussion intended to shed light on organizational communication. I then review the dynamics of communication research conducted in organizations geared at widening our understanding of the various contributing elements of communication that impacts the effectiveness of organizations. I then narrowed the review to assess the systems perspective of organizational communication, followed by an assessment of communication research and more specifically the systems perspective of organizational communication in non-profit organizations which involved previous research done in this area.

#### Definition and Contextualization

The terms organization and communication are individually complicated and multilayered concepts. Organization suggests an identifiable structure, while communication proposes a system of movement or transition. A system can be defined as that which “serve to improve organizational knowledge and understanding by leveraging feedback loops that connect system components with organizational learning to supply vital information continuously recycled to and from all subsystems to influence change in the system” (Smith & Mireles, 2010). Another way of viewing systems in the context of

the theory is as a “complexed set of relationships among interdependent components or parts” (Eisenberg, Goodall Jr, & Tretheway, 2007, p. 106). This combination of movement within structure is characterized as the “interaction required to direct a group toward a set of common goals” (Eisenberg et al, 2007, p. 104), which ultimately describes the systems theory’s perspective of communication within organizations.

### General Systems Theory

Systems theory can be considered a product of General Systems Theory (GST), yet seeking to fine-tune its assumptions and serve as an overarching framework for understanding organizations. (Von Bertalanffy, Juarrero, & Rubino, 2008). An interesting aspect of the GST is that it is a meta-theory, in that, “it does not preclude any assumption before it is applied to a particular context. Therefore, GST integrates existing theories or invents new theories to fit the needs of dynamic situations” (Vlismas & Venieris, 2011). Another interesting claim of this parent theory is its bases of ‘nonsummativity’, “that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and that the interaction of elements in a system can generate new system dynamics not apparent or feasible prior to the interaction of disparate systems” (Barile & Polese, 2010, pp. 26-27).

We learn from the systems theory, therefore, that there is no broad-brush approach that can be taken towards understanding organizations, rather, each organization along with its unique system of communication must be studied and viewed independently. It is this dynamic that communication theories such as the systems theory have been developed to study, and to provide us with a better understanding of just how communication permits us to understand the elements that contribute to successful organizations.

The systems perspective of organizational communication is ideal for this study primarily because of its ability to understand the complexed nature of systems in relation to its varied parts, which is essentially the structural framework of the SDA Church.

With five levels of administration, each level operating under different policies:

Three Divisions, 60 Union Conferences, 58 Union Missions, 10 Union Church Conferences, four Union Church Missions, 362 local conferences, 270 local missions, 7,792 total schools and educational institutions, 175 Hospitals and Sanitariums, 140 Nursing homes and retirement centers, 385 clinics and dispensaries, 62 Publishing houses. It invests over US\$180,000,000.00 in funds for program support and implementation, acknowledged by the United Nations. It boasts 81, 552 church congregations, 69, 909 church companies, 19,260,880 and growing church membership, and 279, 604 total active employees. (Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research-General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, 2016)

With such complexed, multilayered and widespread organization, comes the following question: what is the system of communication that has been designed to suit the organizations' dynamic structure? Is there a philosophical framework that guides how each department relates to each other? This research, however, is not designed to answer these questions from the general or higher organizational levels of the church, instead, this research is focused on how this culture of communication is evident within the local congregations. While the average SDA local congregation may not be responsible for so many other branches of organization, a single local congregation with over 20 ministries and departments still require some level of communication management.

### **Towards Understanding Organizational Communication**

Eisenberg et al. (2007) identifies four of the most prominent concepts of organizational communication, these are: "(1) communication as information transfer, (2) communication as a transactional process, (3) communication as strategic control, (4)

communication as a balancing of creativity and constraint”. Let’s consider each briefly. Communication as information-transfer is viewed symbolically as a channel relaying information from one person to the other. According to Steven Axley (1984) this version of communication theory assumes the following: “(1) language is capable of transferring thoughts and feelings from one person to another person, (2) speakers and writers insert thoughts and feelings into words, (3) words contain thoughts and feelings, and (4) listeners or readers extract those thoughts and feelings from the words.”

Communication in an organization, therefore, is the means through which goals are accomplished. It is simply the “exchange of information and the transmission of meaning” (Dessler, 1982, p. 94). Key to this approach is that nothing is said or expected of the medium through which information is transferred, neither is it believed to be able to impact the meaning or quality of communication, in other words, “if I say it and you can hear it, you ought to understand it” (Feldman & March, 1981, p. 178). Consequently, miscommunication occurs only when “no message is received or when the message that is received is not what the sender intended” (Eisenberg et al, 2007, p. 29).

The transactional-process of communication, on the other hand, suggests that there is not a clear distinction of roles as purported by the transfer model of communication, rather, that “all persons are engaged in sending (encoding) and receiving (decoding) messages simultaneously...and each person is constantly affecting the other. (Wenberg & Wilmot, 1973, p. 5). In this approach the value of continuous feedback is highlighted even in the absence of verbal communication. A person does not have to speak to communicate since “nonverbal messages are conveyed through a person’s silence, facial expressions, body posture, and gestures. As a result, then, any type of

behavior is a potential message” (Redding, 1972, p. 451). Whereas the information transfer model places meaning in the words, the transaction model locates meaning within people, not words, and further suggests, that “miscommunication is the normal state of affairs in human communication...miscommunication and unintended communication are to be expected” (Richards, 1936, p. 432).

Strategic control as the third communication model defines communication as a form applied to control the communication variables within the environment (Parks, 1982). Communication according to this perspective is not only limited to its effective transfer of meaning nor its identification of the source of meaning but is more focused on the goal. Communication, therefore, is “a means to accomplish one’s ends with adaptation and saying what is appropriate for the situation. Communicators must be able to recognize the constraints of the situation and to adapt to multiple goals simultaneously, such as being clear, assertive, and respectful of the other person” (Tracey & Eisenberg, 1991). This perspective, posits that what is important in our communication is if its goal is accomplished, not its clarity or its meaning.

Our final major approach defines organizational communication as the balancing of creativity and constraint, which holds that “communication is the moment-to-moment working out of the tension between individual creativity and organizational constraints” (Eisenberg et al, 2007, p. 36). This model seems to identify with the relational factors that are at play in organizations that make communication possible. It is out of this context that later concepts of organizational communication have developed and have gained the attention of scholars since they realize the dynamic nature of communication within organizations, such as the Organization as Dialogue model (Eisenberg et al, 2007).

Each of the above models is individually complexed and are geared to structure organizations accordingly. The challenge occurs when a model is being implemented or nurtured without understanding the dynamics of such communication models. As we think through these models, I would like to consider in the following sections of this research, which of these models is unique to SDA congregations or its organization? Moreover, if studied, which of the above would be reported. These and other subjects from the above section are reviewed in later discussions.

### **The Systems Theory of Organizational Communication**

The systems theory has its roots in the 19<sup>th</sup> century “back to European thought of dealing with process, change and evolution, particularly the work of Geog Hegel, Charles Darwin, and Karl Marx...[which is] proven to be well established in eastern thought” (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009, p. 951). It was Senge in his (1990) classic *The Fifth Discipline* who wrote that “The unhealthiness of our world today is in direct proportion to our inability to see it as a whole” (p. 168). Without identifying Senge as a prophet, it is easy to see the fulfillment of his assertion almost thirty years later. Ours is the global community that is so closely knitted that a shift in power on a given continent may instantly place another country on a different continent, in poverty or political unrest. There is an undeniable link between the various systems that govern the smooth operation of our lives even if those pieces are not in our country. In the context of organizations, the systems approach leads us to focus “not on the individual parts or people but on relationships, on the pattern that connects” (Bateson, 1972). Buckley (1967) explains that:

The ‘more than’ points to the fact of organization which imparts to the aggregate characteristics that are not only different from, but [also] often not found in the

components alone; and the ‘sum of the parts’ must be taken to mean, not their numerical addition, but their unorganized aggregation. (p. 42).

In other words, an “organization makes a social system more than just its components” (Eisenberg et al, 2007, p. 101).

This framework of system thinking forces us to consider the effectiveness of the organization based on the effective coordination of the entire enterprise and to also consider the effectiveness of various parts of the organization in light of the overall performance of the organization. According to Littlejohn and Foss (2009):

All systems have four aspects – objects, attributes, internal relationships, and environment. The objects are the parts of the system. The attributes are the characteristics of these objects as well as those of the system as a whole. Internal relationships consist of patterns of interaction among the objects, and the environment is the system of influences that act on or impact the system in some way. (p. 950)

Systems theory is founded in biology and GST. It is advanced primarily by biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968) and J. G. Miller (1978). Key terminologies such as ‘living systems’ - a biological term - when applied to organizations suggest that an organization when faced with unique situations, like a biological system, will adapt and evolve to achieve its goal of survival. Another critical term which is developed from the GST that is also critical to our understanding of the systems perspective of organizational communication is that of ‘open versus closed systems’. Prigogine (1980) found that both living and nonliving systems have the potential for self-organization or self-renewal in the face of environmental change, and that disorder is a natural part of the renewal process. Like the living system, that a system is open suggest that it relies on its environment in this change process to determine the nature and extent of its evolution. The theory further posits, that “organizations do not exist as entities isolated from the rest

of the world...but exist in increasingly turbulent environments that both provide inputs to organizations and receive outputs” (Eisenberg et al, 2007, p. 107).

A third key concept is that of ‘distributed intelligence’, which is unique to living organisms. This concept suggests that “all members in the system...play an important role in the system’s ongoing self-organization” (Eisenberg et al, 2007, p. 104). More specifically, distributed intelligence is the reality “that people learn best in a complex environment when they are loosely connected and free to initiate action from anywhere in the organization” (Eisenberg et al, 2007, p. 104).

With this in mind, we consider one of the final aspects of the systems theory relevant to our study, which is interdependence. Here we are forced to realize that a system cannot be sufficiently comprehended by an examination of the individual parts. Littlejohn and Foss (2009) explains, that “the weight of a box of stones is the sum of the weights of all the stones in the box plus the weight of the box” (p. 950). This concept refers to the wholeness of the organization, the relationship of the individual parts, and the relationship of those parts to its environment. In other words, what is created by the interaction of the sum of all the parts cannot be created by any individual part. According to Mulej, “when an organization allows employees to express suggestions and viewpoints, openness and interconnectedness occurs” (Buble, 2012; Mulej et al, 2004). Failure to recognize this element in our organizations leads to what Garret Hardin (1968) called the tragedy of commons:

‘Tragedy of commons’, occurs when a group of people with access to a common resource use it in ways that focus on personal needs rather than on the needs of the whole. While each individual’s actions may make sense from his or her perspective, the failure to recognize the interdependence and consequences of one’s actions can be devastating to both the individual and the organization. (p.150)

The systems perspective of organizational communication in addition to allowing us to view and evaluate the processes of communication in the context of its effective contribution to the organization, also allows us to assess statistically the relationship of subsystems within the organization in the context of the whole. Once an organization is acknowledged, that is, its systematic characteristics have become observable, it is then able to determine a relevant communication process suitable for the organization.

### **Communication Research in Organizations**

The study of communication within organizations has in the past 50 years begun to impact the structure and flow of our world organizations, to the degree that some companies have allowed communication principles to guide their functionality. The system theory is among those that have been used to assess other areas of an organization's framework, as noted by (Nenoen & Storbacka, 2010), that:

A system-theory-based business model can be used as a tool for strategic planning because the framework obviates design principles, resources, and organizational capabilities to provide a map by which strategies can be translated into operational initiatives that create systemic synergies. (p. 45)

It appears, that the realization that much of our organizational successes are also based on the quality of the relationship that exists in those organizations, has led to the increased variations of communication theories that were not previously applied to organizations but are now finding significant room for application.

Larson and Pepper, (2011) in their study of organizations assessed *Organizational Identification and the Symbolic Shaping of Information Communication Technology*. This study affirms, that the global nature of organizations has presented companies with the challenge of engaging its workers across various cultural barriers while developing a sense of identity with employees, who in most cases, have never met and will never meet

the owners of the companies they have worked for in some cases all their lives. The study was conducted at Tech, a multinational technology cooperation, which at that time had acquired a smaller technology company. The study was then focused on the initiatives used to integrate CIE employees into the existing tech company.

The study posits, “the use of technology shapes and reinforces symbolic meanings that influence identification. ... cooperate emails, virtual coffee talks, and company websites represented the distant nature of the organization and the remoteness of their connection with the larger Tech values” (p. 7). The article does not state that the challenge the company had was with its mode of communication, but it seems to suggest that the company failed to realize that communication is more than the establishment of channels. This is what Eisenberg et al. (2007) refers to as communication as information transfer, where communication is reduced to sending and receiving of information not realizing the complicated realities that are accompanied in this process.

Solomon Olufemi Ihidero (2012) in his study of organizational communication applied the leader member exchange theory to his examination of the relationships between organizational communication and conflict management. The study examined “the potential threats to an organization’s quest for effectiveness from destructive conflict and poor communication among employees in a workplace” (Ihidero, 2012, p. 2). Ihidero’s study is significant to us as is pointed out by Gido and Clements (2009) “poor or ambiguous communication, lack of information sharing or failure to make a timely decision” (p. 353) can lead to challenges within organizations. One of the interesting elements that affect the quality of communication within organizations is, ‘*red tape*’. As defined by *Dictionary.com* red tape is “excessive formality and routine required before

official action can be taken” (Ammer, 2018). These elements are assessed in later chapters.

Carrie Lynn Leonard (2014) approaches the subject from a different perspective and seeks to discover how organizations respond to a structure whereby the system of communication is controlled by the stakeholders, in a study involving over 13 middle schools. She assessed “how the organizational communication practices of the staff at a typical private middle school, affects the organizational system’s alignment of goals. She discovered, that “the general problem regarding the impact of organizational communication on goal alignment is that the manner in which goal information cycles through an organization contributes to an individual stakeholder’s interpretation of organizational objectives” (p. 114). Hence, if the stakeholders are unaware of the goals of the organization then it is unrealistic to expect the members of the organization to communicate or fuse the goals of the organization to their communication.

Another study that is important to consider was done by Therese Grieves (2013), which assessed how organizational communication affected employees’ affiliation or interest in ‘living the brand’ or brand identification. The study investigated the internal communication of Royal Caribbean Cruise Line Nordic, “and its call center employees in an organizational communication’s perspective, with a focus on socialization, internal communication, consistency, and identification” (p. 2). Alicia Janee Hart also joins this group of researchers in her 2016 study *Exploring the Influence of Management Communication Behaviors on Employees* (Hart, 2016, p. 9). In her study, she assessed how organizational communication affects employee turnover.

Jim Macnamara (2018) in his research *Toward a Theory and Practice of Organizational Listening* sought to apply a theory predominantly employed in family settings to the culture of organizations. Two of the questions presented in the study were: “(1) To what extent is organization-public communication two-way transactional and dialogic versus one-way information transmission? (2) What barriers...inhibit two-way communication involving listening by organizations?” (p. 7). After analyzing a wide cross-section of organizational types, such as government, corporate, and nonprofit organizations (NPO), across various countries, including, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States, the overarching conclusion was, that “when organizations do listen, it is mostly instrumental, designed to help the organization achieve its objectives” (Macnamara, 2018, p. 11).

This conclusion seems to support the long-held assumption that an organization might respond to a particular complaint if it feels the complaint might bring the organization into ‘disrepute’, not necessarily to ensure the individual's complaint is given full attention. This information is valuable to us since a key part of any system’s efficient functionality is its ability to listen to its public.

### **Communication in Church and or Non-Profit Organizations**

When we broaden this conversation to include the evolution of communication within church or NPO we realize that while there is a developing interest there is still some ways to go in how it's focused. One of the most recent researchers to apply the systems theory in NPO was M. Francisca Henriquez -Prieto (2006), where the systems theory was used to assess the role of internal evaluation, as a means to provide communication feedback information, using a process called organization evaluation.

The researcher noted, that while non-profit organizations often have systems of feedback particularly for the purpose of reporting to various stakeholders, organizations may not allow this information to flow within the organization and may not consider the feedback information for the next event. According to the study, “this flow of information is oriented to inform organization’s members about evaluation findings, but to inform does not guarantee that organization’s members both understand evaluation findings and can translate them into actions that will improve performance” (p. 66). What improves on this ability to maximize evaluation findings within organizations is the system of communication.

Another study of interest was done by Lacy McNamee (2011) *Faith-Based Organizational Communication and its Implications for Member Identity*, where she intended to “provide practical and theoretical insight into how situated communication practices (meetings) in faith-based organizations shape member’s personal religious or spiritual and organizational identifications” (McNamee, 2011, p. 423).

This study is similar to that of Larson and Pepper’s (2011) research that evaluates the employee’s identification based on their technological communication channels. McNamee evaluates this identity relationship by assessing speech codes which comprises the discourse of church meetings, which include: “keeping the faith (emphasizing religious spiritual values and spiritual discipline such as prayer), secular thinking (stresses business concerns/trends and lauds codified standards/goals for decision making), and business as usual (underscore mechanistic routines)” (McNamee, 2011, p. 431). The study suggests that each of these codes appeal to various groups of individuals within the church of study and may lead to dissociation in the members, and in some

cases, may suggest a sense of manipulation. This is particularly the cases where church leaders use terminology to suggest that they ‘heard from God’.

### **Summary**

This review is intended to provide us with a wide basis on which to base this research and has yielded the following among other implications: (1) That the dynamics of communication and its various elements within organizations are understudied in comparison to other areas of study, as is evident with most of the studies conducted years prior. (2) That though some aspects of organizational communication have been studied, it is still not enough to develop a comprehensive hypothesis on communication within organizations. (3) That due to the complexed nature of organizations, even after studying an organization it is difficult to provide general recommendations for ‘organizations’ and must continue to pull learned principles from other organizations. (4) In a broader sense, we are made to realize, that when we talk about communication, particularly communication within organizations, this involves much more than the usage of words or gestures. It includes the various systems, policies, cultures, mediums, organizational structure, among other factors, that influences the quality of communication within our organizations and must be seen as equally significant even as the words we exchange.

Systems theory within the context of organizational communication as a theoretical framework is not among the easiest to assess, precisely for the lessons stated above. Its unique approach demands and requires a unique evaluation process, which most of the studies conducted have not been able to do, that is, they have not presented the follow-up assessment based on the research questions. This is so because systems are unique.

The systems theory of organizational communication is not intended to determine what the system should be, rather, it seeks to highlight the fact, that each organization is a system and can be characterized as unique because of the various systems unique to its mode of operation. The question the theory asks therefore is, “what is the system of communication that is observable in the organization in question.” In this view, its purpose is not primarily to prescribe but to assess the reality of the relationship of the parts to each other.

Hence, most of the research concerning organizational communication has been geared towards assessing the effects of communication within organizations on other variables. Such as: how does communication within organizations affect employee behavior, or how does communication within organizations affect employees citizenship or “living the brand”, among others. These researchers are essentially applying systems knowledge of organizations in an effort to assess outliers Having reviewed the above studies and others, I cannot help but agree with the researchers in their assessment of how communication within organizations affect these variables. In Jim Macnamara’s (2018) research, which sought to assess organizational listening, he concluded, that “when organizations do listen, it is mostly instrumental, designed to help the organization achieve its objectives” (p. 11). Could it be, that one of the factors affecting the quality of communication at the Goshen SDA Church is the lack of value placed on the feedback from other departments and ministries?

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Chapter Overview**

It was Robert Abelson (1995) who said, that “research should make an interesting claim; it should tell a story that an informed audience will care about, and it should do so by intelligent interpretation of appropriate evidence” (p. 2). It is particularly this that this study seeks to accomplish – To allow the data to tell its story through the creative exercise of discovery. This chapter consists of the various components that guide the research process, which are: research context, the philosophical framework, research method, research design, research instrument, data collection and analysis, sampling technique and respondents.

#### Research Focus

The Goshen SDA Church is located at 8221 S State St, Chicago, IL 60619. It is situated in a primarily African-American neighborhood, with visitors from other ethnic groups such as Caribbean and White Americans. The church itself is our primary research focus. It’s sub systems must talk, listen, assess, and act on information to and from each other.

A typical worship service may have a total of 60 to 100 individuals depending on various factors. It has a recorded membership of approximately 200 individuals and it has over 25 ministries and departments that must communicate with each other to

maintain healthy functionality. There are however only 15 individuals as the departmental leaders of the church since various individuals wear multiple hats. The congregation as well the leaders are comprised of mostly females within the age group of 35-70, with a minority population of males and young adults, which is taken into consideration as the data is analyzed. These systems, leaders, and participants are the focus of this research project to determine the means and strategies applied to communicate in support of their common mission.

### **Philosophical Framework**

Fundamental to research are the problem of presuppositions, and the methods we apply in our pursuit of knowledge. These are usually guided by other factors, such as a philosophical framework, which are “different ways of thinking about what we know, what we believe communication is, and what we do as researchers when we study it” (Merrigan & Huston, 2009, p. 34). Hence choosing a method of study involves, intentionally or unintentionally, the researcher locating the research within a particular paradigm.

Research is grounded primarily in three ways of thinking, “knowing by discovery, knowing by interpretation and knowing by criticism” (Merrigan & Huston, 2009, pp. 34-38). The discovery paradigm assumes, that: Knowledge is discoverable through logic and empirical methods; that is, researchers who share the same standards of precision and systematic observation will observe the same patterns of results in repeated tests of the research claims” (Merrigan & Huston, 2009, p. 36; Pavitt, 2004).

One of the primary reasons for such rigor is the need to reduce the subjectivity of the researcher, which potentially adds to the integrity of the findings and conclusions.

The challenge with the discovery paradigm is that it has the potential to blind the researcher to his or her own presuppositions which are inseparable from the human way of thinking. Knowing by interpretation, on the other hand, suggests that the researcher wishes:

To understand the points of view expressed by the people you are observing or the texts you are reading; the interpretive researcher uses observation to help guide his or her understanding of the perspectives expressed by participants or within texts. (Merrigan & Huston, 2009, p. 37)

While the discovery paradigm seeks to prescribe a particular outcome, the interpretive paradigm observes and describes the outcome. One of the challenges with the interpretive paradigm is its susceptibility to subjectivity. It is openly subjective, which demands of the researcher a heightened sense of awareness as he or she approaches the subject.

The final paradigm is the critical paradigm, which views its responsibility to knowledge a little differently. It posits that the researcher is not only responsible to “reveal his or her subjective truth...but to reveal existing social hierarchies and in some cases, to become an advocate for social change” (Merrigan & Huston, 2009, p. 39). Researchers and social scientists are particularly interested in this field since its aim is to effect social change rather than describe social conditions. This research falls within the discovery paradigm, as it employs the use of a specific instrument that seeks to discover reality through a tested methodology.

There is, however, a strong element of interpretation that is assumed, since I must as noted by Abelson (1995), “intelligently interpret the evidence” (p. 2). Given the nature of the research, and the question it seeks to answer, a discovery paradigm gives the researcher a certain assurance of validity, that is, “the procedures and findings can be

verified when the study is repeated by another researcher, or with different participants in a different setting” (Merrigan & Huston, 2009, p. 83).

### **Research Method**

Communication research is further categorized as either qualitative or quantitative research. Qualitative research involves several methods of collecting data, such as “focus groups, field observation, in-depth interviews, and case studies. In all of these methods, the questioning approach varies” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014, p. 48).

Quantitative research, on the other hand, applies various types of surveys and questionnaires. Additionally, “the methods applied are standardized or static and ensures that each respondent is asked the same questions and there is no opportunity for follow-up questions” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014, p. 48). According to Merrigan and Huston, “Quantitative research is associated with positivism or post-positivism, philosophical perspectives characterized by the assumptions of an objective, fixed reality and the deductive application of control and measurement to determine the causes of outcomes under study” (p. 25). This research should be considered a pilot study intended to stimulate future studies under this quantitative framework.

### **Research Design**

According to Merrigan and Huston (2009) “a research design is the typical sequence that connects a researcher’s claim, data or evidence, and warrants” (p. 73). In other words, it enables the researcher to ensure a certain measure of coherence throughout the research. In the context of the discovery paradigm, “the term ‘research design’ encompasses many specific strategies for carefully controlling the selection of the

people or messages to be included in a study, the setting in which the data will be collected, and the strategies for capturing those data” (Merrigan & Huston, 2009, p. 73).

This study is aligned with the cross-section category of research designs which collects a “sample of data at one point in time and is used to draw inferences about the research question...it gives the researcher a snapshot, or perspective on the phenomenon of interest” (Merrigan & Huston, 2009, p. 74), unlike the longitudinal design approach. Due to the nature of the research question, conducting repetitive surveys does not guarantee a different result, since the primary responders would be the same, and the circumstance of the responders is unlikely to change in any significant way to affect the initial results.

### **Research Questions**

1. When observed, would the system of communication at the Goshen SDA Church be classified as a living or non-living system?
2. When observed, would the system of communication at the Goshen SDA Church be classified as an open or closed system?
3. Could this core group of leaders provide enough significant data points to justify the above answers?

### **Research Instrument, Data Collection, and Analysis**

This survey research employs the combination of the interval, nominal and ratio scales that are designed to: “yield continuously measured data and are only used in discovery paradigm research” (Merrigan & Huston, 2009, p. 67). Additionally, interval scales “require categorical responses that are ordered from least to most or from smallest to largest size” (Merrigan & Huston, 2009, p. 70). The questionnaires were self-

administered online, which allowed the participants to access and complete the survey at their own pace. (Watt & van den Berg, 1995, p. 368).

The questionnaire is comprised of 26 closed-ended questions, which requires respondents to “chose from a fixed set of alternatives or to give a single numerical value,” (Watt & van den Berg, 1995, p. 366) such as age range, or the approximate number of years they have been members of the organization in question. The questions reflect the structure of the Likert scale, which “enables the researcher to quantify opinions and beliefs and thus obtain more precise indications” (Berger, 2016, p. 301). Finally, this study is descriptive rather than analytical, and seeks primarily to describe a particular relationship, rather than to understand the rationale behind the reported reality. According to Berger (2016) “it is much easier to obtain descriptions of people’s behavior than it is to find out why people behave the way they do. You have to consider biological, psychological, social, economic, and political factors... in dealing with human behavior” (p. 292).

### **Sampling Technique and Respondents**

In this research, I assessed the communication relationship between systems (departments and ministries) at the Goshen SDA Church, which automatically excludes members who are not positional leaders of ministries/departments. The responders were required to complete the questionnaire online, via SurveyMonkey, an online survey platform. This method fits this survey for a number of reasons, primarily that it provides the opportunity to complete the survey at no cost to the participant, “has no geographical limitations, no specific time constraints, flexibility in the data collection process” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014, p. 217), among other factors.

To be clear, these 26 questions are designed to gain a pulse reaction of the current relationship of the various systems [departments and ministries]. I recognize however, that the systems theory is layered in its claims, hence to assess all the aspects of the theory would require a greater time frame and potentially a different sample group. Additionally, though there are over 20 ministries and departments, there are 16 leaders of departments and ministries at Goshen SDA Church, which is typical for SDA Churches in North America and potentially across various divisions. With regards, to the margin of error, “a general rule of thumb is that the point of estimation for a proportion in surveys of 1,500 people has a standard error estimation of plus or minus 3%, and surveys of 250 people have a sampling error of plus or minus 5%” (Berger, 2016, p. 313). In an effort to ensure a greater level of confidence, the research involved the participation of all 15 members of the church board.

#### Procedural Review

On February 24, at approximately 11:45 a.m., an announcement was read by the pastor inviting the members of the board (the leaders of departments) to meet after the regular Sabbath potluck (congregational lunch) in the conference room to review the requirements of the research. At 3:30 pm, the meeting convened with all 16 members of the board. It should be noted that in Chapter 3 the research sample stated was 15, however, at the actual meeting I discovered that there are in fact 16 members of the board. The pastor led the meeting by reminding the board of the procedures thus far and then handed the remainder of the time to me.

The recruitment document was read, followed by the consent form which details the risk, potential benefits and issues related to confidentiality. After this, I allowed time

for questions or feedback. Some of the members were interested in the benefits of the research to the congregation, others were concerned about their individual benefits of engaging in the research, others questioned regarding the assurance of confidentiality, while some were simply excited to engage in the research. The remainder of the meeting was spent collecting preferred emails and allowing the leaders to sign and date their individual consent forms.

Participants were asked to complete the survey by Monday, February 26, and without receiving incentives or prompting all 16 participants completed their emailed surveys by Monday, February 26. One of the limitations of the process was sending the surveys via SurveyMonkey. Unfortunately, emails via SurveyMonkey did not go directly to individual's inbox, but either to their junk or spam boxes. This was observed during the testing and evaluation phase of the instrument, hence, on Sunday, February 25, I sent a follow-up email to all the participants with instructions on how to access the email which may have been filtered to the spam or junk boxes. This follow-up email proved to be the key to the individuals accessing and completing their surveys in the timely manner that they did. After receiving all the responses on Monday, February 26, I then sent a final emailing detailing my appreciation for their participation in completing the survey.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

#### **Chapter Overview**

This chapter is a presentation of the findings of the study, a review of the data collection procedures, the data analysis process, an evaluation of the responses based on key elements of the systems theory of organizational communication and a summary. The research instrument is designed to gather data across five sections according to the major tenets of the theory, which is intended to compare the current perceived reality of the system of communication. Each of these sections were analyzed and interpreted separately followed by a discussion of the correlation of the findings of the questionnaire in its entirety.

#### **The Data Analysis Process**

The purpose of this correlation pilot study was to assess the current system of communication at the Goshen SDA Church in light of the major tenets of the systems theory of organizational communication. The data for this research was collected using a self-administered web-based survey host, SurveyMonkey.com, which also provides a detailed analysis of the collected responses. The data was exported to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), and with the help of a statistician further statistical analysis was conducted.

The survey was designed to cover and collect data across five major sections, these are: (1) general information of the participants, (2) the leaders' perception of the interdependent relationships among departments, (3) the leaders' perception of the living or non-living nature of the church's system of communication, (4) the open or closed nature of the system of communication, and (4) their perception of the churches' and connectedness and overall operation of the departments. A descriptive comparative approach was then used to interpret the perceived reality of the leaders based on the recommendations of the theory.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Section I: General Information**

#### **Data Results**

This body of data is intended to assess the general demographics of the sample in relation to the study. To this 69.75% of the sample were above 50 years of age, 69% of the sample were females, 66.67% of which have been members of the Goshen SDA Church for more than 10 years. The question to ponder here is, to what degree does this age, gender and years of service demographics affect the perception and ultimate interpretation of the data? Should the fact that most of the participants were female and over 50 years of age have a significant impact on the research? These questions will be considered in the discussion section.

#### **Interpretation**

For this section of the data, correlation tests were done for the six data points as presented in the figures below. The results however, did not reveal that the above

demographic adversely impacted the results of the study outside of its general majority sample.

## Section II: Relationship of Interdependent Departments

### **Data Results**

This section was designed to assess the leaders' perception of the relationship of the departments with each other. The first question asked, how many departments and ministries are in your church? The responses were evenly distributed across the available options, however, a total of 75% indicated the incorrect answer. The fifth question under this section asked how often the departmental leaders relate to each other: again, the responses were evenly distributed, where of the three options 33.33% said once per week, 40% said twice per month and 26.67% said more than four times per month. The next question asked: are voted actions taken by departments relayed to all departments? To this 60% of the respondents said sometimes while 26.67% said never. Hence more than 80% of the sample perceive the communication between departments as sometimes to never. A Likert scale was used with options such as: always, sometimes, and never.

Question seven under this section asked, is adequate time given to allow feedback on other departments' initiatives? To this 93.34% of the responders indicated sometimes to never. Question 8 in this section asked whether the mission of the church is clearly communicated throughout all departments, and 62% percent of the responders indicated sometimes to never. Question 9 asked, are there clear communication procedures established between departments? To this, 86% of the responders indicated sometimes to never. (See Figure 1).

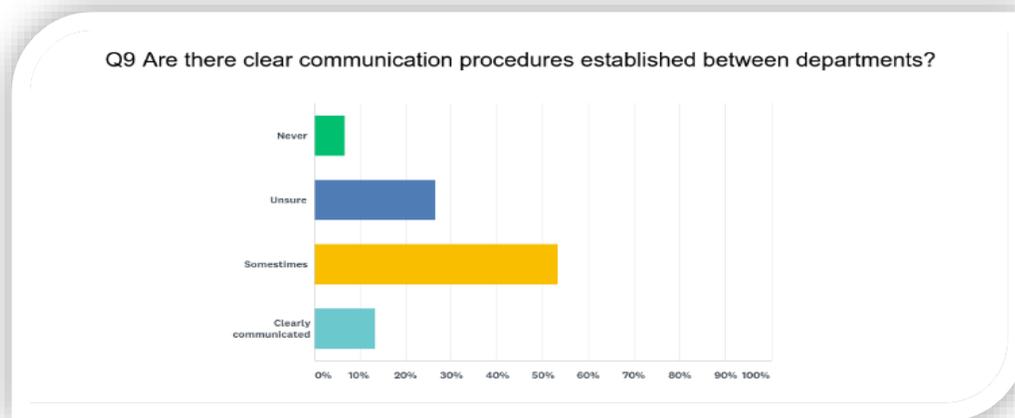


Figure 1. Results from question 9

The remaining three questions in this section are important in light of the previous questions in this section. Question 10 asked, what strategies are employed in your organization to ensure effective distribution of information to all departments? More than half (53%) said information is sent and received through specific channels; 26% said other, 13% said there is a departmental leader directory, and the remaining 6.67% said there is adequate time given to respond and clarify messages. Question 11 asked what communication tools are used in your church. Of the available options which were, email, text message, social media, and meetings, an overwhelming 75% said all of the above. (See Figure 2). The final question in this section asked, do all departmental leaders have access to the communication tools? To this, 68% said yes and 31% said no.

**Interpretation**

The above data is intended to provide a picture of how the leadership of the church perceives the relationship among the departments in the context of interdependence. Interdependence, according to the systems theory, realizes that a

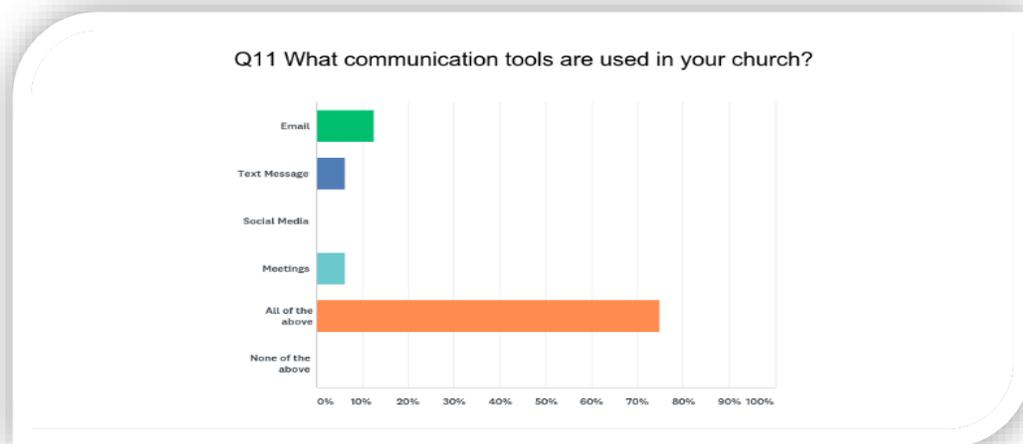


Figure 2. Results from question 11

system cannot be sufficiently comprehended by an examination of the individual part, as Little John and Foss (2009) explains, that “the weight of a box of stones is the sum of the weights of all the stones in the box plus the weight of the box” (p. 950). In other words, what is created by the interaction of these parts cannot be created by any individual part. According to Mulej, “when an organization allows employees to express suggestions and viewpoints, openness and interconnectedness occurs” (Buble, 2012; Mulej et al, 2004, pp. 55).

Based on the assertions of the theory, and the responses of the participants, the results suggest a poor communication relationship among departments. Keep in mind that in the context of the theory, ‘sometimes’ is not considered a positive response but a negative. This is because, the idea of the organization as a system is adapted from the observation of biological and mechanical systems that depend on the consistent relationship of the parts to each other in the context of the whole that ensures a healthy system (Von Bertalanffy, 1968), and ultimately an effective organization. One can

imagine, therefore, that for some of the biological units to function only sometimes is certainly not a good thing.

According to the responses, more than 75% of all heads of departments and ministries are unaware of how many departments and ministries are in their church. Additionally, more than 80% of the sample perceived communication of voted actions to other departments to occur sometimes to never. More than 93% indicated sometimes to never in response to whether adequate time was given to allow feedback on department initiatives. Furthermore, more than 80% of the sample suggested that communication lines are established sometimes to never. Hence the data reveals that the relationship between the departments is overall perceived negatively. This does not suggest that the individual departments are not functioning; what it does suggest however is that the departments as a whole which comprise the system, is not interconnected.

Additionally, the significant disparity in this section is apparent in Figure 1 and 2. It is also interesting that the responders reported that the church uses a variety of communication channels, and that the majority of the individuals have access to all the communication channels, yet 86% of the responders indicated sometimes to never. One would expect that an organization that uses such an array of communication tools would see a higher positive rating of the relationship among departments. However, this report suggests, that having communication channels is not enough to ensure effective communication. Rather, communicational channels must be intentionally and systematically aligned with a mission to accomplish a particular task. The results described in the context of the theory are what Garret Hardin (1968) called the tragedy of commons, which occurs:

When a group of people with access to a common resource use it in ways that focus on personal needs rather than on the needs of the whole. While each individual's actions may make sense from his or her perspective, the failure to recognize the interdependence and consequences of one's actions can be devastating to both the individual and the organization. (p. 1243)

What is important for this church congregation is an analysis of the current communication channels in light of the overall goal of the organization. They may also need to establish protocols for each communication to ensure there is no overlap or cross channeling of information.

### Section III: Living Versus Non-living Systems

#### **Data Results**

This section of the instrument is designed to gauge the responders' perception of the organizations as either a living or non-living system, based on the theory under review. In the context of the theory, living versus non-living systems, as well as open versus closed systems are closely related. However, for the purpose of this research they are divided across two sections for a closer assessment. Living and non-living system is a "biological term when applied to organizations suggest that an organization when faced with unique situations, like a biological system, will adapt and evolve to achieve its goal of survival (Miller, 1978).

Prigogine (1980) found that both the living and nonliving system can be considered adaptable, since both have the capacity to adjust to changes in their environments. The element of the living system that is relevant to us, is that in living systems, "innumerable chemical and physical processes are so 'ordered' as to allow the living system to persist, to grow, to develop, to reproduce, etc." (Von Bertalanffy, 1968, p. 139). This persistent, response to grow, develop and reproduce speaks both to the

organization as a whole, as well as to individual departments within the organization as a system. Hence, this section of the research is intended to assess the level of empowerment within departments, in light of their relationship to the organization as a whole.

There are four questions in this section, with response options such as extremely Never, sometimes and always. The first question asked, is there a sense of autonomy as you lead your department? Of the total responses, 68.75% of the responders indicated sometimes to never. The second question asked, how difficult is it to initiate activities as a department or ministry leader? To this 50% of the responders indicated average to extremely difficult, with average being 43.75%, while the remaining 50% indicated easy to not at all, with 31.25% being easy. The third question in this segment asked, how many stages of approval are required before your department can act? To this 68.75% said 2-3, 18.75% said 0-1, and 6.5% both said 4-5, and above 5. The final question in this segment asked, how likely is it, that a department's voted actions will be granted approval by the church? To this, 93.75% said usually, and the remaining 6.5% said unlikely to be approved.

### **Interpretation**

A healthy living organization is one that encourages independence and autonomy. According to this report, the departments and leaders of the church do not feel a sense of autonomy in their designated roles (see Figure 3). Yet, over 93% of the responders indicated that voted actions are usually approved (see Figure 4) along with a 2-3 step process before voted actions can be acted on. This dissonance could be either as a result of lack of training, excessive control, a red-tape phenomenon as identified earlier, or that

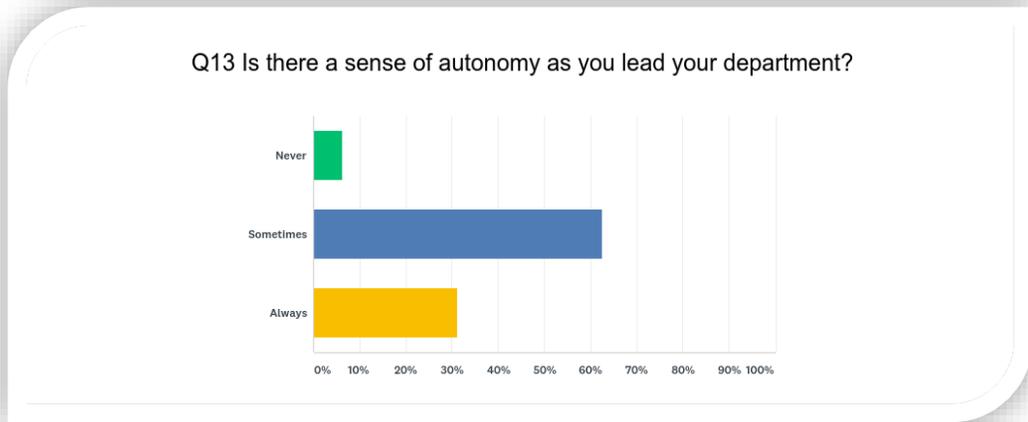


Figure 3. Results from questions 13

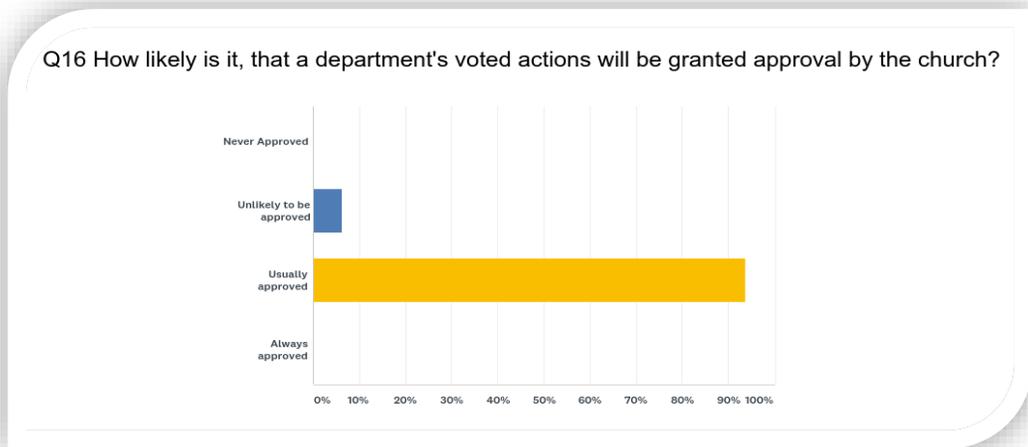


Figure 4. Results from question 16

the voted actions they have in mind may not be those of their departments. Nonetheless, this disconnect in responses does not appear to be the result of excessive procedures, which leaves us with the assumption of the two first options, the latter suggestions or other. When we talk empowerment, we are talking about the complete support system which includes, “equipping, support, motivation and mentorship” (Schwarz, 2015).

Therefore, while the church does boast an easy activation system, one or more of the elements of empowerment is missing.

White (1886) wrote, that members should be taught how to do their work in the church and in the community, and in fact, that this is the work of empowering. (p. 191). Keep in mind, that in the context of a living organism, “people learn best in complex environments when they are loosely connected and *free* to initiate action from anywhere in the organization” (Eisenberg et al, 2007, p. 104).

According to Schwarz (2015) “empowering means that you pass on the power that you have received from other people so that they can grow.” (p. 34) In other words, an unempowered church is antithetical to a living church. Folkenberg (2002) gives us some additional perspective:

The word ‘church’ is the English rendering of ‘*ekklesia*’, made up of two Greek words: ‘*ek*’ (out from among) and ‘*kaleo*’ (to call). The literal meaning of church is, therefore, ‘the called-out assembly.’ The church is ‘the people who belong to the Lord. The church, then, is all about people. The church is made up of living, breathing, and complex people. As a called-out assembly of individuals, the church is, therefore, *a living organism*. (p. 5)

Peter Steinke in quoting Max DePree wrote, “Each of us is an atom in a living, breathing, and changing organism.” (Steinke, 1996, p. 3) This view of the church is by far the most repeated metaphor used in scripture. The question, therefore, is, to what degree are the leaders of departments trained to accomplish their specific tasks and responsibilities?

This reality is similar to that mentioned in Section III. While there are multiple communication channels, because there is no systematic approach to how they are employed, communication remains ineffective. Though there remains a fairly easy process to acquire permission, the church leaders do not feel empowered in their roles.

## Section IV: Open Versus Closed Systems

### Results

Like the living system, an open system suggest that it relies on its environment in this change process to determine the nature and extent of its evolution. The theory further posits, that “organizations do not exist as entities isolated from the rest of the world...but exist in increasingly turbulent environments that both provide inputs to organizations and receive outputs” (Eisenberg et al, 2007, p. 107). The question under review in this section is, to what degree does the community (immediate surrounding environment, current events, changing culture...) affect the direction and, or planning of the church? Is there sensitivity to the changes in its environment?

There are three questions in this section, and the results are shown in Figure 5. The first of which is: is your church more likely to adopt or reject changes occurring in the community? See Figure 5. The majority, 88%, responded in the negative that the church would either adopt later, do nothing or reject changes, with only 12% saying the church would adopt. The second question in this section, see Figure 6, asked, over the past year, what aspects of your church has changed based on the community’s influence or interaction. For this question, 68% of the responders identify changes in either, outreach initiatives, worship services, or the usage of platforms, with outreach initiatives being 43.75%. Another 31.25% of the responders, however, selected none of the options. The final question in this section asked responders to identify the imagery that best fits the system of communication at their church. To this, 69.23% identified the system as “a healthy athlete: always searching for new ways to be better,” 23.08% identified the system of communication as “an old business: stuck in old ways of operation,” with the

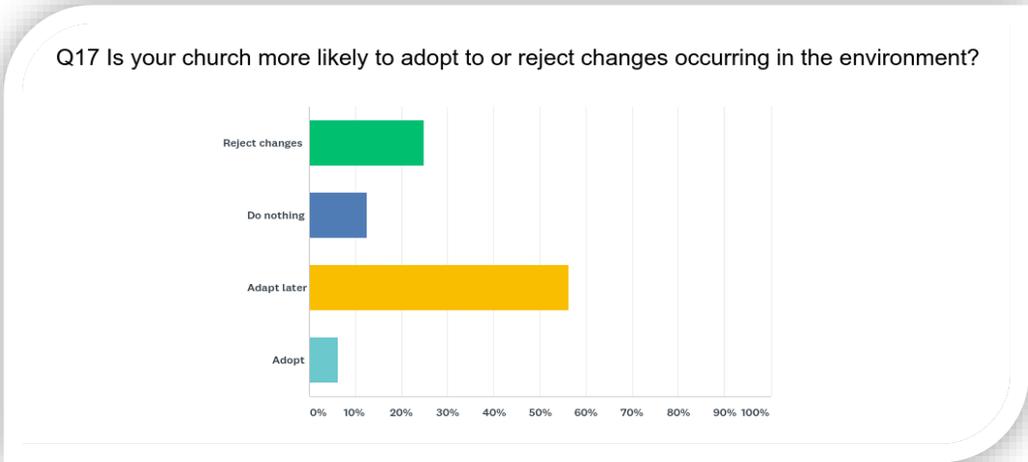


Figure 5. Results from question 17.

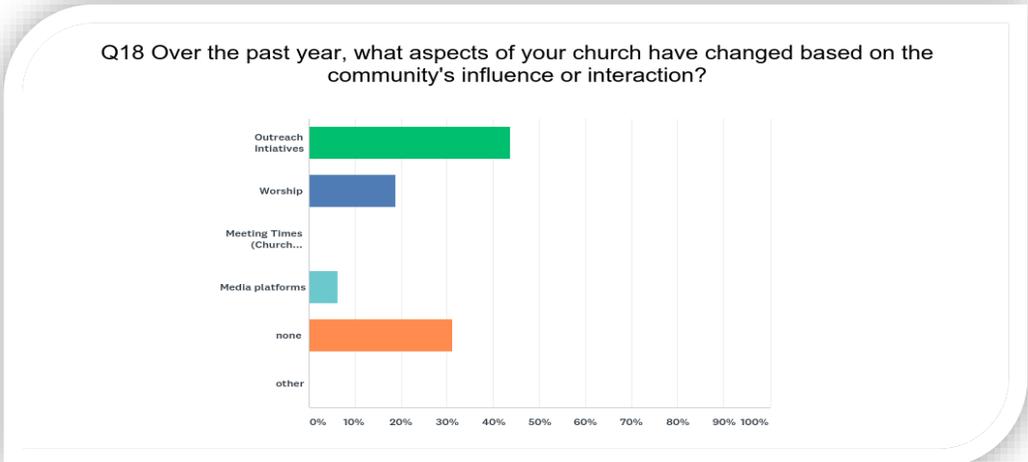


Figure 6. Results from question 18

remaining 7.69% identifying it as “a well-oiled machine: set in motion needing little or no outside influence.”

### **Interpretation**

Like the above sections, there are significant disparities in the responses in this section, in that, almost 90% of the leadership responded that the church either, rejects, does nothing or adopts later to changes or prompts by the environment, with, more than 60% being able to identify changes to aspects of their church based on interactions or influences from the community. This could suggest that there were changes but the changes that were made may not have been based on the needs of the community or if they were, that they were adopted later. A follow-up question to this section would be, what were the stimuluses from the community that prompted the changes? Or, to what degree were these changes impacted by the needs of the community?

In an overall sense, based on the perception of the leaders, the system of communication does not seem to model that of an open system. Question 19 is reserved for the final discussion.

### Section V: Organizational Interdependence, and Connectedness

#### **Results**

Here we realize that a system cannot be sufficiently comprehended by an examination of the individual parts, as Littlejohn and Foss (2009) explains, “the weight of a box of stones is the sum of the weights of all the stones in the box plus the weight of the box.” (p. 950) This concept refers to the wholeness of the organization, the relationship of the individual parts, and the relationship of those parts to its environment. In other words, what is created by the interaction of these parts cannot be created by any

individual part. According to Mulej, this openness and interconnectedness occur, “when an organization allows employees to express suggestions and viewpoints,” (Buble, 2012; Mulej et al, 2004, p.70).

There are seven questions in this section which all begin with the phrase, “in my church.” The responses are as follows: 1) communication systems are aligned with the mission of the church, to which 40% of the responders agreed, 40% strongly disagreed, and the remaining 10% disagreed. 2) practicing good communication is part of the shared beliefs of the church members, 70% agreed and 30% strongly agreed. 3) communication channels often conflict with each other, 70% disagreed and 30% strongly disagreed. 4) departmental leaders and members usually complain about miscommunication, 60% agreed, and 40% disagreed. 5) information is usually communicated clearly and often, 40% agreed, 40% disagreed and 20% strongly disagreed. 6) when information is updated it is shared timely and fully to all departments, 50% disagreed, 20% strongly disagreed and 30 % agreed. 7) communication usually accomplishes its purpose, 45% agreed, 45% disagreed and 10% strongly agreed.

### **Interpretation**

The primary question in this section is, what is the perceived relationship of the entire system of communication at the Goshen SDA Church? Or to put in systematic terms, what is the outcome of the interaction among all departments and ministries in the church? The data seems to suggest significant disparities in the perception of the leadership – that when they look at the overall systematic operation of the church there appears to be no unified response. For example, 60% disagreed to strongly disagreed that mission is aligned with the system of communication, yet over 70% of the same

responders suggested that practicing good communication is part of the shared beliefs of the church. Conversely, while 60% reported that members often complain about miscommunication, and 60% disagrees that information is communicated often and clearly, over 70% disagreed that when information is updated it is shared timely and fully to all departments. What is unexplainable here, and which may require further interventions, is to answer how is mission aligned with communication, yet, the majority of the participants often complain about miscommunication, and that information is not communicated often and clearly, and also not shared timely and fully to all departments. The general trend of the data then suggests that the system of communication at the Goshen SDA Church is indicative of poor interdependence and connectedness among departments.

### **Discussion**

It is important to note that as we look at the system of communication at the Goshen SDA Church that it is not being compared to another organization or church but is being viewed through the major tenets of the theory. Nonetheless, though there are factors that may possibly be generally applied to organizations or congregations with similar demographics and dynamics, a certain amount of caution must be exercised, as “the existence of diverse environments across industries, companies, and even geographic regions means that the same organizing principles and solutions cannot be applied in all situations; rather they are contingent on various factors” (Eisenberg & Goodhall Jr, 2004, p. 104).

Hence, these five sections are suggested by the theory as observable elements distinguishing characteristics of systems and based on the relationship of the parts within

the organization we are then able to classify as either, living or non-living, open or closed. The question, therefore, is, to what degree are these five elements observable at the Goshen SDA Church? Having observed these elements, what is the perceived reality? This research study is not primarily intended to predict data patterns, as subsequent studies will be required to do so, but, to describe a reality-based on the perception of the leadership. Hence the question, what is the current system of communication at the Goshen SDA church based on the systems perspective of organizational communication.

There are two sections that are of primary interest in this discussion: these are the participant's perception of the system of communication as open or closed, and living or non-living, since it is on these two that other factors such as interdependence, connectedness and flexibility are hinged.

Nevertheless, while reading through this data it is important not to be quick to classify the sample based on their report. That is, to what degree should the church or organization be classified as 'open or closed' 'living or non-living' based on the responses or perception of the participants? This is a caution because as Eisenberg and Goodhall Jr. (2004) affirm, "applying systems theory to human language would prove to be challenging" (p. 96). This is challenging because the terms living and non-living are equally complicated terminologies, in that, to what degree can we classify an object living or non-living? Even when we are able to identify that which is living, is it not possible that there could be different measures of living, or non-living? Hence to respect this tension, I have identified the system that the Goshen SDA Church is more readily identifiable with, rather than seek to be definitive in my classification.

Living and non-living organism, “both have the potential for self-organization or self-renewal in the face of environmental change” (Eisenberg & Goodhall Jr, 2004, p. 96). However, each organism is characterized by unique elements. Living organisms, or systems, unlike machines that are controlled by a Central Processing Unit (CPU), which is characteristic of non-living systems, does have some ability to self-organize (when programmed). Living systems, and social organizations, do not so much depend on a CPU, but is rather characterized by what is known as distributed intelligence, the ability of departments and individuals to act freely within the organism.

It is in this context that we move more closely to understanding, “that people learn best in complex environments when they are loosely connected and free to initiate action from anywhere in the organization” (Eisenberg et al, 2007, p. 104). This living social organization, in contrast to machines and mechanical structures where factors can be scientifically programmed and predicted, is “loosely connected” (Scott, 1981). “All members of the system play an important role in the systems ongoing self-organization” (Eisenberg & Goodhall Jr, 2004, p. 96).

This brings into question challenges of empowerment, or autonomy as named in the study, among other factors. Unfortunately, based on the descriptions of the theory and the responses of the participants, the system of communication at the Goshen SDA Church is by nature a living system but it tends to functions as a non-living system.

This discussion is similar to the description of the organization as open or closed, in that “organizations are open to the degree to which they rely on exchanges with their environments to survive, for its viability, its reproductive ability and its ability to change” (Buckley, 1967; Eisenberg & Goodhall Jr, 2004, p. 99). Hence, to locate the system of

communication at the Goshen SDA Church on either of these pendulums, the question is, to what degree do they depend on the environment for their survival, viability, and adaptability? And is this observable?

The significant question in this section was, “is your church more likely to adapt, or reject changes based on community influence? Interestingly, almost 90% of the leadership responded that the church either, rejects, does nothing, or adopts later to changes or prompts by the environment. This reveals the trend, that while the Goshen SDA Church is by nature an open system, it tends to function or is more identifiable with that of a closed system. Concerning the remaining sections, which were, the relationship of the independent parts, interdependence, and connectedness, the general trend of the data suggests that the relationship between the ministries and departments is overall perceived negatively and that the system of communication at the Goshen SDA Church is indicative of poor interdependence and connectedness among departments.

There is an interesting dynamic to the study which seemingly does not correlate to the rest of the responses, and that is question 20, which asks the participants to identify the imagery which best fits the system of communication at their church. This question was designed to allow the participants to express their description through a more readily identifiable form. There were four imageries, which were, 1) a well-oiled machine: set in motion needing little or no outside influence; 2) a healthy athlete: always searching for new ways to be better; 3) an old business: stuck in old ways of operation; and 4) a closed factory: out of business and waiting to be demolished. In as much as the description given by the participants fall more readily in the description of the third or fourth imagery, it is

interesting, that over 69.23% of the participants identified the system of communication as a healthy athlete, always seeking for new ways to be better.

In reflecting on the response, the instrument and my knowledge of the congregation, there are a few questions that are alive in my mind. The first of which is, did the participants misinterpret the question? Did they have in mind the overall quality of the church congregation at this point? Is it possible that they were identifying their desire? Or was there some reservation to give such descriptions of the church, such as old business or closed factory?

Keep in mind that the sample is made up of the leadership of the church congregation, individuals who are heads and leaders of individual departments, yet, there is an overall sense of disarray. It would be interesting to see how the age and gender variables are represented in this and other questions, which would then allow us to answer questions such as: to what degree does this age, gender and years of service demographic affect the perception of the participants?

It is impossible to review these responses and not try to imagine the factors that may lead to these realities, but for two primary reasons this may prove to be a slippery slope. The first of which is, “despite its focus on communication and relationships, however, systems theory does not help to explain the meanings constructed by interactions. It can identify the potential participants in a productive organizational dialogue, but it cannot tell us about the content of the dialogue” (Eisenberg & Goodhall Jr, 2004, p. 113). To put differently, while the research is able to give a description of the reality, it is unable to give the reasons behind it. These are factors that would have to be further analyzed through continued discussion with the participants in a focus group

setting or otherwise where they may be able to respond and give additional rationale for their responses.

What I am referring to here is to a large extent similar to that of the conclusions arrived at in the summary section of my literature review, that: (1) Though some aspects of organizational communication have been studied, it is still not enough to develop a comprehensive hypothesis on communication within organizations. (2) That due to the complexed nature of organizations, even after studying an organization it is difficult to provide general recommendations for ‘organizations’ but we must continue therefore to pull learned principles from various organizational contexts.

This study was birthed from my experience, both as a member and employee of the SDA Church. I observed a fragmented culture of communication that to me plagued the entire church organization. In light of these results, therefore, to what degree can these results be generalized to other SDA Churches in North America or other parts of the world? Additionally, if this study were to be conducted at any level of the church organization, to what degree would the results be comparable? Would the results reveal a system of communication that is more readily identifiable with that of a living or non-living system, closed or open system?

## CHAPTER 5

### DELIMITATIONS, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

#### **Delimitations**

One of the major hurdles of this research was to properly contextualize and identify the study, whether as quantitative or qualitative or simply a descriptive study. Some of the factors that influenced this discussion were the sample size was reflective of qualitative studies, yet the methodology was reflective of a quantitative approach to research. It was important therefore to recognize, that based on the nature of the study and its intent, that the study is properly identified as a pilot study, with the potential for generating future research.

#### **Limitations**

A few of the limitations observed were the following: 1) time. While working on this research I was also in the process of completing my Masters of Divinity at the same institution. This single factor proved to be the most challenging as there were times through the program where I was caught in a balancing act. Another limitation was the platform which hosted the instrument, SurveyMonkey. SurveyMonkey offers a range of options for creating and sending surveys. Their basic paid package was at the time of the research US\$34.00; however, this charge only allows you access to the data, along with certain features such as exporting the results to SPSS for 30 days. Thirty days would

prove to be challenging to conduct pilot tests, secure approval of the Institutional Review Board, send and receive the surveys, and analyze the data. As a result of this, I had to pay an additional \$35.00 to access the data to complete the analysis.

### **Recommendations**

This section contains recommendations in three classes, the first of which is dedicated to future studies, the second of which is dedicated to readers and other publics, and the third to the Goshen SDA Church.

1. To the scholarly research community, I would recommend that this pilot study, in consultation with a statistician, be refined with an expanded methodology and repeated with a sample of congregations drawn from a conference or union to test the results in a larger and more diverse population sample.
2. To the institutions that are responsible for the training of pastors and leaders of congregations, the recommendation is to begin to integrate the teaching of organizational communication, and systems appropriate to the organizational structures of our denomination and local churches.
3. To supporting organizations such as Conferences, Unions, and Divisions: it is important invest resources that develop a culture of leadership that understands the value of system thinking that encompasses organizational communication.
4. To my colleagues, pastors, and leaders: Realize the significant benefit to our ministry by understanding the systemic nature of communication in our organizations.
5. In light of the research, I would suggest the following to the Goshen SDA Church: Begin to work towards a strategic communication plan that examines the

key areas of the research and respond to those with intentionality. For example, the research revealed that though there are multiple communication channels in use, individuals are still unaware of information relevant to the organization.

According to the research, this is so because information channels must be systematically aligned and intentionally used. Therefore, it is important for the congregation to review all the communication channels and develop systematic plans for how these are used.

6. The research also revealed that departments are not interconnected. To this, it is imperative that the church begin to align projects and or ministry initiatives with at least three other departments and or ministries. This increases the level of information shared across departments.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of the descriptive correlation study was to assess the current system of communication at the Goshen SDA Church in light of the major tenets of the systems theory of organizational communication. The data for this research was collected using a self-administered web-based survey host, SurveyMonkey.com, which also provides a preliminary analysis of the collected responses. The data was exported to the SPSS, and with the help of a statistician, further statistical analysis was conducted.

The survey was designed to cover and collect data across five major sections, these are: (1) general information of the participants. (2) The leaders' perception of the interdependent relationship among departments. (3) The leaders' perception of the living or non-living nature of the churches' system of communication. (4) The open or closed nature of the system of communication, and (5) their perception of the churches'

connectedness and overall operation of the departments. A descriptive comparative approach was then used to interpret the perceived reality of the leaders based on the recommendations of the theory.

The data revealed that the system of communication is more readily identifiable to that of a non-living and closed system, though by nature churches are living and open organisms. Other critical areas, such as interdependence, and connectedness were also perceived as poor between departments.

Bertalanffy (1968), though unable to perfect the theory, was able to spark a revolution in how we view organizations. Since then, many scholars have restructured elements of the theory while others have adopted principles from the theory to develop others. However, the primary passion of Bertalanffy (1968) remains, and it is fitting to conclude this research with what could be considered the systems theory, in a nutshell. He wrote.

[A human being] is not only a political animal, he (or she) is, ... above all, an individual. The real values of humanity are not those it shares with biological entities, the function of an organism or community of animals, but those which stem from the individual mind. Human society is not a community of ants or termites, governed by inherited instincts and controlled by laws of the superordinate whole; it is based on the achievements of the individual and is doomed if the individual is made a cog in the social machine. This I believe, is the ultimate precept a theory of organization can give: not a manual for dictators of any denomination to more efficiently subjugate human beings by the scientific application of iron laws, but a warning that the Leviathan of the organization must not swallow the individual without sealing its own inevitable doom. (Von Bertalanffy, 1968, pp. 52-53)

APPENDIX A  
CONSENT FORM

## Andrews University

### Consent and Confidentiality Form: Participants 18 and Older

Dear Participant,

My name is Clavour Tucker, a graduate student at Andrews University completing a Master of Art in Communication. I am conducting a Church Communication Model Assessment research study at the Goshen Seventh-day Adventist Church. The purpose of this single, descriptive research is to interpret and describe the system of communication at the Goshen Seventh-day Adventist Church in light of the systems perspective of organizational communication. This form is a part of a process called “informed consent” which allows you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

#### **Procedures**

For this study, you will be sent via Survey Monkey, an online survey platform, a link that provides access to the survey. The survey is expected to take an approximate 10-15 minutes based on pilot testing. I am not required to be present while you take the survey, however, it is important that you complete the survey within 1-3 days upon receipt of the email. You may also complete the survey either on a computer, tablet or cellphone device.

#### **Voluntary Nature of the Study**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that your willingness to join the study is of significant value and appreciation. If you decide to change your mind during the study, you reserve the right to do so. If you believe you are stressed during the study or you no longer feel the need to participate in the study you reserve the right to change your mind and indicate to the researcher that you no longer wish to participate. You may skip any question that you may be uncomfortable with.

#### **Risk and Benefits of Being in the Study**

There are no known or anticipated risks in this study. Although there may be no immediate benefits to you, your contribution to the wider research community and churches that will be in a better position to function effectively by an assessment of their communication systems is immeasurable. As a credit to you, however, you will be offered a copy of the completed study.

#### **Confidentiality**

While the results of the research will be published, as a participant, you will not be identifiable in this research. The surveys will not require any of the following: your name, home address, cell phone contact information, your area of service, nor any other

information unique to you as a participant. As the researcher, it is my honor to treat your identity with the highest regard.

### **Contacts and Questions**

For questions about the research study I have attached my contact information, please feel free to call, text or email at any time. Cell:347-737-2037, email: [clavour@andrews.edu](mailto:clavour@andrews.edu). For any questions about your right as a study participant, concerns or complaints, please contact Andrews University Institutional Review Board (IRB) phone: (269) 471-6361 email: [irb@andrews.edu](mailto:irb@andrews.edu)

### **Statement of Consent**

“By signing this form, I agree that I understand the nature of the study and the risk as stated as a participant and that my identity will be kept confidential. I also declare that I am above 18 years of age and that I hereby give the researcher permission to include my input via survey in the study as described to me.”

I accept the above terms       I do not accept the above terms (circle one)

**Signature of the Interviewee:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of the Researcher:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX B

CONSENT LETTER

Organizational Consent Letter



Goshen Seventh-Day Adventist Church  
8221 South State Street  
Chicago, IL 60619  
[www.goshensda.org](http://www.goshensda.org)

January 27, 2018

To whom it may concern,

The Goshen Church does consent to participate in the research study project performed by Clavour R. Tucker researcher, which includes surveys (questionnaires), without interviews nor identification of the participants. The title of the study that the Goshen Church is giving consent to be involved in is called: Church Communication Model assessment.

Gordon Fraser Sr. Pastor of the Goshen SDA Church authorizes the consent of church participation.

Yours truly,

**Gordon C.A. Fraser**

Gordon C.A. Fraser DMin  
Sr. Pastor Goshen SDA Church  
773-488-8788

APPENDIX C

SURVEY DISCLAIMER

## Introduction and Disclaimer to Survey

You have been selected to participate in this survey due to your unique position as a ministry or department leader at the Goshen Seventh-day Adventist Church, Chicago Illinois. This research is an assessment of the current communication model at the Goshen Seventh-day Adventist Church. This research is not intended to depend on your prior knowledge or experience at or within any other church or work organization but is specific to your knowledge and experience at the Goshen Seventh-day Adventist Church. The study also does not seek to evaluate your personal techniques, experience, education nor credibility's, you are not the subject of evaluation, rather, I am trying to learn more about organizational communication through your experience as a ministry or departmental leader at the Goshen Seventh-day Adventist Church. Additionally, this research is not an evaluation of what you expect or would hope to exist at the Goshen Seventh-day Adventist Church, nor what previously was, instead, you must answer the question based on what is currently observable.

APPENDIX D

QUESTIONNAIRE



7. Is adequate time given to allow feedback on other departments' initiatives?  
Never                      Sometimes                      Always

8. The mission of the organization is clearly communicated throughout all departments.

Never                      Unsure                      Sometimes                      Clearly

Communicated

9. Are there clear communication procedures established between departments?

Never                      Unsure                      Sometimes                      Clearly

Communicated

10. What strategies are employed in your organization to ensure effective distribution of information to all departments?

- a. There is a departmental leader directory.
- b. There is adequate time given to respond and or clarify sent messages.
- c. Information is sent and received through specific procedures.
- d. Other.

11. What communication tools are used in your church?

Email                      Text Messaging                      Social Media                      Meetings                      In-person

12. Do all departmental leaders have access to communication tools?

- a. Yes
- b. No

### Section III: Living versus Non-Living System

13. Is there a sense of autonomy as you lead your department?

Never                      Sometimes                      Always

14. How difficult is it to initiate activities as a departmental leader?

Not at all                      Easy                      Average                      Extremely  
difficult

15. How many stages of approval are required before your department can act?

0-1                      2-3                      4-5                      above 5

16. How likely is it, that a department's voted actions will be granted approval by the Church board?

Never Approved    Unlikely to be Approved    Usually Approved    Always

Approved

#### Section IV: Open System

17. Is your church more likely to adopt or reject changes occurring in the community?  
Reject Changes                      Do Nothing                      Adapt Later  
Adapt

18. Over the past year, what aspects of your church have changed based on the community's influence or interaction?  
Order of Service      Worship      Meeting times      Media Platforms  
None other

19. Which of the following best describes your Church?

- A well-oiled machine: Set in motion needing little outside influence.
- A healthy athlete: Always searching for new ways to be better.
- An old business: stuck in old ways of operation.
- A closed factory: Out of business and waiting to be demolished.

#### Section V: Organizational Interdependence, Flexibility, and Connectedness

**In this section the following statements begin with the phrase: In my Church:**

**For each statement in the survey, the following scale is provided.**

- SD. Strongly Disagree or the statement is definitely false**
- D. Disagree or the statement is mostly false**
- N. Neutral, no opinion or the statement is equally true**
- A. Agree or the statement is mostly true**
- SA. Strongly Agree or the statement is definitely true**

- 20. Communication systems are aligned with the mission of the church.
- 21. Practicing good communication is part of the shared beliefs of the church members.
- 22. Communication channels often conflict with each other.
- 23. Departmental leaders and members usually complain about miscommunication.
- 24. Information is usually communicated clearly and often.
- 25. When information is updated it is shared timely and fully to all departments.
- 26. Communication usually accomplishes its purpose.

APPENDIX E

DEPARTMENTS AND MINISTRIES

## List of Departments and Ministries

### **Departments**

Clerk  
Treasurer Department  
Children's Department  
Communication Department  
Education Department  
Music Department  
Family Department  
Health Department  
Deacons Male  
Deacons Female  
Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department  
Women's Department  
Youth and Young Adult Department  
Interest Coordinator  
Religious Liberty Department

### **Ministries**

Loads of Love Ministries  
Evangelism Ministries  
Job Fair Ministries  
Transit Ministries  
Prison Ministry  
The Goshen Prayer Circle

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

### **Summary Statements**

I am inspired by the beauty of moving people through the unshakable focus of the power of the Cross.

I believe the ethics of the Cross and the Crown provides me the motivation necessary to accomplish His utmost for those who I serve.

“We must make the best of those hills which cannot be avoided” Alexander Hamilton.  
“We must accept finite disappointment, but we must never lose infinite hope” Martin Luther King Jr,

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### **Education**

- 2011 – BA Religion and Theology, Northern Caribbean University
- 2018 – MDiv, Andrews University
- 2018 – MA Communication

### **Professional Experience**

- 2011-2015 – Pastor, North Jamaica Conference of Seventh-day Adventist (SDA)
- 2016-2018 – Associate Pastor, Goshen SDA, Illinois Conference of SDA
- 2018-Present – Pastor, Potomac Conference of SDA

### **Affiliations**

- Andrews University Graduate Student Association (AUGSA)
- Seminary Student Forum (SSF)
- Black Student Christian Forum (BSCF)
- Seminary News Network (SNN)