Speaking Life To A Church In The Process Of Healing And Growth

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ABSTRACT

SPEAKING LIFE TO A CHURCH IN THE PROCESS
OF HEALING AND GROWTH

by

Emeka Buffong

Chair: Desrene Vernon-Brebnor
ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Thesis

Andrews University

College of Arts & Sciences

Title: SPEAKING LIFE TO A CHURCH IN THE PROCESS OF HEALING AND GROWTH

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Date completed: April 2018

Problem

Over the past several years, there has been a marked decline in almost every area of the Niles Philadelphia Seventh-day Adventist Church life. Members have reported feeling overwhelmed with discouragement, and overall commitment has dwindled significantly. This poor morale is reflected by the low numbers at prayer meetings, Sabbath services and other church functions. Furthermore, there is difficulty in filling church offices and even when individuals volunteer to serve in specific offices they often later resign or lose their motivation to serve. Church members often appear to look for excuses to leave. There is a deep sense of discontentment.
Method

The Natural Church Development Survey (Schwarz, 2012) was administered to a convenience sample of 30 volunteers who were either members or regular visitors at Niles Philadelphia Seventh-day Adventist Church. Following data collection, a survey response committee was formulated to craft a plan for addressing the minimum factor revealed by the survey data. The survey response committee operated according to the principles of the functional group communication theory and developed a plan which was presented to the Niles Philadelphia Seventh-day Adventist Church board for acceptance and implementation.

Results

The Natural Church Development Survey identifies eight quality characteristics, as prevalent in every healthy church, with an average score of 50. These characteristics emerged in the Niles Philadelphia Seventh-day Adventist Church sample in the following descending order, based on each score. The highest scoring characteristic was passionate spirituality, with a score of 46. This was followed by gift-based ministry, with a score of 35, inspiring worship service with a score of 27, effective structures, with a score of 24, need-oriented evangelism, with a score of 21, empowering leadership, with a score of 20, holistic small groups, with a score of 16, and loving relationships was the minimum factor with a score of 15.

Overall the church has a lot of room for growth. The survey response committee developed recommendations to address this minimum factor. Already members are becoming hopeful and are encouraged to use their gifts to make our church a place where loving relationships can be experienced regularly.
Conclusions

The eight quality characteristics are scored highly in every growing church and score lowly in dying churches. Administering the Natural Church Development Survey was a good starting point. Momentum is being built in a positive direction and members are seeing that they are the church, therefore solutions must come from the church members. As members interact to improve the minimum factor of loving relationships, a common passion is being fostered and members are developing more faith in God, edifying each other in the process. Members are beginning to open up to each other because in this process they have discovered how much they have in common.
Andrews University
College of Arts and Sciences

SPEAKING LIFE TO A CHURCH IN THE PROCESS OF HEALING AND GROWTH

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

by
Emeka Buffong
2018
SPEAKING LIFE TO A CHURCH IN THE PROCESS
OF HEALING AND GROWTH

A thesis
presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts

by

Emeka Buffong

APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

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Desrene L. Vernon-Brebnor, Ph.D., Chair

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Judith B. Fisher, Ph.D.

Willie E. Hucks, D. Min. Date approved
DEDICATION

To:

Mom, I want to thank you for all of your help and encouragement. When I told you that I wanted to enter ministry you never scoffed; instead, you told me that that was the greatest work and your only admonition to me was to be faithful to God, in open and in secret.

Suzette, I could not have asked for more in a fiancée. Thank you for always encouraging me to do my best throughout this process.

Niles Philadelphia SDA Church in Niles, Michigan, I could not have gotten this far without your amazing support. We have journeyed together for a while now and I would not have wanted to take this trip with another church. I pray that this thesis will be the beginning of a beautiful turning point for our church. I love each of you and I thank God for allowing us to be able to grow together.
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<td>Empowering Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>ES</td>
<td>Effective Structures</td>
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<td>Gift-Based Ministry</td>
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<td>Holistic Small Groups</td>
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<td>North American Division Evangelistic Institute</td>
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<td>NCD</td>
<td>Natural Church Development</td>
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<td>NOE</td>
<td>Need-Oriented Evangelism</td>
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It is always hard to think back and try to capture the names of all who have helped one to accomplish what they consider to be a major life achievement. This has been a tremendous task that I am humbled to have had the privilege to embark on.

Dr. Rachel Williams-Smith encouraged me to take a look at the Communication program and as I reviewed its offerings, I realized that it would benefit me in ministry. Mrs. Elizabeth Wright encouraged me to write when I questioned if I could have really made a contribution to the messages that were being spread. My mentor, Keith Hamilton, was always there to listen to me and give me honest feedback, thank you sir. Sis. Karen Peay, thank you for sharing how much you love our church; you are our church historian even without knowing it. Thank you to all the pastors and elders of the Niles Philadelphia SDA Church.

Finally, thank you to my committee who have endured with me, and shared valuable insights that improved this work’s quality and kept me motivated. There are a lot more people that I could thank, but space will not allow me to acknowledge everyone, but thank you.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Goal of the Study

The church is a living organism. All living things have the potential for growth as well as the possibility of death. There are life cycles that all living things experience. God expects His church to grow. A biblical passage that stresses the fact that God expects growth from His church is 2 Peter 3:18: “but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen” (New American Standard Bible). This is a growth that has spiritual depth. All of the gospels (the New Testament books of Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:14-18, Luke 24:44-49, and John 20:19-23) include the Great Commission; Jesus calls us as His disciples to go, baptize, teach, and make disciples. This command not only deals with the depth of growth but also a numerical increase of growth. Using the Natural Church Development Survey (NCDS) and the functional group communication theory this research thesis will provide an honest examination of the problems that plague the Niles Philadelphia Seventh-day Adventist Church (NPSDAC) and develop recommendations that will later be implemented to fix, or at the very least, address these problems. The NCDS will identify the problems that need to be addressed, and the functional group communication theory will provide a framework to develop a plan for implementation.
Research Problem, Question and Hypothesis

Research Problem

Over the past several years, there has been a marked decline in almost every area of the NPSDAC life. Members have reported feeling overwhelmed with discouragement, and overall commitment has dwindled significantly. This poor morale is reflected by the low numbers at prayer meetings, Sabbath services and other church functions. Furthermore, there is difficulty in filling church offices and even when individuals volunteer to serve in specific offices they often later resign or lose their motivation to serve. Church members often appear to look for excuses to leave. There is a deep sense of discontentment.

Research Question

What are the negative factors affecting the health of the NPSDAC?

Hypothesis

The NPSDAC’s poor health is a reflection of a lack of a sense of community as measured by the NCDS.

History of the NPSDAC

In 1962 the Lake Region Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (SDAs), headed by Elder C. E. Bradford at the time, agreed that there was a need to start a Black SDA congregation in the town of Niles, Michigan. The Lake Region Conference of SDAs was the first regional conference in the North American Division (NAD). Its inception was the outcome of an action taken by the NAD in 1944 (McCoy, n.d., p. 5). The NPSDAC fell under the umbrella of the Lake Region Conference of SDAs. Elder T.
M. Rowe was the first chosen pastor of NPSDAC, and charter members included: George & Myrna Baker, Arthur & Ethel Fix, Carl & Claudette Hill, Thomas & Jean Hill, William & Priscilla Scott, James & Florida McClain, Annie Mae Hill, Thomas & Margo McClellan. The children who were charter members were Myrna J. Baker (later Hunt), Karen Baker (later Alford), Edward L. Baker, Franklin Ford, Artis Ford, Dowan McClain (later Jones), Ronald McClain; Annie Mae Hill had foster children who were also charter members as well: Linda Hubbard, Roy Hubbard and Joann Hubbard. In all, the congregation which started as a company, included 26 members.

At a later date, members, thought to be influential, joined the congregation. These included: Charles & Janet Gibson, Nannie Frierson Smith, Joseph Smith, Joseph & Ethel Palmer, Lynn & Laura Simmons. Many of these members opened their homes to host the church services.

Further along, Elder John Wright succeeded Elder T. M. Rowe. He baptized Emma Ward and her daughter Margaret Ward (later Haines). The church members soon sought to find a new place of worship. They were led to the John W. Moore lodge on the corner of Seventh and Ferry Streets in Niles (see Figure 1). The members were excited at the prospect of worshiping in a church-like building instead of in members’ homes. The church began using the lodge in January of 1965. Notes and minutes taken (by Myrna Baker later McClain) highlight the concern that members had that the cleanliness of the lodge was an issue because on Friday nights the lodge hosted fish fries. The church decided to ask the head deacon, George A. Baker to make sure that everything was clean and smelled right before Sabbath School, which
started at 9:30 a.m. The children of the Baker household helped in the cleaning. The family got up early on Sabbath morning to make sure that the cleaning was taken care of.

The written notes of the treasurer, James McClain, and the stewardship secretary point out that they worked with the members of the church for 10 years (while in the lodge) showing the church how they could save money in preparation for moving to wherever God would lead them to next. They made sure that the church would be financially and spiritually ready for the move.

James McClain was very diligent throughout the journey from the John W. Moore Lodge to 1327 Broadway Street. Seminarian, Byron Hill, assisted the church in placing a bid for the Broadway location. It was voted that a bid of $53,700.00 be submitted to Niles Westside SDA Church for the building. A plan was put in place where 30 members would commit to paying $15 a month so that the church could make its $450 mortgage
every month. The church membership grew to 40 by December of 1973. The church records show that members were eager to work with each other and they gave concerts and did other projects to raise money for the church. The first church choir was formed by Karen Alford, who was assisted by Lyndon Elliot, who happened to be a seminarian.

The church experienced great excitement, when in 1978, under the leadership of Pastor Robert L. Douglas, it burned its mortgage to the Broadway Street church (see Figure 2). The church property included an adjacent community center (see Figure 3). Over the years NPSDA Church has been led by more than 15 pastors and one seminarian, Byron Hill (K. P. Alfred-Peay, personal communication, January 16, 2018).

Figure 2. Second Official Worship Site of NPSDAC
After several decades in this building, the church wrestled with the idea of moving to a different location. Some members shared concerns about the lack of wheelchair accessibility and room needed for growth. The nursery room left much to be desired and the repairs to the building started to mount leaving the question of how wise it was to invest so much in that building.

*The Circle Maker* (Batterson, 2011) became a source of encouragement for the church and acted as fertilizer for the faith of many. A member of the church’s elder board, Julius Locklear, was named the building chairman. He was the spark that inspired a number of church members to think about a new church with numerous rooms for different ministries, open accessibility, and a contemporary look. In his own words “The book gave me the belief and the courage to ask for what seemed impossible from God.
The book revitalized my prayer life with faith beyond what I had ever imagined” (J. E. Locklear, personal communication, February 19, 2018). A small group of church members took Sabbaths and circled around the 1327 Broadway church praying for God to reveal to the church a new location where the church would be able to do more.

Moving to a new church building had some challenges, but God saw the church through. There were both outside and inside voices that suggested that the church stay in place and be content with a dilapidated, but paid in full, building. Everyone was not on board with getting a new church building. Momentum began to increase however, and voices that were against the move became more and more faint. Both the community center and the church, located at 1327 Broadway, would have had to be sold. The community center was sold after being on the market for 45 days, and the church was sold, after being on the market, for six and a half months (J. E. Locklear, personal communication, February 2, 2018). This goal came to fruition in a short amount of time.

The first Sabbath at the church’s new location was on 26 November, 2016 (see Figures 4 & 5). Claudia Allen, the daughter of the first elder, and treasurer, preached a sermon entitled “Believing in Triumph in the Midst of Tragedy.” She preached from Joshua chapter 1:1-9, focusing on Joshua’s call to move forward in spite of his grieving of Moses who had recently died. This seemed like a sermon that dealt with the reality that we had transitioned. Great things had happened in the life of Moses, but there was more to be done beyond his death.

The Church is the People

In the New Testament the word for church means the “assembly, church, congregation;” it is used 114 times (Trenchard, 1998, p. 54) and it never refers to a
Figure 4. Current Location of NPSDAC

Figure 5. Current Sign of NPSDAC
building, it refers to people. People make up the church. It is nice to have a beautiful edifice dedicated to the assembling of believers to worship God, but the church is the people and that cannot be overstated. If the people lose their passion and are discouraged the church loses its passion and the church is discouraged.

Researcher’s Interest in and Significance of the Problem

The purpose of this research is to identify the factors negatively affecting the health of this church. This research is of special interest to the researcher, as a member and ordained elder. It is noteworthy to point out that because of my position in this church my research is coming primarily from an emic perspective, meaning that I am an insider. Contrary to an etic perspective where the researcher is a mere observer, an emic approach enables the researcher to examine from within. The researcher has been a member of the church for several years and shares with the congregation a strong desire to see the common good of this church community. The researcher has developed a personal relationship with the congregation, and a deep level of trust that makes for honest feedback.

In order to mitigate researcher bias, I requested honesty from all participants involved in this research. This research will be meaningless if honesty is not exercised throughout. I will share the importance of honesty throughout this process. Honest responses will produce the best outcome for this research. This research is significant because the life of this church is at stake.

Important Terms to be Defined

1) Church – In this study “church” may refer to the people or the edifice. The context will clearly identify which one is being addressed.
2) *Natural Church Development Survey* – this is an instrument used to evaluate church health. In 1996 author and researcher Christian A. Schwarz coined the phrase Natural Church Development (NCD). This survey reveals a church’s strengths and weaknesses.

3) *Minimum Factor* – the quality characteristic that ranks least in the NCDS - where there is the greatest challenge

**Limitations and Delimitations**

This study will focus on only one church. There will not be a follow-up NCDS. The survey response committee was made up of 4 individuals who met on 3 occasions, for a total of 4.5 hours.

**Summary**

God is interested in the health of His church. NPSDAC has experienced many challenges through its existence. The genesis of NPSDAC was in 1962. A company of 26 members rotated worship services in their homes. Eventually, this group would worship in the John W. Moore lodge. After several years the company matured to the size necessary to be identified as a church. They relocated to 1327 Broadway Street. In 1978 the mortgage of the Broadway location was burned. This was the congregation’s place of worship for over 30 years. On November 26, 2016 the congregation of NPSDAC worshiped for the first time in its current location 33332 U S Hwy 12. Sensing that NPSDAC is in decline action must be taken. The NCDS will help to identify problem areas. Functional group communication theory will help to guide a group of members to develop and implement a plan to address the challenged areas by improving the church’s minimum factor.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of literature will focus on church health. The NCD process and the functional group theory of communication will be discussed in chapter 3.

Church Health

Church health and church growth seem to be used synonymously in much church growth literature. Many authors would agree with Courtney Olds’ (2017) assessment that while the religious landscape in the United States has shifted in recent years, the church has remained the same (p. 27). Gail Cafferata (2017) laments “Many congregations are simply getting smaller, older, and more fragile…” (p. 312). It is clear that many churches are not thriving in the United States today. Sometimes barriers to church growth can be invisible (McIntosh, 1999, p. 128). In Gary L. McIntosh’s One size doesn’t fit all (1999) he creatively uses a story between a seasoned pastor and recent graduate of seminary who is being mentored; the seasoned pastor identifies various approaches to church growth. McIntosh bases his advice on the more than 500 churches that he has done consultation work for (p. 11). He identifies three categories of churches: small (15-200 congregants, 80% of churches), medium (201-400 congregants, 10% of churches), large (401+, 10% of churches) (McIntosh, 1999, p. 18). He further divides small churches into three categories: fewer than 35 members, 36-75 members, and 76-200. He argues that small
churches are relational, medium churches are programmatical and large churches are organizational. There are five obstacles for growth in a small church: “a small church image” (p. 129), “ineffective evangelism”, “inadequate programming” (p. 132), “downward momentum”, and “inward fellowship” (p. 133). He argues that “we cannot cause growth; we can only create a climate in which growth can take place” (McIntosh, 1999, p. 142). Over 15 years later McIntosh wrote Growing God’s Church: How people are actually coming to faith today. In this book, he developed a 29 question survey that was completed by almost 1,100 individuals (McIntosh, 2016, p. 9). He argues that many churches today in North America are not focused on evangelism (McIntosh, 2016, p. 19). In the same publication McIntosh cites Win Arn’s research in his book, The Master’s plan for making disciples, where he surveyed more than 17,000 people in 1980, and postulates that 75 – 90% of respondents came to Christ because of a friend or relative (McIntosh, 2016, pp. 93–94). McIntosh’s survey of over 1,000 persons from 43 states supports Win Arn’s findings, revealing that 43.2% of the respondents were led to Christ by a family member (McIntosh, 2016, p. 94). In numerous places in McIntosh’s research family members played a major role in the conversion of respondents.

In Thom S. Rainer’s (2014) Autopsy of a deceased church: 12 ways to keep yours alive, Thom reflects on 14 churches that died and he provides insights to living churches so that they can avoid the following pitfalls: (1) the refusal to take an honest look at itself, (2) the experience of slow decline, (3) wanting to go back to the church’s glory days, (4) the church no longer looked like the community, (5) the church’s budget did not focus outside of the four walls, (6) the Great Commission was neglected, (7) preferences were treated as principles, (8) pastoral tenures were short stints, (9) prayer as a church was not
taken seriously and eventually neglected, (10) the church lost its sense of purpose, and
(11) the church became obsessed with its facilities. Two of these points are echoed by
Kevin D. Dougherty et al. (2015); those points being (4) church looked different from the
people in the community and (7) preferences became principles. This is a subtle danger
because long-term members create their own culture that feeds their preferences and that
culture can be believed to be the ways things must be (p. 680). Ranier reveals that only
10% of churches are healthy 40% of churches have symptoms of sickness, 40% are very
sick, and 10% are dying (Rainer, 2014, p. 86). He suggests four ways that a church can
die with dignity: (1) sell the property and donate the funds to another congregation, (2)
donate the building to another congregation, (3) transfer leadership and property to those
who actually reside in the neighborhood, if the church is in a transitional neighborhood,
(4) merge with another church, but let the other church have the ownership and
leadership of your church (Rainer, 2014, pp. 100–101). Surprisingly Mark DeVine and
Darrin Patrick (2014) in their Replant: How a dying church can grow again also
recommend that dying churches should merge with a healthy church and allow the
healthy church to take control of both the ownership and leadership of the dying church
(p. 126,139).

Community engagement forces a church to look closely in the ‘mirror.’ Tonya D.
Armstrong (2016) infers that the church must ruminate culturally, theologically, and
strategically in order to address the emotional and spiritual needs of the church.
Armstrong (2016) is concerned about how mental health is understood by congregants,
with a special emphasis on African-American congregants who take part in more
religious activities yet experience higher levels of mental and physical health disparities
than whites (p. 119). Julie Ma (2015) encourages those facing the challenge of sharing the gospel with people groups, other than their own, that the Holy Spirit helps mission-engaged people to comprehend people groups in a deeper way (p. 174). Svetlana Khobnya (2016) admonishes that ambassadors of Christ will share in the glory of Christ the king but they must also share in his suffering for the world and care for the poor and weak (p. 135).

People groups are increasingly living among diverse people groups making cross-cultural ministry a reality. Mason Okubo (2016) points out that there are two barriers to intimacy in cross-cultural ministry, these being stereotyping and ignoring a person’s culture. This is because both of these practices impede our ability to get to know other people (p. 203).

David Ripley argues that SDA churches in North America need to move from a membership culture (where the focus is on church members) to a discipleship culture where “God and His mission are the center of the church and its primary reason for existence.” A membership culture sees the church as a “well-oiled machine” but a discipleship culture sees the church as a “living organism” (Ripley, 2007, pp. 18–19). In 1999 there were 4,746 SDA churches in North America and from that number 3,000 had fewer than 100 members. The next 1,400 churches had memberships between 100-250 members and these are the numbers on the official records which do not necessarily represent the numbers that actually attend regularly (Ripley, 2007, p. 74). More than 80% of SDA churches are stagnant or in decline (Kidder, 2011, p. 13).

In his book, David Ripley recounts a conversation with one of his members, in which he argues that making disciples is more than giving people information. He further
elaborates that what people value most, beyond information, is a friend and that takes
time (Ripley, 2007, p. 77). He identified 31 myths related to church health that he found
to be problematic to a church. Myth number 28, “we have the truth! That will draw
everyone” appears to be the most dangerous one because it places distributing
information over relationships. Jeffrey Hall (2018) expresses that “individuals must
budget their time wisely to make time for friends…[not having] enough free time is a
frequently mentioned challenge to making friends” (p. 1,4). Hall (2018) goes on to
explain that over 200 hours of meaningful interaction is needed for a good friendship or
best friends to be developed (p. 15). When individuals regularly catch up with one
another and joke around they are significantly strengthening their friendships (Hall, 2018,
p. 16). Philip G. Samaan stresses that “Christ’s program was first and foremost people”
(Samaan, 2012, p. 37). God loves people and wants the heart of people. God wants
people to know that He really loves them and wants to mold them into who He wants
them to be. Many people have heard a lot about Jesus but have been unable to see Jesus
in the lives of many nominal Christians around them. Religious leaders lead in times of
uncertainty and possibility. It is time for collaborative effort to create new ways to face
the challenges that are being faced. Michaela O’Donnell-Long (2015) reminds us of a
fact widely agreed upon by creativity scholars, that “creativity happens amongst people
and in teams” (pp. 37–38). Many churches are in need of holistic healing. Micheline
Kamba (2016) explains that holistic healing is emotional, physical, social, and spiritual
(p. 277).
Summary

The literature shows that many churches in the United States are in a state of poor health. Generally speaking, many churches are struggling because of changes occurring around them, but little change taking place within them. In the busy context in which we live, it can be a challenge to make friends. In spite of the immense challenges, the literature still points out that new converts are most often reached by a friend or relative. The congregation cannot cause growth, but members can create an environment where growth is likely to take place.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research was designed according to the critical research paradigm. This paradigm allows for a mixed methods approach. Mixed method research allows for the use of more than one data source, setting, or investigator. In this case more than one data source will be used (Merrigan & Huston, 2015, p. 399). This mixed methods study will therefore utilize a survey to gather data, which will be followed by the formulation of a functional group (the Survey Response Committee) to create a list of recommendations to address the issues unearthed by the survey. The goal of the critical paradigm is to bring about change; therefore, this study is designed to identify the problems, and to address the problems found.

Sampling

Volunteer/convenience sampling was used for the survey. Volunteers for the survey were recruited by the use of an e-mailed letter, an announcement was made concerning the survey in the church’s bulletin, or they were asked directly. The recruitment letter was provided / read to everyone prior to their taking the survey.
Measurement/Instrumentation

Natural Church Development

In reviewing the literature, it becomes clear that there is a plethora of studies on church growth and church health, but how does one determine how to best assess a church? Robert E. Logan said, in describing the NCD process and the NCDS that resulted from it, in May 1996, that as far as he knows “there has never been such an extensive, statistically valid, worldwide church growth research project ever conducted” (Schwarz, 2012, p. Preface) the same seems to be true today. Christian A. Schwarz researched church growth through the observation of empirical research, observing nature, and studying Scripture (Schwarz, 2012, p. 13).

Natural Church Development goes deeper than what is shared in most church growth literature. Its process identifies weak areas in the life of a church and requires that the church in that particular context formulates its own unique plan to address its minimum factor (weak areas). The goal of NCD is not merely increasing church membership but improving the health of the church. Rodney Jon Mills, explains in his dissertation that NCD places “its emphasis on providing a healthy environment for church growth” (Mills, 2009, p. 3). His goal was to validate the NCD. Mills contacted 150 congregations and was able to verify 50 congregations that did something to improve their minimum factor. Of the churches that addressed their minimum factors 75% had a gain in membership, 73% had an increase in local giving and 83% saw an increase in tithe; on the other hand, those churches that did nothing to improve their minimum factor experienced a 60% decrease in membership and 54% decrease in tithe (Mills, 2009, pp. 108–109).
The NCDS that was used in this research has been tested and applied to many SDA and non-SDA churches. It includes the Interval level of measurement and it uses Likert scales with multidimensional variables. The survey uses 91 questions to examine the presence of eight quality characteristics and provides a score for each item on a scale that can go below zero and above 100. According to the instrument, a characteristic is ranked high if the score is above 65, ranked as average if the score is 50, and ranked as low, if the score is 35 and below.

Even though this instrument is over 20 years old it has proven to be a reliable instrument because it is regularly being updated and improvements are made to ensure that its reliability and validity are intact. The fact that it is better known and more widely used today than 20 years ago give evidence that many who have used this instrument are pleased with the results that they have seen from using it and going through the NCD process. Its popularity and increased use make a strong case in support of its use even after 20 years.

North American Division Evangelistic Institute did the processing of this instrument, but it was up to me to get the church to understand what the purpose of the NCDS was, figure out how to get respondents to take part in the survey, and find a team to develop recommendations to address the minimum factor. The main thing that I am adding to the process is leading the survey response committee to come up with recommendations that will help the church to address the minimum factor that has emerged from the survey.
Functional Group Communication Theory

This is the theoretical framework that I will be using to lead a group of church members to develop a plan that will be implemented by church members. Philosopher John Dewey authored the book *How we think* (1910) and in it explains that problem-solving has six steps: “(1) expressing a difficulty; (2) defining the problem; (3) analyzing the problem; (4) suggesting solutions; (5) comparing alternatives and testing them against a set of objectives or criteria; and (6) implementing the best solution” (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011, p. 279). This theory’s champions are Dennis Gouran and Randy Hirokawa. It was built on the work of John Dewey’s reflective thinking, Robert Bales’ interaction process analysis, and Irving Janis’ vigilant decision making. This theory is a “unified and coherent set of propositions, assumptions, and claims that attempt to explain how and why communication is related to the quality of the decisions groups make” (Salazar, 2009, pp. 416–417). This theory is ideal because the plan and its implementation will not be done by one person, instead, the process will be done as a group. The theory suggests that there are four requisite functions for effective decision making: “(1) problem analysis, (2) goal setting, (3) identification of alternatives, and (4) evaluation of positive and negative characteristics of each alternative” (Griffin, Ledbetter, & Sparks, 2014, p. 217). The twelve requisites/propositions ensure each step of the planning and implementation process is well thought out.

**Detailed Study Procedures**

Natural Church Development Survey

I explained the NCDS’s purpose to the church. The explanation was done via e-mail ahead of time and later done verbally on the day of the survey. The survey itself cost
$295.00 which the I paid. This fee covered the price of the 30 questionnaires for members, the pastor’s questionnaire, instructions on how to best fill out the survey, a copy of Russell Burrill and Tom L. Evans’ (2014) *Creating healthy Adventist churches through natural church development* and the analysis of the surveys (NADEI, 2018). The data sources for this survey were 30 members or people who have frequently attended NPSDAC within the last year. The pastor had a special survey that he completed. It was explained to those taking the survey that the survey was anonymous and their honest feedback would make the results of this survey more accurate. Once I received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the surveys were distributed to those who volunteered to take part in the survey following divine service on Sabbath February 24, 2018. Participants were encouraged to fill out all questions to the best of their ability. When the surveys were completed I collected the consent forms and placed them in a folder, and the surveys in a large envelope. These surveys were anonymous because they did not have anyone’s names on them and once they were placed in the envelope it was impossible to detect who filled out which particular survey. There were no foreseeable risks involved in doing the survey.

The survey was administered in the fellowship hall of NPSDAC. Each respondent received a survey and a writing utensil to complete the survey.

Some helpful tips are shared by Folkenberg (2002) about conducting the NCD Survey that I followed as best as possible. He recommends that all 30 members respond to the survey at the same time and at the same location. He shares that it is important to reassure those taking the survey that it can be completed in around 30 minutes (p. 20). When I pilot tested the survey, the respondent completed it in 16 minutes and 24 seconds,
while reading at a comfortable pace. He recommends that the pastor not be present while members are taking the survey (Folkenberg, 2002, p. 21). I did not have all 30 volunteers present after the fellowship meal that Sabbath so I had to call individuals and ask if they were willing to complete the survey. Everyone that I asked was willing to do so. I read to them the purpose of the survey and ensured that they all signed a consent form to take the survey.

On February 27, 2018, I gave the NADEI the 30 completed NCDS’s for analysis. The results of these surveys were e-mailed to me on February 28, 2018.

Once I got the 30 surveys completed and analyzed by the NADEI, I shared findings of the survey with the members of NPSDAC. During this meeting I asked for three volunteers who would be willing to form a survey response team for the purpose of developing recommendations on how we would address the minimum factor that came to light from the results of the NCDS.

Recommendation of Survey Response Committee

I received the survey analysis reports from NADEI on March 1, 2018. On Sabbath afternoon, March 10, 2018, I shared the results of the survey with the members of NPSDAC. During this meeting I asked for three volunteers who would be willing to form a survey response team for the purpose of developing recommendations on how we would address the minimum factor that came to light from the results of the NCDS. I distributed the book *Creating healthy Adventist churches through natural church development* (Burrill & Evans, 2014) to each team member and asked them to prayerfully read the material before our first planning meeting.
We held our first of three meetings on March 12, 2018, for an hour and a half. During this meeting, we probed what love meant. Following that, we answered what meaningful relationships looked like. By comparing a secular view of love to a Biblical view, we were clear that Biblical love is expressive. I handed out a promise that I wanted us to read daily and Abran J. Salazar’s 12 prerequisites in order to conduct group work using the functional group communication theory (Salazar, 2009, pp. 417–419). We began with the very clear goal of making recommendations to tackle the problem of a lack of loving relationships (LR) in our church, as discovered by the results of the NCDS. By the conclusion of our first meeting, we formulated two recommendations. Those recommendations were regular Sabbath meals and formulating holistic small groups (HSG).

On March 13, 2018, we held our second meeting. On this night we noted some challenges to having three Sabbath meals per month and putting together HSG. One of the challenges to having meals on three Sabbaths a month as a church and having members hosting guests when we did not have the Sabbath meal was the cost associated with this goal. The question of sustainability was raised. We agreed that potlucks would be helpful as long as they were well planned and families only had to bring one dish/item that could feed an adequate number of people. We decided that twice a month was more reasonable to have potlucks. As for HSG, the warning was given that some training and buy-in was necessary for this to be a success. The pastor needed to be on board with the idea of having small groups and leadership needed to see what HSG looked like before they led out in these groups.
As a group, several more recommendations were crafted that night. Including the previous night, we had a total of 22 recommendations.

Our final meeting was on March 14, 2018. During this meeting, we reviewed all of our recommendations and decided that one of them needed to be taken out. So, we concluded our time together having drafted 21 recommendations.

**Requirements of Functional Group Communication Theory**

According to Abran J. Salazar (2009), there are 12 requirements for decision making in the functional group communication theory. These are:

1. Understand the type of answer for which the issue under consideration calls. These answers are in response to the type of question the group is attempting to answer – fact, conjecture, value, or policy.
2. Determine the characteristics of an acceptable answer. Group members develop criteria that the desired choice should satisfy.
3. Marshal a realistic range of alternatives among which an acceptable answer is presumed to exist. Group members generate a broad range of possible answers/alternatives/solutions to the issue under consideration.
4. Critically examine every alternative in relation to each criterion used to define an acceptable answer. This requisite assumes skill, knowledge, and a sense of objectivity on the part of group members.
5. Select the alternative that best conforms to the characteristics of an acceptable answer. Group members should also compare the alternatives against each other to determine which appear to be the most desirable and appropriate.
6. Make clear their interest in arriving at the best possible decision.
7. Identify the resources necessary for making such a decision.
8. Recognize possible obstacles to be confronted.
9. Specify the procedure to be followed in working on the task.
10. Establish ground rules for interaction.
11. Employ appropriate interventions for overcoming affiliative, cognitive, and egocentric constraints that interfere with successful accomplishment of fundamental task requirements.

12. Review the process by which the group comes to a decision and, if indicated, reconsider judgments reached. (pp. 417–419)

Griffin, Ledbetter, and Sparks (2014) explain this theory as having four “requisite functions,” these being “(1) problem analysis, (2) goal setting, (3) identification of alternatives, and (4) evaluation of positive and negative characteristics of each alternative” (p. 217).

Reliability and Validity of Church Profile

The reliability of the NCDS was examined by analysis of the data, revising the questionnaire and using a professional statistics program to analyze new data (Schwarz & Schalk, 1998, p. 232). There are three ways in which the validity of the church profile was ensured: 1. Confirmatory factor analysis, 2. An external criterion is used (churches that do not use the survey), and 3. Every question on the questionnaire is assigned to one of the eight quality characteristics (Schwarz & Schalk, 1998, pp. 233–234). In Rodney Mills’ research of 50 SDA churches who used the NCDS and implemented the plans that were developed, and 50 SDA churches which did not use the NCDS, he noticed a significant difference between the two groups. The churches that used the NCDS and implemented their plans saw growth, but the churches that did not use the survey experienced decline.

Data Analysis

The classical test theory is the basis of the NCDS. The researchers responsible for the NCDS express that their method of analysis is not revealed to the public because
“...the sale of the church profiles is the only way for the Institute for Natural Church Development to finance the high costs for research, these data are ‘protected knowledge’ which isn’t publicly accessible” (Erwich, 2004, p. 185).

Based on the NPSDAC profile reports I receive from NADEI, I will use infographics to explain the strengths and weaknesses of the NPSDAC and will assess the research question and hypothesis in light of the data. The NADEI reports allow me to do a comparative assessment as to the health of NPSDAC, in comparison to other SDA churches in the U.S.

The implementation group will meet and develop recommendations for how the minimum factor that was revealed from the NCDS can be addressed. They will each receive a copy of the 12 requirements used in functional group communication theory. I will observe how the group works together throughout the process.

Summary

This chapter outlined the mixed method approach of this research study. It presented the steps that were taken and some of the challenges that I experienced while trying to complete the necessary tasks. All along the way, I received the support of the NPSDAC membership. They allowed me to overcome some of the challenges that I experienced and minimized some of the issues that I had.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Demographics

Thirty individuals who are members/ were members/regular attendees of the NPSDAC completed the NCDS during the week of February 21-27, 2018. The pastor of NPSDAC submitted his survey on February 21, 2018. Fourteen individuals took the survey February 24, 2018 at the church building and the remaining volunteers completed the surveys in their homes or other public venues in dining facilities or on a school’s campus. All surveys were completed by February 27, 2018.

Of the 30 respondents who took the survey 19 were women compared to 11 men. Their ages varied: two were between 21-30, four were between 31-40, four were between 41-50, five were between 51-60, 12 were between 61-70, and three were above 70 years old. This means that more than 60% of the respondents who took the survey were over 50 years old (see Figure 6). No one took the survey who was under 18 years old.

The respondents were chosen using volunteer sampling so there was not an attempt to get a specific group of individuals to do this survey; all that was needed was for the respondents to meet the criteria of being members/ were members/regular attendees of the NPSDAC.
None of the respondents had been a Christian for less than seven years. None of the respondents were recent converts to Christianity. It appears that most of the respondents to the survey became Christians at a very young age and remained so throughout their lives (see Figure 7).

The length of time that respondents were a part of this church varied widely as well. NPSDAC has been in existence for more than 50 years. Many of the respondents have been coming to NPSDAC for less than 20 years (see Figure 8). What can be learned from those who have been attending this church for more than 30 years? Perhaps it would...
be helpful for those who have been at this church for a long time to share some lessons on what it was like in the earlier days at NPSDAC. What has changed over the years? What are some things that may need to be updated or restored?

Twenty-five of the 30 respondents were a part of another local church before they started attending NPSDAC. Nineteen of the thirty respondents attended NPSDAC because they moved to the area.

These results were shared with the NPSDAC on Sabbath, March 10, 2018. I presented the information in an informal lecture style with the aid of a dry erase board.
Eight out of the 14 who took the survey in the fellowship hall at NPSDAC on February 24, 2018 came for the results. None of those who took the survey outside of NPSDAC’s fellowship hall came to the presentation of the NCDS results.

The NCDS uses a standardization formula that gives an average score of 50. Scoring 50 simply means that the average church would score 50 for each of the eight quality characteristics. Overall 70% of churches will score between 35 and 65. Churches that score less than 35 make up 15% of those taking the survey. Churches that score 65 or more make up 15%.
Results from Survey

The survey measures a characteristic low if the score is under 35, average if the score is 50, and high if the characteristic scores over 65. NPSDAC scored below average in every category, with an overall score of 26 (see Figures 9 & 10). There are eight quality characteristics that are measured in the survey. These quality characteristics are: empowering leadership (EL), gift-based ministry (GBM), passionate spirituality (PS), effective structures (ES), inspiring worship service (IWS), HSG, need-oriented evangelism (NOE), and LR. Figure 9 displays the scores of NPSDAC in each of these quality characteristics.

Figure 9. Results from NCDS for NPSDAC
Figure 10. Comparison of NCDS Scores between SDA Churches in USA and NPSDAC

Passionate Spirituality, with a score of 46, was the quality characteristic NPSDAC scored the highest in (see Figures 9 & 10). This score is near to the average when compared to other SDA churches that have used the NCDS. For most of the SDA churches in the USA, PS ranked highest with a score of 56.6 (P. Cincala, personal communication, March 16, 2018). This quality examines whether or not Christians in a particular church are “on fire,” or in other words, how much it appears that Christians live out their beliefs (Schwarz, 2012, p. 28). Some of the survey questions used to measure this characteristic asked “Q71. I experience God’s work in my life [61], Q41. I
often tell other Christians when I have experienced something from God [64], Q84. I enjoy reading the Bible on my own [58].” The highest score in this section was “Q77. Times of prayer are an inspiring experience for me [71].” The lowest question scored in this section was “Q52. I am enthusiastic about our church [11].”

The second highest quality characteristic that NPSDAC had was GBM, with a score of 35. Among SDA churches in the USA, GBM scored 50 (P. Cincala, personal communication, March 16, 2018). Gift-based ministry ties together ministries that members are engaged in along the lines of their spiritual gifts; members minister / serve in areas where they are spiritually gifted in (Schwarz, 2012, p. 26). Someone who loves to host others would be the hospitality leader, or on the hospitality team at the church.

Some survey questions used to measure this characteristic asked “Q62. I enjoy the tasks I do in our church [33], Q66. I experience the benefits of working on a team in our church [37], Q37. Our church regularly offers help for people to discover their gifts [28]. The highest score in this section was “Q8. It is my experience that God obviously uses my work for building the church [64].” The lowest scoring section in this section were “Q7. I feel my task in our church is a positive challenge that stretches my faith” and “Q26. I feel that my church supports me in my ministry [both 20].”

Following GBM for NPSDAC, IWS ranked third with a score of 27. Among SDA churches in the USA, IWS had a score of 48.1 (P. Cincala, personal communication, March 16, 2018). Here the question is: Can the Holy Spirit be felt in the worship service? This is where the inspiration or joy comes from (Schwarz, 2012, p. 33). Some of the survey questions used to measure this quality characteristic were “Q17. The music in the worship service helps me worship God [17], Q88. I always look forward to the worship
service [33].” The question that ranked highest in this section was “Q89. I prepare myself to participate in the worship service [58].” The question that ranked lowest was “Q56. I’m often bored during the worship service [16].”

The quality characteristic of effective church structures (ES) had a score of 24 for NPSDAC. Among SDA churches in the USA, ES had a score of 46.3 (P. Cincala, personal communication, March 16, 2018). Church structures function for the sole purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission as stated in Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:44-49; John 20:19-23; and Acts 1:7-8.

Any structure that is put in place that limits the goal of the church is dismantled and replaced (Schwarz, 2012, p. 30). Some of the survey questions used to measure this characteristic asked “Q67. I know the goals that we are working towards as a church [19], Q91. The activities of our church are well planned and organized [43], Q40. The volunteers are trained frequently [28].” The highest scoring question in this section was “Q57. I understand clearly how the different parts of the church work together [50].” The lowest scored question in this section was “Q13. Our leaders actively support church development [13].”

Need-oriented Evangelism scored 21 at NPSDAC. Among SDA churches in the USA, NOE had a score of 52.5 (P. Cincala, personal communication, March 16, 2018). Churches who score high in this area meet the actual needs of the community that they are ministering to (Burrill & Evans, 2014, p. 69). If the community is dealing with a high rate of debt / bankruptcy then the church would offer classes on how to spend wisely. Some of the survey questions used to measure this characteristic asked “Q33. I pray for my friends, colleagues and relatives who do not yet know Jesus Christ, that they will
come to faith [60], Q70. I know a number of individuals in our church who have the gift of evangelism [26], Q87. Our church provides practical help for new Christians to grow in their faith [21]. The highest score in this section was “Q75. I try to deepen my relationships with people who do not yet know Jesus Christ [66].” The lowest question scored in this section was “Q21. The evangelistic activities of our church are relevant for my friends and family who do not yet know Jesus Christ [12].”

Empowering leadership scored 20 at NPSDAC. Among SDA churches in the USA, EL had a score of 46.2 (P. Cincala, personal communication, March 16, 2018). Empowering leadership is seen when leaders “…equip, support, motivate, and mentor individuals to become all that God wants them to be (Schwarz, 2015, p. 34). Some of the survey questions used to measure this characteristic asked “Q24. Our leaders are good at explaining things [24], Q38. Many people are given the opportunity to actively participate in our worship services [21], Q81. Our leaders regularly receive assistance from an outside person (e.g. coach, church consultant, other pastor, etc.) on how to develop our church [20].” The highest score in this section was “Q28. Our pastor(s) have too much work to do. (neg) [78].” There was a tie for the lowest scoring questions in this section “Q13. Our leaders seem to enjoy their ministry in our church” and “Q22. Our leaders are clearly concerned for people who do not know Jesus Christ [17].”

Holistic small groups scored 16 at NPSDAC. Among SDA churches in the USA, HSG had a score of 43.6 (P. Cincala, personal communication, March 16, 2018). Robert Folkenberg, Jr (2002) explains that “…it is often the case that churches with a minimum factor of loving relationships will also have quite a low profile score in holistic small groups” (p. 111). This is very clear considering that “Holistic small groups are places
where we become transparent, where we share about the experiences in our lives, our struggles and failures, and where intimate relationship both to God and to fellow-Christians can grow” (Schwarz, 2015, p. 44). Some of the questions used to measure this characteristic asked “Q11. My small group helps me with the challenges of my life [16], Q34. My small group helps me to grow in my spiritual life [18], Q65. I am a member of a small group in which I feel at home [17]. The highest score is this section was “Q27. In my small group we spend lots of time on things which are irrelevant to me. (neg) [56].” The lowest question scored in this section was “Q90. In my small group we trust each other [11].”

Loving Relationships was the lowest scoring characteristic at NPSDAC, with a score of 15. Among SDA churches in the USA, LR had a score of 45.1 (P. Cincala, personal communication, March 16, 2018). Love is the most basic component of the Christian life and yet it is often a neglected topic because it seems so obvious. The problem is not in speaking about love, but rather, the problem is in showing love. Some of the survey questions used to measure this characteristic asked “Q30. In our church it is possible to talk with other people about personal problems [9], Q32. There is a lot of joy and laughter in our church [9], Q43. I know of people in our church with bitterness toward others (neg) [10]. The highest score in this section was “Q48 When someone in our church does a good job, I tell them [72].” The lowest question scored in this section paints the picture of a church that is in crisis “Q39. I can rely upon my friends at church [-3].” This was not only the lowest scored question in this section, but the entire survey. If people do not feel loved then true friendships can never be formed.
Christian Schwarz (2012) stresses that “People do not want to hear us talk about love, they want to experience how Christian love really works” (Schwarz, 2012, p. 38). Agape love does not start with feelings as romanticized views of love start; agape love starts with loving thoughts, which lead to loving deeds and finally ends in loving feelings (Schwarz, 2004, p. 47). The Christian thinks about what reaction to a person or thing would be pleasing to God and then does that action. Thinking about what is pleasing to God and doing that means that the Christian is not controlled by their feelings and can still show love to someone without feeling like it. Obedience to God comes first and the feeling will eventually follow.

**Minimum Factor**

Loving relationships is the quality characteristic with the lowest score making it the lowest minimum factor for NPSDAC. With this knowledge, Christian A. Schwarz (2012) explains that it is now time to use the minimum strategy; this strategy assumes that focusing on the weakness is best. The best way to improve the overall church’s quality index is by improving its minimum factor (Schwarz, 2012, pp. 52–53).

Without LR, nothing else really matters. If love is present but unnoticed then it must be translated in a way that people can experience it. The NPSDAC membership is realizing that the gulf between members is widening and this cannot go on without being addressed. There is a need for members to rekindle the flame of brotherly love that once burned brightly.

After receiving the NCDS results of SDA Churches in the USA (P. Cincala, personal communication, March 16, 2018), I was able to compare those results with those
of NPSDAC and we were lower in every category, but our highest score matched the average highest score that most SDA churches received (see Figure 10).

Our survey results revealed that our church was in poor health and it helped us to assess the degree to which it was in poor health. The encouragement is that the church was willing to take the first step in addressing the problem that it has been experiencing. Dr. Tom L. Evans testified that “…increased health allowed everything to function more effectively in the church….If God’s work is to advance, we must have churches that function in ways that produce life and health” (Burrill & Evans, 2014, p. 6). The results are clear that NPSDAC is in need of healing before it can truly be fruitful. The blessing of healing will bring with it the blessing of growth.

The Survey Response Committee

The survey response committee was composed of 4 members who have been active in NPSDAC. The four of us who served on this team were NPSDAC board members. The group had two males and two females. The survey response committee was representative of the church because everyone on the committee was an active member in NPSDAC.

The survey response planning group met three times. The original date for the planning group to meet was premature because the members of the group needed to be reminded of the assigned reading that was necessary to be done ahead of time. This created a delay, but it was worth having that slight delay. I asked the three members of the group to read selected chapters of the book by Russell Burrill and Tom L. Evans (2014) titled *Creating healthy Adventist churches through natural church development*, The team read much more than chapters 1 and 2 that but they did not all get to chapter ten.
by our first meeting. I assumed that my instructions were clear, but when we met it was clear that there was some confusion. I should have double checked to make sure that the team understood what I was asking of them.

The meeting times were not always convenient for the entire team. One member did not make it in person to all three meetings. Following each meeting, I e-mailed the entire team the notes from our time together so that the members could review what was discussed and have an opportunity to provide additional feedback if necessary.

Our survey response team met three times in the fellowship hall of NPSDAC. The setting was conducive for effective group meetings.

Each of our meetings together came up to 90 minutes for a total of four and a half hours all together. In the end, we developed 21 recommendations that will be presented to the board for their approval, then to the church at large for discussion and implementation. These recommendations were developed to improve the characteristic of LR which was the category NPSDAC scored the lowest in.

Recommendations from the Survey Response Committee

1. Be aware that, at times, we may cause people to feel like they are outsiders and don’t belong to the SDA network. In order to address this issue, we should consciously choose topics of discussion that do not exclude people, especially when we are having Sabbath dinners at church. We can have workshops on being inclusive to aid meeting this goal.

2. We need to find ways to expand friendship networks. Members should have a casual conversation with someone who they do not regularly talk with at church sometime in the week. Within a year every member should have spoken to every member
of the church outside of the church at least once. We can have a quarter for prayer meeting that examines principles of Christian friendship.

3. Corporately engage in activities that will increase trust among the members of NPSDAC. One of the ways that we can increase trust among members is by creating opportunities for members to get to know each other better. Perhaps the most basic way that this can be done is by inviting others to eat at one’s residence.

4. Be aware of our spiritual gifts. During the time period of this study, NPSDAC participated in a spiritual gifts workshop. The program was scheduled independent of this research but the timing was advantageous as the team believed that knowing our spiritual gifts will help us to be able to better relate to each other.

5. We need to be mindful of the tone of our speech (How we say what we say to each other). In an effort to address this, we can have a panel discussion of various helping professionals who can share the importance of the tone of our speech and how it affects others.

6. We need to be mindful of the tenor of our speech (The pattern, direction, or character of something spoken). Sermons that deal with the tenor of our speech can be preached to help the church understand why this is important to pay attention to.

7. Developing LR needs to be a team effort. Sometimes members say things that come off in a negative way but they may not be aware as to how negative what they say may come across, especially when a third party is involved. In times like these, we need to intervene when we see our brother or sister respond in a way that could crush another person.
8. We must be respectful of others. We will listen to what others share with us that they find disrespectful and seek to avoid those things. Harmonious interactions will show that respect is being shown.

9. We need to follow Christ’s example of interacting with people by meeting people where they are, instead of waiting for them to come into the church building/back to the church building.

10. We need to find common ground with others; finding common ground helps us to build bridges that connect us with each other.

11. We must resolve conflicts in love.

12. We must try to understand others. Everyone does not express themselves the same way.

13. We need to apologize when we hurt others.

14. We need to reach out and rebuild relationships.

15. We need to support one another whenever we can.

16. We need to do away with unfriendly attitudes.

17. We need to allow members to be engaged in the worship service. For instance, members can do the welcome etc.

18. Our worship service seems too rigid. One of the team members said that entering the sanctuary for our worship service, we look like soldiers marching. Maybe we can smile and look more relaxed.

19. We need to allow children to take part in the worship service beyond ushering.

20. Our church should host Sabbath dinners twice a month on the 2\textsuperscript{nd} & 4\textsuperscript{th} Sabbaths. These meals will be called (name of month) Family Fellowship Meal. These
meals will be done potluck style. A list will be circulated in which members can sign up for what they would like to contribute. Only about ten members will need to contribute for these meals; they will provide one dish/item. One of the goals of this meal is to ensure that no visitor/guest sits at a table by themselves. If a department has a dinner planned it will go as planned. The only thing that is requested is that no visitor/guest eat by themselves. For the month of April, we would have one dinner on the 21st, this will be the exception because of the board meeting and members need to have time to plan to contribute and get used to the goal of having two meals a month at the church.

21. Holistic small groups should be established at NPSDAC, but only after leaders are guided on how to form effective HSG and they have the support of the pastor. Holistic small groups are a great way for church members to come together. They speak to every area of life: mental, physical, and spiritual. They can be very powerful, but leaders need to be trained on how to maintain a HSG. This must be clearly seen and the expectations must be clear. One of the reasons why leaders need to be trained is because seeing this done in person helps potential leaders to know if they are willing to bear the load of being a HSG leader. It will take about three months for leaders to be trained so that they can produce leaders as well. In order to function at an optimum level, the pastor and leaders of the church must embrace having HSG.

The Research Question and Hypothesis in Light of the Research

The research question was answered by the data and the hypothesis was supported. These will be discussed further in Chapter 5.
Summary

This chapter explains the eight characteristics of the NCDS as they appeared in the NPSDAC study sample. The survey data identified LR as the minimum factor for NPSDAC. The survey response team was formulated, and after three meetings, the team was able to develop 21 recommendations which would be presented to the church board for review and implementation by the church at large. The willingness of the church to rally together to get to this stage has been promising. This is, however, not the end; it is only the beginning of a process that will take time.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Goal

The goal of this research was to evaluate the health of NPSDAC, according to the characteristics measured by the NCDS. We were able to identify some of the factors that were contributing to the decline that we were experiencing in our church. From this knowledge, we formed a group to develop a list of recommendations to address the issue.

Research Question Discussion

What are the negative factors affecting the health of the church?

Besides PS, every other quality characteristic scored low. This means that there are really seven areas that need special attention, but the focus of improvement is in LR. As LR improve all other areas will benefit. When I shared the results of the survey members looked discouraged, realized that LR needed to be established/improved among a number of members. During the survey response meetings, there was a silence about real problems until the stakes of our work was emphasized. Sometimes confidentiality and anonymity are a gift, as was the case in collecting feedback via surveys. When members were given the opportunity to freely share, knowing that they would remain anonymous and their responses would be confidential, they were willing to open up on paper. Gary L. McIntosh (1999) argues that small churches are relational (p. 18), and
with our church’s name including the word Philadelphia, which means brotherly love, the results of our survey infer that there is a problem. The poor health of our church can be seen in the lowest scores of our survey being in LR and HSG. Without a change in LR we will not be living up to the name of our church.

The recommendations that the survey response committee developed all focused on improving LR, which would advance the health of our church. Death was a possibility that the members of the survey response committee were aware of, but we did not want to spend time and energy focusing on death. Death can happen without our effort and planning, however, life/improved health demands both.

Courtney Olds’ (2017) observation of the religious landscape in the United States having changed, but the church remaining the same is both true and false for NPSADC. NPSDAC has made several changes to adjust to the changing environment. Our former location was not handicap accessible. Building codes today ensure that buildings are handicap accessible. Our current location is handicap accessible. Another change that NPSDAC made was the removal of pews and their being replaced with chairs. Chairs give a more contemporary appearance, as well as additional comfort. The lighting of our new church is better than in our former location.

One area where NPSDAC needs to look at improving is its use of technology. There is a great need to use technology far more than it is currently being used. There is a church Facebook page that is not being updated regularly. Our church’s web site needs some additional features and should be updated. We have a Faithlife web page where audio sermons can be listened to. This is a good place to allow the young people of the church to contribute to ministering to their peers. Having advice for every stage of life
and different problems that people may go through would help us, as a church, to help
more people in our community.

We have yet to make major changes outside of our church edifice to create
meaningful relationships with our community. We have a community guest day annually,
but maybe this can be done quarterly instead. We can contribute an article weekly or
biweekly to the *Niles Star* and / other newspaper outlets with an encouraging/informative
message. We can take part in special events that are taking place in the city that do not
conflict with our beliefs. There are still a many ways that we can make further inroads
into our community.

Several publications offer suggestions as to how to improve the health of one’s
center, and how to identify factors that contribute to the death of churches, the problem
with most of these resources, however, is the fact that their reliability and validity were
not very strong. Most authors writing on the topic of church growth rely on small sample
sizes and limited experiences in various contexts, thus their information is not
generalizable.

Since enrolling at the SDA Theological Seminary, I have been hearing about
NCD and the NCDS. The NCDS has not only lasted for more than 20 years, but it has
proven to be very instrumental in improving the health of many SDA Churches. Rodney
Mills’ research concluded that when church members take the NCDS, develop a plan and
implement it, improved health is realized, a great deal of the time. Once a church is
healthy, growth will result (Mills, 2009). Tom L. Evans and Russell Burrill (2014) are
very strong supporters of NCD and in their book *Creating healthy Adventist churches
through natural church development* they gave an overview of the process. Robert
Folkenberg, Jr. wrote an implementation guide for NCD entitled *Health for the harvest: four inspiring steps to total congregational health*. Knowing that our denominational church leaders supported this tool helped me to make the decision to use it with a high level of confidence.

The results from the use of the NCDS showed us where we were as a church in each of the eight quality characteristics that make up a healthy church. The results were clear that besides PS, NPSDAC scored low in the other seven areas. The group took the news fairly well. They did not respond in denial; instead, they tried to understand why the results were so low. There was a sense of hopefulness in spite of the initial shock. The results caused us to be prayerful about what the next steps would be and we were united in a state of humility.

Hypothesis and Discussion

My hypothesis was “The NPSDAC poor health is a reflection of a lack of a sense of community as measured by the NCDS.”

I found that the results of the study proved my hypothesis to be correct. The first blessing was the ability to see where the weaknesses of the church were. When I shared the results in church on Sabbath afternoon three hands were eagerly raised after I asked for three volunteers. This was a good sign because it meant that individuals were willing to tackle the challenges that we discovered. Christian Schwarz explains that it is a best practice to focus on the lowest area of the survey, also referred to as the minimum factor. Our minimum factor of LR was tackled with a great desire to see to it that these be improved / intentionally formed in our church.
Using the functional group communication theory helped us to work as an efficient team and to develop our recommendations in a timely manner. In our group time we did not have to fight affiliative constraints because no one felt the need to be protective or defensive. We did not have egocentric issues either because the group was focused on the well-being of the church. The challenges we faced were largely cognitive. We needed to start with a clear understanding of what love meant and what it meant to have LR. The Bible was our standard in helping us to define both love and LR, as presented in 1 Corinthians 13, Galatians 5:22-23, and John 4. Following our discussion of love as a Biblical principle we concluded that love involved caring for others.

Implications

This study can be likened to going to a doctor’s office because one is experiencing a pain that can no longer be ignored. When one receives the diagnosis that one’s health is very poor, there are two ways to respond to this crisis: positively or negatively. This research has brought us, as a church, to a point of no return. We were awakened, in no uncertain terms, to the poor health of our church and this led us to make a decision to do anything necessary to improve our church’s health. I am glad that this has led us to fight for the life of our church.

My Experience in Research

Since entering the graduate communication program at Andrews University I knew that I wanted to do a meaningful culminating project. I considered several ideas before deciding on this topic. This topic of church health means a great deal to me because NPSDAC is a place that helped to shape my approach to ministry. When I shared
my interest in doing a study on the health of our church with the church body I saw a genuine interest to be supportive displayed by the membership.

I counted the cost to do this research as well as the potential benefits. This research involves evaluation and sometimes individuals and organizations can fight any type of evaluation, which can lead to severe disagreements. Even with the possibility of severe disagreements, the life of NPSDAC was at stake so this research was necessary. The potential benefits far outweighed the costs. The instrument used to measure our church’s health was very important to me and to this study. I needed a tool that would accurately diagnose our church’s health. The NCDS is a proven instrument that is couched within a proven process.

The main limitation to this research is that of time constraints, and the fact that the results are not generalizable. There never seems to be quite enough time to do all of the things that are necessary in any research study, to one’s full heartfelt desire. I hope that the church does not see this as the end of an assignment, but instead, the beginning of a journey towards improved health. Just like the human body, one can always improve one’s health and good habits tend to lead to a disciplined lifestyle that allows one to enjoy one’s abilities at an optimum level. This is the beginning of a process that will be ongoing for the life of this church.

**Recommendations**

The suggestions that came out of this research need to be implemented immediately. They came from concerned members who thought through what was happening and found that these recommendations can help to fix the problems that we are
facing. If the recommendations are not implemented then NPSDAC will not reap the full benefits of the NCD process for improving the health of the church.

As a church we need to maintain a prayerful attitude for the improvement of the health of our church. There is no effective method or strategy that is more important than prayer. Without our dependence on God, everything that we do will fail. Only God can truly give life.

The leadership team of NPSDAC needs to assess on a monthly basis, how well recommendations are being followed and if they are being implemented effectively. If a recommendation can be improved then it should be modified and explained to the church as to how it was improved and why. It is important that the church as a whole is involved so that everyone can feel like they are a part of the necessary change.

Six months from now, God willing, we need to conduct another NCDS in order to see how we have improved as a church.

**Summary**

This experience has taken me to a place where I could not have predicted, when I started this research in the fall of 2017. Throughout my years of study, I heard a lot about what it means to be a religious community and the importance of forming LR, especially in our postmodern society, but never, to such a degree, have I realized the importance of true community – LR before. The NDS was an effective tool to help us determine the health of our church, where the eight quality characteristics are concerned. The functional group communication theory really helped me to lead an effective group and allow us to have a basis upon which to formulate meaningful recommendations. I believe that, as a church we were able to get a snapshot of where we are. It is already apparent that
momentum is building in the direction of positive change. When I shared the survey findings with the NPSDAC they perceived that the results showed the church’s health as critically poor. They accepted the diagnosis and members were willing to take the steps necessary to begin an intentional process to improve the church’s health.
APPENDIX A

LETTERS

RECRUITMENT LETTER FOR NCDS

Dear Niles Philadelphia SDA Church member / regular attendee,

   Friend, my name is Emeka Buffong and I am conducting a thesis entitled “Speaking life to a church in the process of healing and growth.” Healing and growth are synonymous. The goal of this research is to identify factors that are negatively affecting the health of the church and put in place a plan that will be implemented to address these factors.

   The Natural Church Development Survey was developed after 1,000 churches from 36 countries were researched and 8 characteristics were common in all of the healthy churches. This survey has been conducted in hundreds of churches to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Churches that did this survey and developed and implemented a plan to address these factors, generally, experienced health and growth.

   Would you help this church towards the process of healing and growth? Thirty volunteers are needed to conduct this anonymous survey that usually takes less than 30 minutes to complete. The feedback from this survey will help us to point out the areas that we need to develop as a church family.

   This is completely voluntary. Completing this survey can help us to move in the direction of both healing and growth.

   About 3 weeks following this survey, five individuals will be needed to take part in a three-question interview. Confidentiality will be maintained and your name will not appear in the research.

   Thank you in advance for your consideration and / participation!

Emeka Buffong
30 January 2018

Institutional Review Board
Andrews University
4150 Administration Drive, Room 322
Berrien Springs, MI 49104-0355

Dear Members of the Institutional Review Board,

Emeka Buffong proposes to conduct research under the title, “Speaking Life To A Church In The Process of Healing and Growth.” He wishes to conduct research, utilizing volunteers who regularly attend the Niles Philadelphia Seventh-day Adventist Church in Niles, Michigan. The research seeks permission for 30 members or individuals who have a close relationship with the Niles Philadelphia Seventh-day Adventist Church to take the Natural Church Development Survey. The researcher also requests that he be allowed to personally interview a few members after plans have begun to be implemented for the sake of gaining their perspective of progress being made.

The Niles Philadelphia SDA Church Board met on 14 January 2018 and granted approval for Emeka to conduct his research. As pastor of the church, I write this letter, signifying permission that Mr. Buffong be allowed by the IRB to proceed as he as outlined.

Yours truly,

Willie Edward Hucks II
Pastor, Niles Philadelphia Seventh-day Adventist Church
February 16, 2018

Emeka Buffong
Tel. (534) 702-0021
Email: emeka@andrews.edu

RE: APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS
IRB Protocol #118-017 Application Type: Original Dept.: Visual Art, Communication & Design Review Category: Exempt Action Taken: Approved Advisor: Desrene Vernon-Brebner Title: Speaking life to a church in the process of healing and growth.

Your IRB application for approval of research involving human subjects entitled: “Speaking life to a church in the process of healing and growth” IRB protocol # 118-017 has been evaluated and determined Exempt from IRB review under regulation 46.101 (b) (3) -- research involving surveys, interviews or observation of public behavior. You may now proceed with your research.

The projects involve no more than minimal risk, no data is collected from minors or other vulnerable subjects, and there is no dissemination of results outside of the class.

Please note that any future changes (see IRB Handbook pages 11-12) made to the study design and/or informed consent form require prior approval from the IRB before such changes can be implemented. Incase you need to make changes please use the attached report form.

While there appears to be no more than minimum risks with your study, should an incidence occur that results in a research-related adverse reaction and/or physical injury, (see IRB Handbook pages 12) this must be reported immediately in writing to the IRB. Any research-related physical injury must also be reported immediately to the University Physician, Dr. Katherine, by calling (269) 473-2222.

We ask that you reference the protocol number in any future correspondence regarding this study for easy retrieval of information.

Best wishes in your research.

Sincerely,

Morlekei Ong
Research Integrity and Compliance Officer

Institutional Review Board – 8488 E Campus Circle Dr, Baller Room 234 - Berrien Springs, MI 49104-0355
Tel: (269) 471-6361 E-mail: irb@andrews.edu
## APPENDIX B

NCDS – PASTOR

NEW NCD SURVEY—PASTOR’S FORM

Instructions — Please read carefully

- This form is to be answered by the pastor in addition to a copy of the questionnaire.
- If the church does not have a pastor, a member of the church leadership should complete the “Pastor’s Form.” (In this case, some questions will not be relevant and should be left blank.)
- If the church has several pastors, only the Senior Pastor will answer the Pastor’s Form and a copy of the questionnaire. If your church has no Senior Pastor, randomly select one of the pastors to answer the Pastor’s Form.

Most of the questions are mandatory because they provide basic contact and demographic information. It will not be possible to process the survey data without this information.
- Please keep a copy of this form for your records.
- It will be a helpful reference when completing the next NCD Survey.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

- **Church**
  1. Church name
  2. Church address
    a. Address 1
    b. Address 2
    c. City
    d. State or Province
    e. Postal Code
    f. Country
      United States of America
  3. Church website

- **Pastor**
  4. Your name
  5. Pastor’s phone number
  6. Pastor’s fax number
  7. Pastor’s cell/mobile phone number
  8. Pastor’s e-mail address

- **Contact** (if different from pastor, e.g., survey administrator, otherwise optional)
  9. Contact name
  10. Contact address:
      a. Address 1
      b. Address 2
      c. City
      d. State or Province
      e. Postal Code
      f. Country
        United States of America
  11. Contact phone number
  12. Contact fax number
  13. Contact cell/mobile phone number
  14. Contact e-mail address
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

15. Pastor's age: 

16. Pastor's gender: male female

17. Pastor's highest level of education:
   - Theological studies
   - Training on the job
   - Bible School
   - Other

18. How many years have you been the pastor of this church?

19. If you have completed the "3-Color-Gift-Test", please indicate your 5 highest manifest gifts.
   - Apostle
   - Artistic creativity
   - Counseling
   - Craftsmanship
   - Deliverance
   - Discernment
   - Evangelism
   - Faith
   - Giving
   - Healing
   - Helps
   - Hospitality
   - Interpretation
   - Knowledge
   - Leadership
   - Mercy
   - Miracles
   - Missionary
   - Music
   - Organization
   - Prayer
   - Prophecy
   - Service
   - Shepherding
   - Singleness
   - Suffering
   - Teaching
   - Tongues
   - Voluntary poverty
   - Wisdom

20. My leadership style can be described best as:
(Mark all that apply):
   - Authoritarian
   - Partnership
   - Democratic
   - Task-oriented
   - People-oriented
   - Goal-oriented
   - Serving
   - Relationship-oriented
   - Team-oriented

SIZE & GROWTH OF YOUR CHURCH

21. Number on church membership roll:

22. At present, the average number of adults attending church services (in most churches this would be the primary worship services) each week is ____________ (according to your own way of counting).

23. At present, the average number of children attending church services (in most churches this would be the primary worship services) each week is ____________ (according to your own way of counting).

24. During the past five years the average number of adults attending church services (in most churches this would be the primary worship services) each week was ____________ (according to your own way of counting):
   - A. (one year ago)
   - B. (two years ago)
   - C. (three years ago)
   - D. (four years ago)
   - E. (five years ago)

25. How do you count your worship service attendance? (Multiple answers possible.)
   - A. We don't count, the figures above are guessed.
   - B. If someone attends 2 or more worship services per week, we only count him or her once.
   - C. If someone attends 2 or more worship services per week, we count him or her each time.
   - D. We only count the attendance at the main worship service.
   - E. We don't count every week, only on regular special occasions.
   - F. Other

26. How many worship services does your church have each week?

27. How many small groups (home groups, cell groups, prayer groups, etc.) are there in your church?
## CHURCH PLANTING

28. Over the last 10 years, how many daughter churches were planted by your church?  

29. If any of your daughter churches have completed an NCD Survey, please indicate each of their account names (from their NCD Survey website account).  

30. Over the last five years (including this year), how many members has your church given to daughter churches?  

| A. (this year) |  
| B. (one year ago) |  
| C. (two years ago) |  
| D. (three years ago) |  
| E. (four years ago) |  
| F. (five years ago) |  

## GENERAL INFORMATION

31. Denomination:  

32. Founding year of this church (if known)  

33. Location of church. What type of community best describes the location of your church?  

- [ ] Inner city  
- [ ] Suburb  
- [ ] Town  
- [ ] Village  
- [ ] Rural  
- [ ] Other  

34. What age groups are predominant in your church? (Mark all that apply)  

- [ ] Children (ages 1-12)  
- [ ] Youth (ages 13-18)  
- [ ] Young adults (ages 19-25)  
- [ ] Young families (ages 20-35)  
- [ ] Middle age (ages 35-64)  
- [ ] Senior citizens (ages 65 and up)  

35. How would you best describe the music style of your church? (Mark all that apply)  

- [ ] Liturgical  
- [ ] Celebration  
- [ ] Organ music  
- [ ] Contemporary instruments  
- [ ] Spontaneous  
- [ ] Planned  

36. Which of the following terms best describe your church’s theology? (Mark all that apply)  

- [ ] Liberal  
- [ ] Fundamentalist  
- [ ] Politically engaged  
- [ ] Charismatic  
- [ ] Pentecostal  
- [ ] Evangelical  
- [ ] 3 Color / Trinityian  

37. Does your church follow any of these approaches? (Mark all that apply)  

- [ ] Cell church  
- [ ] House church  
- [ ] Willow Creek  
- [ ] Purpose-driven church  
- [ ] Emerging church  
- [ ] G12  
- [ ] Natural Church Development
38. How many NCD Surveys (including this one) has your church completed?

39. Is your church doing this NCD survey as the last survey before or first survey after an NCD Campaign?
   - Neither
   - Last survey before
   - First survey after

40. NCD Color Profile Results
   If your church has completed the NCD Color Profile (from the book "Color Your World With Natural Church Development" by Christian A. Schwarz), please check the most recent results of your church’s NCD Color Profile:
   - Green
   - Red
   - Blue

41. Will your church be assisted by a coach during this NCD cycle?
   - Yes, we have a coach
   - Yes, we will look for a coach
   - No

42. Was your church assisted by a coach during previous NCD cycles?
   - Yes, frequently
   - Yes, sometimes
   - No

43. Do you want to receive regular information about NCD by e-mail (from NCD International and/or the national NCD partner)?
   - Yes
   - No

44. If NCD International or the national NCD partner was interested in using the results of your church’s NCD Survey in one of their publications – would you allow us to contact you to get your permission?
   - Yes
   - No

Please do not forget to answer the survey questionnaire as well.
APPENDIX C

NCDS – REGULAR

NEW NCD SURVEY

Instructions — Please read carefully

• This questionnaire will help to discover the strengths and weaknesses of your church. It is important that you answer all of the questions by marking one of the indicated boxes. When you come to a question in which none of the responses match your opinion, please choose the response that corresponds as closely as possible to your opinion. Think about your church and how it currently looks from your point of view.

• If you feel that a question is not applicable to your church’s situation, leave it blank.

• This questionnaire is used worldwide in a wide variety of denominations. As a consequence, you may not be used to some of the vocabulary in the questions. Answer each question based on what you think it means.

• If a question refers to leaders (e.g. #13), it refers to pastors, priests, elders, deacons, board members, and similar positions.

1. Gender:
   - Male
   - Female

2. Age:
   - <20
   - 21-30
   - 31-40
   - 41-50
   - 51-60
   - >70

3. How long have you been a Christian?
   - years
   - Can’t say

4. How long have you been a part of this church?
   - years

5. Have you been involved in another local church before this one?
   - yes
   - no

6. If “yes”, please indicate the reason for moving to this church:
   6a Relocated to this area
   - Yes
   - No
   6b Current church provides more effective ministry to children/young adults
   - Yes
   - No
   6c Style of worship service
   - Yes
   - No
   6d Leadership of current church
   - Yes
   - No
   6e Conflict in previous church
   - Yes
   - No
   6f Dissatisfaction with previous church
   - Yes
   - No
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<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I feel my task in our church is a positive challenge that stretches my faith.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>It is my experience that God obviously uses my work for building the church.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>The tasks I perform in our church match my gifts.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>I feel the sermon in the worship service speaks to my personal situation.</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>My small group helps me with the challenges of my life.</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>I connect with God in a meaningful way during the worship service.</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Our leaders seem to enjoy their ministry in our church.</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>I find it easy to tell other Christians about my feelings.</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>I feel that the worship service has a positive influence on me.</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>I know what value my work has in the overall work of our church.</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>I know that someone in our church will hold me accountable for meeting the commitments I make.</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>The leaders of the ministries of our church meet regularly for planning.</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>We encourage new Christians in our church to get involved in evangelism immediately.</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Our leaders actively seek to remove barriers that limit my ministry.</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>The evangelistic activities of our church are relevant for my friends and family who do not yet know Jesus Christ.</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Our leaders are clearly concerned for people who do not know Jesus Christ.</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Our leaders actively support church development.</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>My contributions to church life are reviewed regularly.</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>I enjoy listening to the sermons in the worship service.</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>I feel that my church supports me in my ministry.</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>In my small group we spend lots of time on things which are irrelevant to me.</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Our pastor(s) have too much work to do.</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>I know that other church members pray for me regularly.</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>In our church it is possible to talk with other people about personal problems.</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>Our leaders are good at explaining things.</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>There is a lot of joy and laughter in our church.</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td>I pray for my friends, colleagues and relatives who do not yet know Jesus Christ, that they will come to faith.</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>My small group helps me to grow in my spiritual life.</td>
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The following statement is true...

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The following statement is true...

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<td>63</td>
<td>In our church we often try new things.</td>
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<td>64</td>
<td>The small group and ministry leaders in our church each mentor at least one other person.</td>
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<td>65</td>
<td>I am a member of a small group in which I feel at home.</td>
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<td>66</td>
<td>I experience the benefits of working on a team in our church.</td>
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<td>67</td>
<td>I know the goals we are working towards as a church.</td>
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<td>I firmly believe that God will work even more powerfully in our church in the coming years.</td>
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<td>69</td>
<td>There is a lot of creativity in the evangelistic activities of our church.</td>
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<td>I know of a number of individuals in our church who have the gift of evangelism.</td>
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<td>I experience God's work in my life.</td>
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<td>72</td>
<td>The Bible is a powerful guide for me in the decisions of everyday life.</td>
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<td>73</td>
<td>The leaders of our church concentrate on the tasks for which they are gifted.</td>
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<td>Our leaders are spiritual examples to me.</td>
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<td>I try to deepen my relationships with people who do not yet know Jesus Christ.</td>
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<td>76</td>
<td>The leaders of our small groups are trained for their tasks.</td>
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<td>Times of prayer are an inspiring experience for me.</td>
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<td>Our small groups actively seek to multiply themselves.</td>
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<td>I clearly understand what is expected from me when fulfilling my task in our church.</td>
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<td>80</td>
<td>If I have a disagreement with a member of our church, I will go to them in order to resolve it.</td>
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<td>81</td>
<td>Our leaders regularly receive assistance from an outside person (e.g. coach, church consultant, other pastor, etc.) on how to develop our church.</td>
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<td>82</td>
<td>The leaders of our church support individual Christians in their evangelistic endeavors.</td>
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<td>83</td>
<td>Our leaders regularly praise and acknowledge volunteers.</td>
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<td>I enjoy reading the Bible on my own.</td>
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<td>85</td>
<td>Our worship service attracts unchurched visitors.</td>
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<td>When new people come to church events, we approach them openly and lovingly.</td>
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<td>Our church provides practical help for new Christians to grow in their faith.</td>
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<td>I always look forward to the worship service.</td>
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<td>I prepare myself to participate in the worship service.</td>
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<td>In my small group we trust each other.</td>
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<td>The activities of our church are well planned and organized.</td>
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APPENDIX D

NCDS CONSENT FORM

Andrews University
Department of Visual Arts, Communication, and Design
Consent Form

Research Study Title: “Speaking life to a church in the process of healing and growth”

Primary Researcher:
Emeka A. Buffong
emeka@andrews.edu
Candidate: MA in Communication

Purpose:
The goal of the Natural Church Development Survey (NCDS) is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of Niles Philadelphia Seventh-day Adventist Church (NPSDAC). Following the identification of these factors a plan will be developed to address these and the process will begin to address these factors.

Criteria for Respondents:
Participants must be over 18 years old and a members or regular visitor of NPSDAC.

Taking part in this survey is voluntary. At any point it is possible to end one’s participation in this research without any penalty.

Target Audience:
The population is those who are members of NPSDAC or regular attendees that are over 18 years of age.

Procedure:
The NCDS will take around 30 minutes or less

There are no expected risks and the survey is an anonymous one.

There will be no compensation and benefits for taking this survey.

By signing this form below, you acknowledge that you have read, understand, and agree to the terms aforementioned.

Respondent please print, sign, and date here:


Researcher print, sign and date here:
REFERENCES


