The Augusta, Maine, Church-planting Project

Michael D. Steenhoven

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ABSTRACT

THE AUGUSTA, MAINE, CHURCH-PLANTING PROJECT

by

Michael D. Steenhoven

Adviser: Douglas R. Kilcher
Title: THE AUGUSTA, MAINE, CHURCH-PLANTING PROJECT

Name of researcher: Michael D. Steenhoven

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Douglas R. Kilcher, D.Min.

Date completed: March 1995

Problem

There has never been a SDA church in Augusta, the capital city of Maine. The purpose of this project was to plant a healthy SDA church there, develop a church-planting plan, and create a vision for further church planting in the Northern New England Conference.

Method

Twenty-one members from an established congregation, four miles south of Augusta, became the nucleus for the Augusta Church. In conjunction with this group, a ten-part church-planting plan was developed. Northern New England
church-planting vision is progressing as the successful impact of the Augusta, Maine, church-planting project is unfolding.

Results

The church plant has been successful following the church-plant plan. Upon completion of the first year, membership in the Augusta Church increased by more than 100 percent, tithe for the mother and daughter churches increased nearly 50 percent, and many in conference leadership are beginning to develop a vision for church planting in other Northern New England communities.

Conclusions

Well-organized and planned church planting has tremendous impact on church growth that can be duplicated in other communities throughout Northern New England and North America.
Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

THE AUGUSTA, MAINE, CHURCH-PLANTING PROJECT

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Michael D. Steenhoven
March 1995
THE AUGUSTA, MAINE, CHURCH-PLANTING PROJECT

A project report
presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
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Michael D. Steenhoven

APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

Advisor,
Douglas R. Kilcher

Bruce L. Bauer

Philip G. Samaan

Dean,
SDA Theological Seminary

May 12, 1995
Date approved

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Project

Augusta, the capital of Maine, is in close proximity to the birthplace of Ellen White, co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. However, there has never been a SDA church there.

The primary purpose of this project was to plant a healthy SDA congregation in the city of Augusta. Secondary objectives include the following:

1. An enhanced understanding of effective church-planting technique for future church-planting projects

2. Creation of a vision for church-planting projects throughout the Northern New England Conference.

Even though the research reflects the distinctive character of a newly planted church in central Maine, a major portion of the knowledge gained may be useful in other ministerial settings.

Justification for the Project

Several elements provide impetus justifying this project. They include discovery of effective church-planting principles, implementation of the biblical mandate
for growth in new communities, and enhanced personal effectiveness in church planting.

Even though substantial SDA growth continues in many areas outside of North America, church growth has reached a plateau here in this country.¹ This is particularly true for the Northern New England Conference of SDA's. From December 1989 to December 1994, conference membership decreased slightly from 4,159 to 4,140 members.² During the same five-year period, the Farmingdale-Augusta membership increased from 75 to 131, an increase of nearly 75 percent.³ The first justification for this project is the determination of which church-planting principles made Farmingdale-Augusta's growth possible.

Scripture provides the second basis for this project. The "Great Commission" of Matt 28:19, 20 contains the churches' "marching orders" for planting churches among "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Rev 14:6). With a population of 24,000 people within the city limits and another 50,000 people in close proximity, Augusta is in dire need of a SDA presence.

Finally, this project is warranted on the basis of

¹Monte Salin, Sharing Our Faith with Friends (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1990), 224.

²Nancy Malcolm and Bette Toscano, NNEC secretaries, interview by author, January 3, 1995.

³Ibid.
personal benefit. It will elevate my awareness of effective church-planting techniques, thereby improving future church-planting proficiency.

Definition of Terms

There are a number of terms apropos to the establishment of new churches. Below is a list of those terms and definitions:

1. **Church planting**: creation of a new church where one did not exist earlier.

2. **Mother church**: established church that is sponsoring the new (daughter) church with personnel and other resources.

3. **Daughter church**: church that is created utilizing the personnel and resources of an established (mother) church.

4. **Core group**: selected members from the established congregation (mother) who become the nucleus for the new church.

5. **Hiving off or swarming**: a model of church planting in which a select number of established (mother) church members form the core of the new (daughter) church.

Plan and Chronogram

The planting of a new congregation is not something done on the spur of the moment with little forethought given to preparation and planning. "Any pastor or lay person who
wants to be part of a growing church should be prepared for some good old-fashioned hard work." This is especially true of church planting. A great amount of planning, coordinating, and training needs to take place if a church plant is going to be successful. Some longevity on the part of the pastor in the district is also needed to ensure success and growth.\textsuperscript{1}

Plans for the Augusta, Maine, church plant were developed as a result of research combined with past experience in the formation of the new SDA congregation in St. Joseph, Michigan. For planting a church in Augusta, the "Hiving Off" model was selected.\textsuperscript{2} Other models include colonization, adoption, accidental parenthood, satellite, multi-site, multiple campus, mission team, catalytic planter, founding pastor, apostolic planter, and independent planter. Plans for the Augusta church plant included:

1. Assessment and treatment of the mother church
2. Change of attitude and creation of a new vision
3. Establishment of revived spiritual emphasis
4. Training program
5. Development of coordinating committee

\textsuperscript{1}William M. Easum, \textit{The Church Growth Handbook} (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 118.

\textsuperscript{2}C. Peter Wagner, \textit{Your Church Can Grow} (Glendale, CA: Gospel Light Publications, 1976), 61.

\textsuperscript{3}C. Peter Wagner, \textit{Church Planting for a Greater Harvest} (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light Publications, 1990), 60-73.
6. Implementation of community-awareness programs
7. Obtaining financial support
8. Designation of a core group
9. Worship site selection/date of first worship
10. Setting further goals.

This chronological sequence allowed for a smooth progression from unhealthy mother church to healthy "mother" and new "daughter" congregation.

Assessment of Mother Church

The first element of this church-plant plan concerned the health of the mother church. Unhealthy mothers do not give birth to healthy children. This is also true with churches. If the "mother" has reached a plateau or is declining, if she cannot even meet her own financial obligations, or if she is rife with dissension, it is not wise to move forward with plans to plant another church. Any sign of sickness should be dealt with first.

Therefore, it is imperative that an accurate diagnosis of the health of the "mother" be taken. How has she grown in the past? "All churches can and should frequently see their own graphs of growth. Nothing will tell them so effectively how they are getting on with their main task."1 Unfortunately, this is not often done. Church leaders

believe that everything is going well, but seldom check. Therefore, they never really know for sure if current goals are being met.

Churchmen who, without knowing the growth histories of specific Churches, make judgements about them often make wrong judgements. They substitute what ought to have happened for what did happen, ascribe wrong reasons for events, and in general indulge in wishful, inexact reconstructions.¹

Growth statistics in stewardship and membership are not the only assessments of health that should be taken. The spiritual and social health of the mother congregation should be checked as well. This information becomes readily apparent as one conducts home visitations. If the analysis of the mother church shows weakness in any area, this problem should be corrected first. The health of mother or daughter congregations may be jeopardized by moving ahead too quickly.

Creation of New Vision

The second element of the church-planting plan involves the implementation of a church-planting vision in the minds of the congregation and, possibly, conference leadership. Unless this happens, the church-planting pastor will be planting the new congregation on his/her own. Unfortunately, "America is dominated by a theology of maintenance."² We are content with the status quo. This

¹Ibid., 130.

²Ibid., 30.
theology of maintenance has taken root with many churches and church leaders. This is not just true for other churches; it is becoming increasingly true for our own denomination. Donald E. McGavran goes so far as to say, "Many a time the specialist will have to strike out on his own because the denomination or the evangelist has no intelligent plan and does not intend to get one."^1

Oftentimes, the church-planting pastor will shoulder the responsibility of developing the church-plant vision, articulating it persuasively so that people rally to its support, and then turn that vision into reality."^2 This type of transformational leadership is a process that, of necessity, needs to be ongoing if the church is to further the gospel commission. Without it, a church planter will strike out on his or her own with little possibility of success.

Revised Spiritual Emphasis

The third element of this plan deals with spiritual emphasis. Church planting was so successful in the first century because it was a Spirit-led activity (Acts 1:8). Throughout the book of Acts is recorded incident after incident of the Holy Spirit's guidance (Acts 8:29; 10:19-20; 13:4; 16:6-10; 19:6, and so on). Furthermore, the days of

^1Ibid., 441.

preparation prior to Pentecost were spent in supplication and prayer (Acts 1:14).

The disciples did not ask for a blessing for themselves. They were weighted with the burden for souls. The gospel was to be carried to the ends of the earth, and they claimed the endowment of power that Christ had promised. Then it was that the Holy Spirit was poured out, and thousands were converted in a day.¹

Church planting is just as much of a spiritual battle today as it was 2,000 years ago. Satan especially attacks those who are involved in this means of outreach. Through prayer, Satan's attacks can be neutralized.² Therefore, it is imperative that any church-planting plan provide opportunity for a spiritual preparation for all those connected with it.

Training Program

Furthermore, a myriad of community-outreach activities, details, and preparations need to be made before and during a successful church plant. It would be impossible for any one person to accomplish all of them. Consequently, it behooves the church planter to have as many trained people working with him or her as possible. This is the fourth element of my church-planting plan. If something can be delegated, do not do it yourself. However, one needs to make sure that the person delegated has been trained to

²Wagner, Church Planting for a Greater Harvest, 50.
handle it. Bill Hull sees the pastor primarily as a trainer of people. "His main task is to train people to do ministry." The best way that I have found for training is to use the example of Jesus. In home and hospital visitation, jail ministry, Bible studies, etc., I always take someone with me. Robert Coleman states:

Give practical work assignments and expect them to be carried out. This gets men started, and where they already have seen their work demonstrated in the life of the teacher, there is no reason why the assignment cannot be completed.

More church members need to be trained to effectively carry on multiple church planting:

Churches are to be organized and plans laid for work to be done by the members of the newly organized churches. This gospel missionary work is to keep reaching out and annexing new territory, enlarging the cultivated portions of the vineyard. The circle is to extend until it belts the world.

As members become comfortable in ministry, I allow them to take more responsibility. Leadership of many ministries has developed in this manner and those leaders, in turn, train others. Unless this happens, all the work of ministry, including church planting, falls on the shoulders of the pastor.

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1Ibid., 109.


White, Evangelism, 19.
Coordinating Committee

The fifth element of this church planting plan is the development of a coordinating committee. As the additional task of planting a new church is taken on, planning and organization increases dramatically. According to C. Peter Wagner, "most church planters would do well to have a core of people around them who bring some of the technical skills that unchurched people would not have."¹ This is especially true in the planning and start-up phases of the new church. This coordinating committee has the responsibility of developing ongoing church-plant strategy and implementing it. It needs to meet on a regular basis for greatest effectiveness.

Community-Awareness Programs

The sixth element of the church-planting plan focuses on the need for community awareness. "The more often they see the name Seventh-day Adventist, the more aware of the church they become."² Contingent upon resources available, it should be the goal of every Seventh-day Adventist church to have its name before the public wherever possible. The goal of this part of the plan is to develop ministries and outreaches meeting the needs of the community. "The secret

¹Wagner, Church Planting for a Greater Harvest, 56.

to success is to find a need and fill it."¹ Meeting the needs of the community not only brings additional awareness of your church, it also results in church growth.

One of the characteristics of the fastest growing churches in the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is that they promote "targeted, permanent ministries instead of events, activities, and short term programs."² These long-term-awareness ministries targeted toward people in the host community place the newly planted church on a more solid footing, stabilizing the church and promoting future growth.

Financial Support

Some level of financial support is needed, but not to as great an extent as some might expect. This is the seventh element of the church-planting plan. Generally, it is best if the local church can shoulder much of the responsibility. This establishes greater commitment from the mother church, and helps to ensure better stewardship for the funds that are spent. William Easum suggests that 5 percent of a church's budget be spent on evangelism.³ I consider this figure to be way too low and would recommend a minimum of 10 percent, especially, if a church is sponsoring

¹Wagner, Your Church Can Grow, 136.
²Salin, Sharing Our Faith with Friends, 122-125.
³Easum, 89.
a church plant. In addition, it would be helpful to request some level of financial support from other sources outside of the local church for the first year or two.

Having financial support in place helps to expedite various ministries and outreaches being carried on in the church-planting project, and needs to be in place at least several months ahead of any planned ministries.

Designated Core Group

The eighth factor of the plan concerns selection of a core group. Applicable in particular to the "Hiving Model" of church planting, this element deals with the selection of leaders who will form the core of new members in the daughter church. Using a local church as a base has several built-in advantages for the new church, particularly when the nucleus for the new church is formed from the parent congregation:

1. It will have some experienced lay leaders.
2. Nucleus members have a higher level of commitment.
3. There will be general agreement on ministry philosophy.¹

One should not be concerned with decimating the leadership of the mother church either. According to a study conducted by Roger Dudley and Clarence Gruesbeck:

Nor does the mother church suffer from these strong leaders moving into the daughter church, for after

¹Wagner, Church Planting for a Greater Harvest, 60.
almost every church planting event, potential leadership which had lain dormant in the mother church for lack of opportunity came to the front when leaders left to organize the new congregation.¹

This selection needs to be done with much thought and prayer as to who will be the best-suited leaders in this new congregation.

Site and Date Selection

Selection of a suitable worship site, and the date of the first worship should be planned several months or more in advance of the first service. This is the ninth factor of my plan. Several items should enter into the selection of a location: Do not consider only cost--of more importance should be the variables of accessibility, utility, and visibility. "Most church growth authorities believe that the more visible a church is the faster it will grow."² Therefore, do not let the selection of a suitable location be governed by price only. The Lord owns the cattle on a thousand hills.

Further Goals

The final component of the church-planting plan focuses on the need to set new goals after the church is planted. Setting goals encourages the new church to greater growth. "Leaders must exercise display of faith. Every goal is a

¹Dudley and Gruesbeck, 27.
²Ibid., 20.
Once the church is planted is not the time to sit back and enjoy the fruits of one's labor. The daughter church needs to continue in its growth. Ultimately, its objective should be the planting of a new church from within its own ranks.

The previous ten elements compose the Augusta church-planting plan. As can be seen, from the previous discussion, planting a church is not an easy task. However, even though challenging, it is also very rewarding. Church planting, utilizing the hiving model, gives opportunity for all members in the mother church to take an active role in ministry. The plan also provides for an orderly progression so that the plant takes place smoothly. First, it determines the health of the mother church and prepares it for growth. Second, it provides proper training so that the mother church can grow. Third, it makes plans for a healthy new church. Finally, it continues the process of setting future goals so that growth does not stagnate. Table 1 lists the elements of the Augusta church planting plan and the anticipated dates of completion.

Criteria for Evaluation

The primary purpose of this project was to plant a healthy Seventh-day Adventist congregation in the city of Augusta. The two secondary purposes included determination

— Wagner, Your Church Can Grow, 46.
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<th>Anticipated Date of Completion</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Assessment of Mother Church</td>
<td>9/1/89</td>
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<td>Treatment of Mother Church</td>
<td>1/1/92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Creation/Implementation of Vision</td>
<td>3/1/91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Spiritual Emphasis</td>
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<td>4. Training Program</td>
<td>on going</td>
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<td>5. Develop Coordinating Committee</td>
<td>8/1/91</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Community-Awareness Programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Financial Support Committed</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Core Group Designated</td>
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<td>9. Select Worship Site</td>
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of effective church-planting techniques and developing vision for the planting of churches throughout the Northern New England Conference.

With these purposes in mind, appropriate criteria for evaluation include the following:

1. Membership trends for mother and daughter churches
2. Stewardship trends for both mother and daughter churches
3. Determination and evaluation of individual church planting components

The above four components should give an accurate evaluation of the Augusta, Maine, church-planting project.

Limitations of the Project

This project is written to apply generally to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America, with specific application to Northern New England. The church-plant principles applied in the Augusta, Maine church plant may be applicable in other countries, but would need to be assessed on an individual basis. Furthermore, some of the principles discovered are situational contingent. Further research, in differing environments, would expedite identification of these variables.

Moreover, it is recognized that there may be other principles responsible for growth within various church-
plants. Community and Church relationships are both complex and invasive. I have attempted to identify major principles, with particular emphasis on those that were predominant in the planting of the new congregation in Augusta. However, I acknowledge that differing environments in both church and community will cause varying church-plant principles of growth.
CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL BASIS

Theological Church-Planting Framework

Since sin entered the world with Adam, God has been searching for man, seeking to bring restoration (Gen 3:9). God purposed through Abraham and his posterity to bring this restoration about (Gen 12:3). In Abraham, all families of the earth would be blessed. Through the seed of Abraham, namely Christ, every person on earth would have opportunity of restoration and salvation. However, if the Gentiles were to hear these good tidings, and receive the blessing spoken of in Gen 12:3, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? (Rom 10:14).

The Bible presents three different models by which the church was to be planted throughout the world. Two models were in effect under Israel as a nation. The third model applied to the church of the apostles. The first model operated as the nation of Israel was blessed by God. Under such kings as David and Solomon, the nations of the world came to Israel seeking the source of her greatness. As
representatives of those countries came to know the true God, they in turn were to become the nuclei of new congregations in their homeland. The second model functioned as Israel went into captivity. Now, the captives became the nuclei of new congregations in foreign lands, still spreading the gospel throughout the world. The third model functioned with the newly formed church of the apostles. In this case, the apostles and believers traveled to various parts of the world, spreading the gospel and forming new congregations.

Model 1

In the first model of church planting, God chose the offspring of Abraham. They are referred to as the "church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38). This "church in the wilderness," or ekklesia, was the "called-out ones." Scripture defines the church as "those who are called out" and it clearly indicates that these called-out ones were part of the Old Testament experience. As Abraham was called out of the land of Ur (Heb 11:8; Gen 11:31-12:1), so Israel would be called out of Egypt (Exod 3:7-8).

However, this church in the wilderness was called out for a special purpose. It was called into a special covenant with God; it was given an inheritance in the land of Canaan, and was to be a light to the world (Deut 4:6-8, 13, 20). Its high and holy purpose was to be a blessing to the nations as was promised to father Abraham. Not only
were the people called out of Egypt into special covenant with God, but they were also to extend the same invitation to the world. Israel was to plant the church of "called-out ones" throughout the world. The method of accomplishment would be different from that of the New Testament church, but the outcome was to be the same.

Israel would possess Canaan, the most strategic piece of real estate in the world. Through her new homeland passed the great trade routes of antiquity. Through her borders traversed people from Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. As Israel remained in faithful covenant with God, she would become a mighty nation. Her fame and that of her God would spread worldwide.

Note the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the first temple. Solomon does not speak only of Israel. He speaks of the strangers or gentiles who come from another nation. They too were to be called out. Solomon speaks of them as "coming from a far country for thy name's sake" (1 Kgs 8:41). Yet, when they returned home, when the church was extending its borders beyond Israel, God was to hear them from heaven (1 Kgs 8:42, 43). God's purpose for Israel was "that all the people of the earth may know that the Lord is God, and that there is none else" (1 Kgs 8:60).

Solomon's early reign was a tribute to the holy purpose given Israel by God of planting the church among the nations. Because of his wisdom, prosperity, and fame,
Solomon's renown spread far and wide. Rulers like the Queen of Sheba came because they "heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord" (1 Kgs 10:1). Her response at the end of their communion together was "Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel forever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgement and justice" (1 Kgs 10:9). It appears, when one examines Jesus' statement in Matthew, that she was one of the first called out of heathen worship in her own country, thereby becoming the first member of the church in her nation (Matt 12:42).

Moreover, the Queen of Sheba's experience was not an isolated incident. It is recorded that "all the earth sought to Solomon" (1 Kgs 10:24). The same verse indicates that they came to hear the wisdom that "God had put in his heart." What a golden opportunity the church of Israel had. The whole world was coming to them. As they heard of the Lord of Lords, and the King of Kings, the creator of the universe, they would in turn become ambassadors for God and church planters in their own countries.

Model 2

If Israel had remained true to her high and holy trust, the boundaries of the church would have encircled the globe. God's church would have been planted among all the nations. Unfortunately, Israel broke her covenant with the Lord. The people broke His commandments and abhorred His judgments.
(Lev 26:14, 15). As a result, they fell from their special position with God, and were scattered among the heathen (Lev 26:33). Yet, God would still fulfill His purpose of planting the church throughout the world. The method of church planting would now change, but the object would be the same. Now the church would be planted by the children of the captivity scattered among the nations. Examples of this are given for both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel.

A young maid of the Northern Kingdom of Israel was carried away captive by the Syrians. It was she who witnessed to Naaman's wife of the God of Israel—"Would God my lord were with the prophet of Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy" (2 Kgs 5:3). After his miraculous recovery on the banks of the Jordan River, Naaman exclaims, "Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel" (2 Kgs 5:15). Before returning to Syria, Naaman confirms that he will worship no God but the God of Israel. Naaman has been called out from the service of the Syrian god Rimmon (2 Kgs 5:15-18). The church is planted in Syria, and Naaman is the first member. So, even in entirely different circumstances, God accomplished His task of planting the church among all nations.

As the Southern Kingdom of Judah broke its covenant with God, the people too were scattered. Taken to Babylon, they were to fulfill God's purpose for them in captivity
rather than in peace. There were God's faithful among the captives, such as Daniel, Hannaniah, Mishael, and Azariah who took up the appointed work of planting the church in the kingdom of Babylon. Time and again, King Nebuchadnezzar was constrained to acknowledge the authority and power of the God of heaven (Dan 2:47; 3:28; 4:37). He even made a decree compelling his subjects to recognize the supremacy of God. God was planting His church in the Babylonian royal household through Hebrew slaves. The church was certainly planted in the life of Nebuchadnezzar, for by his own admission he proclaims, "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgement: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase" (Dan 4:37).

The church was planted not only in the city of Babylon through the influence of these four young captives from Judah. At the dedication of King Nebuchadnezzar's image people were sent from all over the realm—"the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces" (Dan 3:2). Can you imagine the message that went back with these men to their native countries? The God of heaven had miraculously intervened in behalf of His three servants, changing the king's own word. The message of God's love towards His people went everywhere, and I am sure there were not a few
who were called out to worship the one true God. As a result, God's church continued to spread even as His chosen people were in Babylonian captivity.

This did not stop with the Babylonian empire. Daniel realized the importance of extending the kingdom of God no matter which empire he served under. He was a constant witness to all heads of state. King Darius of the Medo-Persian Empire already had a knowledge of the King of heaven before Daniel was thrown into the lion's den. The king said to Daniel, "Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee" (Dan 6:16). The miraculous delivery from the lions helped to further the kingdom of God. Again, the king of an empire declared to all his people the love and miraculous power of Daniel's God. What Israel failed to do in peace and prosperity, God was accomplishing through her in captivity. His church was spreading throughout the nations.

As Israel returned from captivity to her homeland, the people were granted a time of probation lasting until A.D. 34 (Dan 9:24-27). God's people were to be gathering fruit for the kingdom (Matt 21:33-43). Israel was to be calling out people from all the world. God's church was to spread far and wide. Unfortunately, this was not the case. Caught up in its customs, rituals, and exclusivity, Israel had separated itself from the world. Separating from sin, the people separated from sinners. No longer were they a
blessing to all nations. As a result, the Lord took the vineyard from them and gave it to His newly formed church (Matt 21:41-43).

**Model 3**

Made up of only twelve men, this church was given the responsibility of planting churches over the whole earth. In this newly formed church, we see the third model of church planting. The Apostles were to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). They were to go to all nations (Matt 28:19). The third model pictures the apostles and believers going out to the world to plant congregations everywhere. No longer would the favored nation or captive model of church planting be used.

The book of Acts could be described as a church planter's handbook. It describes an explosion in the number of converts and churches. One author describes it thus:

> If the ministry of Jesus was successful, the ministry of the apostles after Pentecost was even more so. Their experiences, recorded in the book of Acts, span a 30-year period. In those 30 years, the original 500 or so grew to several tens of thousands, with some estimates as high as 100,000 in Palestine alone.¹

The church grew so fast that in that thirty-year span, Paul could say that the gospel had gone to every creature under heaven (Col 1:23).

> How could this happen so rapidly? "In Acts, Paul

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clearly equated the conversion of people with the organization of churches. His goal was the planting of churches in every major city of Asia Minor.\textsuperscript{1} Jesus told His disciples that they were to reach out in ever-widening circles to the world about them; first to Jerusalem, second to all Judea, third to Samaria, and finally to all the earth (Acts 1:8). When reviewing the fulfillment of Jesus' strategy as recorded in the book of Acts, one finds that, "the first believers were Galilean Jews. Then the gospel jumped to Hellenistic Jews in Jerusalem, then to Hebrews in Judea, then to Samaritans, then to an African, then to other Gentiles."\textsuperscript{2} As the people were converted, they were added to the church (Acts 2:41, 47). This was not only to the church at Jerusalem. Churches were also formed in Samaria for the newly converted (Acts 8:9-14). The book of Acts speaks of churches in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria (Acts 9:31), as well as the churches of the Gentiles (Rom 16:4).

Everywhere one went, a new church was planted or being planted. The biblical record speaks of a church in each of these locations: Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), Saron (Acts 9:35), Antioch (Acts 13:1), Caesarea (Acts 18:22), Ephesus (Acts 20:17), Cenchrea (Rom 16:1), Lydia (Rom 16:5), Rome (Rom 16:23), Corinth (1 Cor 1:2), Laodicea (Col 4:16), Thessalonica (1 Thess 1:1), Babylon (1 Pet 5:13), Smyrna

\textsuperscript{1}Dudley and Gruesbeck, 14.

\textsuperscript{2}Wagner, \textit{Strategies for Church Growth}, 48.
(Rev 2:8), Pergamos (Rev 2:12), Thyatira (Rev 2:18), Sardis (Rev 3:1), Philadelphia (Rev 3:7), and Galatia (Gal 1:2). Furthermore, multiple churches are spoken of in these locations: Lystra and Iconium (Acts 14:21-23), Phenice and Samaria (Acts 15:3), Judea, Galilee, and Samaria (Acts 9:31), Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:41), Macedonia (2 Cor 8:1), and Asia (1 Cor 16:19). Paul also speaks of Rome, Spain, and perhaps even North Africa (Rom 1:9; 15:22-29).

Not only were the number of converts increasing daily, so were the number of churches (Acts 16:5). Churches were planted everywhere and the above cities are by no means exhaustive. There was an unparalleled commitment to church planting at that time. If the gospel commission given by Jesus was to be achieved, churches had to be planted throughout the world. This was the whole work of Paul and Barnabas. "The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Acts 13:2). "Consequently, these men gave themselves to church planting."\(^1\)

This was not their work alone, however. As a result of the persecution at Jerusalem, the believers were scattered far and wide. In their dispersion, they brought the gospel with them, which was preached unto both Jews and

\(^1\)Dudley and Gruesbeck, 14.

Greeks (Acts 11:19-24). Churches in Phenice, Cyprus, Cyrene, and Antioch resulted in large part to their witness. Without this kind of total church commitment to church planting, it would not have been possible to have as many as 100,000 believers in Palestine alone. Nor, would it have been possible for the gospel to have gone to the entire world in a period of only thirty years.

Thus, we can see that God utilized three methods of church planting throughout history. The first was employed as Israel, the mighty nation, gave witness of the wisdom and might of her God. The second was placed in service as Israel witnessed to the world in captivity. The third was fruitful as the apostles and believers travelled the nations, planting new churches everywhere. Each model was different. Yet, in all three models, new churches were to be planted everywhere.

Church-Planting Principles

As Scripture records the spread of the gospel with church plant after church plant taking place, we catch a glimpse of some of the principles that made these church plants successful. First, we find that they followed a church-planting strategy. Second, we see that a vision for church planting was promoted within the church. Third, we notice an ongoing training strategy taking place. And finally, we recognize a spiritual emphasis to the work of planting new congregations. All of these factors made for
rapid and successful church plants.

First, we see that the apostles did not follow a haphazard church-planting strategy. "The church grew because of the evangelistic strategy by which the gospel sped through Palestine, Asia Minor, and beyond. Success followed the preaching, teaching, and nurture of clusters of people, called out and organized into churches."\(^1\) You will notice in Acts 1:8 that the church was to develop a strong home base before moving into the outlying countryside. The believers were to concentrate on strengthening the church in Jerusalem before moving into the next territory. Once Jerusalem was established, they were to plant new churches in Judea, strengthen them, move to Samaria, and so on, until there were churches throughout the earth. Following this strategy, each new church was strengthened by those planted earlier. They were in close enough proximity to the previous church plant so that they could draw upon the resources of that church.

Second, we find a vision for church planting promoted within the church. Not everyone was supportive of planting new churches, especially among the culturally different Gentiles. Consequently, such people as Peter and Paul emphasized and promoted the planting of new congregations. Not only was it important to plant churches, but the attitudes of some of the Jews towards planting the church

\(^{1}\)Dudley and Gruesbeck, 15.
among the Gentiles had to be changed as well. In Acts 15:7-11, Peter points out that God has chosen the Gentiles. He gave them the Holy Ghost. Paul and Barnabas declare the miracles that God has wrought among the Gentiles by them (Acts 15:12). Jews who did not want to see the church planted among the Gentiles, when they heard Peter's rehearsal of his experience, were quiet and "glorified God, saying, 'Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life'" (Acts 11:17, 18). Again and again, we find the church planters of the first century dealing with this problem by pointing out the providence of God in dealing with the Gentiles.

Third, we find that church planting was effective because an ongoing training process was in place. More experienced people like Paul provided on-the-job training for a number of individuals. Some of his trainees include Barnabas (Acts 13:2), Mark (Acts 13:13), and Timothy (1 Tim 1:2). Paul trained them much like Jesus trained the Twelve. They learned by observing and then doing (Matt 10:1-24). Furthermore, many of the letters in the New Testament are full of instruction for the churches. The church continued to grow because new converts were always being trained to take on more and more responsibilities.

Fourth, there was a deep spiritual emphasis to this work. Church planting is a work directed by and blessed of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was poured out upon the
apostles that they might be witnesses of Christ in Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8). The Spirit directed Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch who returns to his homeland as the first member of the Ethiopian church (Acts 8:26-29, 37-39). The Spirit set Paul and Barnabas apart for the work of church planting (Acts 13:2). Paul was directed by the Spirit to go to Macedonia (Acts 16:9, 10), where many churches were planted (2 Cor 8:1). The book of Acts could be more appropriately termed "The Acts of the Holy Spirit," for it was the Holy Spirit who directed the growth of the newly formed church (Acts 8:29; 10:19-20; 13:4; 16:6-10; 19:6, and so on). Furthermore, it was the Lord who gave the increase (1 Cor 3:6). As a result, the church placed strong importance on prayer, study, and witness. It had a close connection with God, and the process of church planting increased its spiritual development.\(^1\) Eph 2:11-22 supports this, for it is referring to the corporate experience of the church.

**Summary**

We find many of the characteristics of successful church planting in Scriptures. The book of Acts in particular speaks of church-plant strategy, vision development, member training, and spiritual emphasis. The

\(^1\) Chaney, 22.
church not only grew because the Lord blessed it in church planting. It also grew because foresight and planning were given to the task.

Are we to be planting churches today? We most certainly are! The great commission did not end with the first century. When Jesus told His disciples to spread the gospel to all nations, He looked to our time, for He said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt 28:19-20). The multiplication of churches is to continue into our time and especially among Seventh-day Adventists. Rev 14:6-12 points to a special message that is to go to "them that dwell on the earth, to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." Like the apostles, God's church in the time of the end is to be planting churches throughout the world. His blessing will attend the work.

Literature Review

There is not a plethora of material written on the subject of church planting, and even less exists concerning the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. However, that which is available contains a tremendous amount of practical wisdom. Church-planting literature could be categorized under three major headings, which would include the need for continued church planting, characteristics of effective church planters, and characteristics of effective church plants. All three of these major headings have numerous
sub-categories which will be developed in this paper.

**Church-Planting Need**

Literature on the subject of church planting almost unanimously points to the need for an increased emphasis on developing new congregations in America. One often thinks of America as a "Christian" nation. Yet, an estimated eighty million people in the United States have no allegiance to any Christian group. "This makes America one of the great mission fields of the world."¹ C. Peter Wagner quotes even higher figures, for he estimates that at least "100 million have yet to commit their lives to Jesus as Lord."² This provides for abundant opportunity in church planting. Certainly, "ripe harvests abound in North America—but men with scythes are needed."³

What is even more tragic is that the church in America is falling further behind each year. "While in 1906 there was one church for every 745 residents, there is now one church for every 2,630 residents."⁴ Furthermore, for any three new congregations in a given year, two will cease to exist.⁵ These statistics are not germane to other churches

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¹Chaney, 40.
²Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow*, 170.
³McGavran, 49.
⁴Dudley and Gruesbeck, 17.
⁵Ibid.
alone. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, one finds the same disturbing trend taking place. In the early years of the SDA church, the primary focus was on church planting. Camp-meeting tents were pitched everywhere; missions were established that there might be a "memorial" to the third angel's message in that place. "More than 1500 local churches were organized during this time (1870-1900)."\(^1\) Unfortunately, this church-planting emphasis did not continue. As a result, our decadal growth rates have experienced a steady decline over the last century.\(^2\) As of 1987, the SDA yearly growth rate has declined to a new low of 1.4%.\(^3\) This trend will not be reversed unless new significance is placed on church planting.

According to Monte Salin, "Planting churches can do more to increase baptisms among White, non-Hispanic North Americans than any other single activity."\(^4\) Donald McGavran states, "Citizens will be won in great numbers only through multiplying new congregations composed of their kinds of people."\(^5\) The planting of new congregations will not only stop declining growth rates, it will reverse them.

Sometimes the thought is expressed that it would be

\(^{1}\)Ibid., 15.
\(^{2}\)Salin, 16.
\(^{3}\)Ibid., 22.
\(^{4}\)Ibid., 7.
\(^{5}\)McGavran, 71.
better to enlarge the mother church rather than start a new one. Church-growth studies have found the opposite to be true:

The presence of two or more congregations with the same denominational affiliation usually results in a higher level of congregational health and vitality than if one congregation has a denominational monopoly in that community.¹

This principle is not new. Retailers have known this for years:

As we learn from the modern shopping mall theory of merchandising, two churches even in close proximity to each other will reach many more unchurched than either one could hope to do alone.²

Do you want more church growth? Plant another church in close proximity.

Considering the need and opportunity, many authors regard church planting as the supreme task of the church. According to Donald McGavran, "Today's supreme task is effective multiplication of churches in the receptive societies of earth."³ Dr. Ralph Winter seconds that opinion with the statement:

I used to be an expert in the gadgets and the gimmicks--the various means and types of ministries common to most missions. Recently it has become steadily clearer to me that the most important activity of all is the implanting of churches.⁴

¹Schaller, 29-30.
²Wagner, Church Planting for a Greater Harvest, 41.
³McGavran, 41.
⁴'Ralph Winter, quoted in McGavran, 41.
Charles Chaney states that, "America is not a Christian nation, but a mission field. The churches here should give attention to multiplying congregations among all the social and cultural segments of society."\(^1\) Again and again, authors on church planting emphasize the apriori nature of the task.

Furthermore, the planting of new churches is seen as "the most effective evangelistic methodology known under heaven."\(^2\) Scores of denominations state that the most influential factor in their numerical growth has been an increase in new congregations.\(^3\) The veracity of these statements has been proven in application.

Between the years 1977 and 1984, the average annual growth rate for all churches in North America, including new ones, was 2.8%. During the same period, the average annual growth rate of new congregations was 31.2%.\(^4\)

Individually, we also find the experience of several denominations and conferences within the Seventh-day Adventist Church showing tremendous growth as a result of church planting. One of the fastest growing denominations in the United States has been the Assemblies of God. "They have constantly held church planting high. Articles and motivational pieces on church planting regularly appear in

\(^1\) Chaney, 19.
\(^2\) Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth*, 16.
\(^3\) Schaller, 21.
\(^4\) Dudley and Gruesbeck, 27.
their clergy journal." The Southern Baptists also credit church planting as being one of the reasons they have become the largest Protestant denomination in America. They constantly invest substantial resources in church planting on all levels. The same growth is also seen in conferences where Seventh-day Adventists are planting churches.

The Texas Conference is a significant example of the relationship between conference membership and congregation growth in recent years. Over a period of eight years, 73 churches were established in the Texas Conference as a result of a church planting goal throughout the conference. During this time the number of converts more than doubled. During the six years prior to the planting of new congregations, the most baptisms in any one year was 700. Between 1977 and 1984, when 73 churches were being planted, 1,900 were baptized in a single year (1982).

Similar results were experienced between 1974 and 1984 as church planting was emphasized in the Alaska Conference under William Woodruff. "In 1974 the membership of 950 met in eleven organized churches. Within ten years membership doubled to 1,900 members worshiping in 27 congregations."

In case after case, it has been demonstrated that the rate of accession to the church will increase dramatically as new congregations are added.

This work of church planting must continue moving

Wagner, Church Planting for a Greater Harvest, 14.
Ibid., 15.
Dudley and Gruesbeck, 18-19.
Ibid., 19.
forward. Church growth is to be sought not as an exercise in humanity, but because the "extension of the Church is pleasing to God."¹ Church planting was blessed of God in the first century, and as we examine the results of church planting today, we find that it is the closest thing we have to a guaranteed means of reaching more people with the gospel of Jesus Christ.² The Seventh-day Adventist Church needs to take note.

If we do not allocate the resources of membership, manpower, money, time, and attention that the large cities require, then we are not serious about the task of reaching every nation, tribe, language, and people group with the three angels' messages.¹

If the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to reach these large masses of humanity, renewed emphasis needs to be placed upon planting churches. Ellen White spoke on numerous occasions about the need of multiplying churches. Below are a few of her quotes pertaining to this matter:

Those who are chosen of God are required to multiply churches wherever they may be successful in bringing souls to the knowledge of the truth.¹

New churches must be established, new congregations organized.³

¹McGavran, 5.
³Salin, 77.

Everywhere the light of truth is to shine forth, that hearts now in the sleep of ignorance may be awakened and converted. In all the countries and cities the gospel is to be proclaimed... Churches are to be organized and plans laid for work to be done by the members of the newly organized churches.

Enter every new place possible and begin the work of educating in vicinities that have not heard the truth.

Place after place is to be visited; church after church is to be raised up.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church needs to renew this commitment to church planting. However, there will be some obstacles to this renewed commitment:

Few leaders of Church or mission are acutely conscious of church growth. Conferences of every sort are commonly held; but until recently few have dealt with the multiplication of churches.

According to Chaney,

We have no national or regional strategy for church planting to which the group is committed. We don't have a climate within local churches for them to become actively involved in extension and bridging growth.

All of these obstacles can be overcome as we shall see shortly, however, with the right church-plant leadership. These leaders will be planting churches everywhere because of the following reasons:

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2Ibid., 47.

3White, Testimonies for the Church, 7:20.

4McGavran, 77.

5Chaney, 40.
1. Church planting is biblical.  
2. Church planting means denominational survival.  
3. Church planting develops new leadership.  
4. Church planting stimulates existing churches.  
5. Church planting is efficient.¹  

Furthermore, leaders see more than just one ripe apple. They see a whole ripe orchard. They recognize that "the true fruit of an apple tree is not an apple. The true fruit of an apple tree . . . is another apple tree."²

**Characteristics of Effective Church Planters**

Church-planting literature also has much to say about the characteristics that make for effective church planters. According to C. Peter Wagner, successful church planters possess the following characteristics:

1. A committed Christian worker  
2. A self-starter  
3. Willing to endure loneliness  
4. Adaptable  
5. Have a high level of faith  
6. Have supportive spouse and family  
7. Are willing and able to lead  
8. Have a friendly personality  
9. Are clearly called by God to plant a church.³

Leaders of these new "daughter" congregations of generally less than two hundred members will need "versatile entrepreneurial leadership."⁴

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³Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest*, 52-55.  
⁴Easum, 61.

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effective church planters is that they are visionary catalysts. They are the key principals in determining whether a church plant succeeds or even begins. "God by His actions, uses a key figure to lead His people. It was true then, it is true now."¹ As C. Peter Wagner states, "I will reiterate time and time again, the leader is the principal key to a successful church planting endeavor."²

Furthermore, successful church planters are people of faith, which is reflected in a positive attitude. Bill Hull points out that "to a great degree the attitude of the pastor will determine the attitude of the church."³ "The single most important factor in determining the growth of a church is the pastor's attitude about its mission."⁴ This is especially true regarding church planting. If the pastor does not possess a positive attitude toward planting new congregations, how will the church ever develop it? He plays the key role of attitude developer.

In addition, an effective church planter must devote time for the training of those who will be involved with the undertaking.

In church planting, you can only start with qualified leaders. When I planted my church, I appointed the first pastoral team (our title for elders, those who

¹Hull, 78.
²Wagner, Church Planting for a Greater Harvest, 51.
³Hull, 100.
⁴Easum, 56.
lead and oversee) only when I had men who qualified in philosophy and ministry skills.¹

In fact, church-planting pastors who do all of the ministry without allowing the involvement of their parishioners are behaving in an unloving and uncaring fashion. "Not to train and unleash all willing members is the greatest pastoral sin."² If we look at Christ's example, we see that He devoted His energy to a small group that was teachable.³ His time, ideas, and efforts were invested in those twelve men who were being equipped to do His work.⁴ As Jesus worked with these men, He gave them personal supervision and guidance until such time as they were matured enough to carry on alone. This is to be the example that modern church planters follow today as they train members for the extension of new congregations.⁵

One final characteristic listed of effective church planters is longevity. It is unwise to plant a church and move to a new field of ministry shortly thereafter. According to Donald McGavran, "Moving a pastor who has led hundreds to Christ to a more important post in administration or seminary has frequently damaged and

¹Hull, 33.
²Ibid., 129.
³Coleman, 24.
⁴Philip G. Samaan, Christ's Way of Reaching People (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assoc., 1990), 34.
⁵Coleman, 100.
sometimes arrested a promising movement." Churches that keep pastors longer are more likely to grow.

Church growth often demands a long pastoral service. A few years here and a few years there will not do it. Most truly strong churches have known continuous strong leadership by one key pastor for an extended period of time.

Lyle Schaller suggests an extended period of longevity of a minimum of twenty-five years:

Experience suggests the best way to start a new church that will attract a large cadre of enthusiastic charter members and continue to grow in numbers year after year is to identify the right person to be the mission developer and for that minister to continue as the pastor for a minimum of 25 years.

Schaller may be on the extreme side when speaking of longevity for the church planter, but every author who has dealt with this particular characteristic has stressed the importance of not planting a church and then immediately moving.

Effective Church Plants

The final grouping of characteristics deal with the attributes of effective church plants. The following attributes are those that have been found in newly planted churches that are thriving.

1. The first characteristic of effective church plants is that they are divinely guided. The Holy Spirit takes a

1McGavran, 157.

2Zunkel, 108.

3Schaller, 38.
central role in directing this outreach. He provides all resources needed. As Robert Coleman asserts, "Church growth is a divine project of the Holy Spirit's work."¹ On the day of Pentecost, as the disciples were sent to go forth planting the church in the world, it was the Holy Spirit who descended upon them, preparing them for their work. "That they might have success in their work they were given the power of the Holy Spirit. Not by human might or wisdom was the gospel to be proclaimed, but by the power of God."²

The Holy Spirit is still present today to give success in church planting. "When a church becomes committed to church planting, God invariably raises up believers who are endowed with this gift and who prove very productive in church planting."³ Chaney goes on to say that we need not worry about losing some members from the sponsoring church, for we can "expect and look for others whom God will send to fill their places."⁴ Others will come from outside the congregation and some will already be there.

2. From a Southern Baptist perspective, the primary task of forming the new congregation rests on the local church.⁵

¹Coleman, 67.
³Chaney, 34.
⁴Ibid., 91.
⁵Chaney, 63.
There are a number of advantages to placing control at the local level. Local control gives greater flexibility, ownership, and wiser use of resources to the church plant project.

3. The literature also deals with the implementation of and follow through on a church plant strategy. There are a number of advantages to having a strategy. C. Peter Wagner lists six:

1. Increases efficiency
2. Helps measure effectiveness
3. Permits midcourse corrections
4. Unites the team
5. Makes accountability natural
6. Helps others replicate what you've done

This strategy helps to ensure smooth progress and follow-through as the new church is being developed. The Southern Baptist Convention utilizes the following regional church planting strategy:

1. Begin with divine imperative.
2. Build on self-study.
3. Know region geographically, culturally, and ecclesiastically. Pinpoint areas where new churches are needed.
4. Have clear objectives and specific goals.
5. Determine factors dictating priority consideration.
6. Identify and make advantageous use of homogeneous units.
7. Identify felt needs.
8. Mobilize staff, volunteers, and financial resources.
9. Don't let real estate dictate mission strategy.
10. Give central responsibility to volunteers.
11. Make direct evangelism a major strategy factor.
12. Count on God to give a marvelous increase.¹

¹Wagner, Strategies for Church Growth, 32-34.
²Chaney, 58.
This strategy has proved effective in the planting of thousands of SBC churches. Along with these points, Charles Chaney sees a number of conditions essential to a bold and effective strategy for church planting on the part of the local church:

1. Dynamic, creative leader who thinks big, with a genuine compassion for souls.
2. Congregation that assumes responsibility for a significant geographical area.
3. Flexibility in the church planting strategy.
4. Transferable philosophy of ministry from mother to daughter.
5. Congregation and leaders must have commitment to direct evangelism done by laity.
7. Positive attitude grounded in faith in God. A positive mental attitude is essential to constant achievement.
8. A team approach to church planting needs to be fully explored, not just nucleus of believers.¹

Each of these characteristics facilitates effectiveness in the church-plant project.

4. An important characteristic of effective church plants is that they set goals. Setting goals is beyond the thinking of most Christians. They set goals for family, business, and leisure, but not for the work of the church. Yet, "church growth seldom comes without bold plans for it."² You can dream and talk of church growth, but unless plans are made and goals are set, nothing will ever happen.

C. Peter Wagner boldly asserts, "The number one requirement

¹Ibid., 71-73.
²McGavran, 437.
for having real church growth—unlimited church growth—is to set goals."¹ The Southern Baptist Convention is one of those denominations that made bold plans for church planting. Here are the church planting goals set for the period from 1977-1990 for SBC's region comprising Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin:

1. Double the number of churches.
2. Focus attention of SBC on the region for a significant period of time (1977-1990).
3. Focus resources of all SBC agencies to meet priority needs of the region.²

This bold commitment on the part of the SBC is one of the reasons that they are the largest Protestant denomination in the United States. "If I had a word of advice it would be this: make no little plans. They have little power to give people a vision of what could be."¹

5. A further characteristic of effective church plants is that members work with homogeneous units. As a result, members are targeting those who are most receptive to their presentation of the gospel. The homogeneous-unit principle asserts that "most congregations tend to attract new members who closely resemble the people who constitute the current membership."³ "Men and women like to become Christians without crossing barriers. They understand the gospel

¹Wagner, Strategies for Church Growth, 159.
²Chaney, 51.
³Zunkel, 24.
⁴Schaller, 77.
better when expounded by their own people." Therefore, the effective church planter recognizes these barriers and eliminates them whenever possible.

6. In addition, members of effective church plants recognize and meet the needs of the people who they are ministering to. They know that if a church meets people's needs, they will become members. The most effective church plants rely on a balanced program of evangelistic meetings and other ministries geared to meeting people's needs. They do not place all of their emphasis on the reaping series.

7. Another feature of a effective church plant is commitment in finances for the daughter congregation. The Southern Baptist Convention subsidizes its new daughter churches for forty-four months. In addition, its regional strategy includes plans for mobilization of financial resources. William Easum suggests that the church "always be in debt to something--either mortgages or missions." Having finances in place before the new church is born allows it to obtain suitable space, carry out awareness

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1McGavran, 227.
2Wagner, Your Church Can Grow, 85.
3Dudley and Gruesbeck, 46.
4Chaney, 47-50.
5Ibid., 58.
6Easum, 105.

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ministries, and hold evangelistic meetings.

8. The final feature of effective church plants is the location of the daughter congregation. When selecting the first temporary meeting place, the four criteria used today are "location, cost, availability, and adaptability." One should pay full attention to all four when making final determinations for the first worship setting. Furthermore, experience in Seventh-day Adventist churches has shown it to be best to plant a new congregation "between 3 and 10 miles from the mother church and not over 25 miles away." These relatively short distances do not endanger the temporary lifeline that connects mother and daughter congregations until the daughter congregation is able to function alone.

Summary

Currently available church-planting literature provides much practical guidance and advice. It first presents the necessity for a renewed emphasis on church planting, especially in the light of the current condition of the church. Furthermore, the literature describes the characteristics of those individuals who are effective church planters. Finally, it has presented the earmarks of a successful church plant. It is hoped that this literature will be very useful for the aspiring church planter.

'Schaller, 60.

'Dudley and Gruesbeck, 45.
CHAPTER III

AUGUSTA CHURCH-PLANTING NARRATIVE

From the time that I arrived in the Northern New England Conference as a ministerial intern, it had been my desire to be involved in church planting. I wrote letters to and visited with my conference president regarding the potential for church planting in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. In those communications, we spoke of several large cities of 50,000-plus people in which there was no Seventh-day Adventist church. I spoke in particular of Augusta, the capital of Maine, which was totally virgin territory. Shortly thereafter, in July of 1989, my family and I were transferred to the Farmingdale district, which borders the capital city. My wife and I were elated to begin our assignment in Farmingdale—a congregation from which we hoped to plant a new church in Augusta.

Assessment of Mother Church

However, we were not adequately prepared for the condition of the Farmingdale Church that we found upon our arrival. Membership had been declining over the past five years and had decreased from eighty-nine to seventy-five. Average worship attendance had dropped to between forty-five
and fifty. Tithe had increased, but it was more an indication of the booming economy than the health of the church. Furthermore, the attitude of the members covered the spectrum from negative to apathetic. I heard comments such as, "This church will never grow," "Our last evangelistic series didn't draw a single person," "We have considered closing the church," "I couldn't invite my friends here," and so on. Farmingdale was barely healthy enough to sustain itself without considering the extra burden of planting a new church.

**Creation of Vision**

The first consideration was changing the attitude of the members and giving them a new vision for themselves and their congregation. Whether at board meetings, in the pulpit, or in personal visitation, the message presented was always one of encouragement, emphasizing what God had done for them and His church in Farmingdale. We held a Vacation Bible School that summer. It was the first time that one had been held in over a decade. The church had excellent success with over forty in attendance. Many of our people became involved in this project and began to get excited about other potential ministries. As they became excited, others began to catch some of the enthusiasm.

Membership began to grow, and I began speaking occasionally about the possibility of planting a new church in Augusta. The possibility was first presented to the
Farmingdale Church Board. (This was within six months of entering the district.) Again, the comments were fairly negative: "Every pastor has tried planting a church in Augusta and everyone has failed." "In the past, we couldn't even get anyone out to a Branch Sabbath School that was started." However, this attitude also began to change as the church grew and more people became involved in personal outreach. Members actually began to invite their friends and neighbors to church.

Awareness Ministries

About this time a small group of evangelistically oriented members began meeting in our home once a week for the purpose of envisioning where our church could be in the next few months and years. (A number of these people were given personal invitations, but all who wanted to come were welcome.) Out of that group came the idea of developing awareness ministries suggested by the congregation, which would be staffed with people who had talents and interests in those areas. The congregation was very enthusiastic about this approach and launched a number of well-staffed and organized ministries for the community impacting both Farmingdale and Augusta.

One ministry formed almost immediately was an Alcoholics Anonymous group that meets in the church every Thursday evening. It was formed by one of our newly baptized members. The group has become one of the most
effective in the area, with eighty-five to ninety regularly in attendance. Furthermore, the founding member has two disciples in training. They are leading out in a Bible study every Thursday evening before the AA meetings.

In addition, several members suggested that we offer cooking classes to a broader segment of the population than we might find attending a church-sponsored function. They approached the University of Maine at Augusta and have conducted classes there for a number of years.

A number of our people became interested in ministry to inmates at the Kennebec County Jail in Augusta. Originally, only two of us were involved. Now, five years later, more people have been trained into this ministry so that we have six people taking an active role in this weekly outreach.

Within the last six months, four of our people (one in Farmingdale, three in Augusta) have taken a chaplaincy training course at Kennebec County Hospital in Augusta and are currently serving on a voluntary basis at that hospital.

All of these ministries ultimately have been formed with the object not only of meeting felt needs, but also spiritual needs as opportunities present themselves. Many of our members can trace their first contact back to these ministries. There are usually fifteen or more Bible studies going on at any one time with contacts from these ministries. In addition, a prayer group is active on nearly
a daily basis holding up these outreaches and people before the Lord.

The proliferation of ministry outreach groups has been encouraged and continues to expand. The church sponsors regular blood-pressure clinics with a rented van, annual vegetarian-tasting buffets, smoking-cessation clinics, periodic-reaping series, and other events. Every member is encouraged to become actively involved in one or more of these ministry outreach groups. At least a third of the church is doing so! This has not only proved a blessing in church-member involvement and training, but has resulted also in a church-growth explosion.

As ministries have burgeoned, it has now come to the point that leadership is being spread more and more to the laity of the church. Through the Church Ministries Facilitator Group that meets every other Wednesday, new ministries are being discussed, evaluated, and implemented. Once in place, the majority of the decision making rests with the ministry group itself. (Even while I have been away writing this dissertation, plans are being developed to create a down-link station for 3ABN in which the network will be rebroadcast throughout the Farmingdale/Augusta area.) Augusta's Building Committee is also continuing the process of locating land for a new sanctuary. The work of the church is being spread to many hands. The result has been a blessing.
Vision Realization

In a little over two years after beginning our service, the Farmingdale Church realized the need of expanding its facilities. Our Sabbath School space was terribly inadequate. Several classes were meeting in the sanctuary, one class was competing for the mothers' room, and another class was meeting in the food storage room. In addition, we did not have handicap-access for the church or the restroom facilities. Furthermore, our parking was often beyond 100 percent capacity on many Sabbaths.

In the spring of 1991, the Farmingdale church in business session voted unanimously to acquire any abutting land that neighbors might be willing to sell us. Furthermore, they also unanimously voted to construct a new addition to the church to deal with the Sabbath School and handicap-access problem. The new addition was completed in February of 1992. In addition, all three neighbors agreed to sell us abutting land from between twenty-five to thirty-five feet. This helped alleviate our parking problem.

During this time of Farmingdale expansion, I continued addressing the need to expand to Augusta. Attitudes were beginning to change dramatically, due in large part to the involvement of church members in many ministries and the growth that was taking place in Farmingdale. Whereas before Farmingdale members considered planting a new church a hopeless dream, they now began to realize that it might be
in the realm of possibility. We began spending more time in our board meetings and church-ministry facilitator meetings discussing plans for Augusta church planting. This was 1992. Our church had now grown to one hundred members and was continuing to expand. Even if we took twenty members from the Farmingdale Church and started a new hive in Augusta, we would still have more members than we started with in 1989. As the Farmingdale Church continued growing, more and more people were catching the church-planting vision.

Conference Communication

During this initial three-year period, I had kept the conference president abreast of the situation in Farmingdale and the progress of plans toward the church plant. At this time I found, however, that not everyone at the conference office was completely supportive of taking twenty members from Farmingdale and planting a new church in Augusta. Two of the conference treasurers were opposed to the idea. "It would be better to keep growing the Farmingdale Church." If that was not possible, which it was not because of space limitations, "Why not sell the old church and build a new building?" Furthermore, "How could the Farmingdale Church handle the $50,000 debt of the new addition, if twenty members left for Augusta?" "Planting a new church would only decrease the membership and tithe, ultimately weakening both churches." I could see that we had a major problem to
deal with if we were ever going to see a church planted in Augusta.

An invitation was extended for conference leadership to meet with the Farmingdale Church Board. By this time, the Farmingdale Board was fully behind the church-planting project and had been making plans for several months toward this end.

The meeting was cordial but serious. Farmingdale leaders indicated that now was the time to plant a church, that they had faith that it would succeed, and they were not willing to change their plans or postpone the church plant until a later date. The conference president called me the next day to tell me that even though treasury was still not all that excited about the idea, he had made the decision to "put the money on the winning horse."

From this experience, I realized that it was important to extend the "church planting vision" base of support. I requested and was granted an opportunity to speak to the Northern New England Conference Executive Committee regarding the Augusta Church planting plans. Two of the Farmingdale leaders and I met with them during camp meeting in 1993. We received good support. I have continued to inform them, our conference president, and treasury regarding the ongoing process.

Core Group Selection

In late summer of 1993, we began to finalize plans for
the first worship service in Augusta. Much of this planning was carried on through the Church Ministries Facilitator Group. We set a tentative first worship date of April 30, 1994. In addition, we started discussing characteristics desired for core group members. Two church-planting endeavors had failed in the past decade in Northern New England. I learned that a contributing factor to their demise had been the lack of careful screening for the initial core group. For that reason, I would never stand up some Sabbath morning and ask for volunteers to be part of a church-planting group. I know that I would have numerous volunteers. Unfortunately, many of those volunteers would be undesirable selections who would do more harm than good.

I believed that there would be a number of advantages to not making the core group selections myself and turned the process over to the Church Ministries Facilitator Group. During our bi-monthly sessions, we began discussing the characteristics of an effective core group. We felt that it was of primary importance that members of this group have a burden for souls. They should not be there because they were dissatisfied with the church they came from, or because they had their own personal agenda to push. Furthermore, the Facilitator Group believed that it was important that members of the core group have a variety of gifts. Some would be relatively new in the faith and some would have many years of experience. We would utilize some of
Farmingdale's current leadership for our core group, but would not decimate this leadership. Based upon these criteria, the Facilitator Group selected twenty people to become part of the initial core group that would plant a church in Augusta. All but two accepted. Three later asked to join the group and were accepted, making the initial core group a total of twenty-one members.

This core group began meeting on a weekly basis starting in September of 1993. Officers were selected, plans were developed for worship and Sabbath school classes, and search began in earnest for a suitable worship location.

Providential Leading

About this time, a dedicated layman came to me with the idea of planting a church among Hispanic people in the Augusta area. He and his family had been leading out in a church-planting endeavor in Lowell, Massachusetts. There are not many Spanish-speaking people in Maine. There are only a few hundred in Augusta, with several small pockets scattered throughout the state. However, no work of any type by any denomination is being done among these people. Therefore, an Hispanic outreach became part of our church-planting plan.

With seven months remaining, the core group began evaluating potential worship sites in Augusta. Recognizing that we were on a limited budget, we started looking for property that we might rent. High on our priority list was

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a location that would have visibility and accessibility. We located a beautiful Episcopal Church in early November available for only $40 per week. Since Providence seemed to be opening doors ahead of our original schedule, we moved our first worship date to November 20, 1993, five months ahead of our original schedule.

At this time, another answer to prayer was granted before I had even made the request. With the additional responsibility of a second church, I was concerned with how it would be possible to continue this hectic pace of growth without some additional help. Little did I realize that a newly retired Bible worker from El Cajon, California, was attending the Farmingdale church for the very first time that Sabbath. While I was in the midst of thought, she came up and introduced herself as a Bible worker who did not want to retire. The Lord had impressed her a few weeks earlier (three o'clock in the morning) that she should return back east to Maine. Wanting a stronger confirmation than this, she was startled to hear her phone ring at such an early hour. It was a long-time friend from Maine, calling to encourage her to move back to Northern New England. This woman moved here in November 1993 and has been a great help to the church.

**Mother/Daughter Assessment**

The Lord has blessed mightily since our first worship service on November 20th of 1993. The original core group
in Augusta has now expanded to a church of forty-three members as of December 31, 1994. Of those forty-three, fifteen are part of the Hispanic group. A church plant among Hispanic people is also in process in Portland. Thirty-five people are currently in regular attendance. The Augusta group continues to make plans for the future.

During the summer of 1995, construction is being planned for a new worship facility. Our design is such that we will be able to construct the church in stages as membership grows and more funds become available. One member has already obtained the donation of a new well. Another member is a plumber and will supply free labor and material at cost. Moreover, a Hispanic contractor is willing to donate free labor for construction. Another member works for a lumber yard and the proprietor has offered material at cost. In addition, other members have skills in various aspects of construction. The building committee is presently looking for suitable sites. The doors of Providence are certainly swinging wide open.

During 1993, both Farmingdale and Augusta boards continued to meet jointly. Application was made and funds totaling $13,500 were received from the conference for the Augusta project. In our case, the transition went fairly smoothly. The only issue that we had to deal with was the discontent of a few Farmingdale members. These were people who had not been asked to become part of the core group. I
would not have changed the process, though, since it was better to have them discontented than actively involved in church planting. This discontent has since died down.

In the first year of operation, the Augusta Church has grown from twenty-one members to forty-three. Its tithe has gone from zero to $26,000, an annual tithe figure that places it ahead of one out of every three churches in the Northern New England Conference. Augusta has been fully able to sustain its own budget, with nearly a $5000 surplus after meeting all expenses as of December 31, 1994. Even though Augusta is becoming more autonomous, many activities including vespers, social activities, a number of ministries, and the Church Ministries Facilitator Group continue to meet together. However, both church boards and building committees now meet separately.

The Farmingdale church has not suffered either. Even with core group members missing in 1994, tithe still increased over 1993 by 6.4 percent, increasing from $64,687 in 1993 to $68,830 in 1994. Farmingdale's budget was also positive, ending the year in the "black" with no problems in meeting its $50,000 mortgage expense for the new addition. Furthermore, attendance is back to what it was prior to the church plant. Membership should be back up to its previous church-plant level within eighteen months. Thus, we see that church-planting has resulted in excellent health for both mother and daughter churches.
The vision for church planting is now growing in my churches and Northern New England. Several Farmingdale and Augusta members have talked about the time in the not-too-distant future when we can plant a third church. The conference president would like to see our experience duplicated in other parts of the conference. Plans are underway for me to meet with the executive committee to discuss future church-planting. And the concerned treasurers? They're catching the vision also. I spoke to the senior treasurer in early January, shortly after the year-end tithe receipts were in. The combined tithe for the Farmingdale-Augusta Churches had increased nearly 50 percent in one year. He said, "We really appreciate the fine work you're doing. Keep it up."

The Lord has certainly blessed our prayers and effort. It is my desire to see our experience duplicated over and over again in Northern New England and throughout North America.
CHAPTER IV

PROJECT EVALUATION

Three purposes for this project were delineated in chapter 1. The primary purpose of this project was to plant a healthy Seventh-day Adventist congregation in the city of Augusta, Maine. Two secondary purposes included determination of effective church-planting techniques and developing a vision for the planting of churches throughout the Northern New England Conference. Based upon these purposes, four evaluation criteria were presented for the Augusta, Maine, church-planting project. They included:

1. Membership trends for both mother and daughter churches
2. Stewardship trends for both mother and daughter churches
3. Determination and evaluation of individual church planting components

The following parameters were used in the evaluation of the project. The Augusta Church was planted on November 20, 1993. The five-year period from 1989-1994 was considered in
analyzing membership and stewardship trends for both mother and daughter congregations. Determination and evaluation of church-planting components were developed through interviews with members of both congregations. The analysis of church-planting vision in Northern New England Conference was based on personal observation and interaction with conference leadership.

For the first two evaluation criteria, growth is depicted graphically, allowing easier analysis. According to Donald McGavran,

> Graphs present the facts of growth dramatically, but their greatest usefulness is that they enable the student to pinpoint his investigation of trends in growth at the right moments, with accurate knowledge of their magnitude, duration, and nature.'

In particular, I present the change points between old and new pastorates and the year 1994, shortly after the Augusta Church was planted. This helps us to pinpoint the trend of growth at the right moments.

**Membership Trends**

The first criteria of evaluation dealt with membership trends. Composite membership of Farmingdale/Augusta is given for 1984-1994 (see fig. 1). This shows the general trend of combined membership, even though the Augusta church did not exist until the close of November 1993. The previous pastorate extended from July 1983 to July 1989. I

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'McGavran, 143.
Fig. 1. Farmingdale/Augusta Membership, years 1984-1994.
began my Farmingdale ministry in July 1989. From 1984 through 1989, membership experienced a overall decline of 16 percent. On the other hand, membership increased nearly 75 percent in the following five-year period from 1989 through 1994. The general trend from 1989 through 1993 has been approximately 10 percent membership increase per year. However, in 1994, the first full year of the Augusta church, the yearly growth rate increased to nearly 20 percent. This growth contrasts with the Northern New England Conference membership, which decreased from 4,159 to 4,140 for the same five-year period (see fig. 2). Clearly, church planting and the preparation for it has led to excellent membership growth in the Farmingdale/Augusta churches.

Stewardship Trends

The second criteria of evaluation dealt with stewardship trends for Farmingdale/Augusta. Again, the ten-year period of composite tithe is examined from 1984 through 1994 (see fig. 3). Tithe did increase nearly 40 percent from 1984 through 1989 during tenure of the previous pastor. However, upon examination of the Northern New England Conference's tithe during the same period, we find a similar increase of 32 percent. Increase in tithe during this period appears to have been due largely to the booming economy experienced in the New England states. The sour economy of 1989 through 1991 also finds expression in conference tithe receipts (see fig. 4). During this
Northern New England Membership
(Rounded to nearest 100 people)

Fig. 2. Northern New England Conference Membership, years 1989-1994.
Fig. 3. Farmingdale/Augusta Tithe, years 1984-1994.
Fig. 4. Northern New England Conference Tithe, years 1989-1994.
three-year period, total tithe remained flat from year to year. Helped along by the improvement of the economy during the last two years, however, one sees an overall increase from 1989 through 1994 of 13 percent. However, when looking at the same period for the Farmingdale/Augusta tithe, we see an increase of 120 percent. Of particular excitement is the nearly 50 percent increase in tithe for 1994 over 1993. This increase coincides with the planting of the Augusta Church. Clearly, church planting and the preparation for it has led to excellent stewardship growth in the Farmingdale/Augusta churches.

**Church-Planting Components**

The third criteria of evaluation dealt with determination and evaluation of effective church-planting components. This criteria of evaluation is much more subjective than the previous two. Donald McGavran suggests an interview approach for this type of analysis, asking to-the-point questions such as, "I am looking for the causes of this sudden surge of growth." With this technique in mind, twenty people were asked to fill out a questionnaire listing the ten most influential factors of growth for the Farmingdale/Augusta churches (see Appendix A). Respondents included the conference president, district Bible worker, church elders, and other randomly selected

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\[\text{\textsuperscript{1}}\text{McGavran, 145.}\]
people. Sixteen questionnaires were returned—one from the conference president, eight from Farmingdale, and seven from Augusta. In those questionnaires, respondents indicated twenty-seven different factors of growth. Those factors, in turn, were organized into a survey which was given to church members in worship attendance on January 28, 1995 (see Appendix B). Of a potential total of seventy-six surveys, thirty-eight were returned. Survey response tabulation is presented in table 2. Questions #3 through #29 indicate the twenty-seven factors of growth gleaned from the questionnaires. The Scale indicates responses from 1 through 4, with 1 indicating great impact, 2 indicating moderate impact, 3 indicating minimal impact, and 4 indicating no impact. The column numbers indicate the percentage of people who indicated that particular response on their survey.

For instance, question #11 on the survey asked how great an impact did "Pastoral integrity" have on the growth of this church. Eighty-eight percent of the respondents indicated great impact, 0 percent indicated moderate impact, 9 percent indicated minimal impact, and 3 percent indicated no impact. Analysis of this survey reveals a high correlation between specific growth factors related by those who were interviewed and those taking the survey. For nearly every growth factor listed in the survey, 50 percent or more of those surveyed believed that particular factor
TABLE 2
RESPONSES TO CHURCH-GROWTH QUESTIONNAIRE
(in Percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spirituality</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3. Personal witness/Bible studies given by pastor</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4. Personal witness/Bible studies given by members</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5. Pastor's emphasis on personal prayer time</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6. Congregation's emphasis on personal prayer time</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7. Pastor's emphasis on personal Bible study</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8. Congregation's emphasis on personal Bible study</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#9. Relevant, Biblical preaching</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#10. Church social activities</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#11. Pastoral integrity</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vision</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#12. Pastoral vision or dream of what church can be</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>#13. Inspiration of members to share pastor's vision</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#14. Setting of achievable goals</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#15. Communication between conference and church</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
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Table 2—Continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#16. Church board leadership and involvement</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#17. Personal Ministries Facilitator meetings</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Atmosphere</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#18. Loving, caring attitude of congregation</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#19. Church facility—Sanctuary, classrooms, etc.</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#20. Periodic revival meetings</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#21. Church unity</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#22. Opportunities for member involvement in ministry</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#23. Availability for on-the-job ministry training</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#24. Pastor's emphasis on evangelism</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evangelism</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#25. Spanish outreach</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#26. New member involvement</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#27. Continued follow-up after decisions are made</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#28. Youth ministry</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#29. Meeting the needs of community through ministries</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
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had great impact on the growth of the church. When one combines responses number 1 and 2, nearly every growth factor had a combined response of 80 percent or more, indicating those respondents believed that particular factor had moderate or great impact on growth. Moreover, survey questions centered around the major categories of spirituality, vision, organization, atmosphere, training, and evangelism. It is interesting to compare these major categories and individual survey questions with the original church-plant plan. That plan as presented earlier in Chapter 1 included:

1. Assessment and treatment of the mother church
2. Change of attitude and creation of a new vision
3. Establishment of revived spiritual emphasis
4. Training program
5. Development of a coordinating committee
6. Implementation of community-awareness programs
7. Obtaining financial support
8. Designation of a core group
9. Worship site selection/date of first worship
10. Setting further goals.

Numbers 2 through 6 and 10 find their counterpart in survey questions dealing directly with the points mentioned in those items. The treatment aspect of number 1 is a thread that runs through most of the survey, while the assessment was conducted without the knowledge of the
congregation. Items 7 through 10 were organizational responsibilities dealt with by the board and Personal Ministries Facilitator meetings without the general participation of the congregation. Therefore, we find that the follow-up survey supports the original church-plant plan. In addition, responses to questions 9, 11, 12, and 24 indicate the central role that the pastor plays as church planter. One question in the survey, however, was not part of that church-plant plan—question 25 deals with Spanish outreach. Eighty-six percent of survey respondents believed that Spanish outreach had great impact on church growth. As presented in the Augusta Church Planting Narrative, the Spanish outreach did not become part of the church-plant plan until shortly before the first worship date and thus was not part of the original plan.

Creation of Vision

The final criteria of evaluation pertains to the creation of a vision for church planting in the Northern New England Conference. This process of vision creation is still ongoing, but much has been accomplished since 1989. Prior to that date, there had been only negligible emphasis on conference church planting. To change this attitude and bring about renewed church-planting vision, several things have been done:

1. Communication with Union President, Conference President, Conference Staff, and Executive Committee at
various times regarding church-planting vision

2. Planting of Augusta Church on November 20, 1993
   (Augusta to be model for conference church plants)

3. Consultation with Brunswick, Maine, pastor regarding
   church planting in adjacent community

4. "Pioneer Paths" articles on the Augusta Church
   Planting Project ("Pioneer Paths" is the conference
   newsletter).

   In addition, several more vision-implementing plans are
   scheduled for the future:

1. Consultations with Doug Kilcher and Russell Burrill
   regarding names of potential church planters to fill
   Northern New England Conference districts as vacated

2. Meeting with the NNEC Executive Committee to discuss
   church-planting need and implementation of a church-
   planting goal for the conference.

Creation of a vision for church planting takes time. It
took several years with the Farmingdale church. It will
take some time with the Northern New England Conference.

In conclusion, evaluation of the Augusta church-
planting project shows a marked increase in both membership
and stewardship as a result of planting the new church.
Furthermore, survey results show vindication of the
soundness of the church-plant plan. Finally, church-
planting vision for all of the Northern New England
Conference is on its way to implementation.
Benefits for the Church

The planting of a new church can result in increased vitality of the mother church as she makes preparation for the birth of the daughter congregation. This increased vitality was evidenced in a number of areas, such as greater membership involvement in witnessing, and a stronger commitment in stewardship. In addition, other fruits of this new vitality included membership increase for the mother church, more active leadership, and a renewed emphasis on mission. All of these characteristics were the fruit of the church-planting project in Augusta.

It is unfortunate that so many of our members have never witnessed for Christ. Most have never seen the need or realized the responsibility for witness that is placed upon them as Christians. With the goal of planting a new church in the neighboring city of Augusta, Farmingdale members saw the need for witness like they had never seen it before. They also realized that the responsibility rested with them. Many had never given Bible studies. Now, they do so regularly. Many had never reached out to people, ministering to their needs. Now, many are involved in this type of outreach. The initial impetus behind this renewed emphasis on witness was the church-planting project.

An additional benefit of the church-planting project has been a greater faithfulness in stewardship. Even before the church plant in November of 1993, Farmingdale tithe had
increased 50 percent over the previous four years. People give where their heart is. As Farmingdale members became more involved in active outreach, their financial dedication increased as well. Even with the core group transferred to Augusta in 1994, Farmingdale's tithe still increased 6 percent over the previous year. Thus, it can be seen that the church-plant project has provided financial blessing to the Farmingdale church.

A further benefit to the Farmingdale church as a result of the church-planting project is a membership increase. From 1989-1993, Farmingdale membership grew from 75 to 111. Even with the church plant, it is expected that the Farmingdale membership will return to 111 shortly. Typically, church planters expect core members to be replaced within six months.' An influx of new attendees did replace core members during that six month period. Therefore, it is evident that mother-church membership increase is a potential benefit realized from church planting.

The mother church also gains the advantage of new leadership as she takes on the task of church planting. Leadership that has lain dormant in the mother church fills the vacancy left by those transferred to the new church.

Finally, church planting promotes mission emphasis for the mother church. She recognizes that she must reach out

'Wagner, Church Planting for a Greater Harvest, 38.
to the local community just as the new church is doing. Consequently, I have witnessed the Farmingdale congregation taking a more active role in her own mission outreach.

In conclusion, benefits of greater stewardship, increased witness, membership growth, leadership activation, and mission emphasis all have been attained as a result of the church-planting project. The mother church realizes many potential benefits from planting a daughter congregation.

Benefits for the Conference

A conference can benefit greatly by planting churches within its environs. Church planting allows it to fulfill the great commission, increase membership and tithe, and provide for the employment of many trained workers.

The gospel is to go to every creature (Mark 16:15), to every nation (Matt 28:19), to every nation, kindred, and tongue and people (Rev 14:6). When the disciples received this commission, they went everywhere preaching the word and planting churches. That commission extends to our day for Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt 28:20). "Those who are chosen of God are required to multiply churches wherever they may be successful in bringing souls to the knowledge of the truth."1 Establishing new congregations will cause the

1White, Testimonies to Ministers, 199.
gospel to be extended worldwide.

Church planting also provides conference benefits seen in membership increase. Conference membership for Northern New England actually decreased for the five-year period ending on December 31, 1994. However, figure 5 depicts what conference membership would have been had the conference grown at the same rate as Farmingdale/Augusta. It would have gone from 4,159 to 7,278, an increase of nearly 75 percent in five years. Current growth shows a decrease from 4159 to 4140. Church planting provides tremendous impetus for membership growth.

Church planting also results in tithe increase. Tithe increased slightly in the five-year period ending December 31, 1994. Figure 6 depicts what conference tithe would have been had the whole conference grown at the same rate as the Farmingdale/Augusta churches. Instead of the modest 14 percent increase, tithe would have increased by nearly 125 percent with a nearly 50 percent increase in 1994 alone. Instead of year-end tithe receipts of $3.3 million, they would have received $6.5 million—nearly double what was actually received. Clearly, church planting provides tremendous impetus for conference tithe increase.

Church planting also allows for the employment of larger numbers of trained workers. It is considered to be the most cost-effective form of evangelism. In addition,

Wagner, Church Planting for a Greater Harvest, 38.
Projected NNE Membership *
(Rounded to nearest 100 people)

* Projected Rate of Growth if NNEC Equaled Framingdale/Augusta

Fig. 5. Projected Northern New England Membership, years 1989-1994.

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Projected Northern New England Tithe *
(Rounded to nearest $100,000)

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C. Peter Wagner notes that "students right out of seminary are among those who have the highest potential of being successful church planters." Thus, the conference has the benefit of expanding work within its territory using the most cost-effective means, while making use of those who have the greatest potential for success.

In summation, church planting benefits the conference by enabling it to fulfill the gospel commission in its territory, increasing conference membership and tithe, and providing cost-effective employment for trained workers. The benefits certainly lead one to place support behind church planting.

*Ibid., 16.*
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The planting of new churches has been the objective of God throughout Scripture. Whether through Israel or through the church, the Lord's desire has been to have "called out ones" scattered around the globe. As the New Testament Church took this commission seriously, millions were reached with the gospel. In the relatively short period of only thirty years, Paul could say that the gospel had gone to every creature (Col 1:23).

This gospel commission, carried out so faithfully by the early church, is to continue to our time (Matt 28:19, 20). Unfortunately, we do not see the fervent zeal that inspired the early church exhibited in much of Christianity today. Yet, there is a tremendous need. With one hundred million unreached people in North America, we could be considered the sixth largest mission field in the world. Some denominations, however, are taking church planting seriously. Among them are the Southern Baptist Convention, Nazarenes, and the Assemblies of God. Southern Baptists are the largest Protestant denomination in the United States, largely because of their continued emphasis on church
planting at all levels of their organization. The Assemblies of God is currently one of the fastest growing Protestant denominations in this nation as a result of their ongoing objective of planting new churches everywhere.

The harvest is truly ready. The Seventh-day Adventist Church needs to place renewed concentration on the planting of new congregations in North America. During the early development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in the period of 1870-1900, new SDA congregations sprang up by the hundreds. It was estimated that over 1,500 new churches were started during this period. With the passing of years, however, the planting of new churches began to gradually decrease. With this trend, membership growth in North America has begun to plateau with a yearly growth rate of only 1.4 percent as of 1987. New churches need to be established everywhere in this country. These are not only my sentiments, but those expressed by Ellen White as well.

We need to target cities of size and influence for the planting of new SDA congregations. With this thought in mind, plans were developed to begin a new congregation in Augusta, Maine. It is the state capital with an area population of 75,000 people. Yet, there had never been a Seventh-day Adventist Church in that community. To meet this church-plant objective, another SDA church three miles south of Augusta was selected to be the mother of this new congregation. Thus, the Farmingdale SDA Church began the
process of making preparation for the birth of this new church. From Farmingdale would come the resources needed, including a core group of members who would become the nucleus of the Augusta Church.

Plans for the Augusta church plant included ten steps as listed on pages 4 and 5 of chapter 1. A number of advantages were gained by following that plan utilizing the "hiving model" of church planting. They included the following:

1. Church-plant resources of people, material, and finances were available from the mother church

2. The plan provided pre-birth assessment and care for the mother church ensuring that she would have good spiritual health before and after the Augusta church-plant

3. The change of attitude and new vision contributed needed congregational support for church planting

4. A revived spiritual emphasis supplied the necessary faith to see the project through and contributed a positive attitude and atmosphere to the church

5. The training program gave members the confidence and tools needed for ministry

6. The coordinating committee supplied the organization necessary to cover the many details of planting the new church

7. Community-awareness programs gave SDA name recognition to the city of Augusta
8. Obtaining financial support provided funding for community-awareness programs and evangelistic meetings

9. The core group provided needed leadership in the new church

10. Planning for worship location and first date of worship established goals that when met would increase faith

11. Setting further goals provides impetus for greater growth.

The Augusta church-plant plan has been successful. Since planting the church on November 20, 1993, membership has grown to forty-three members. Tithe for 1994 was $26,188, placing it in the thirty-seventh percentile of all NNEC churches. Furthermore, there have been benefits to Farmingdale as well. Their membership and tithe have also increased as a result of the Augusta church plant. In addition, mission emphasis and outreach is also blossoming for the mother congregation.

However, I see this as only the beginning. The vision for church planting must extend beyond Farmingdale/Augusta. With the Augusta church plant as the starting model, it is my dream to see church planting extend throughout the Northern New England Conference. Consequently, the implementation of this vision has begun once again, only this time it is at the conference level. May the Lord continue to grant His blessings as this work moves forward.
APPENDIX
APPENDIX A

FARMINGDALE/AUGUSTA CHURCH GROWTH QUESTIONNAIRE
January 20, 1995

Dear Augusta Church Leader,

For the past five years, the Farmingdale Church has grown more than ten percent each year in both membership and tithe. With the addition of the Augusta Company in November of 1993, growth has increased dramatically. Total tithe for Farmingdale / Augusta increased by nearly fifty percent in 1994 compared with 1993 while membership increased nearly twenty percent.

Part of the requirements for my Doctor of Ministry project include the identification of factors that have caused our growth here in the Augusta Company. Would you please list the ten most influential factors that you believe have been responsible for our growth below:

1. ____________________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________________
4. ____________________________________________________
5. ____________________________________________________
6. ____________________________________________________
7. ____________________________________________________
8. ____________________________________________________
9. ____________________________________________________
10. ____________________________________________________

Thank you for your help.

Cordially,

Michael Steenhoven, Pastor
APPENDIX B

FARMINGDALE/AUGUSTA CHURCH GROWTH SURVEY
CHURCH GROWTH SURVEY

1. Church regularly attended
   ___ Farmingdale    ___ Augusta

2. Length of SDA membership
   ___ < 3 years      ___ > 3 years    ___ not a member

In your opinion, how great an impact have the growth factors listed below had on the growth of your church. (Rate each of the growth factors for the church that you attend regularly, not both.)

Please place a check for each question below using the following numerical rating:

   1 - Great Impact        3 - Minimal Impact
   2 - Moderate Impact     4 - No Impact
   5 - Not Applicable

SPIRITUALITY

3. Personal witness / Bible studies given by pastor
   ___ 1   ___ 2   ___ 3   ___ 4   ___ 5

4. Personal witness / Bible studies given by church members
   ___ 1   ___ 2   ___ 3   ___ 4   ___ 5

5. Pastor's emphasis on personal prayer time
   ___ 1   ___ 2   ___ 3   ___ 4   ___ 5

6. Congregation's emphasis on personal prayer time
   ___ 1   ___ 2   ___ 3   ___ 4   ___ 5
7. Pastor's emphasis on personal Bible study
   ___ 1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4 ___ 5

8. Congregation's emphasis on personal Bible study
   ___ 1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4 ___ 5

9. Relevant, Biblical preaching
   ___ 1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4 ___ 5

10. Church social activities
    ___ 1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4 ___ 5

11. Pastoral integrity
    ___ 1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4 ___ 5

VISION

12. Pastoral vision or dream of what the church can be
    ___ 1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4 ___ 5

13. Inspiration of members to share pastor's vision
    ___ 1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4 ___ 5

14. Setting of achievable goals
    ___ 1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4 ___ 5

ORGANIZATION

15. Communication between conference & church
    ___ 1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4 ___ 5
16. Church Board leadership and involvement  
   ___ 1  ___ 2  ___ 3  ___ 4  ___ 5

17. Personal Ministries Facilitator Meetings  
   ___ 1  ___ 2  ___ 3  ___ 4  ___ 5

**ATMOSPHERE**

18. Loving, Caring attitude of congregation  
   ___ 1  ___ 2  ___ 3  ___ 4  ___ 5

19. Church facility - Sanctuary, Sabbath School rooms, etc.  
   ___ 1  ___ 2  ___ 3  ___ 4  ___ 5

20. Periodic Revival Meetings  
   ___ 1  ___ 2  ___ 3  ___ 4  ___ 5

21. Church Unity  
   ___ 1  ___ 2  ___ 3  ___ 4  ___ 5

**TRAINING**

22. Opportunities for member involvement in different ministries  
   ___ 1  ___ 2  ___ 3  ___ 4  ___ 5

23. Availability of on the job training for various ministries  
   ___ 1  ___ 2  ___ 3  ___ 4  ___ 5
EVANGELISM

24. Pastor's emphasis on evangelism
   __ 1  __ 2  __ 3  __ 4  __ 5

25. Spanish outreach
   __ 1  __ 2  __ 3  __ 4  __ 5

26. New member involvement
   __ 1  __ 2  __ 3  __ 4  __ 5

27. Continued follow-up after decisions are made
   __ 1  __ 2  __ 3  __ 4  __ 5

28. Youth ministry
   __ 1  __ 2  __ 3  __ 4  __ 5

29. Meeting needs of community through such ministries as A.A., smoking cessation meetings, cooking classes, chaplaincy work, van ministry, jail ministry, etc.
   __ 1  __ 2  __ 3  __ 4  __ 5

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BIBLIOGRAPHY


V I T A
Michael D. Steenhoven

EDUCATION

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