

Andrews University

## Digital Commons @ Andrews University

---

Faculty Publications

---

2009

### A Report on the 180 Symposium

Roger Dudley

*Andrews University*, [dudley@andrews.edu](mailto:dudley@andrews.edu)

Allen Walshe

*Andrews University*, [walshe@andrews.edu](mailto:walshe@andrews.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pubs>



Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Dudley, Roger and Walshe, Allen, "A Report on the 180 Symposium" (2009). *Faculty Publications*. 156.  
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pubs/156>

This Contribution to Book is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact [repository@andrews.edu](mailto:repository@andrews.edu).

---

# A Report on the 180° Symposium

---

**Roger L. Dudley**

**Director: Institute of Church Ministry  
Emeritus Professor of Christian Ministry  
Andrews University**

**Allan Walshe**

**Director of M.A. in Youth Ministry  
Andrews University**

---

## Introduction

**O**ctober 21 to 23, 2008 over thirty youth ministry professionals, academics, and practitioners met at Andrews University to share ideas on how to retain youth and young adults in the Adventist Church. The Symposium was hosted by the Center for Youth Evangelism (CYE), co-sponsored by the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, the Lake Union Conference, and *AdventSource*, and coordinated by Japhet De Oliveira, CYE associate director. Participants came from four world divisions: Euro-African, North American, South Pacific, and Trans-European. In addition to those in attendance, three others who were not able to be physically present submitted papers.

The first day was devoted to the presentation of 26 papers. Each presenter was given 10 minutes to summarize his/her paper and then another 10 minutes to answer questions from the group. The procedures of this long day (8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.) were held in the Seminary Chapel, and visitors were invited to attend. The full papers will all be included at the end of this report.

The over-riding problem that brought this group together was the high losses of youth and young adults being experienced by Adventism. A number of papers referred to statistics such as that of Dudley (2000) who found that at least 40 to 50% of Adventist teenagers in North America, who had been baptized, are leaving the church by their middle twenties. Beyond Adventism the problem also exists. Allan Martin's paper quoted George Barna as reporting: "The most potent data regarding disengagement is that a majority of twentysomethings—61% of today's young adults—had been churched at one time during their teen years but they are now spiritually disengaged

(i.e., not actively attending church, reading the Bible, or praying)" (Barna, 2006, paragraph 6). Paul Richardson views the problem from another angle when he writes: "The median age for the Seventh-day Adventist community in North America, including the un-baptized children in church families is 51. . . Among native-born White and Black members the median age is even higher" (Center for Creative Ministry, 2008). The church is aging because as the active generation grows older, they are not being replaced. For a thorough examination of the characteristics of this generation of youth and young adults, see Monte Sahlin's paper on profiling Millennials in this collection.

These concerns are widely shared, from the president of the General Conference to youth ministries professionals, to local pastors of churches with absent young adults, to teachers struggling to impart faith, to desperate parents. The 180° Symposium was organized to grapple with this crisis.

## Morning Procedures

After interacting with the papers, the second and third days were spent wrestling with implications of the material. These sessions were open only to the official invitees. Shirley Freed, Chair of the Leadership and Educational Administration Department at Andrews University, served as moderator. She divided the participants into five groups. Each group was given a share of the formal papers. The morning was spent with the groups discussing the papers and selecting the major themes and ideas. Large sheets of paper were taped to the walls, and groups wrote on the sheets the major problems they discovered and suggestions to deal with those problems.

A background theme to all the discussions was the difference between modernism and post-modernism thinking as it applied to youth ministry. Applied to this discussion, post-modernism is more involved in experience rather than factual logic and more attracted to relationships than to formal structures.

### **The 15% Plan**

During the noon hour Ron Whitehead proposed the 15% plan. In every denominational organization, a certain amount of money is set aside for evangelism. Ron noted that when we eat a meal in a restaurant, we tip 15%. Why not set aside 15% of evangelism money in every organization to be used in youth ministry. While the “tip” analogy is not perfect, the plan could be a tremendous boost to the ministry. Ron then introduced Rodney Grove, the acting president of the Lake Union, who declared that the Lake Union would participate in that plan. Discussion in the afternoon evolved on ways that the 15% might be used to support youth ministry. Some ideas that arose were as follows:

1. Invest in human resources such as a Kids Discipleship training course.
2. Rent a store front for seven-day-a-week youth center for career counseling
3. Health consultation
4. Faith-development Sabbath would have a church-type contemporary service.
5. Find out what Seventh-day Adventist ministries are currently on public college campuses, strengthen them, and then find new campuses to strategically launch more.
6. Hire magabook leaders who could start a program and launch it in a whole conference.
7. Set up churches of refuge for young people to spread out among the conferences to motivate young people (see Ron Whitehead’s paper). This would be for training of churches.
8. Encourage every Adventist young adult between 18-25 years to spend a full year as a student missionary even if they are not in an Adventist college.
9. Entrusting the resources to the people who are going to do the work (e.g., music ministry to teach in an area where young people don’t have those resources).
10. Lay youth leaders mentorship program. Lasts about three years. Purpose and intention is because funding is becoming less available, we have to lay off some pastors. So now there aren’t enough youth pastors available. Have lay youth leaders be mentored for three years with the goal that they will train to become youth leaders in the church. Certification could be provided.
11. Use seed money to encourage young people to be involved in community service. Money would be given to a church which would direct the community services with the youth. The church members will build relationships with the youth since they will be working together and barriers are broken down.
12. Secular campus ministry such as open a café at the University of Iowa where there is no Adventist ministry on the campus.
13. Take the opportunity to challenge the youth in one’s area to use it as they see fit; the money is for them. Students could write a proposal. Outreach students could have small budgets that they can handle. If we create the ideas for them, then they don’t have ownership. Traditional evangelism fails over and over again, so go ahead and give them the money and the risk and let them go for it.
14. Most of the plans the youth will want to do don’t cost that much. Costs are food/transportation. So set aside money for food and space, and then invest some into pastors and youth leaders going to counseling. Adventist culture is careful about how open we are, so that affects every level of relationships, from person to person to God. Youth want relational stuff. Let’s provide a forum where there can be input from the young people. So they can come up with the ideas, and we can empower them.
15. Affirmation of the young adults in the room said the same thing – Give it to the young adults and let them decide. Add a mentoring component. Center for Youth Evangelism is an example of a place where they can come and put their dreams into practice. It’s important to give youth the space and resources to be able to dream. Put young adults into positions of power. Put thirty-year old young adult leaders in conference/administrative levels.
16. Point about counseling should not be glossed over because what can tend to happen is that there are people who work in this area because of their own needs. They disenfranchise young people and help build a wedge. Being healthy in service is important – counseling is a crucial factor.
17. There is a certain level of expectation to succeed. Sometimes we need to allow them not to succeed. Give out money for long term even though it may fail in the short term. Have to challenge youth to aspire to something. Challenge youth to be successful in what we do. However, some of the greatest

- teaching moments are through failures. Commit your plans to the Lord. Will the success look like what we think is success? What looks like failure to us may actually be success in the Lord's eyes.
18. Invest in family ministry and parenting. Broken people come from broken families. To separate family ministry from youth ministry is a mistake. They are intertwined. We will never have enough youth pastors to be at every church. We need to have primary individuals who are dedicated to youth ministry. Families need to be strengthened along with youth ministry. If the parents have built the right type of bridge and relationships, as the youth pass out of the teens, they will remember their parents' influence and relationship and will return. It goes back to the value of the parents.
  19. Among adolescents the connection at school is even more important than the influence of their parents. The peer factor becomes a bigger influence at this point in their lives. We need to put well-trained chaplains in our school system. They can help create connections to positive influences in our schools.
  20. Youth are influenced not only by their peers, but by any source of mentorship. The reason they distance themselves is because there is no relationship with the parents. The parents don't recognize the stage they are entering. They go to where their voice is valued. Family is most important, but lots of youth have clueless families. Young people can still do well in the face of poor parenting if they have strong community. We need to be competent community members to help.
  21. What we are talking about has an implicit mentoring component. Intergenerational learning is going on. The element of mentoring is pervasive. Someone with expertise or leadership experience is interactive with the young adult. It needs to be mentoring in the true sense, not management. Showing trust leads to empowerment.
  22. This is a new idea. We give money to young people and say go for it. Where can we present this idea? How can we name it in a way so that leadership hears it and understands it?
1. Young adults don't have the baggage of dealing with the system. We all have different reactions to things because of the various amounts of experience we have with the system.
  2. Just giving the youth what they want isn't what is important. What is inhibiting us is that the system won't allow us to accomplish what we have laid out here.
  3. Taking ideas to God in prayer to determine if they are His will. When Ron Whitehead knows something is great, then he knows when to be tenacious. For example, the 15% of the evangelism budget in the Lake Union was a year and a half in coming. It has a lot to do with prayer and hearing God's voice. There has to be a pervasive spiritual transformation among us.
  4. It was recommended that we take the request for 15% of the evangelism dollars to the conference leaders. One caution—We shouldn't think that youth ministry depends on money. It helps, but good youth ministry can take place without a lot of money.
  5. You cannot breathe easy once the money has been agreed to. It takes a very long time to generate change. If we don't keep the pressure on year after year, we will be out of business within two or three years.
  6. Ron Whitehead represents the type of leader that our leadership culture lacks. The group here "doesn't stop at brick walls." This group will work to effect change when they return home. We need a culture of leadership change. When we have more support, we have more strength. It's a high priority for us.
  7. In cultures where resources are not available, it is counterproductive to wait around for money to do ministry. Money follows successful ministry. Move forward with what we have, and then the funding will follow.
  8. The danger is that we come up with a great idea and then wonder why no one is following. The leadership is still thinking about it. We need to take the time to bring them up to speed with the whole process. Spend time getting everyone up to speed so they can support it. We need to understand the process and make a commitment to it, so we can bring people on the different steps of the journey. Sell the dream first before they will give you money.
  9. The elephant in the room is the education establishment. The culture shift means that the thousands of dollars that are being spent on our

### How to Approach Church Leaders

The group agreed that the issue is deeper than money. There need to be some fundamental changes about leadership in the church. Conference youth directors are given money and told to give it out, but the leadership remains a problem.

educational system are reaching fewer and fewer young people as they attend non-Adventist schools. The 15% is aiming for young adults who are not in our educational system.

10. Money is not the solution. Money follows the vision. We shouldn't get sidetracked on how to get money. We need to come up with creative ideas so that the youth can experience the benefits of the same type of service projects without spending the huge amounts of money.
11. There is a Council on Evangelism Witness that meets two times a year. This 15% plan should be on their agenda. Contact those leaders who have already bought into it. Unless we speak to the right people, nothing will happen. But now people are beginning to hear the story and take notice. We need to get this on the agenda for every youth department and the Council on Evangelism Witness. It needs to be done personally. Youth ministry leaders need to personally give the book produced by this Symposium to the church leadership. Many of the world church leadership weep over the loss of our youth. We need to bring this message to them. We need to share the full situation. Not only "Here is the problem," but "Here is a process to help solve the problem." Don't say the door is closed before we press upon it! Let's make it our business to be the pleader for this cause. The Council on Evangelism Witness will want to know criteria by which that 15% would be allocated. They will want specifics.
12. Don't look only inside the church for money – look for other sources. Other sources are looking for good ideas. Find the individual people whose interest matches yours.
13. God has opened the door every step of the way for the public campus ministry. We need to remember that God is the one who funds his work.
14. There is some resentment that the Adventist church has so much process. We need to think about how we talk about process, especially when we are talking with our young adults. Help them value the process, and enable them to do ministry while they wait on the process. While we talk about process, people are dying.

conclusions. This involved lively dialog. Toward the end of the day, the group decided that five major themes had arisen out of the discussion: (1) Identity, (2) Relationships, (3) Spirituality, (4) Leadership, and (5) Service.

That evening several of the leaders met with some young adults, some who were attending church regularly and some who were not. The Millennials agreed with the choice of topics and concluded that relationships was the most important of the themes.

The final day tables were set up for each of the five themes. Participants were invited to choose which theme they wanted to pursue. Each group developed a problem statement for its particular theme and then wrote out suggestions for how that problem could be addressed. In this report, the following five sections will each explore one of the major themes that the groups identified.

### The Search for Identity

Developmental psychologists like Eric Erickson have seen human growth as a series of stages which each individual must traverse in life.

"Adolescence has been labeled 'the search for identity.' The key question is 'Who am I?'"

Everyone follows these in a pre-determined order. How many stages depends somewhat on a particular scholar's way of arranging them. For example, Erik Erickson has formulated eight stages: infancy, toddlers, pre-school,

elementary school, adolescence, early adulthood, middle adulthood, and later maturity. Each stage has implications for physical, mental, emotional, and moral development.

Now, developmental psychology holds that at each stage of human development there are certain tasks to be accomplished. To at least some degree, the mastery of these developmental tasks is necessary to reach maturity for that particular stage and to prepare individuals to cope with the next step in their overall growth. The important thing here is that God has programmed us so we are driven to attempt the task at the proper stage in our development. It is natural.

For our purposes, we will consider the stage of adolescence which may blend into early adulthood since economic pressures and increased vocational requirements have led to the prolongation of adolescence, particularly in western societies. The adolescent has many important tasks to accomplish including those relating to sexual development and learning the responsible behaviors that allow for economic independence in the next stage. One of the key tasks is achieving emotional independence from parents and other adults. Adolescence has been labeled "the

### Identifying the Major Themes

During the afternoon of that second day, the individual groups began to report to the whole company on their



search for identity.” The key question is “Who am I?” All this involves searching for meaningful self-consciousness, planning for the future, and developing a philosophy of life and values. Achieving all this is the road to mature and responsible adulthood.

Adolescence is a time of tremendous import. Think of what is involved. The child has been largely dependent upon his parents. Major decisions have been made for her. She needs the constant advice of mother and father, as well as their emotional and financial support. He has lived by the rules and values of their home. She cannot conceive of operating apart from them.

But now, all of this is going to change. The child is turning into an adult. He will have to learn to make his own decisions. She must determine for herself the values by which she will live. He will no longer be merely an extension of his parents. She will become her own person. Finding one’s identity is the key to successful living.

In addition to physical, spiritual, and social identity, the young person must formulate a religious and spiritual identity. While much of this is a process between the person and God, religion also has a corporate dimension. How does the young person understand what it means to be an Adventist? What are the essential elements of Adventism, and what are the cultural fringes? We cannot hope to retain young adults if they do not perceive the Adventist church as supporting their own identity.

The working group assigned to discuss the question of identity decided on the following problem statement:

Identity is the distinguishing character of a person or organization. Our church has enough distinguishing characteristics in order for her to establish a well-defined identity. However within the church at large there is a growing need to redefine or reconfirm its identity. Our youth are often caught in the middle of this transition. They need a strong identity to shape their faith, yet they are confronted with either an identity befitting a modern world view or a transitional identity which is still shaped by solving our issues with a postmodern world view. The church is well aware of its need to translate its faith into a postmodern setting and yet cannot provide the clear identity our youth ask for without frustrating this process. Our youth, seeking for a clear identity, are often left with an identity which contradicts their own world view or is at least in tension with their own world view. This issue is one of the contributing factors in our youth leaving through the back door.

Throughout the Symposium, discussion often focused on modernism versus post-modernism as it applies to youth ministry. Young Adventists seem caught between the two worlds. While this is not the place to attempt precise definitions of these two world views, youth —like their

adults — face the confusion of absolutes versus uncertainties; proclamation versus discussion, factual proofs versus relationships. Should Adventists be more involved in sharing distinctive doctrines or demonstrating the love of Jesus? Is everything either black or white, or are there gray areas? What are the defining characteristics of Adventism?

As the study group struggled with these questions, they proposed the following possible solutions:

The identity which we provide to our youth should be ready for future or current shifting world views. In order for this to be possible, our youth work with regards to identity should consist of three major components:

1. The presented identity should represent the core of our Christian faith. It should focus on the life, death, resurrection, and teachings of Jesus Christ; particularly the outworking of the principles and values of the Kingdom of God in their lives. Bible studies, week of prayer material, youth Sabbath school lessons, sermons, and themes of our congresses and rallies should all be about the life, teachings, and values of Jesus Christ. Our youth need to know what it means to live the Kingdom of God today. Their religious identity should reflect this.
2. The presented identity should also be mission oriented. Living the principles and values of the Kingdom of God means being involved with mission, whether locally or internationally. Our identity should be that of a service organization; we should be known in our communities as the church who feeds those who are hungry and clothes those who are naked. Mission programs with a practical focus rather than an evangelistic focus should be stimulated, encouraging our youth to build relationships and through these relationships share what difference Jesus is making in their lives.
3. The presented identity should be rooted in our Adventist heritage. The identity should still be recognized as an Adventist identity; however, it should focus on dogmas which can be translated into praxis, giving the identity its distinct Adventist flavor. The Sabbath, the health message, and stewardship are just a few examples of dogmas which have been translated into praxis and which give this distinct Adventist flavor.

The group felt that it is time to move beyond an information-based identity and adopt an identity with an emphasis on the unity that Christ calls for (John 17:20-21) so that the world will know that God is among us as we have love for Him and love for each other (John 13:34-35). This prioritization of unity needs to be on all levels

– generational, theological, racial, gender, and cultural. While we do need clarity on the essentials of the Adventist faith, we need tolerance on the non-essentials and purely cultural vestiges. In all things we need charity. We do need the 28 fundamental doctrines for they give shape to our special identity; but we need to see them not as absolutes but as helping us to understand better who God is and how He desires to work with His people. Every doctrine must reveal the love of God and better fit us for our mission.

For further discussions of Adventists and the search for identity, see the papers by Japhet De Oliveira and Jeroen Tuinstra in this collection.

### Relationships are the Key

Relationship is central to emotionally healthy living. Relationship was pivotal to God’s original plan for humanity. No sooner had God kissed Adam awake and set him among the animal kingdom than He said something was “not good.” What was “not good” was Adam’s aloneness. God existed in relationship—Trinity—three persons in one. There-

“The millennial generation yearns for community, yet there is a dearth of healthy relationships within the church.”

fore, if these three, while being one, also exist in relationship, when they created in their image or likeness, then those they created, who are to bear their image, would also be created for relationship. He wanted us, his “image bearers” to also be

centered in love and experience satisfaction of relationship. Stanley Grenz (1996) describes community or relationship “as the goal of God’s program for creation.”

So relationship is not optional; it is woven into the very fiber of our being. A breakdown in relationship has been the devil’s key target on mankind since the fall, and what appears to be an increasingly significant lack of relationships within current generations is deeply affecting the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its young people.

Healing relationships and creating community are primary in Jesus’ plan for restoration (John 17), and it is a priority for postmodern (millennial) youth and young adults. The church must find ways to move from its current informational, propositional paradigm to a more relational, spiritual forming paradigm if it is to retain its youth and young adults. The group working on the theme of relationship began by identifying the problem the church is having in this area.

The millennial generation yearns for community, yet there is a dearth of healthy relationships within the church. This has resulted in young people searching elsewhere to

find a community for which their hearts were created. Unless genuine authentic relationships are fostered and encouraged within the church, this generation will continue to fulfil this God-given need for relationship elsewhere. After all, the group of young adults presented with the five themes the symposium selected agreed that Relationships were most important of all.

With this in mind the group offered the following possible solutions :

1. Churches need to recognize that the process of finding answers is more important than the answers. This means learning to facilitate a conversation rather than to teach “the truth.”
2. Churches need to provide “spaces” for relationships to flourish. This can happen within and outside the church’s traditional parameters and at all times throughout the week.
3. Young people need to be intentionally involved in the development and regular evaluation of the vision of the church.
4. Churches need to develop intergenerational activities around common interests in order to foster understanding, respect, and trust in the community.
5. Churches should have a youth mentoring system in place. The intention of such a system would be to foster honesty, openness, and authenticity in both the mentoree and the mentor.
6. We recommend that the world church set aside a day every year to focus on mentoring and relationships in the local church.
7. We recommend a campaign be run in the churches to encourage every adult to learn the names of five young people. This will foster a climate of communication which will help relationships in the church.
8. We believe that sermons, Sabbaths schools, and other presentations that take place in the church need to be intentionally personal and relational.
9. Perhaps most important: In our churches, in our schools, in our homes, we must teach and model that religion is primarily a matter of relationships rather than a set of beliefs or a code of behaviors. In other words, belonging trumps believing and behaving.

In addition to the report of the study group, several other items were introduced:

1. Equality of gender, ethnicity, and social standing along with authenticity must mark the relationships we foster with our youth.

2. Relationship renewal includes God, our inner selves, our fellow humans, and our environment.
3. The foundation of human relationships is the Golden Rule that Jesus gave: Do to others as you would have them do to you (Matthew 7:12).
4. In order to establish and maintain relationships, leaders must be willing to become vulnerable.
5. While large conference-wide and denominational events can inspire and motivate youth, building vital and permanent relationships takes place primarily in the local congregation. In this venue small groups present the very best environment for creating deep and healthy relationships. Members of these groups learn to care about each other and give encouragement when spiritual or practical problems arise.

As Jesus commanded us (John 13:35), we are known as His followers based on our love for one another. As a top priority, the counsel of Paul (Galatians 5:14) gives our marching orders: “The entire law is summed up in a single command: Love your neighbor as yourself.”

### **Spirituality—the Essential Ingredient**

The group working on the theme of spirituality began by identifying the issues surrounding this core value of church life. This is what they crafted:

Adventism, which is characterized by rationalism, has tended to embrace correct doctrinal positions as well as religious behavioral markers as its main expressions of spirituality. The group saw spirituality as being open to experiencing the acceptance, presence, and pleasure of God. Sensing and knowing God’s heart is the life song and purpose for disciples (God followers) who increasingly grow to be aware of, relax in, and daily enjoy the presence of God. While young adults are generally turned off by formal church structure and exclusive systems of belief, many hunger for a genuine spiritual experience. They desire that feeling of closeness to God.

One young adult passionately shared: “I need to hear about Jesus. I need to hear that He loves me. I need to hear someone remind me how He showed me His love. So I’ve found other places to go; places that weren’t distracted by someone else’s writings or other churches’ teachings. They told me only about my Lord, His sacrifice and His love, and what it means to me.” Another expressed frustration with the church’s focus on rules over spirituality: “I believe that the Adventist Church concentrates too much on rules and what a person should not do rather than on a person’s spiritual life.”

Spirituality is a difficult term to describe because it is a fundamentally personal and inward experience. Attending

church, engaging in devotional practices, and sharing one’s faith are measurable and may be considered evidences of a spiritual experience, but they are not spirituality itself. We cannot measure a person’s relationship to God. We can only encourage the practices that contribute to it. On the other hand, we cannot separate it from our daily work, study, and recreation. Post-moderns (as many of today’s young adults are) tend not to have the disconnectedness of moderns where the spiritual is in a separate compartment from the secular. Rather, the spiritual permeates the entire life. Any task, done in the right spirit, can be a spiritual experience.

Authentic spirituality for Christians is found only in a connection with Jesus Christ which comes through study and meditation on the holy Scriptures and is nurtured by an atmosphere of prayer. If we would help our youth and young adults develop their spiritual natures, our first priority is our own connection with God and then sharing that experience with them.

With these thoughts in mind the group offered the following possible solutions for drawing young people toward a personal spirituality:

**Discipleship:** Intentionally mentor youth and young adults through Christian formation pathways that will help them to learn to enjoy the presence of God.

**Devotional habits (spiritual disciplines):** Rather than the traditional brief morning Bible study and prayer requests, the youth could be mentored and taught how to read the Bible reflectively and to pray contemplatively as well as to engage in other devotional habits (spiritual disciplines) that will lead to a deeper personal experience of Jesus. The following will be helpful in this process.

**GOD encounters:** Major programs that foster and support a movement of young adults who will wholeheartedly pursue a 24/7 experience of the living God through gatherings, curriculums, and spiritual mentoring.

**GOD connections:** A radically different model of small group that is designed to do two things—build authentic community and teach the devotional habits (spiritual disciplines). These should become epicenters of spiritual formation-processing for youth and young adults.

**Discipleship Coaches:** Offering spiritual mentoring via Christocentric leaders who are willing to serve youth and young adults as spiritual mentors. This discipleship coaching can be peer or intergenerational. The key is to foster contemplative questions and personalized practices that will deepen the devotion of the young adult to Jesus.



**Experiencing GOD:** Help young adults be conscious of what God is doing in the world. Teach them to perceive what God is doing in the world and to know how they can participate with Him.

**Ancient-Future Adventists:** Fostering a “true to original” expression of Adventism in the Postmodern era. Steal back the identity of the church as a young adult movement, passionate about Jesus and intent on exposing Christ’s desire to penetrate every facet of their lives.

**Significant Belonging:** Young adults are looking for (1) a sense of belonging (2) a sense of significance. Develop a mentoring system that gives focus to these core youth and young adult needs and plant the process into every local church culture.

**Oasis:** Offering young adult community and worship experiences through networking clusters in metropolitan and multi-church regions.

**Book Club:** Endorsing discipleship and spiritual formation titles and Biblical passages to be read and discussed with other youth and young adult participants.

**Spiritual GPS:** Track individuals through life’s milestones (e.g., graduations from high school and college/university, first job, engagement, etc.) and initiate contacts and affirmations as they make their way toward adulthood. (e.g., develop profiling software to track birthdays, graduation, etc.)

These will all be the precursor to the following which will continue to foster the process:

**Life Mission:** Maximizing the short-term mission experience to form a long-term life of service (e.g., fostering re-entry training to embed mission into everyday lifestyle). One avenue might be to involve young adults in community service as a form of a localized mission life.

**Global Village/Compassion Carnival:** A fair-like event with various booths/stations highlighting different service/compassion/ministry agencies in a community (e.g., United Way, Habitat for Humanity, Women’s Shelter, Salvation Army, etc.).

## The Call for Leadership

*Entropy:* “a thermodynamic measure of the amount of energy unavailable for useful work in a system undergoing change.” “A measure of the degree of disorder in a substance

or a system: entropy always increases and available energy diminishes in a closed system.”

In more pedestrian terms: things left to themselves tend to run down. Weeds will take over the garden. Buildings will deteriorate. People get older and slower. That happens in the church also. Without special attention, a church will not grow, but decline. If youth ministry is not intentional, the youth will leave. Thus dedicated, vigorous leadership is essential if Adventism is to halt the exodus of young adults out the back door.

The group that worked on the theme of Leadership developed the following problem statement:

The difficult task of retaining Millennials is indicative of a deeper problem that challenges our church and its leadership. Young adults desperately desire connectedness and a sense of belonging to a loving community that provides a safe environment for building and restoring relationships and spiritual growth. Accepting the need for change is difficult and almost impossible for most established communities. Leaders that do not facilitate opportunities for young adults will inevitably discover that Millennials will seek other communities that are truly leading them into satisfying and fulfilling experiences. Congregations that accept the need for change and move toward becoming inclusive, emotionally healthy communities where young adults can express their spirituality in their own way will attract seekers of all types. Unfortunately, few congregations will spontaneously move in that direction. Therefore, vital leadership is absolutely essential. The group believes that there needs to be more balance in the leadership models taught and practiced within the church. Given that crucial need for leadership, the group proposed a number of possible practical solutions:

1. There should be annual leadership summits focused on the art of learning and factors of change that help foster visionary leaders. The servant-leadership model should be mandatory.
2. Leaders should be taught how to be relational and deeply spiritual.
3. Leaders should be encouraged and supported to be bold.
4. Leadership training should be provided at all youth and young adult ministry events.
5. Leaders should intentionally utilize accountability and evaluation systems.
6. Leaders should take a team approach.
7. Churches should model mentoring of youth and young adults in all leadership positions.
8. Churches should structure themselves so that everybody is equipped and involved to their full potential.

9. Churches should select leaders who have room for growth.
10. Leaders should lead without the need for getting credit.
11. Leaders should take responsibility for other's growth and development.
12. Churches should choose leaders based primarily on their character.

It was also suggested that the church needs to move from a hierarchical model of leadership toward a team approach. The team needs all the ideas and energy that diversity can bring. As a church, we must recognize that since we are all on the same team, we either all win or all lose.

Leadership that identifies itself by mirroring the spiritual relationship that Jesus had with the Father and the relationship that He had with the people He came to save will ignite a life-changing process that will result in a life of service. An important component of Biblical leadership is empowering those placed within our trust to join in a shared vision to fulfill God's purpose for His church.

Leadership is the obligation and the privilege of every Christian to exert his/her influence on behalf of Christ. Leadership opportunities for service and evangelism must be provided by the church to all youth and young adults. Transformational leadership is not satisfied with the status quo. It believes, lives, and initiates Christ-centered leadership that is revealed through servant-hood, not lordship and imperialism. We must foster transformational leaders.

As Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it (Ephesians 5:25) through self-sacrificing servant leadership, so this generation must be led to emulate His leadership style as a witness to the needy world.

### The Theme of Service

The North American Division Youth Retention Study (Dudley, 2000) followed a large division-wide sample of teenagers for ten years until they were in their mid-twenties. While focusing on why young adults leave the church, the study also probed the reasons why so many decided to remain. One of the main factors was that they were involved in active service either within the church or in its outreach.

"What fosters perceptions of acceptance, belonging, and validation? Many responded that opportunities for leadership and involvement are responsible. They have ownership. They are valued and equal team members" (p. 119). Typical comments were: "Being involved and feeling needed and important." "It is exciting to be a part of an alive, growing church, and even more so knowing I've had a part in creating that." "I stayed because I had leadership and involvement opportunities available."

No better example could be given than Becky Lane Scoggins 1996 *Adventist Review* article, "What My Church Did Right," which by her permission was included in an appendix, pages 209-212. The small Blackberry, Minnesota church celebrated in style her baptism. Then, as a sixth-grader she was elected Sabbath school secretary with responsibility for picking up the offering envelopes, counting the money, and recording it in a log book. Her sixth-grade classmates served as Cradle-Roll teachers,

"When it comes to involving young people in service, churches too often protect and delay rather than prepare and proclaim."

junior deacons, and members of the social committee. In the seventh grade, she was elected church communication secretary and carried her hand-written news releases to the local newspapers. She and her peers were asked to read the mission stories in Sabbath school when they couldn't even pronounce the names of some of the countries. And so it went. "We never doubted that our church needed us."

Is it any wonder that she and her friends still love the church? If young people feel that the church really belongs to the adults, and they are just observers, they may well drift away. They must be given that sense of ownership. We have to make them feel, "This is my church. I have an equal share in it with everyone else. The church needs my services. They can't get along without me."

The group working on the theme of service began by trying to identify the problem we are having in this area. Why aren't we more successful in involving youth and young adults since this is so crucial to their retention? This is what they crafted:

Some individuals and churches serve rarely or sporadically instead making service a lifestyle. For others, it is either evangelism or community assistance, rather than both. And some serve "with a hook" instead of being motivated by disinterested benevolence. When it comes to involving young people in service, churches too often protect and delay rather than prepare and proclaim. We tend to hold back rather than empower. We underestimate the potential of young people to serve as evangelists in saving the lost. Our service is limited and flawed.

With this in mind, the group offered the following possible solutions:

1. Pray for the Holy Spirit to gift and empower us as the Body of Christ to serve and witness in our church and community—without prejudice, favoritism or expectation of response.

2. Challenge each church to participate in ongoing, inter-generational service activities in their community.
3. Empower youth in collaboration with adults for local and international community improvement projects.
4. Because of commitment to whole-person ministry, engage in a lifestyle of compassionate service regardless of the outcome.
5. Make communication effective by initiating relationships through service activities. Some of the best opportunities to build relationships come as youth work together in groups on service projects.
6. Publish and share the service activities that young people do.
7. Target service activities (including evangelism) to serve and save youth and adults in our communities, not only within our churches.
8. Collaborate Adventist Volunteer Network with Adventist Community Services, ADRA, and other community organizations, and don't merely replicate existing service agencies.
9. Follow the progression of service evangelism from *Ministry of Healing* page 143 (Christ mingled as one desiring their good, He sympathized with them, met their needs, won their confidence, and then invited them to follow Him).
10. Be open to service locally and beyond, such as short-term mission trips and longer missionary service.

Empirical evidence shows that young people who involve themselves in these solutions will experience:

1. Attraction to the church
2. Become involved in church
3. Stay in the church
4. Increase self-esteem
5. Be less likely to experience teen pregnancy
6. Be more likely to stay in school
7. Be more likely to go to college
8. Get better grades in school, which is associated with less drug use
9. Become community-oriented for life

For a comparison of the service-oriented nature of early Adventist youth societies compared with contemporary youth ministry see the paper by Cindy Tutsch in this collection. For research on the beneficial effects of service-oriented education check the paper by Gary Hopkins, et al. in this collection.

## Conclusion

The word that seems to permeate all these reports and all the following papers is connection. In a seminar conducted by Tim Elmore at the recent North American Division Ministries Convention, the acronym EPIC was presented as the necessary modus for ministering with today's Millennials. E = They want religion that is Experiential. P = They demand Participation. I = They look to Images not words and search for truth in metaphors. C = Connected. They want high tech and high touch. Relationships are all-important.

The following papers were written independently by individuals. Each presents not only information but valuable suggestions. While there is much agreement, there is no smooth flow like chapters in a book. There is obviously some overlap. How then to order the arrangement of the chapters?

The organizing committee has decided to place the Monte Sahlin paper first because Monte presents a thorough review of the characteristics of Millennials which is foundational to what will follow. After that, the chapters are arranged in alphabetical order by the last name of the presenter. Some readers will start at the beginning and read everything through to the end. But many will use this as a reference work so the chapters could be read in any order. Each presentation is introduced by an abstract so readers can quickly grasp the sense of the chapter and decide if this presentation is one of especial interest. All chapters represent the life passion of the respective authors attempting to share what they have learned and experienced as a contribution to the immense problem our beloved church faces.