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### A Strategy to Increase the Retention of Members in the Nyaguta District

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ABSTRACT

A STRATEGY TO INCREASE THE RETENTION OF  
MEMBERS IN THE NYAGUTA DISTRICT

by

Paul G. Kiage

Adviser: Bruce L. Bauer

## ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: A STRATEGY TO INCREASE THE RETENTION OF MEMBERS IN THE NYAGUTA DISTRICT

Name of researcher: Paul G. Kiage

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Bruce L. Bauer, DMiss

Date completed: October 2014

### Problem

According to a report given at the 2010 year-end church board meeting that was conducted in the Nyaguta district of the South Kenya Conference, more than 40 percent of the members baptized each year drop out from the church.

### Method

The current nurturing programs in the Nyaguta District churches were reviewed to see whether they were effective. A questionnaire was administered to the focus groups to obtain information. Seminar materials on membership retention from the Bible, the writings of E. G. White, and other Christian writers were developed and a series of seminars were conducted to train a group of assistants who started teaching lessons they

had received on retention for a total of one month in the various churches in the district.

## Results

The project was implemented in the 29 local churches of the Nyaguta district with the following were the results. First the district grew to a level where it was reorganized into two new districts. Second, the church attendance of newly baptized members, improved—with reports indicating that more than 90% of those baptized since 2011 attend church regularly. Third, all the churches now have regular organized worship services in home churches and this additional fellowship and nurture has strengthened retention in the district. Fourth, some of the issues dealing with culture, for example, ancestors worship, female circumcision, and contacting diviners have been addressed and members who were formerly practicing these have discontinued such practices. Fifth, there are fewer leadership struggles within the churches and most of the churches are experiencing more leadership stability. Sixth, most churches are now following the appropriate baptismal procedures in training baptismal candidates. These include consistent teaching for at least six months and assigning an elder or an experienced member to continue nurturing new members until they are grounded in basic Adventist teachings. Seventh, the new spiritual nurturing methods conducted are followed by more than a half of the churches. Eighth, out of the seminars conducted and counseling sessions done several people have been healed and others delivered from evil spirits.

## Conclusions

It is important to note that the overall goal of the project was achieved, which was to reduce the dropout of members in the Nyaguta district to at least 10%. It is also

important to note that by increasing the retention of members in the district I have achieved the goal of Adventist mission which is to make disciples for Christ. One cannot make disciples unless church members are nurtured. In fact, spiritual nurture is the most important function in an Adventist church.

Andrews University  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

A STRATEGY TO INCREASE THE RETENTION OF  
MEMBERS IN THE NYAGUTA DISTRICT

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

by  
Paul G. Kiage  
October 2014

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Paul G. Kiage

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Date approved

Dedication

to my dear wife Gladys Kerubo,  
who has been such a faithful helpmate  
for many years  
and  
my beloved children: Deborah, Faith, and Daniel

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background of the Study**

According to a report given at the 2010 year-end church board meeting that was conducted in the Nyaguta district of the South Kenya Conference, more than 40 percent of the members baptized each year are removed from the church books. This is a high number in relation to membership retention. Some of the reasons why the members drop out of the church could include cultural ties, insufficient spiritual nurture programs, ineffective church leadership, and involvement in the African religious practices in times of crisis. Furthermore, it seems that some members are not taught what Adventists believe before baptism. This has led to slow membership growth, has discouraged evangelistic activities, and has caused some non-Adventists to question Adventist credibility and to have little interest in the Adventist message.

#### **Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this project is to develop and implement a strategy to increase the percentage of retention by at least 10 percent a year for the next two years.

#### **Significance of the Project**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church believes in the Gospel Commission of making disciples and the need to continue to teach and nurture new members. Reducing the



number of members who drop out of the church is in line with the mission of the church. This project will help ground the members in the Adventist faith instead of relying on African religious practices.

The project seeks to develop effective biblical leadership styles which will impact the spiritual nurture of members, reduce some of the cultural practices which contribute to membership loss, emphasize Bible principles and Ellen G White teachings in the area of membership retention, develop more efficient spiritual nurture programs on membership retention in the church, and create new methods of nurturing church members.

### **Limitation of the Study**

While the problem of losing members is experienced in other districts of the South Kenya Conference my research will only be conducted in the Nyaguta District

### **Personal Basis for Ministry**

#### **Introduction**

This section will cover five subsections (1) self-knowledge and self-assessment, (2) general background such as my personal biography, education and ministry, (3) specific personal assessments such as conversion, assurance of salvation, margin in time and resource, spiritual stages and devotional life, worldview, temperament, and damage factor, (4) spiritual gifts, leadership, interaction style, task type, and (5) conclusion with two parts: first a description of how self-assessment will affect the project both positively and negatively, and second, a summary of self-knowledge and an assessment to indicate how and why I entered the ministry, including an intentional

“look” into my emotional, physical, and spiritual life. In the Bible, we read about biblical characters who were aware of themselves. Ps 23 and 139 give examples of how David was aware of his life and even how God called him.

Paul, in his epistle to the Philippians, gives a vivid picture of how he was aware of himself before receiving Christ and after receiving Christ. He also makes it very clear about his mission which resulted in his call. Christ our Lord was also aware of Himself and His calling and His mission (John 17:1). Their success was built on the premise of giving God glory.

### General Background

I was born in Kenya December 1959 I and belong to one of the 42 tribes in Kenya called the Abagusii, a tribe near Lake Victoria. My father had two wives and I was the son of his second wife. I did not experience many problems of being in a polygamous home because the two families lived at different places (homesteads), about two kilometers apart. My father’s first wife died when I was still young.

My father’s first wife’s eldest son was an Adventist but he did not influence me to Adventism because he stayed far from us. My parents used to drink the local beer and sometimes my father used to drink opium and my mother smoked the local tobacco but I never saw them drunk. My parents believed in ancestral worship which includes appeasing the spirits. I observed how they used to sacrifice to those spirits and it created fear and trembling in me. They also used to bring diviners to the house to counteract the evil spirits and our family was involved in cleansing ceremonies. Witches troubled us a lot at night, since witchcraft was practiced by some people in our village. Because of these things we lived a life of uncertainty and hopelessness. My parents were hard

working; hence, none of us lacked any essential items of life. My father had many animals—cattle, goats, and sheep—so in the early years of my childhood, I used to accompany my elder brothers to take care of my father’s cattle.

The most important virtue that my parents gave me was to be honest. I would be caned if I did not tell the truth. Sometimes I was treated very harshly by my elder brothers when I made a mistake and this caused me to grow up being quiet.

Apart from family issues and the community, our family grew up at a place where there was a lot of cattle rustling and this demanded that we be alert at all times. In addition there used to be frequent intertribal conflicts.

During my primary education, I studied in an Adventist affiliated school where I was introduced to some Bible stories and teaching instructions which were part of the syllabus. I completed my primary studies in 1977, and during my last year in primary school I was baptized. From 1977 to 1980, I attended secondary school and during that time my spiritual life was greatly strengthened by the Adventist teachers who taught me. After form four, I joined form five and six from 1980 to 1982 for advanced studies. After high school I taught in a secondary school for six years. It was during this time that the Lord called me into the ministry.

I went to Spicer Memorial College in India for my BA degree in Theology between the years 1987 and 1990 after which I joined the Andrews University Extension Program at Spicer from 1991 to 1993 and obtained a MA degree in Religion.

I joined the ministry in 1993. My first appointment was to work as a chaplain for schools, colleges, and universities, and as a Youth Director in the South Kenya Conference. I also served as a Stewardship Director and Personal Ministries Director

from 2002-2010. I have served in two districts and currently I am in a third district.

In 1994 I married Gladys Kerubo with whom we have three children, Deborah Gesare (1995), Faith Kemunto (2001), and Daniel Kiage (2004). The eldest is in secondary school while the others are in primary school.

### Dynamics That Have Shaped My Ministry

The Lord who knew me before I was born has used several ways to shape my personality. In this section, I will mention six ways in which the Lord has shaped my life: culture, God's call to the ministry, community, communion, conflict, and commonplace.

#### **Culture**

The Kisii culture where I was born has the following features: most houses are not permanent, most of the people are friendly to foreigners, they have many clans and the people of each clan live together as a united entity, and they love their cultural virtues. Most of Abagusii people follow their cultural beliefs, such as no life after death, making sacrifices to ancestors, and the worshipping of many gods. In their social life the head of the home is the man, and each clan has a clan elder. Most of family problems are solved at home and by the clansmen. The staple food for the Abagusii is *ugali* and the main economic activity is keeping animals and intensive farming. The place is hilly and has several seasonal rivers and one non-seasonal river called the Gucha. The unique thing about the place where I was born was inter-tribal wars due to cattle rustling. This forced me to grow up prepared for war at any time. Another thing about my culture is the circumcision of male children. When we were circumcised, we were trained as warriors. The songs sung during our circumcision ceremony were meant to get us prepared to

defend our community and people against invaders. Hence men were trained to stand firm against enemies. Even today, the common phrase in the Bible, “stand firm,” appeals a lot to me (Eph 6:10-11; Josh 1:6).

## **Call**

The Lord called me to be a Christian in 1977. When I was baptized I grew up in a non-Christian home though my early school life had some influence on my Christian faith. Before I entered college I taught in a secondary school for six years. Those six years were used by the Lord to prepare me for ministry.

I wanted to be a teacher and I was qualified to join the diploma program in education but every year I applied to be interviewed I was not chosen. This happened every year for six years. During those years I used to ask God to show me what career He wanted me to take up. When I realized that God wanted me to join the ministry, the way was opened and I went for pastoral training.

## **Community**

When I became a Seventh- day Adventist, I was spiritually nurtured by the church members. Actually, in those days, Christian fellowship was very strong. I received nurture from both the adults and the youth and I was also encouraged by my brothers and sisters to stand firm for Christ.

## **Communion**

When I became a Christian I was taught to be strict in following God’s Ten Commandments, practicing a life of prayer, Bible study, witnessing, and reading Ellen White’s books. These things first produced an atmosphere of legalism, but helped a lot in

my general discipline and personal commitment to God. When I received the assurance of my salvation later, those tools played a crucial role in deepening my relationship with God. I learned to experience God in prayer, Bible reading, fellowship, and many other ways.

### **Conflict**

My Christian life was not an easy journey at first because my parents, who were not Christian and who were at first excited that I had become a Christian, had strong objections when my lifestyle differed from theirs, especially in terms of drinking, smoking, and consulting ancestral spirits. We had frequent sharp conflicts at home. At one time my father chased me from his presence, ready to beat me up but I escaped. In ministry, one major issue that I encounter is members possessed with evil spirits. At times it takes much time to minister to them and it can also lead to exhaustion.

The many experiences I have had dealing with people who were enslaved by Satan and ministering to people who were sick physically and emotionally have made me a firm believer in prayer and regular Bible studies and fellowship with other Christians.

### **Commonplace**

In my daily walk with God as a Christian, several incidents have happened which have helped me see God's hand. When I was in high school, there was a strike and when I opposed it as a Christian, I was almost torn to pieces, but God saved me. In many such incidences, I have seen God's hand in my life. In all the above experiences, God prepared me for my present assignment to be a "minister of the gospel" (McNeal, 2000, p. 73-198).

## Specific Personal Assessment

### **Conversion and Assurance of Salvation**

I became a Seventh- day Adventist in 1977. Though my early life in primary school influenced me to become an Adventist, I never was baptized until 1977. The main motivation why I became a Christian was to escape hell and go to heaven. When I became an Adventist, the Adventist Youth Society was very strong in our mission, and held several Bible congresses, seminars, and many other religious youth meetings.

We were told during these meetings that in order to be a Christian we had to pray every day, read our Bible every day, witness to our friends, and attend all church meetings. I followed all these requirements but my real assurance of salvation came two years later in 1979 when Pastor Jack Sequiera, who was a missionary and the Ministerial Director of the East African Union, taught us about “righteousness by faith.” That was when I started enjoying a full life in Christ. And ever since, I have lived to teach the subject of righteousness by faith. I have enjoyed living with Christ and preaching Christ-centered messages.

### Margin

In this section I will briefly discuss margin in four areas: emotional, physical, financial, and time. Basically all four aspects are out of balance in my life.

### **Physical Reserve**

Since I have a large district with 33 congregations, I am overloaded. Almost all the time I am exhausted and tired. This kind of predicament can be solved either by dividing the district or by learning to be self-controlled.

### **Financial Reserve**

I am pressed also in the financial aspect of my life since I cannot meet all the basic financial obligations of my family, especially in area of school fees. I am paying school fees for my three children and am also paying for my current Doctor of Ministry program; however, I cling to God's promise that He will supply all my needs (Phil 4:19).

### **Time Reserve**

Time is a big issue due to the large district with over 4,000 church members, a majority of whom are young in the faith. Therefore, providing the needed spiritual nurture is a real challenge. I therefore miss quality time with my family and children. My devotional life suffers and my personal life is hectic. When it comes to time I am overloaded and marginless.

### **Emotional Reserve**

Due to the physical overload caused by a lot of activities in the district I am emotionally overloaded. I have no margin in time which has led to stress, anxiety, and worry, and all these have led to emotional instability. However, the book *Margin* has helped me to determine and to establish margin at all costs. I am determined that by God's grace and the principles given in the book, I will be helped to develop margin in all of the four aspects mentioned above (Swenson, 2004, pp. 69-131).

### **Spiritual Path**

The spiritual life of every person passes through several stages. The community stage is the stage we are born into—a stage of lawlessness (Ps 51:5) where by nature we are sinners and enemies of God (Eph 2:1-4). Stage two is where there is need for a certain



kind of framework by which one works at developing a spiritual life. Stage three is a stage of questions. At this stage, if good training is given, a person can move in the right direction. The fourth stage is a communal stage whereby one has to relate with other people.

My devotional life can be divided into two major parts: time set aside for prayer and meditation, and Bible reading that is usually done early in the morning between 4 and 6 o'clock.

For my devotion I pick a book from the Bible, and read chapter by chapter every day, I read the Sabbath School lesson, books by Ellen White, and other devotional books. I have a yearly cycle where I read a particular portion from the Bible every day. I also have other Christian literature and Bible commentaries that I refer to. I would like to increase the time I spend in my devotions. In addition, I have a regular group of two pastors with whom I meet for prayer, meditation, counseling, and sharing personal life experiences in view of the ministry.

## **Worldview**

According to Jon L. Dybdahl worldview is “the deep, underlying, usually conscious concept structures of a people or culture that is the source for their values, beliefs and actions” (2008, p. 101). I recognize that there are four major worldviews: first, there are those who do not believe in a personal God; second, those who believe in a personal God and the world, third, those who believe in personal and spiritual beings, and fourth, those who believe in a personal God, spiritual beings, and the reality of the present world (pp. 102-109).

The correct view is that God is real. He created the world and He is in control of

the world. He keeps it and maintains it. He is in our daily lives and is also working in various circumstances to fulfill His purposes of saving people. He works with individuals, groups of people, and the church. He engineers circumstances in order to reveal Himself.

### **Temperament**

According to the MBTI test I discovered that I am ranked as an ESJF: E stands for extraversion which means I am an extrovert. This means that I am energized by the outer world, I am outgoing, focus on people, and think. S stands for sensing: this means I take in information by seeking facts which are detailed and based on reality. J stands for judging: I prefer a planned, decided, orderly way of life. F stands for feeling: this means I base my decisions on personal values. These classifications listed above have a lot of positive impact in the implementation of my project; however, some have a negative impact (Dybdahl, 2008, pp. 111-114).

### **Damaged Emotions**

Since I was the youngest in a family of eight children, I was not very happy early in life since I had watch over my father's cattle. I viewed it as forced labor since I had no time to enjoy playing with my age-mates. Then during my primary school years, my teachers were so harsh on me that I did not enjoy learning. In fact, because of their roughness, my early school years were miserable. Another event which did a lot of damage to my emotional life was the sickness of my mother, which was a result of a broken bone which demanded a lot of time from us to nurse her. She eventually died in a lot of pain. Though she died while I was a grown up, that painful experience damaged my

emotions. Healing has come but the scars remain.

### Spiritual Gifts

According to the Spiritual Assessment Gifts Test on Spiritual gifts from the book *Equipped for Every Good Work: Building a Gifts-Based Church* (Dick & Dick, 2001, pp. 31-46), I discovered that my spiritual gifts include miracles, healing, prophecy, faith, and teaching. I believe the test was accurate because those are the gifts I have noticed in my ministry.

### Leadership/Interaction Styles

According to Dick & Dick there are four categories of leaders: These are: thinkers, directors, pleasers, and dreamers (2001, pp. 54-68). The tests show that I am a pleaser, I am classified as people oriented, and I am diplomatic, very flexible, love people, hold an agenda secondary to relationships, sensitive, dislike conflict, hardworking, reliable, want everyone to be happy, make and keep the peace, am honest, listen well, act as problem solver, want to be liked, slow paced, like to chit-chat, am loyal, and not constrained by the clock. While not all the details may apply, yet this is what I am. This profile has helped me to know my strengths and weaknesses. It has also helped me to be humble and accept all people in the light of the different abilities that God has given to them. Above all, it has challenged me to use my spiritual gifts for God's glory and not for my own glory. It is important to discover one's spiritual gift but it is more important to live as a gifted person.

There are also some potential negatives connected with being a pleaser. Pleasers are not task-oriented and can seem ineffective. Another weakness is that pleasers

sometimes lack vision, they are slow in nature, can be over sensitive, are less honest, and not so strict with accountability. The implications of this kind of leadership include the fact that pleasers create a good environment for people to share ideas freely, the concerns and feelings of many are considered, generally people in the group or church will be comfortable. Pleasers may be reluctant to give direction to the church, often have no plans and no vision in their desire to be inclusive. In view of the above description I understand my strengths and weaknesses and this can help me in how I relate with others (Dick & Dick, 2001, pp. 66-67).

### **Task Type Preferences**

There are four basic task type preferences: (a) project types who are interested to see projects organized and done, (b) work types, who are into doing the work and do not want to be involved in planning and organizing, (c) process type people who enjoy doing the brain work, and (d) finally there are fellowship types, people who prefer working with a group to accomplish a task. I am in this last category—fellowship task type (Dick & Dick, 2001, pp. 87-91).

### **Conclusion**

The personal assessment given above has helped me see who I am and how this will affect my project. There are both negative and positive aspects, so I will briefly list the negative aspects first and then the positive ones.

#### **Negative Aspects**

Born in a polygamous family, I did not enjoy a lot of closeness from my parents. I especially missed the parental love which is very crucial in a child's development. This

may impact my project and may hinder the process of membership retention. Second, I may not have a good understanding of all aspects in membership retention since my background is not exactly like many of those I am dealing with. Third, in the area of temperament, I may have an easier time helping those who share my temperament type, which is that of a rational thinker. Fourth, concerning the damage factor, healing is possible. When we speak of damaged emotions, we need to realize that one is never 100% healthy emotionally. The remaining portion, which is not healed, may be a hindrance to this project. In relating to others according to the spiritual gifts I have, I will not be able to meet all the needs of all the members.

#### Positive Aspects

On the positive side, my growing self-awareness has helped me to understand myself and accept who I am. This encourages me to live according to the way God has made me. This takes away the spirit of competition from my heart because I cannot be like others.

A second positive aspect is that I have had a personal experience with God, and that gives me courage to do my project. The way He has led me in the past is an assurance that He will lead me in the future. I have experienced God in my own way and I believe He is leading me to complete a specific project in my life. This also builds my self-image and helps me feel secure as I focus on God, the God who does not change when other things change. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever” (Heb 13:8).

A third positive aspect is that my devotional life gives me strength as I realize that I am growing day by day and the sources of strength for my spiritual journey are

available. God's grace and His Word are available. His grace will give me strength when I am weak so that I will be able to do my project to the best of my ability.

A fourth positive aspect is that by knowing my gifts and leadership skills, I am able to mingle with church members who have other gifts, use them, allowing their gifts to compliment mine to strengthen the process of working on this project. Knowing my strengths and weakness as in my leadership style has humbled me and helped me to be willing to use others in working on this project. This will even make others feel that the project is not "mine" but that it is "ours." The implementation of the project will also be more effective because both the leaders and the members will be involved in the process.

This chapter discussed my personal basis for ministry which included a short biography, my temperament, spiritual gifts, leadership interaction styles, spirituality type, task type preference, personal ministerial experience, and personal and spiritual needs and goals. By assessing these components I have a picture of how my life will help the reader to know more about the researcher. It also reveals how they can impact the project positively or negatively.

### **Overview of the Paper**

Chapter 2 deals with a theological reflection which focuses on spiritual nurture as taught in the Bible, the writings of Ellen G. White, and other Christian writers. Chapter 3 analyzes the political, social, cultural, geographical, and religious context of the Nyaguta District where the project will be conducted. Chapter 4 deals with the strategy for implementing the project, and Chapter 5 covers implementation, summary, conclusion, and recommendations.

In the next chapter a theological intervention will be sought to curb the loss of members in the Nyaguta District. This will be drawn from the Bible, the writings of E. G. White, and other Christian writers.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES ON MEMBERSHIP RETENTION

#### **Introduction and Definitions**

In this chapter theological principles on membership retention will be drawn from the Bible, the writings of E. G. White, and other Christian writers to address the problem of membership dropout in the Nyaguta District. It is hoped that the principles, if well applied, will increase the membership retention by at least 10% a year. The principles will cover effective spiritual nurture methods, effective leadership styles to enhance the spiritual nurture of members, and other principles which will help newly converted Christians to be rooted in their Christian faith. Two words that need to be clearly understood are defined below.

*Retention:* the word retention is an English word which means the act of retaining or state of being retained, the capacity to hold (*Collins Concise English Dictionary*, 2008 p. 1415). The word retention means the act of being retained, the power to retain, and the capacity for retaining (*Random House Webster's Dictionary*, 2001, p. 105).

*Nurture:* The word nurture means to feed and to protect or support and encourage, to bring up, train, educate, upbringing (2001, p. 845)

#### **Principles of Retention in the Old Testament**

In the Old Testament, there are not many texts dealing with membership



retention. However, there is one in Exodus that can be applied to this situation.

The book of Exodus narrates the Children of Israel's deliverance from Egypt by Moses. After God brought several plagues upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians, Pharaoh agreed to allow the Israelites to leave Egypt. Under the leadership of Moses and his brother Aaron, the children of Israel left Egypt for the land of Canaan. Moses was not only their leader but was also acting as a judge to solve the many cases brought to him (Exod 18:1-24).

It was in the above mentioned context that Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, advised Moses on how to handle the heavy burden of solving cases from the people. Concerning this text, *The New Interpreter's Commentary* explains that Jethro proposed a judicial system to Moses, which was distinct from the primitive practice of one-man adjudication. In the new system, good and well-trained people were recruited for judging. The system had courts for different social units, the lesser courts where the other judges worked and a high court where Moses presided to solve the most difficult cases (Brueggemann, 1994, 1:827).

The system not only saved Moses from leadership burnout, but it helped the community have peace, harmony, wholeness, freedom from conflict, stability, and a shared welfare. This principle of involvement and delegation in leadership can be used to enhance the unity of a group to keep people together and to encourage many to experience a growth experience. This kind of leadership fosters a nurture process by involving others in new tasks (Brueggemann, 1994, 1:828).

### **Principles of Retention in the New Testament**

In this section, texts from the New Testament dealing with membership retention

will be studied in order to address the problem of membership loss in the Nyaguta District. It is hoped that since these principles were effective in nurturing Christians in the 1st century, that they can be applied to the Nyaguta situation. Acts 2:41-47 gives five principles which will be discussed below:

The book of the Acts of the Apostles was written by Luke to show how fast Christianity had spread within 30 years (Barclay, 1976, pp. 1-4).

The immediate context of Acts 2:41-47 is chapter one which speaks about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, which was part of the fulfillment of the prophecies of Joel 2:28 and Christ's promise in John 17:26-27. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit marked a new era where God's message was taken to many nations through those who were present at Pentecost.

After the Pentecost event, Peter stood and explained to those who were present the meaning of the event. In his speech or sermon, Peter spoke in brief about the life and ministry of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:22). He spoke about Christ's death and how God's purpose was fulfilled in the death of His son (v. 23), Christ's resurrection, which was due to God's intervention (Ps 16:8-11), Christ's exaltation (vv. 33-36), and Christ's salvation (vv. 37-39).

Peter's sermon convicted the audience and they asked what they should do. Peter appealed to them to repent and many of them repented and received forgiveness. That sermon gave birth to a new community and it is from this new community that the principles on spiritual nurture are drawn.

In Acts 2:41-47 the key elements are the apostles' teaching of the Word, fellowship, prayer, breaking of bread, and witnessing. The apostles' teaching was with

authority. These apostles were appointed by God to nurture the Church through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:28). The teachings of the apostles and the prophets birthed a new fellowship—the church (Eph 2:19, 20).

The term *koinonia* is a Greek word meaning “fellowship,” which is found in Rom 15:26 and Heb 13:16, referring to sharing possessions or contributions given to the poor saints in Jerusalem.

The breaking of bread uses the same word referred to in Luke 24:35, 46; Matt 26:26; Mark 14:22; and 1 Cor 11:24 where it refers to both physical meals and the Lord’s Supper (Bruce, 1970, pp. 99-102).

The key ingredients which made the church strong and fostered spiritual growth can be summed up in the following. “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching.” This revealed how the church members were regularly taught and how the apostles were consistent in giving regular instructions from the Word of God (Acts 2:43).

The presence of God’s Spirit initiated new relationships and newness of life among the believers. Individuals became a community of fellowship and friendship. This kind of fellowship was one of the reasons the church grew in numbers and in the spiritual life.

The sharing of things among the early church was also common. This reveals the experience of those in God’s kingdom and is part of the fulfillment of Christ’s mission as recorded in the Bible. The believers from all levels of life were together, including the poor, the lame, and the rich. They had all things in common (Acts 2:44; Luke 4:16-18, 21).

Teaching, fellowship, sharing of goods, and prayers of repentance made it

possible for the new converts to continue maturing in faith. The religious practices in that early church embraced an obedience which led to a community of worship, a practice of sharing of goods, and witness.

The sharing of goods is not common today, but Luke gave a description of what the Spirit of God can do when it comes to economic disparity. The Spirit moved believers to do away with social disparities and helped foster a spirit of sharing (Bruce, 1970, pp. 72-73).

Commenting on Acts 2:42-47, Barclay makes the following observations concerning the Apostolic Church whose members were involved in various church activities:

- It was a learning church with the church members listening to the apostles' instructions and gaining new insights.
- It was a church of fellowship that enjoyed a quality of togetherness where the members lived as brothers and sisters in a family.
- It was a praying church that depended upon God for strength; they met in prayer before going out to the world. Thus they were able to face the problems in life because they lived a life of prayer.
- It was a worshipping church; they worshiped God in their homes and in the temple.
- These were the things which attracted people. It was not only a good church but it had a winsome attractiveness and virtue. It was able to attract people to God (Barclay, 1976, pp. 42-4).

I can draw some of the principles which made the early church strong from the

brief look at Acts 2:42-47 as given above. The same principles can be applied to churches in the Nyaguta district in order to help them be strong and retain their newly baptized members. These principles include teaching the Word of God consistently to newly baptized members and older members, having regular times of prayer in the church and in the homes of newly converted believers, stressing a life of fellowship and witnessing in the church, and above all, teaching the importance of a life of dependence upon the Holy Spirit's leading.

When teaching the Word of God to new converts, special instructions will be given concerning evil spirits, including witchcraft, divination, ancestral spirits, and the state of the dead. This is because, according to interviews conducted in the Nyaguta District and from talking with focus group members, I discovered that some members, including newly baptized ones, leave the church due to cultural issues including consulting the spirits of the dead. The principles drawn from Gordon Doss' teaching about folk religion will be included in the Bible studies for new converts. This includes an emphasis on a theology of worship and submission to help members move from self-centeredness (which is common in our cultural context), to God-centeredness. The gospel will help the new believer to reject an ego-centered religion and a magical mentality that is common in animistic contexts. The center of the message will be on God and what He does. This change in worldview will require a total submission to God and total rejection of contacting evil spirits. (Isa 8:19-22; Jer 27:9-10; Gal 5:20; Rev 21:8).

I will also teach about holistic theology, which will require new church members to be taught about creation, God, heaven, and eternity. This will help answer many questions in the minds of many new Christians.

There will be instruction on power and the cross. This will be taught since in our context many search for power. Teaching on God's power and on Him as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe (Gen 1; 17:1), how Christ defeated Satan and his host and brought all things to Himself (John 16:33; Eph 1:22), and how Gods' supreme power was demonstrated at the cross where Satan was defeated and the world was redeemed will help the new believers trust in Gods' power (1 Cor 1:23-27; Heb 2:14-15; Hiebert, Shaw, & Tienou, 1999, p. 371).

Eph 4 speaks about the practical aspects of the life of believers after receiving the grace of God. In this chapter the apostle Paul discusses Christian duties, privileges, and the responsibilities that fellow believers have to one another. Paul also gives several exhortations which encourage spiritual growth and how it can be achieved (Nichol, 1957, 6:1021-24).

Eph 4 suggests the following principles on spiritual nurture: (a) all believers are to be instructed to stay in Christ in order to experience spiritual growth, (b) all believers are to stay united in order to have close relationships which are necessary in fostering spiritual growth, (c) when all believers use their spiritual gifts, they will be strong in the faith and care for each other.

### **Principles of Retention in Ellen G. White's Writings**

Ellen G. White in her book *The Acts of the Apostles*, gives the following principles concerning nurturing new converts: (a) appoint some church officers to be in charge of the new converts, (b) have earnest and hardworking people continue to give instructions to the new converts, (c) carefully train the new converts in order to establish them in the faith, (d) follow the example of Paul and Barnabas in training and creating

fellowship for new converts, (e) instruct the new converts on how to take care of themselves as they rely upon God's promises in Matt 18:20, (f) appoint godly men to take charge of the new converts and keep on instructing them in the principles of the faith, and (g) involve the new converts in God's service in order to help them grow in faith (White, 1950, pp. 177-187).

In White's book *Evangelism*, the following principles on nurturing new members are briefly explained: (a) the new converts are to be helped and instructed by mature members on how to experience the truth in their lives, (b) God is better pleased to have new converts thoroughly educated than to have a large number of professed members who are not truly converted, (c) new converts are counseled to seek the society of those who fear God so that they can help them to gain strength in their faith, (d) the new converts should be engaged in the service of the Lord to help them grow strong and also as a sign of their faith, and (e) a follow-up program must be carried out for the new converts which involves visitations and giving them Bible readings (1946, pp. 334-335).

In the book *Testimonies for the Church*, White gives the following counsel concerning temptations surrounding new converts and on how they can be assisted. Those who are young in the faith may be kept from great temptations or opposition by being placed under the care of experienced Christians, and the new converts should be told that a Christian life is a constant warfare; hence, they should be firm, not slothful (1948, 5:183).

Concerning converts in a city, White states, "And as men and women are converted to the truth, those standing at the head of city mission should with much prayer show these new converts how to experience the power of the truth in their lives. This

united effort on the part of all workers would be as a nail driven in the sure place”  
(White, 1948, 9:111-112).

Regarding those who have been baptized recently, White recommends that they should be subjected to more detailed instruction about their baptism and what it means once a person is baptized. New instructions which can help them to be firm in their faith include, (a) teaching that baptism means being baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and that it is a sign that they were buried in the likeness of Christ’s death and raised into a new life, (b) they are dedicated to God, to Christ, and to the Holy Spirit, (c) they are to make the things of the world second in their life, (d) they should not live careless or indifferent lives, and (e) they should always keep in mind that they are subjects of Christ’s kingdom and partakers of the divine nature. They are to surrender all that they are and have and employ all their gifts to God’s glory (White, 1948, 6:98-99).

According to Ellen White, small groups are another means of nurturing and bringing new members into the church. She states,

If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies to work not only for the church members but also for the unbelievers. If in one place there are only two or three who know the truth, let them form themselves into a band of workers. Let them keep their bond of union unbroken, pressing together in love and unity, encouraging one another to advance, each gaining courage and strength from the assistance of the others. (1948, 7:22)

She also says that companies should assemble in the evening, at noon, or in the early morning to study the Bible. During the meetings, the members should relate personal experiences to each other for this will bring more comfort and joy to the soul than even songs sung in the churches. This kind of association will be a means of maintaining one’s integrity (1948, 7:195).



According to White, another principle for spiritual growth is the study of the Word of God, which is the key ingredient in the spiritual life of a true and committed believer in Jesus Christ. Concerning reading the Word of God for spiritual growth, she states:

If we would live a true Christian life, the conscience must be quickened by constant contact with the Word of God. All the precious things with an infinite cost which God has provided for us will do us no good. If they cannot strengthen us and produce spiritual growth, this can only be achieved by eating the word of God and making it a part of ourselves. (White, 1948, 7:195)

### **Principles of Retention in Other Christian Literature**

In this section the key principles on membership retention as taught by other Christian writers will be listed, discussed, and analyzed in view of addressing the issue of membership retention in the Nyaguta District.

#### **Small Group Principle**

According to David Githii, the small group principle is an effective way of retaining Christians. As recorded in Exod 18:13-26, Jethro advised Moses to divide the people into small groups as a means of having effective leadership. While the context was on effective leadership, the method has an element designed to keep people together, growing together, working together, and sharing together. This kind of arrangement will assist in meeting the physical, mental, and social needs of those in the small group. People in small groups can share burdens and associate together and even understand each other's temperaments. This can be helpful for the newly born members of the church (Githii, 2008, p. 33).

## Church Meetings

Meetings where newly converted people meet in the church and receive love from the other members is likened to giving blood to a person. This is where the personal needs of new converts are taken care of and their concerns shared. A church which has regular meetings has a higher potential to empower, equip, and transform their communities and the new converts (Linthicum, 2005, pp. 150-151).

## Focusing on Discipleship

The basic teaching of making a believer into a disciple must be applied to new converts. These include, (a) time with God in prayer (John 15:7-8), (b) time with God in reading His Word (John 8:31-32), (c) time with God in fellowship (John 13:34-35), and (d) a habit of tithing (Luke 14:33) (Warren, 1995, p. 349).

## Every Member as a Minister

Another principle is to involve all members in ministering to one another—this is vital to the spiritual nurture of new converts. In Acts 6:1-7, the number of members increased and the needs of the members also increased. The apostles were finding it difficult to minister to everyone. The church chose members who were full of the Holy Spirit to take care of the other needs so that the disciples could continue teaching the Word. The results were good. “The word of God kept on spreading and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly” (Stott, 2007, p. 76). The key points are that God calls all His people to ministry; God calls different people to different ministries; and God expects those called to the ministry of the Word to concentrate on their calling (p. 76).

## Delegation

The case of Jethro and Moses in Exod 18:7-27 promotes the principle of delegating responsibilities. Commentators suggest that the advice of Jethro to Moses not only helped Moses avoid overwork but is also a way to enhance involvement of many members in the church service and to take care of the new converts. The apostles did not solve the problems that came with growth by trying to work harder. Instead they solved them by delegating responsibilities to others who could help (Acts 16:1-7; George & Logan, 1987, pp. 115-116).

In his book *How to Help Your Church Grow*, George Knowles suggests the following principles which can help keep members in the church. He suggests (a) having a consistent, intelligent, and loving follow-up of known members, (b) visiting new members and their families, (c) helping new member discover their spiritual gifts, and (d) subdividing members into smaller groups and making each group growth conscious (1999, pp. 48-49).

Bill Hull offers four principles needed to make disciples: come and see, come and follow, come and be with me, and remain in me.

1. *Come and See Principle* (John 1:39-46). This first step encourages people to consider who Jesus is and to test Gods' goodness. This is the first introduction to Christ and His work. In brief, this means the church meets its members for encouragement, instruction, consolation, and motivation (1 Cor 14:3; Heb 10:24-25). All members should meet together regularly so that they can receive and enjoy all that the church can offer.

2. *Come and Follow Principle* (Matt 14:18-22; Mark 1:16-20.). Christ stayed for a long period with those he called. He trained them into a life rightly related to the Word,

prayer, relationships, and mission. It was a lifetime commitment.

3. *Come and Be With Me Principle* (Mark 3:13-14; Luke 6:13). This principle is applied to the few who have suitable gifts, character, and skills to be trained to be disciple makers. These people may constitute a pool for future church pastors, missionaries, and dynamic disciple-making leaders.

4. *Remain In Me Principle*. These are a group of laymen ready to labor in teams who are well trained, highly motivated, and have grown spiritually. This is the group referred to in Eph 4:16 (Hull, 1990, pp. 216-218).

Gal 4:19 says, “Until Christ is formed in you.” Gordon Fee, commenting on this verse, suggests a very strong principle concerning membership retention. He explains that the new Galatians were not to deviate from Christ. They were to stay in Christ until Christ’s image was formed in them. This goal should be given to each newly converted member, to stay with Christ and to be Christ centered (2007, p. 231).

Aubrey Malphurs offers several important contributions on how Jesus made disciples that are crucial in membership retention. Unlike the crowds which followed Jesus, the disciples who believed, followed Him and obeyed Him. They were a narrow circle of followers called the twelve disciples and a broader circle which consisted of a variety of men and women from various groups who believed and followed Jesus (Luke 6:13; 8:1-3). To follow Jesus meant to be a servant of Jesus, to be willing to serve Jesus even to the point of death. In order to make disciples, Jesus focused on small groups of disciples (Mark 1:16-20; John 2:11). Second, He spent time with the inner circle of the twelve. Third, He counseled individuals like Nicodemus in John 3 (Malphurs, 2009, pp. 55-58).

Malphurs also listed six steps which can assist new believers to grow in Christ.

These steps can be summarized as follows:

- They should follow Jesus (1 Cor 11:1; 1 Pet 2:21) and to follow Jesus means to serve Him (Acts 20:19; Rom 12:11; Col 3:24; 1 Thess 1:9) and serve others (1 Cor 12:5; Eph 4:12; 6:7; 1 Pet 4:10).
- They should deny themselves and embrace His will for their lives (Rom 6:1-14; 12:1; Gal 2:20; Phil 3:7-8).
- They should believe and hold to Christ's teachings (Acts 2:42; 6:1-7).
- They should love one another (1 John 3:14).
- They should bear fruit (Gal 5:22; Col 1:10 (Malphurs, 2009, p. 66)).

Malphurs lists three additional points concerning how the early church made disciples. These points indicate the kind of lifestyle the members of the early church lived which resulted in its rapid spiritual growth. He suggests that, (a) they met in large houses (medium sized groups), (b) they met in smaller houses (small groups), and (c) they ministered one-on-one (individually) as Barnabas ministered to Paul (Acts 9:26-28) (2009, p. 71).

In his book *The Disciple Making Church*, Tangeman discusses several key points to keep church members growing. They include having a church strategic plan, helping members discover their spiritual gifts, being mission focused; and having a church structure that favors spiritual nurture. These points are further explained as:

1. Having a strategy of shaping new believers into Christ's image.
2. Having a simple church structure which will enable church members to easily meet one another.

3. Assisting and helping the members to accept changes which will be rewarding to them and to others.

4. Encouraging small groups as a means of nurture among the members.

5. Letting all members be involved in seasons of prayer.

6. Helping members to discover and use their spiritual gifts in order to edify all the other members.

7. Helping the members to focus on the mission of the church.

8. Establishing small groups where disciples can be nurtured, supported, encouraged, and trained (Tangeman, 1996, pp. 325-326).

Warren offers a few additional suggestions on how to help church members become mature. He suggests that spiritual growth must be intentional for it requires commitment and effort to grow (Rom 6:13) and spiritual growth must be very practical, for any believer can grow to maturity if he or she develops the spiritual habits required. Also, spiritual growth is a process that takes time (see, e.g., how God allowed Israel to grow little by little in Deut 7:22) and people arrive at maturity through a process (Eph 4:10). Spiritual maturity is better demonstrated by behavior than by beliefs, so we should let others see our faith by our actions (Jas 3:13), for Matt 7:24-27 suggests that by their fruits you shall know them. Christians need relationships to grow to spur one another along (Heb 10:24-25; 1 John 3:14), and it takes a variety of spiritual experiences with God to produce spiritual maturity (Deut 11:2; Prov 20:30) (Warren, 1995, pp. 331-340).

Social meetings also have an important role to play in retention. Russell Burrill suggests that the social meeting was one of the earliest methods used to care for church members. This method helped church members share their testimonies and experience the

presence of the Lord. Such experiences encouraged the members to grow strong in the faith (1998, p. 180).

Burrill further suggests that social meetings are a strong method in nurturing church members.

Adventists maintained a beautiful balance between the relational and the cognitive and the cognitive while modern Adventists seem to be majoring on the cognitive and neglecting the relational. Perhaps it is time for modern Adventists to rediscover the balanced life of the cognitive and the relational. Perhaps it is time for fewer sermons and more fellowship. (p. 180)

Many social meetings have been conducted at Adventist events such as camp meetings and General Conference sessions. It was at such occasions that Ellen White presented Jesus Christ as the only solution for our sins.

It was also at such occasions that the newly converted gave their testimony about how they had been forgiven and expressed their joy and happiness about their new experience with Christ (p. 188).

Concerning social meetings as a means of nurturing new converts Burrill explains that social meetings enabled the early Adventists to develop a community among the believers. During those occasions, the Bible studies conducted gave them an opportunity to share and confess their sins and to encourage one another. The social meetings acted as glue to hold the early believers together. It also helped them to iron out differences between themselves (p. 186).

In order for any newly converted member to grow spiritually, the Adventist Church has suggested that seven principles be followed:

1. A life of Spirit. The Spirit of God not only gives birth to a new life, He fosters

the spiritual growth and helps the new convert to daily walk with God (John 14:17; 16:13; Rom 8:14; 2 Cor 3:17, 18).

2. A life of love and unity. A Christian life starts by being reconciled to God and then to one another, for sin had brought separation (Isa 59:2). In Christ there is reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18). Love is a requirement of any believer for as Christ loved us, so we must love one another (John 13:34).

3. A life of study. As food is a basic need to sustain the physical life, so is it with God's Word—it is likened to a sword (Heb 4:12). The Word equips the Christian with all good virtues for the Christian journey. It is to be studied daily and regularly (2 Tim 3:16, 17).

4. A life of prayer. To know God's will is part of what is needed for spiritual growth. This will be possible only as one has a constant life of communion with God—life of prayer (Luke 18:11; Eph 6:18). Prayer is likened to oxygen for the soul.

5. A life of fruit bearing. A Christian life is demonstrated by what the Bible calls fruits of the Spirit (Matt 7:20; Eph 2:78). It is a life of obedience which is the result of the believer's relationship with God. Love is demonstrated in action (John 14:15, 15:4).

6. A life of spiritual warfare. The Christian journey is filled with warfare, war between good and evil, and between Christ's people and the devil (Eph 6:12, 13; 1 Pet 5:8-9). A Christian life is both a battle and a march.

7. A life of worship, witness, and hope. Christian growth takes place within a community of the redeemed and, on the other hand, we have a community of those without the visible body of Christ. This life happens while we are being together with



other members (Acts 2:42-47) (General Conference Ministerial Association, 2005, pp. 155-171).

After reading, analyzing, and synthesizing the research done by one author, Burrill suggests six points on how to grow an Adventist Church and on how to retain new members in the church:

1. New converts need friends. A church must be based on friendships or a relational model to keep new converts in the church.

2. New converts who stay need to experience a high degree of change in their life situation. The more rapid the change a person undergoes in life, the more open and receptive the person is to a new orientation of life. This means that conversion involves several changes occurring at the same time. Those changes may lead to conversion or not, but the change provides an openness to new ideas that did not exist without those changes.

3. New converts who stay develop relationships with church members prior to conversion. Most issues of retention of members are based on relationships with people. When new converts have relationships with old members of the church, this helps them to remain in the church. People without friends often leave.

4. New converts who stay develop friendships in the church. This often involves becoming active in a small group since it is not easy to be a friend of all the church members. Small group participation is mandatory for any church that is serious about keeping its new members.

5. New converts who stay fit in the church. New members are more likely to stay in the church if they have a similar socio-economic status as other members. Age groups

also have an impact. For example, if the majority of the church consists of older men, they tend to attract and retain their age group more than other age groups.

6. New converts stay when integrated into a group and given a role or task. New members should be given some kind of church duty to keep them involved so that they are able to identify themselves with the church (Burrill, 2009, pp. 75-83).

In his book *The Tender Shepherd*, John Killinger describes the following ways concerning how to care for and feed new members. He offers practical examples on how these principles can be applied.

1. After giving new members a warm welcome they should be given information about the church and their duties as new members. New members could also be photographed and their photos displayed in the “New Member Gallery” so that the older members can get to know them.

2. Sponsors who will mentor the new members should be carefully chosen from the congregation. These will be responsible in introducing the new members into the congregational lifestyle and training them on how to experience life with the other church members. The sponsors should be friendly and lovable in nature and having the ability to pass the right information on to the new members.

3. How the new members are introduced to the congregation has a big impact on whether the new members will keep coming or abandon the church. This requires that the pastor handle the new members with much care. If he or she introduces them with enthusiasm and happiness, the same will be done by the congregation when interacting with them.

4. A follow-up letter should be written by the pastor to new members to welcome

them and express gratitude to them for coming to the church. This letter can also acknowledge that the church has received them into church membership.

5. The new members' biographies should be taken and written in the weekly newsletter to enable the church members to know more about the new converts' age, address, work, talents, hobbies, and a brief background.

6. An orientation program is useful because it gives new members specific roles they can be involved in during their first few weeks, it gives new members more information, and it provides an opportunity to the older members to interact with the new members.

Topics that can be covered in the orientation include a refresher course about the history of Christianity, the history of the local church (denomination), a general overview of the workings of the congregation and a challenge to the new member for total commitment in their devotional life, the use of their resources, and their continued spiritual growth (Killinger, 1985, pp. 37-44).

The *Ministers' Manual of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* points out a very important aspect concerning nurturing church members. The book states that it is not just baptizing people into the church which is important, but teaching and fellowshiping with them is also vital.

The most miraculous thing about Pentecost is not that 3,000 were baptized in a day but that they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship. (Acts 2:42) With the Holy Spirit's aid, it's possible to enjoy both quantity and quality in church growth. (1992, p. 129)

The *Ministers' Manual* gives further information on how to establish new members. Develop a friendship system to help the new members become connected with someone whom they respect so that the person cares for them. "We then that are strong

ought to bear the infirmities of the weak (Rom 15:1). This person will act as a guardian, sponsor, under shepherd, or as a friend to the new member. This guardian will report to the pastor at least quarterly how the new convert is getting on (*Minister's Manual*, 1992, p. 130).

Another way of caring for the new member is to continue giving them instructions. "As new born babies, desire the pure milk of the Word that you may grow thereby" (1 Pet 2:2). Assign them some work and let them be trained on how to witness to their immediate friends and family members. The same method was used by Christ in Mark 5:19 (*Minister's Manual*, 1992, p. 132).

In his book *You Can Keep Them If You Care*, James Cress underlines three important ingredients that are necessary to keep new members in the church: (a) they should be able to articulate the doctrines of their faith, (b) they should have friends within the congregation (at least six to eight), and (c) they should be involved in meaningful group activities (2000, p. 46).

Cress also points out another ingredient in the nurturing of new members: to open doors for them. Intellectual truth is not enough to keep the new members. We should create "communalism" with the new converts. We should not close ourselves off in "mission compounds" but we should try to create an environment where we can mingle with the society around us. As Adventists we are lacking in this area. We need to go beyond information to lifestyle (2 Pet 3:18). Cress further explains that transformation should be witnessed outwardly like in the case mentioned in Luke 3:8, 10-14. The new members should have an experience of putting off the old evil nature, proper Christian submission in various areas of political and social life, be charged to watch and pray, be

encouraged to stand firm in the faith, and to resist the assaults of the devil (Cress, 2000, pp. 50- 53).

Cress further recommends the following strategies to be applied to the newly baptized believers so that they can be kept in the church: (a) build an incorporation consciousness, (b) develop an incorporation structure, (c) provide friendship by building opportunities, (d) structuring need-meeting ministries, (e) create new roles and tasks, and (f) monitor incorporation results (p. 57).

Cress explains further on how church members are to be kept in the church by stressing that the most important thing to do is to have meaningful relationships with them. This involves being able to win their friendship and being able to share intimate, private areas of the other person's life so that you can earn that person's trust and build some measure of relationship. This is essential in keeping him or her close to you emotionally and physically. The church may teach correct and true doctrine but unless the new members have friends, they will not remain in the church for long (2000, pp. 64-65).

The next important question that one may ask is: How can one make meaningful friendships? To answer this crucial question, which is at the core in membership retention, Cress suggests six steps:

1. Communicate love, especially by the church leaders. They need to relate in love to the new converts.
2. Preach and teach love. Love preached from the pulpit should be manifested in the life of the preacher.
3. Emphasize friendliness and warmth. Let it be seen practically that you are able to love as you mingle, greet, and share with all.

4. Follow up your visitors. This is where you try to get to know your visitors. Invite them for lunch, know where they stay, take their mobile phone numbers, and show an interest in them.

5. Broaden the inner group. Make the new people feel that they belong to the church or congregation. This should not be an artificial welcome but should show genuine love and warmth.

6. Strengthen and increase social events by creating social meetings outside the church for more fellowship, for example, play together, eat together, pray, learn with one another, etc. (Cress, 2000, p. 69).

### **Summary and Conclusions**

The study on theological principles from both the Old and New Testament, from the writings of E. G. White, and from different Christian writers has emphasized many important principles on membership retention. These principles can be broadly classified into four main categories: (a) the role of a Christ-centered life, (b) the role of newly baptized member, (c) the role of the church leaders, and (d) the role of the mature Christians. Each of the four categories has a crucial part to play in membership retention. The categories mentioned above will be discussed briefly in order to show their role in retaining members.

*A Christ-centered Life:* The life of a new believer must be centered upon Christ because Christ is the source of spiritual life. This means that the new believer must have a close relationship with Jesus Christ. It also means they need a consistent devotional life which includes regular prayer, regular Bible study, and regular fellowship with church

members. If this lifestyle is followed by the new converts they will be strong in their faith and they will usually stay in the church.

*The Role for New Believers:* New believers also have a role to play in staying in the faith and in the Church which includes staying united with other members, cooperating with the church officers and those members who give them Bible instructions, and above all participating in church services and other activities, like witnessing, helping, giving tithes and offerings, and other church activities.

*The Role of the Church Leaders:* This too is very important in retaining new converts in the church. Leaders should conduct regular Bible studies for the new converts, visit them, and monitor their general welfare.

*The Role of the Mature Church Members:* Mature Christians also have key roles to play in nurturing new converts. They must work hard to create loving relationships with them, must provide for both their spiritual and physical needs, must visit them in their homes, and must help them when they have a crisis.

In this chapter, I developed a theology of retention as taught in the Scriptures, in E. G. White writings, and other Christian writers. In the next chapter I will deal with the political, cultural, and religious context of the Nyaguta District of the South Kenya Conference where the project will be implemented.

## CHAPTER 3

### POLITICAL, CULTURAL, GEOGRAPHICAL, AND RELIGIOUS ANALYSIS OF NYAGUTA ADVENTIST DISTRICT

In this chapter I will discuss the political, cultural, geographical, and religious context of the Nyaguta Seventh-day Adventist District. My intention is to show how these factors will impact the project, the retention of membership in the Nyaguta District of the South Kenya Conference.

#### **Contextual Description of the Nyaguta Region**

##### Political Context

In this section the political aspect of the Nyaguta District will be discussed. This includes the lives of people, how they are governed by local and national leaders, how they relate to one another, both within their group and with their neighbors and the rest of the Kenyan people. The section will also show how politics may impact the implementation of the project.

The Nyaguta District is part of Kisii County, which is one of the 47 counties in Kenya. The people who live in Kisii County are the Abagusii, one of the tribes in Kenya. The Nyaguta District consists of two political divisions, Keumbu and Kiogoro. The two divisions have 5 chiefs and 17 assistant chiefs. This kind of government structure is called Devolved Government, which brings government services closer to the people (Government of Kenya, 2010, No. 55). This government structure unites the communities



and enhances peaceful and democratic leadership. This current political system will create a favorable environment for the spiritual nurture of church members. Church meetings and other gatherings take place without fear. Another advantage of the government structure is that it implements the constitution of Kenya, which gives freedom of worship to all registered religious groups.

Leaders are chosen according to their leadership skills and educational qualifications. Interviews are conducted and the best are appointed to leadership positions. All interviews are presided over by a government official from a higher level of leadership. County commissioners are appointed by the president of the county.

County administrators have their offices centrally positioned in the area of their work. This enables people to meet them for consultations. All county officials are paid by the government, except the clansmen/women who are locally given some allowances from their specific clans. The clansmen/women usually handle the simplest issues in the clan.

In order to enforce law and order, each administrative office or center has some administrative policemen/women. They are positioned to enforce law and order, and protect the administrators and the community from any lawless activity.

The common disputes which are handled by the government administrators are land disputes within the communities and at their boundaries, issues of cattle rustling, as well as clan and family conflicts. The government administration also promotes government policies at all levels.

The Nyaguta District is connected with other parts of the country by tarmac roads. These roads make transport possible in the district as well as outside of it; however, most

of the other roads are impassable during the rainy season. There are three main tarmac roads, Kisii-Kilgoris, Kisii-Nairobi, and Keumbu-Kilgoris. Transport vehicles and small vehicles access the district to carry people or raw agricultural materials, such as maize grains and banana. Motorcycles and bicycles are also used to transport people and commodities. The communication network is fairly good, since most people have mobile phones, radios, and televisions.

In conclusion, there is generally law and order in the Nyaguta District. There is also security and peace among the dwellers of the Nyaguta District. Government policies are fairly well adhered to and most people are informed about government policies.

### Social Context

This section is intended to help the reader understand the society of the Nyaguta District. The information given in this section is from personal observation obtained during personal house to house visits, personal interactions with church members, especially elderly church leaders, from 2011 to 2013.

Families consist of nuclear and extended families. In the nuclear family most families have an average of six children. However some families have as many as 12 children. Extended families are common in many families. A married man apart from taking care of his nuclear family (his wife and children) has relatives, such as grandparents, cousins, in-laws, nephews and nieces, and others.

The society also has polygamous families. In such families there can be more than ten children in a single home. In such families there are continuous family conflicts.

The primary needs of most members of the society are fulfilled: food, clothing and shelter. The daily food is *ugali*, along with vegetables, bananas, sweet potatoes, and

milk. Children are usually clothed well, with clothes for hot and cold seasons. Most families have houses which protect them from sun, rain, wind, and thieves. Most of the houses are semi-permanent.

Land resources are evenly distributed among the people. However, for those with large families, the land is sub-divided into smaller units than those with smaller families. The presence of peace will enhance the implementation of the project since spiritual nurture is favored by a peaceful community. Most young people work in their fields or gardens. Less than one quarter of the population is employed by the government.

The main income of most people is from small scale farming (peasant farming). Their income per day is less than one American dollar. Since most of their activities involve farming or agriculture, their income varies from year to year, due to climate or weather changes. If the weather is favorable, the harvest is good and if it is bad, the harvest is poor.

The government of Kenya provides free education for both primary and secondary education. Very poor families are also given a local bursary. It is the law in Kenya that all children who are eligible for school must attend school. The provision of free education has reduced the level of illiteracy to a large extent and this has assisted church members to be able to read Christian books, which enhance spiritual growth.

There are five health centers located in Nyaguta District which provide sufficient services and care for healthful living. Common diseases are: Typhoid, highland malaria, and the current killer disease HIV/AIDS. The presence of health facilities has also helped church members to receive health care services which have an impact on their physical and spiritual growth. This has also reduced a high mortality rate in the community.

## Cultural Context

This section covers several aspects, including the definition of culture. I will describe the general behavior and ways of living in the district.

The term culture comes from the German word *kultur*, meaning to develop or grow; it helps to understand human similarities and differences from society to society (Howell & Paris, 2011, p. 27).

### **Population**

The population of the Nyaguta District consists of Abagusii people, one of the 42 tribes of Kenya. According to the 2009 census, the tribe has a total population of about 2.5 million (Kenya National Bureau of Standards, 2009, 1c:120-127). The Nyaguta District has about 100,000 people, about 2.5 percent of the population of the Abagusii tribe.

### **Authority and Power**

The Nyaguta Adventist District is in Kisii County. Some clans are wealthier than others. This is often due to ancestral origin. If the clan has a chief or rich man or a well-positioned government officer or educated children, such a clan tends to be rich. The way social amenities are distributed in the district also gives a similar picture. The key factor which plays a major role in social life is education. Families with well-educated children who are employed by the government are highly respected by the community. The earliest educated people (many were from Adventist families) were those who attended Adventist mission schools (church leaders, personal communication, December 20, 2012).

## **Eating and Dressing**

Eating and dressing habits have been compromised by a Western lifestyle and also by globalization; however, there are some who still follow the traditional way of eating, dressing, and cooking.

## **Rites of Passage**

Life stages include birth, circumcision, marriage, and death. Most births take place in hospitals although some take place at home. Circumcision is compulsory for all male children and is conducted between the ages of 8 to 12 years. Female “circumcision” is also done, though it is currently decreasing because it is prohibited by the government. Three types of marriages are practiced: customary marriage, civil marriage, and church marriage. Of the three the dominant one is the customary marriage. The key issue which connects all these marriages is the dowry or bride-wealth. This is problematic because most youth cannot afford the dowry; therefore, they elope and drop out of the church (Omwoyo, 2012, pp. 41-48).

Those who are Christians believe in the resurrection of the dead. Others believe in the resurrection. They conduct cultural ceremonies when an adult dies. These rituals or ceremonies are mainly done to appease the spirits of the deceased. Even some Christians and Adventist church members are influenced by these practices.

Within the district there are local herbalists, diviners, and healers. These persons exert a strong influence on some of the members who go to consult them. Their presence has challenged me to study the Bible and apply biblical principles to counter these demonic practices. In the process of countering these demonic practices some people have been delivered and empowered for mission.

We share some cultural beliefs and practices with our adjoining tribes, although we have differences in our worldviews. Concerning this Gailyn Van Rheenen comments,

The Kipsigis believe all spirits to be ancestors. The Kisii and the Luo, however, perceive the presence of ancestral spirits as well as other spirits who have never been human. While witchcraft and sorcery are prevalent among the Kisii and Luo, these practices are less pronounced among the Kipsigis. On the other hand, ancestral blessings, which are not critical to Luo culture, play a significant role in Kipsigis culture, especially during marriage ceremonies and rites of passage into adulthood. (1991, pp. 26-27)

This reveals that some cultural practices within the district can be found in the other neighboring tribes, this poses a challenge on spiritual nurture because they will continue to influence members in Nyaguta District even after addressing the problem.

The Nyaguta area churches have members from different clans within the district. The composition of such membership has advantages and disadvantages. When it comes to talents, it provides a variety. But at times there are leadership struggles based on clan loyalties, especially during church elections.

### Geographical Context

The Nyaguta district is within a region surrounded by many hills with plateaus. It has many rivers which feed the Gucha, the main river which cuts across Kisii County and ends in Lake Victoria. The region is green all year with both natural and exotic vegetation. The place is within the equatorial climate region, where the rainfall totals range between 1,750 and 2,250 mm a year (Omwoyo, 2004, pp. 27-29). The place is generally cold in the morning and hot in the afternoon. The rains fall mostly late in the afternoon. The climate is suitable for agriculture, both farming and livestock keeping. The main cash crops are tea and coffee, which are grown on a small scale. The dominant type of farming is subsistence.

The various geographical conditions will favor the implementation of the project. They include the rainfall patterns and the temperature, the terrain, and farming activities. While the rains and temperatures favor holding seminars during the day, the terrain is also conducive for communication and travelling (Omwoyo, 2012, pp. 9-16, 42-43).

### Religious Context

In this section major religious groups will be identified and the influence of religion in the Nyaguta District will be discussed. The role of religious groups in shaping the life pattern of the district will be analyzed.

#### **Major Religious Groups**

The major religious groups in the Nyaguta District are Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR). Of the two, Christianity forms the larger group. There are no major world religions, such as Hinduism, Islam, or Buddhism. There are a few Muslims, but there is no mosque in the district.

The Christian church with the largest number of members is the Catholic Church. This church has three major centers in the Nyaguta District. In each center there is a jointly sponsored school by the church and the government. In this arrangement the government of Kenya provides teachers and the church provides religious instructions and leadership to the school. Catholics are concentrated in these centers.

The second largest Christian church is the Adventist Church, which has 27 organized churches and 6 companies. They are evenly distributed over the area.

The third group consists of Protestant churches, the Pentecostal Assemblies of God, the Redeemed churches, and the Full Gospel churches (Information obtained through observation and from local government officers).

## **Their Influence**

As a district pastor I have observed that impact of the religious bodies is mainly felt in education. The Catholic Church has three major secondary schools, and the Adventists also have three. The general lifestyle of the community has been shaped by the teachings of these churches. Social evils, such as heavy drinking and the use of drugs, have been minimized. A good number of the county administrators, such as chiefs and sub-chiefs, are either Adventist or Catholic. Most families who are at the forefront in agriculture, business, and other economic activities are Christians.

Of the Christians in leadership positions, the majority are Adventists. The fact that some church members are government officers poses a challenge to spiritual nurture, for they are not available when needed for church services.

## **The Adventist Church in the Nyaguta District**

In this section I will discuss the general overview of the Adventist church in Nyaguta District. This will include, the history, growth pattern, pastoral leadership, finance, attendance, church activities, and felt needs.

### **History of the Church**

The historical aspect of the Adventist church in the Nyaguta District goes back to 1900-1912 when the first missionary, by the name Ira A. Evanson came from America to Gusii and established a mission center at the place called Nyanchwa, where the present South Kenya Conference Headquarters is located (Nyaundi, 1997, p. 31). The first camp meeting to be held in the Nyanchwa mission field was held in the present day Nyaguta District. Most churches within the district were born from the original Nyaguta district.



According to oral traditions of elderly Adventist members, Adventists from all over the South Kenya Conference and what is present Nyamira Conference used to come and camp at Nyaguta. They put up tents and stayed for one full week, eating together and worshipping together daily. The meetings produced the earliest converts from the Abagusii tribe. The main speakers in those days were missionaries from America.

Currently, Adventist church members in the Nyaguta District are evenly distributed within the district. Every two to three kilometers there is an Adventist Church building. According to the current statistics from the church records in the district there are about 5,200 members. However, the latest 2012 church “head-count,” done in every church, showed the number has dropped.

Of the 33 congregations, 18 have permanent church buildings. The rest have semi-permanent buildings. Some of the churches have pews while others do not. Most of the buildings are large enough to host all its regular members and most have legal government land title deeds.

The Adventist church membership in the district has a good relationship with Christian of other churches. They share many things, such as common tea buying centers and students of both the Adventist and non-Adventist schools. They also meet in social meetings such as school parents’ meetings, marriages, and initiation ceremonies.

The impact of the Adventist Church in the Nyaguta District is great. Adventist Christians come from almost all the clans. The Adventist-affiliated schools, both primary and secondary, are well represented in the whole region. There are many Adventist teachers and government officers within the District. Currently there are three Adventist pastors who were born in the district and three Adventist families of retired Adventist

pastors with their children who are members of the church and some are church elders.

### Membership Growth Patterns for Ten Years

Table 1 shows the membership growth pattern. The following is observed: (a) the highest membership in the district was in 2010 followed by 2004, (b) the lowest membership was experienced in 2006 followed by 2011, (c) the average membership is 4,500, and (d) the growth patterns are irregular.

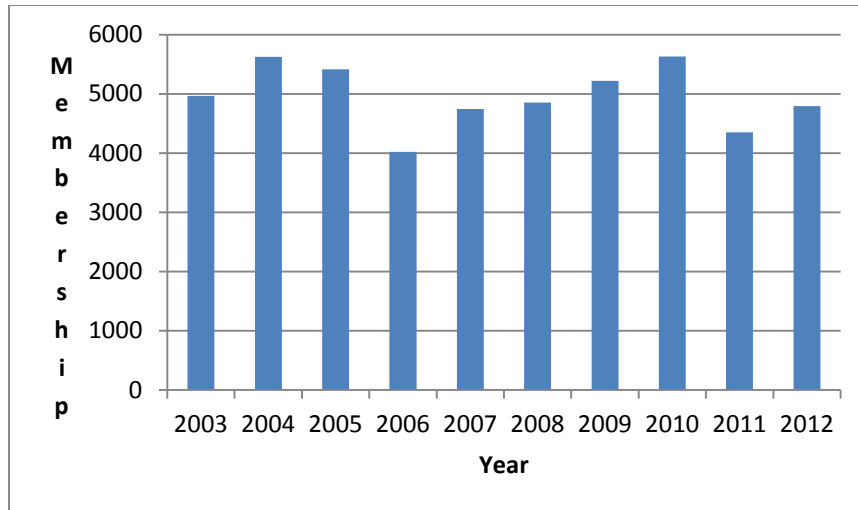
Table 1 shows statistical records according to the records of the South Kenya Conference (2013) and the records of the churches of the Nyaguta District (2013).

Table 1

#### *Nyaguta Membership Record Between 2003 and 2012*

Year	Membership	% Growth
2003	4,965	
2004	5,622	11.6
2005	5,415	(3.6)
2006	4,022	(34.6)
2007	4,743	(15.2)
2008	4,853	(2.4)
2009	5,217	(7.5)
2010	5,631	7.9
2011	4,348	(22.2)
2012	4,792	10.2

*Note.* Taken from *South Kenya Conference Statistical Report—May 2013*.



*Figure 1.* Nyaguta membership record between 2003 and 2012.  
Taken from South Kenya Conference Statistical Reports May 2013.

#### Pastoral Leadership in the Area

The pastor I replaced in 2011 had ministered in the district for five years, 2006-2010, while the two before him served for three years and two years. The average number of years pastors served was three years. This is because the district does not have a pastor's residence so pastors usually commute from outside the district. The district is the largest in the conference, with 27 organized churches and 6 companies.

#### Financial Pattern for Five Years

The financial trend in tithe giving and offerings show an upwards trend. Table 2 and Figure 2 show the trend in Kenyan shillings.

The financial state of the district shows that the majority of members are not faithful in returning tithes. Several reasons affect faithful giving: (a) the population is dense so the land is split into small units to the extent of becoming uneconomical for meaningful cultivation; (b) farming methods are outdated and cannot produce high

Table 2

*Nyaguta District Tithes and Offerings Distribution 2008-2012*

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Tithe	1,394,322	2,120,118	2,194,177	2,418,613	2,483,362
Offering	121,827	154,428	151,797	165,526	179,693

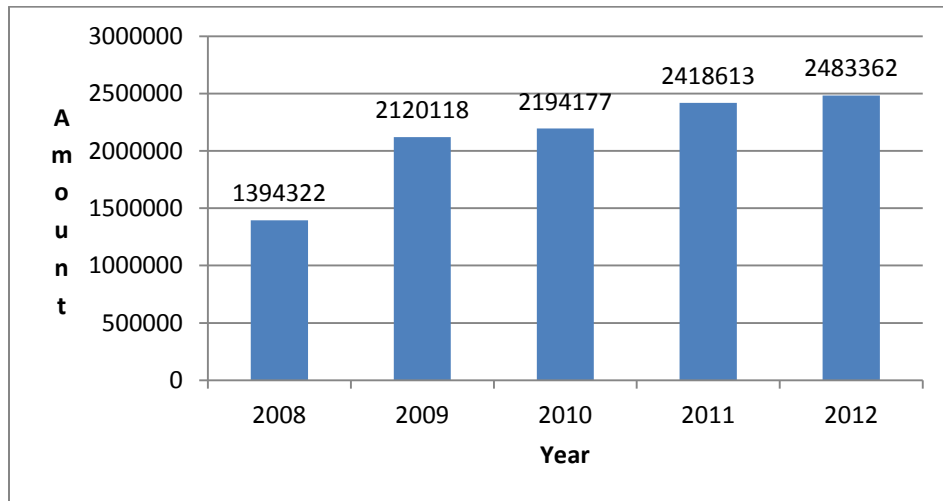


Figure 2. Tithe amounts for 2013. Taken from South Kenya Conference Treasury Reports—2013.

yields; (c) many Adventist youth are not employed; (d) economical dependence, meaning that some families have many children whose needs must be cared for.

Other factors which affect giving are spiritual: (a) lack of total commitment to Jesus Christ; (a) lack of sufficient biblical teaching on giving; (c) lack of spiritual leadership that sets a good example in tithe giving.

While the above figure shows a positive trend in giving, the number of tithe payers in the church records is not proportionate to the number of members. Fewer than 20 percent of members are regular tithers. While one of the reasons given is that the

majority of the members are unemployed youth, yet not all those employed are faithful in tithing

#### Church Attendance

Attendance of members in most of the churches is above 70 percent. They start with fewer than half for the Sabbath School programs, but by sermon time most of the members are present. The majority of those who attend are women and children. Most of the churches have permanent buildings with enough pews for their members. The distance from one church to another is between two to three kilometers.

#### Church Activities

The church conducts several activities within the week and over the weekends. During the week various small groups meet: Women's Ministries and the Dorcas society meet on Wednesday for Bible study and singing. They also visit those in need. The youth meet during the week for fellowship and conduct several programs planned by their leaders and the church. Each church department plans and conducts seminars for spiritual nurture. Every church has small groups for fellowship, which meet as home churches every Sunday morning. Each congregation conducts an evangelistic campaign at least once in a year. The churches meet yearly for one week for a camp meeting, organized by the conference. The camp meeting is a very important occasion for spiritual nurture and fellowship.

#### Felt Needs in the Nyaguta Churches

The first need is to subdivide the district into more than one so that it is manageable. At present the district is large and its membership is over 5,000. This makes

pastoral work ineffective and difficult. Second, several members need serious biblical and Christ-centered teaching in order to receive total deliverance from several African traditional practices, such as deliverance from the fear of diviners, sorcery, ancestral spirits, and other related practices. The third need is to train and make disciples by applying biblical principles so that churches can stop losing members. Fourth spiritual leadership seminars and training are needed in order to equip the church with able leaders who can lead the church to accomplish its mission. Fifth, there is a need to make members financially self-sustaining by applying stewardship principles from the Bible and the writings of E. G. White. Finally, members need Adventist institutions which are affordable where the youth can receive an Adventist education.

The greatest of all the felt needs in the district is a spiritual revival, in all aspects of the church. As was stated by E. G. White:

A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work. There must be earnest effort to obtain the blessing of the Lord, not because God is willing to bestow His blessing upon us, but because we are unprepared to receive it. (1958, p. 121)

### **Missiological Implications**

The mission of the Adventist Church is to communicate the gospel to the world in the context of the Three Angels' Messages (Rev 12:6-12). The Nyaguta District is part of the world where the gospel is to be communicated. The gospel cannot be effectively communicated without understanding the contexts of the recipients, which include political, geographical, cultural, social, and religious contexts. Membership retention in the Nyaguta District, which is the purpose of the project, cannot be effectively implemented without understanding the contexts discussed. Therefore, this chapter has a

role to play in achieving the mission of the Adventist church, which is to make disciples for Christ.

### **Summary**

The Nyaguta District is surrounded by low hills and valleys. It has seasonal and permanent rivers. Its climate is favorable for farming. It is also conducive for keeping animals. The climate favors most of the churches to be involved in religious activities, such as house-to-house visitation and holding evangelistic campaigns.

In the historical context, the place is part of the Abagusii tribe in Kenya with the people speaking the Ekegusii language. The Abagusii tribe is the second tribe in Kenya to receive the Adventist message and it is now the tribe with the largest number of Adventist members in Kenya. They are generally known to be aggressive in taking the Adventist message to people who are generally receptive to spiritual matters and because of this they might respond positively to the implementation of the project. They have cultural traits that, if well used and submitted to God's work, can be used for the spreading of the gospel.

The Abagusii people are generally outgoing and social by nature. They can easily mingle and interact with other people. A good number of them are exposed to a modern lifestyle. They are generally peaceful and hard working. Some of them have left old cultural practices; however, things like circumcision of the male children, polygamy, and beliefs in ancestral spirits are still practiced by some. Their social nature can be a strong point when it comes to sharing the spiritual message. The presence of some people, who practice ATR, creates an environment to demonstrate Gods' power over such practices, because many of the practitioners live in fear and need deliverance.

The dominant religious groups are Christians. There are no great world religions such as Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. The absence of these world religions will favor the implementation of the project because the other Christian denominations are not a threat to the spread of Adventism in the district. Even though the Catholic Church has the greatest number of members, it is not a major hindrance to the spread of Adventism in the district. Christian churches have done a good ground work by preaching and turning people from some African religious practices which are against the Bible.

The Adventist church in the Nyaguta District has a unique history in the setting of South Kenya Conference. This has led to a spirit of contentment and pride among the church members. This could be one of the reasons for irregular growth patterns in memberships, inconsistent pastoral leadership, few members returning tithes and offerings, and church activities and attendance becoming a formality.

Having understood the context of Nyaguta District I am now in a position to develop a strategy for the retention of members in the district. I will build the strategy using the aid of a Gantt chart and Logframe in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER 4

### STRATEGY TO INCREASE THE RETENTION IN THE NYAGUTA DISTRICT

#### **Introduction**

The previous chapter dealt with the social, political, cultural, and religious contexts of the Nyaguta District in the South Kenya Conference. The purpose of this chapter is to offer the needed understanding for the development of an appropriate strategy that will help implement retention of members in the Nyaguta District. Using the Logical Framework Approach, this chapter outlines a strategy in a sequential and orderly manner to address the problem.

#### **Description of a Logframe**

The following paragraphs describe a logical logframe and its application to my project and also explain its background and functions. The logical framework is a planning tool which was developed by USAID in the 1960s (Dale, 2003, p. 57).

#### **Definitions**

The Logical Framework Analysis (LFA) is a means of planning, implementation, and evaluation, of research programs and project (Jenssen, Hambly, & Odeme, 2001, p. 254). One can also say that a Logframe is a logically structured thinking instrument used for planning projects. It makes involvement, transparency, and ownership possible

(Sida, 2004, pp. 3, 6). A Logical Framework Analysis (LFA) can be used to summarize even multiple strands of a project, clearly and systematically (McDonald et al., 2010, p. 1061).

In the following section more information is given concerning a logframe: Goals must be clear and understood by all stakeholders (Bruce & Langdon, 2000, p. 9). Objectives define the project structure (NORAD, 1999, p. 64). Measurable indicators show the achievement level of the Logframe hierarchy (p. 64). The means of verification include data that is recorded and made available for the project managers to determine if objectives have been recorded. Assumptions describe conditions beyond the control of project management (p. 74).

The Logframe has columns and rows. The vertical row includes the following: Goal, Purpose, Outputs, Activities, and Inputs. According to Bond Notebook 4, Series 4, the goal gives the overall problem the project will assist in solving (Bond, 2003, p. 4). The Purpose tests the effect of the project (Armstrong & Baron, 2008, p. 283). The output states the services and the benefits received from the project (Ortengren, 2004, pp. 3, 6). The activities are tasks done to achieve outputs (Bollyyan, 2004, p. 12). The inputs are the goods and services necessary to undertake the activities (NORAD, 1999, p. 17). Some of the advantages of a logframe are as follows: it brings together all the key elements of the project, it presents them in a systematic, concise, and coherent way, it ensures that inputs and outputs are not confused with each other or objectives are overlooked, it identifies the main factors related to the main success of the project, it provides the basis for monitoring and evaluation, and it encourages a multidisciplinary approach to project preparation and supervision (Takyi, 2011).

## **Application of the Logframe**

The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to make disciples as commanded by Jesus Christ (Matt 28:19-21). In view of this, I undertake the project to curb the membership loss in the Nyaguta district.

The overarching goal of my project is to reduce membership loss in the Nyaguta district. The purpose which is connected with the goal is to develop and implement a strategy to increase membership retention in the district. In order to achieve the above, five major outputs will be produced by the project. These are: (a) permission from the conference, (b) focus groups interviewed, (c) seminar materials developed, (d) seminars conducted, and (e) monitoring and evaluation completed.

In the first quarter of the year permission will be received, focus groups will be interviewed in April and May of the second quarter of the first year, materials will be developed from the Bible, Ellen White's writings, and other Christian writers in August and September of the third quarter of the first year, and seminars will be conducted starting from October of the first year through January of the third year. Monitoring and evaluations plus summaries and recommendations will be conducted in the second to fourth quarter of the third year. Activities which will be carried out include study and collecting materials for training, exposition, and topical studies (Warren, 1995, p. 295), disciple making (Hull, 1988, p. 124), cultural setups (Anderson, 1997, p. 158), and involvement of the conference (Dudley, 1983, p. 62).

## **Summary**

After permission has been granted by the conference and church boards, questionnaires will be administered to the focus groups, materials will be developed,

seminars conducted, and monitoring and evaluation carried out. The elders will be trained as TOTs (trainers of trainers) as well as other leaders in the 26 churches. I agree with McNeal that as a leader I should form a culture of good virtues (McNeal, 2006, p. 72). The cultural setup especially dealing with evil spirits in the Kisii community will be studied (Van Rheenen, 1991, p. 27). It is also important to understand the culture of people before imparting Christian virtues to them.

After all these steps are completed, the information gathered will be shared with the conference and all the members of the Nyaguta district for their spiritual growth and edification. I hope the experience obtained from conducting the project will also deepen my relationship with Jesus Christ. The LFA (Figure 3) shows the flow of the activities of the project implementation from the beginning to the end.

Objectives	Measurable Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions
<b>GOAL</b> Nyaguta district membership dropout reduced	Two churches adopt training in retention program by October 2012	Churches have biblical retention materials in church files	All churches will support the project
<b>PURPOSE</b> A strategy to increase membership retention in Nyaguta District developed and implemented	Training started by thirteen churches by fourth quarter 2012	Sabbath school attendance record	Members will be willing to be trained as trainers
<b>OUTPUTS</b> 1. Proposal discussed  2. Focus group interviewed  3. Seminar materials developed  4. Seminars conducted  5. Monitoring and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposal approved</li> <li>• Focus group interviewed by first quarter 2012</li> <li>• Seminar materials in churches by fourth third quarter 2012</li> <li>• Twenty- six elders trained as TOTs</li> <li>• Evaluation instrument</li> <li>• Analyzed reports recorded</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval letters in the file</li> <li>• Focus group Reports</li> <li>• Seminars materials in the file</li> <li>• Records of trained elders</li> <li>• Evaluation records</li> <li>• Analyzed records in files</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conference and church boards give permission</li> <li>• Seminar materials will be in churches</li> <li>• Elders willing to be trained</li> </ul>

ACTIVITIES	INPUTS		
1.1 Seek permission from the conference 2.1 Interview focus group 2.2 Collect data 3.1 Gather biblical teachings 3.2 Gather teaching from other writers 4.1 Produce seminars 4.2 Members share in God's words 4.3 Develop methods on sharing information on spiritual nurture 4.4 Appoint leaders in small groups to steer the programs of recruiting and training other members 5.1 Monitoring and evaluations 5.2 Evaluation instrument tested 6.1 Final Evaluations and recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support group</li> <li>• Teaching materials</li> <li>• Budget</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Church elders and personal ministries leaders willing to be involved in activities</li> </ul>

Figure 3. Logframe.

### Gantt Chart

A Gantt chart, shown in Figure 4, is a tool used in projects to communicate, used as a project schedule status, and also act as a means of tracking and trending schedule performance (Brown & Hyer, 2008, p. 422). The main advantages of a Gantt chart are: (a) it is easy to understand, (b) it gives a clear picture on a time scale horizon (p. 161), (c) it is also easy and simple to use, and (d) it helps a team to see where resource conflicts

ACTIVITIES	Year 1											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>Output 1: Proposal discussed</b>												
<b>Activity 1: Permission sought</b>												
1.1 Written letter												
1.2 Permission granted												
<b>Activity 2: Approved letter taken</b>												
<b>Output 2: Focus group interviewed</b>												
<b>Activity 1: Focus group discussions</b>												
2.1 Data collected												
<b>Activity 2: Data analyzed</b>												
<b>Output 3: Seminar materials developed</b>												
<b>Activity 1: Gather biblical principles</b>												
3.1 Old and New Testament teaching												
3.2 Prophets teachings												
3.3 Other Old Testament writings												
3.4 The gospel's teachings												
3.5 The writings of Paul												
3.6 Other New Testament writings												
<b>Activity 2: Other writings</b>												
2.1 Ellen White writings												
2.2 Consult other Christian writings												
<b>Output 4: Seminars conducted</b>												
<b>Activity 1: Produce seminars</b>												
4.1 Members grouped by gifts												
4.1.1 Gifts of teaching												
4.1.2 Gifts of prophecy												
4.1.3 Other spiritual gifts												
4.2 Members small groups												
4.2.1 Home churches groups												
4.2.2 Families grouped												
<b>Activity 2: Members share in God's Word</b>												
4.3 Words of Old Testament												
4.4 Words of New Testament												
4.5 Words of Ellen White												
4.6 Group leaders form tot												
4.7 Men and women leaders												
<b>Output 5. Monitoring and evaluation.</b>												
<b>Activity 1: Monitoring</b>												
5.1 Quarterly and annual reports												
<b>Activity 2: Final summary and recommendations</b>												

Figure 4. Gantt chart (year 1).

ACTIVITIES	YEAR 2				YEAR 3				ONE IN CHARGE			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	A	B	C	D
<b>Output 1: Proposal discussed</b>												
<b>Activity 1:</b> Permission sought												
1.1 Letter written												
1.2. Permission granted												
<b>Activity 2:</b> Approved letter taken												
<b>Output 2: Focus group conducted</b>												
<b>Activity 1:</b> Focus group discussions												
2.1 Data collected.												
<b>Activity 2.2</b> Data analyzed												
<b>Output 3: Seminars developed</b>												
<b>Activity 1:</b> Gather biblical principles												
3.1 Old and New Testament												
3.2 Prophets teachings												
3.3 Other OT writings												
3.4 The gospel teachings												
3.5 The writing of Paul												
3.6 Other NT writings												
<b>Activity 2:</b> Other writings												
2.1 Ellen White writings												
2.2 Other writings												
<b>Output 4: Seminars conducted</b>												
<b>Activity 1:</b> Produce seminars												
4.1 Members grouped by gifts												
4.1.1 Gifts of teaching												
4.1.2 Gifts of prophecy												
4.1.3 Others Spiritual gifts												
4.2 Members in' small groups												
4.2.1 Home church groups												
4.2.2 Families grouped												
<b>Activity 2:</b> Members share the Word												
4.3 Words of Old Testament												
4.4 Words of New Testament												
4.5 Words of Ellen White												
4.6 Words of Christian writers												
<b>Output 5. Monitoring and evaluation</b>												
<b>Activity 1:</b> Monitoring												
5.1 Quarterly information in												
<b>Activity2:</b> Summaries/suggestions												
Key: A= Researcher    B= Conference office    C= Church Boards    D= Church Members												

Figure 5. Gantt chart (years 2 & 3).



exists (Brown & Hyer, 2010, p. 211). According to Schwalbe, a Gantt chart can be used to evaluate the progress on a project by showing schedule information and to compare planned and actual process (2007, p. 234).

### Implementation of Strategy

Every project requires a careful and thoughtful strategy to succeed. One writer has observed that it is one thing to make a strategy and another to implement it. Strategies often die due to lack of implementation (Malphurs, 1999, p. 175).

A strategy is described as a careful plan, or the art of devising plans to reach a goal. A good strategy has both long-term planning and short-term foresight (Robb, 1989, p. 37). In another way a strategy shows the goal while implementation leads to carrying out details to achieve the goal of the project.

Unlike business strategies a Christian strategist is required to depend upon God, for without Him, he or she will fail. The reason is that God is the one who provides all the power needed to succeed in His mission (John 15:4-5; Phil 4:13; Dan 2:27-28). “As Christians a strategy forces us to seek the mind and will of God. Strategy is an attempt to anticipate the future God wants to bring about. It is a statement of faith as to what we believe that future to be and how we can go about bringing it into existence” (Dayton & Fraser, 1990, p. 14). Strategy is also a means of communication to fellow Christians so they can know how we think and concentrate our effects (p. 14).

In conclusion, What is an effective strategy? “An effective strategy is therefore composed of a clearly defined purpose, measurable goal, marking progress toward fulfillment of the purpose, and practical action plans as to how we will go about attaining our goals to make accomplishment of the overall purpose possible” (Robb, 1989, p. 52).

### Activities and Resource Schedule (Gantt Chart)

The activities are with the action steps that will bring about the achievement of the outputs of the logframe (Figure 3) as shown above. They are the tasks and sub-tasks that have start and end points as well as persons or specialists to implement them. Figures 4 and 5 show how the project outputs will be realized. During the first year of the project activities involving the first two outputs are expected to be partially completed. These activities include receiving permissions from South Kenya Conference; focus groups interviewed, and collected data analyzed. The second year of the project covers outputs three and four. Seminar materials on membership retention will be developed from the Bible, Ellen G. White writings, and other Christian writers. Seminars will be conducted where the members are classified in several groups. For example, members will be grouped by gifts, small groups, church groups, and family groups. In all these groups, members will share prepared materials or principles on membership retention as taught in the Bible, the writings of E. G. White, and other Christian writers. The third year output number five will be conducted. The activities carried out include monitoring and evaluation and final summaries and recommendations.

The outputs in this project are from the first to the third year. There needs to be a lot of flexibility since change is expected in the application of the activities and resource schedule.

#### **Focus Group**

Interviews will be conducted with key informants who understand the members in the Nyaguta District. Discussions will be carried out on why members drop out of the church immediately after they are baptized. The questionnaire approved by Andrews

University will be administered to the focus groups (see Appendix C) for questionnaire). After conducting interviews with various groups, men, women, youth, the collected data will be analyzed. The main ideas will be listed as to why people drop from church.

### **Production of Teaching Materials**

By the end of the third quarter of the first year, the teaching materials will be ready. Biblical principles which will be used to teach membership retention will be drawn from the teachings of the OT and NT, teachings of Ellen G. White, and other Christian literature.

### **Training of Elders and Members**

Seminars will be conducted for 26 church elders in the fourth quarter of the second year. This will be the first training. These elders will be used to train members in their respective churches in the first and second quarter of the third year. In the third quarter of the third year the members will be organized into various groups as they share the information on how to retain church members in the church. Some of the groups will include home churches, family groups, and groups based on spiritual gifts.

### **Teaching Materials in the Churches**

By the fourth quarter of the first year each church will have received developed teaching materials from the Bible, the writings of Ellen G. White, and other Christian authors.

### **Church Meetings**

A special time for teaching the church members will be set aside and with the

help of the church elders several meetings will be conducted in each of the 26 churches. Some of the meetings will be conducted on weekends, including on the Sabbath.

### **Final Evaluation of the Project**

The final evaluation will be conducted by the first elders in the various churches, the church boards, and personal ministries department of each church. The reports of the findings will be shared with the conference Personal Ministries Director and the executive committee. Some of the questions to be asked are: “Did we reach the goal? Did we follow the strategy? Did we spend more resources than anticipated? Did we reach the goal?” “Regardless of the outcome, we need to look back and see what God (Satan) has been doing” (Dayton & Fraser, 1990, p. 32).

The importance of an evaluation cannot be over-emphasized. An evaluation helps to determine the success of a project (Campbell, 2011, p. 26). It also shows the achievements of the project in relationship to the objectives (p. 366). Concerning evaluation, Dayton and Fraser state, “Evaluation looks at whether we reached our goals, whether the way we went about them was appropriate, whether we believe our goals are appropriate” (1990, p. 320).

### **Means of Verification**

The means of verifications for the outputs of this project includes: retention teaching materials supplied to churches, an approval letter from South Kenya Conference available in the Nyaguta District file, focus group reports available in the District file, the records of trained elders in the District file, evaluation records, and analyzed records in District files.

## Evaluators

This project is a spiritual activity in a district with 26 churches. The evaluation will be conducted by the church boards and the personal ministry director from the conference who will look at the results from each church.

## Monitoring and Reporting Progress

The continual flow of reports from the 26 churches in the form of reports, data, and surveys will show the effectiveness of the monitoring instruments. The evaluation instruments will be designed to keep weekly records, Sabbath School reports, monthly church board minutes, and the quarterly activities which will foster the project's success.

## Linkage to the Logical Framework Matrix

The project process follows a bottom-up hierarchical order of the objectives presented in the logical framework. Tasks are done to achieve activities which are performed to produce outputs which lead to the purpose which contributes to the overall goal.

## Results of Evaluation

The final evaluation will indicate whether the tools used in the project were applied appropriately. Among these tools will be survey instruments, questionnaires, interviews, and participants employed to ensure the success of the project. The final evaluation will also reveal the percentage of members who have been retained.

## Summary

The purpose of this project is to increase membership retention in the Nyaguta

District. In order to realize this objective five interrelated outputs will be identified as the key ingredients for the achievement of the purpose. The first has to do with the discussion of the proposal. This will be followed by focus group interviews where different groups of church members will be interviewed: men, women, and youth both male and female. Next, seminar materials will be developed which will draw retention principles from the Bible, the Old and the New Testament, E. G. White's writings, and other Christian writers. The next step will be to conduct seminars which will involve 26 elders from all the churches. These elders will be trained to train church members who will be participants in membership retention. Finally, monitoring and evaluations will be conducted. In the beginning each church elder in each church will be evaluated in view of the overall objectives and where any disparity is found, corrective measures will be taken. Then continuous assessments will be done on a monthly basis until the final evaluation will be conducted.

To make the running of the project easy the whole plan will be summarized in a logical framework matrix. It will be further broken down by means of a Gantt chart with detailed task-time-personal schedules which coordinate resources and activities needed to achieve the objective of reducing the dropout of members.

A Christian strategy, unlike other strategies, depends upon God who makes His mission possible by His enabling power. He has promised in His Word that He will be with those who will be in His mission until the end of the age (Matt 28:18-20).

In this chapter the needed understanding for the development of an appropriate strategy that will help implement retention of members in the Nyaguta District was

discussed. Chapter 5 deals with project implementation of the membership retention strategy in the Nyaguta District, and includes lessons learned and recommendations.

## CHAPTER 5

### PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION, SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Introduction**

Chapter 4 described my strategy to increase membership retention in the Nyaguta District. Two project tools were used, the Logical Framework Analysis (LFA) and the Gantt chart. The LFA provided a summary of the strands of the project in a clear and systematic order, while the Gantt chart revealed scheduled timelines for the outputs and activities of the project.

In this chapter a report of the project implementation will be discussed, covering the steps taken to realize the retention of membership in the Nyaguta District. The chapter will also include the lessons learned, a summary, conclusion, and recommendations.

#### **Report on Project Implementation**

In order to achieve the membership retention in the Nyaguta District, five major outputs were produced by the projects. These are proposal discussed, focus groups interviewed, seminar materials developed, seminars conducted, and monitoring and evaluation completed. The participants in the project involved were interview focus groups, church elders, church departmental leaders, church board members, and other



church members. While most of the planned activities took place as scheduled, some activities were completed earlier than planned, others came later, and others were not conducted at all. However this did not affect the project implementation though it slowed the process.

### **Permission Obtained**

The first step in the implementation of the project was to secure permission from South Kenya Conference to conduct the project. After one month from the application date I obtained permission on June 24, 2011 (Appendix A).

### **Venues and Participants**

After obtaining the permission, I conducted major seminars as follows, January 3-February 28; March 21, September 9, 2012, February 3, 9-10, 17, 2013. The participants involved were elders, deacons, dorcas leaders, women ministry leaders, children leaders, and Sabbath School leaders. Others were church departmental leaders, home church leaders, church board members, and the South Kenya Conference Personal Ministries Director.

I reviewed the nurturing programs in the Nyaguta District churches to discover whether they were effective. I involved all elders, all church boards, and other church members.

I first met the elders on February 2, 2012, and after consultations, I introduced to them my project; most of them were excited and they agreed to be partners in implementing it. I then outlined the steps needed to implement the project. During the meeting I informed them that they would be the key people in overseeing the

implementation of the project; at the same time I informed them about the other participants.

After gathering general information concerning nurturing programs in the Nyaguta District, I gathered more information from all the church boards where I presented in all the district churches from January 31-February 28, 2012. I also gathered other information from church members during weekly counseling sessions.

From the groups mentioned above, I found there were three types of spiritual nurture programs in the Nyaguta District before I implemented my project; namely, Sabbath programs, weekly programs, and other programs. The Sabbath programs included Sabbath School between 9:00 and 10:00 a.m., Divine service between 11:15 to 12:30 p.m., and afternoon departmental programs.

During the week, they had mid-week prayer meetings that usually met on Wednesdays, youth programs, Adventist men's programs, Dorcas, and choir meetings. Other meetings consisted of a yearly camp meeting conducted between July and August at the district camp centers. There are also conference meetings conducted at the conference headquarters, district centers, and at the camp level.

#### Focus Group Interviewed

After reviewing the current nurture programs in the Nyaguta District, I began conducting focus group interviews. The first group was interviewed on February 5, 2012, and the topic discussed was whether baptismal candidates were thoroughly taught before baptism. The group consisted of 2 elders, 2 deacons, 6 Dorcas leaders, 2 women's ministries leaders, and 2 children's Sabbath School leaders.

The second group was interviewed on March 21, 2012 to discover whether members have regular devotions. That group had 8 young women, 4 youth leaders, and 4 junior leaders.

The third group was interviewed on April 10, 2012 to explore whether church discipline is carried out according to church standards. The group consisted of 8 young men, 4 youth leaders, and 4 junior youth leaders.

### Reports of Focus Group

The reports from the focus groups and church leaders obtained the following as reasons why people leave the church especially immediately after baptism.

#### **Lack of Sufficient Instructions**

Reports of both focus groups and church leaders reported that most of those baptized are not given enough biblical principles before baptism. Therefore, when they encounter some challenges after baptism, they easily leave the church because they lack enough biblical knowledge to sustain them.

#### **Lack of a Christ-Like Life**

The newly baptized members expect to see a Christ-like model from the professed church member. When this expectation is not met, some decide to drop from the church. This is a common problem because a majority of church members are not living up to the set Christian standards.

#### **Discrimination in Church Discipline**

When the church is discharging church discipline, it is carried out with partiality. Those who “matter” have their cases handled with lenience (such as church leaders)

while others are dealt with strictly. This double standard in carrying out church discipline discourages new members and some leave the church.

### **Lack of Effective Church Leaders**

Some church leaders do not perform their duties as expected such as caring for the weak in faith, visiting the newly baptized members, or attending to the needy. Because of this, some new members are exposed to temptations which drive them from church.

Some church leaders are involved in leadership struggles, for examples seeking church positions instead of caring for members. This kind of behavior causes others to leave the church.

### **Lack of Christ-Centered Sermons**

The church leaders and those interviewed reported that most of the sermons and teachings conducted in the churches do not focus on Christ, His birth, life, death, and resurrection. They are mainly departmental promotions which are not connected with the gospel. Lack of preaching and teaching the gospel consistently leads some church members to seek salvation through works. Christ says that without Him nobody can do anything (John 15:5). No spiritual nurture can be attained without members abiding in Christ.

### **Lack of Spiritual Nurture Emphasis**

It was also agreed by the leaders that the churches have no systematic spiritual nurture programs that are conducted in the local churches. What is conducted is church programs without specific goals in spiritual nurture. They said that some programs

conducted are like social entertainment. No regular studies are conducted on Christian growth and discipleship.

### **Cultural Beliefs**

There are others who drop out of the church because of various cultural beliefs. These would include: ancestral worship, contacting diviners during sickness and time of crisis, traditional burial ceremonies, sacrificing for the deceased and female circumcision.

The focus group suggested six ways to improve retention: present more Christ-centered messages in our churches, increase instruction for baptismal candidates, teach biblical responses to divination, witchcraft, sorcery, and other cultural beliefs, administer church discipline consistently and without partiality, establish nurture and retention committees, and have the South Kenya Conference conduct more spiritual nurture seminars.

### **Participants and Venues**

The following section lists the type of leaders trained, where the training took place, and the dates when the membership retention seminars were conducted in the Nyaguta District. The teaching materials were obtained from the Bible, the writings of Ellen G. White, and other Christian authors.

### **Training of Participants**

The various groups trained included church elders, church officers, and church board members. The training was conducted among different church groups like elder's, women's leaders, youth leaders, children's leaders, deacons, deaconesses, and church board members.

A sensitization seminar was held on September 9, 2012 for first elders, deacons, and deaconesses at the Nyaguta District Center. These groups were briefed about the whole program of spiritual nurture and the new plans of instructing those in baptismal classes.

The second major training took place concurrently at two centers, Nyaguta and Kiogoro churches for 16 days in December 2012. During this period various subjects were covered on spiritual nurture especially at the departmental levels. At the same time the churches were assigned training dates and given an outline of the training materials.

The third major training took place at the Nyaguta District Center on February 3, 2013. The group consisted of first elders and publishing leaders from the Nyaguta District churches.

The fourth significance training was held on February 9, 2013, at the Nyaguta District Center and it was attended by all 75 leaders. The fifth important seminar was held on February 10, 2012, and was attended by the deacons and deaconesses. The sixth important training was held on February 17, 2012, and it was attended by all the elders' wives.

In all the above mentioned meetings and seminars the main subjects covered included the following topics: nurturing newly baptized members, spiritual formation, true education, reasons for health reform, prevailing realities in the Nyaguta District, the mission of the Adventist Church, stewardship, spiritual leadership principles, and spiritual gifts.

### **Objectives of the Training**

There were three objectives that guided the training: (a) to equip leaders with

Bible methods on nurture and discipleship, (b) to equip leaders with leadership skills, and (c) to enable every trainee to grow in Christ.

### **Actual Training Procedures**

A devotional of 10-20 minutes based on a specified text began each session followed by a presentation of a subject by a chosen presenter. Time was then allowed for questions and discussions. During the final session, additional time was allowed for more discussion, clarifications, and suggestions on the way forward. Time was also spent to fix dates for conducting seminars by the departmental directors in their churches. Some of the churches followed the schedule as given in the LFA and Gantt chart while others did not. However in either case the impact in training was felt.

### **Achievements**

The achievements of the project were reported by three groups, which are the church elders, church board members, and departmental heads. The reports from the churches by the participants listed eight major achievements that the project attained as a result of the emphasis on retaining members in the Nyaguta District.

First the district was reorganized into two new districts because of its growth which was experienced because of membership retention (see Appendix A).

Second, despite the fact that church elders and clerks in the district have no regular practice of accounting for the church attendance of newly baptized members, interviews with them indicate that more than 90% of those baptized since 2011 attend church regularly.

Third, all the churches have regular organized worship services in home churches

where about five families meet every Sunday for prayer and fellowship. This additional fellowship and nurture has strengthened retention in the district.

Fourth, some of the issues dealing with culture, for example, ancestor worship, female circumcision, and contacting diviners were addressed. Some members have shared with me during my weekly counseling sessions that they have discontinued such practices.

Fifth, most churches are experiencing more leadership stability as indicated by the presence of fewer leadership struggles in churches and also more unity experienced in most of the churches. These improvements have been noted by church members' verbal testimonies and in the elders' reports at their recent elder's councils.

Sixth, most churches are following the appropriate baptismal procedures in training baptismal candidates. These include: consistent teaching for at least six months and assigning an elder or an experienced member to continue nurturing new members until they are grounded in basic Adventist teachings.

Seventh, the new spiritual nurturing methods conducted are followed by more than a half of the churches. For example, some have formed small groups for prayer and fellowship and some are nurturing newly baptized members in other ways.

Eighth, out of the seminars conducted and counseling sessions done several people have been healed and others delivered from evil spirits. In one of the district meetings 80 church members testified in the meeting how they had been healed and delivered from demonic forces.

### Challenges Encountered in Project Implementation

The implementation of this project encountered six major challenges:



1. Lack of cooperation from all the churches because some members felt that the exercise was taking extra time from their busy schedule, others were skeptical about the new ways of spiritual nurture, and others were undecided.

2. Some elders failed to implement the project. They felt that pastor was overloading them with a work which he should do alone, some felt that it was the pastor's project and he should do it alone, and some who were committed to conduct the project were discouraged by those who rejected it.

3. Some of the trainers failed to conduct the training in a consistent manner because they lacked experience in training. Some felt they should be paid for their services, but since I did not include money for that in my budget it was not possible.

4. The project was interrupted by other programs of the church. While conducting the project I did not stop the local church programs or those of the conference, so some of them interrupted the implementation of the project.

5. Funds for the preparation of training materials and conducting the training were limited.

6. The low level of literacy among some church members reduced the effectiveness of the seminar because the teaching materials used were written in English. This made me summarize and translate the materials into the local language.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

### **Monitoring**

The project was monitored by the first elders of the churches and the church boards on a quarterly basis. Also, I received reports from the departmental heads each quarter on how they were implementing the nurture program in their churches. I also

made personal observations as I did my visitations from church to church and during my weekly counseling sessions.

### **Evaluation of the Project**

The reports of the implementation were analyzed and the results were recorded and written up as part of this doctoral project.

### **Lessons Learned**

The researcher learned various lessons following the completion of the project implementation process.

1. It takes time to change a system or traditions in local churches, hence this program did not start quickly and it needed a longer period of time to be fully implemented.
2. A large district with 29 churches and 4 companies is a difficult place to implement a program of this kind. In the future it would be better to limit the program to a few churches.
3. It takes time to train trainers of trainees (TOTs) because some are not mature leaders.
4. It takes time for members and leaders to adopt new ways of training.
5. Local churches conduct church elections every year or two. These changes interrupted the implementation of the project.
6. By training church leaders on how to nurture young Christians the researcher also learned several principles on church leadership.

7. I have learned that if baptismal candidates are taught extensively before baptism they tend to remain in the church.

8. Some churches experienced fewer leadership struggles by conducting the leadership seminars

9. It is true that there are cultural ties which hinder newly baptized members to stay in the church. More emphasis could be placed in this area.

### **Future Impacts**

The impact of the project is far reaching due to the following reasons. First, the success of the project will likely influence other nearby districts and there will also be increased retention of members in those districts. Second, the Nyaguta District will continue to be a role model in nurturing of believers. Third, replicating the project in other multi-church districts will lead to the sub-division of those districts to more manageable-sized districts. Finally, the South Kenya Conference has a model which can help in the retention of members in other districts.

### **Conclusion**

It is important to note that the overall goal of the project has been achieved, which was to reduce the dropout of members in the Nyaguta district to at least 10%. It is also important to note that by increasing the retention of members in the district I have achieved the goal of Adventist mission which is to make disciples for Christ. One cannot make disciples unless church members are nurtured. In fact, spiritual nurture is the most important function of all the Adventist churches.

The implementation of the project has widened my research methods, especially

at the local church setting. It is at the local church where such research is to be conducted in order to impact the mission of Christ. While human beings have their part to play in spiritual nurture, it is only God who determines the overall growth of the church (1 Cor 3:7).

### **Recommendations**

The researcher suggests the following recommendations for the planner, the Nyaguta district churches, and the South Kenya Conference.

#### Recommendations to the Planner

1. The planner should consider beginning the implementation of the project all over again, especially in the churches where the implementation did not take place.
2. To improve on the weak aspects of the project, more sensitization seminars need to be held for elders, church leaders, and members before the commencement of similar projects.

#### Recommendation to the Nyaguta District Churches

All district churches should consider incorporating a similar project in their churches and should continue with the implementation process.

#### Recommendation to the South Kenya Conference

The South Kenya Conference should adopt the project and share it with other districts in order to increase the retention percentages in all the churches in the district.

APPENDIX A

LETTERS



**AUA**  
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WEB: [www.aua.adventist.org](http://www.aua.adventist.org)

AUA ETHICS REVIEW BOARD

I, PAUL GWARO KIAGE, a student of the AUA/Andrews DMin Program, do hereby submit to the Ethics Review Board my project dissertation proposal, together with the questionnaire/survey/ interview schedule (choose one) I will use. I am hereby asking permission to go ahead with my research, with the full intention of collecting data in an ethical manner, without harm of any kind to those who will give me information.

Title of the project: A PROJECT TO INCREASE THE RETENTION OF MEMBERS IN THE NYAGUTA DISTRICT

Place where the project will be carried out: NYAGUTA DISTRICT

I agree to obtain the informed consent of the persons whom I will interview or survey. I will avoid causing any harm to these subjects. I also agree to maintain the confidentiality of those interviewed/surveyed. Finally, the information gathered will be used exclusively for my project dissertation. After my defense, I will destroy the collected data.

[Signature]  
Signature of student

24/6/2011  
Date

[Signature]  
Signature of adviser

XX

Permission has been  granted  denied.

For the ETHICS REVIEW BOARD of AUA

[Signature]  
Signature  
Dean  
Position

[Signature]  
Date  
**Adventist University of Africa**  
Private Bag Mbagathi - 00503  
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**23 JUL 2011**  
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Theological Seminary  
Office of the Dean



SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST  
CHURCH

South Kenya Conference  
P.O. Box 22-40200, Kisii - Kenya  
E-mail: southkenyaconference@gmail.com

May 29, 2014

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

**RE: EARLY IMPROVEMENTS**

This is to inform you that **Paul Gwaro Kiage** contacted us for implementation of the project towards the award of Doctor of Ministry program research entitle "**TO INCREASE OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP RETENTION IN NYAGUTA DISTRICT.**" South Kenya Conference. As the result of the project the District has been divided into two Districts- the old Nyaguta Distriet and Amariba district. There is also improved tithes and offerings from the District.

Thanks and may God bless you.

Sincerely



Pr. Sibiah Miyianda  
**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY SKC**



SEVENTH-DAY  
**ADVENTIST**  
CHURCH

South Kenya Conference  
P.O. Box 22, Kisii - Kenya  
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November 16, 2011

Dear Pastor Paul Gwaro

**RE: PAUL GWARO DOCTORATE PROJECT**

Christian greetings.

I hereby inform you that you have been granted permission to carry out your research at Nyaguta District on "Retention of Church membership according to Minute No.SKC 184.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Pr. Joseph Parmanyari  
**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY SKC**

CC: SKC officers

APPENDIX B  
SEMINAR NOTES

**ELDERS/PERSONAL/MINISTRIES SEMINAR OUTLINE**

**NURTURING NEWLY BAPTIZED MEMBERS IN NYAGUTA DISTRICT**

Definition: The word nurture means retaining or being retained, capacity to hold.

Introduction: more than 30% or 40% of our members we baptize leave the church after one year.

This is alarming situation – when it comes to our mission of making disciples. Therefore the following are principles on nurture as taken from the bible, the spirit of prophecy and other Christian writers. New Testament teaching: Acts 2:41-47: New members to be

1. Devoted to church leaders teachings
2. They are to be taught to fellowship with members or one another
3. They should be consistent in prayer
4. They should be ready to participate in witnessing

**Spirit of prophecy principles Acts of the Apostles pp 177-187**

1. Appointed church officers to be in charge of newly baptized members.
2. Commit the new church members to devoted church members
3. To be carefully trained
4. To follow the example of Paul and Barnabas in teaching new members.
5. To be taught to take care of them and rely upon God's promises Matt 28:20.
6. Good men to give them instructions
7. To involve them in church service
8. To help them to be mature and to educate them thoroughly.
9. To be dedicated to God and His holy spirit for guidance.

**Other writers**

10. Have them in small groups
11. Have them attend all church meetings
12. Make them disciples – by allocating time of prayer with them, bible reading time for fellowship and the habit of tithing
13. Have delegation of duties as you minister to them.



14. Have them involved in social meetings conducted by the church.
15. Let them be integrated to church members, church leadership and the mission of the church.
16. Have a plan to nurture them - strategic plan – under the committee of nurture and retention.
17. Have more information and materials from the district pastor.

**By Paul G. Kiage  
Nyanguta District**

### Spiritual Formation Outline

Definition:

Four major ingredients to spiritual formation

- |           |          |                      |
|-----------|----------|----------------------|
| <b>a.</b> | Vision   | Hebrews 11:27        |
| <b>b.</b> | Gospel   | Romans 1:16          |
| <b>c.</b> | Lordship | Col 2:6, Eph 3:14-20 |
| <b>d.</b> | Presence | Matt 28:20           |

Spiritual formation Part 2

Ways to improve our vision

1. Study of the word of God
2. Meditate on the life of Christ
3. Develop a prayer life
4. Memorize scripture

Ways to understand the gospel better

Accept the reality that Jesus died for you Romans 5:8, 10

Study the truths of the gospel e.g. birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ

Accept the fact that God loves you with unconditional love Jer 29:11-13

Ways to integrate Christ's Lordship Eph 3:14-20

Allow the Holy Spirit to work in you always      John 16:13

Make Christ the priority in all decisions you make      Phil 1:21, Gal 2:20

Ways to enhance our awareness of God's presence

Matthew 28:19-20

John 14:15-20

## SPIRITUAL GROWTH MODEL

### Spiritual Growth and Development

- Attract      -Where it starts –John 12:32
- Convict      -What He does –John 16:7-11
- Compel      -What we want to do -2 Cor 5:14-15
- Empower      -What God does in us
  - God works in us –Phil 2:12-13
  - God gives a new heart –Ezek 36:26-27
  - God's Spirit in us causes us to obey
- Transform      -How God changes us to be like Him
  - Not recognized by the individual (1 Tim 1:15)
  - God created us for good works (Eph 2:4-10)
  - God equips us to do His will (Hebrews 13:20-21)
  - Christ dwells in us (John 14:20, Eph 3:15-17)
  - God promises us power (Acts 1:8)

APPENDIX C  
QUESTIONNAIRE

Questions for a focus group in Nyaguta district for

Doctor of Ministry research by Paul Kiage.

Three different focus groups will meet starting in January 2012. The purpose of the focus group is to discover why such a large number of church members, especially new ones, drop out of church yearly. For the first group, I will select 2 elders, 2 deacons and 2 other male church leaders, together with six ladies, that is, 2 Dorcas leaders, 2 Women ministries leaders, and 2 Children Sabbath School leaders. The second group will consist of 8 young women, of whom four are youth leaders and 4 are junior leaders. The third group will consist of 8 young men, of whom 4 are youth leaders and 4 are junior leaders.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think so many people leave the church soon after their baptism?
2. **What do you think about** how Adventist beliefs are taught in baptismal classes?
3. What are some of the weaknesses in how we prepare people for baptism?
4. Are there cultural issues that cause people to leave the church?
5. After people are baptized, are there some things we could do to help them stay in the church?
6. Do you think marrying non-Adventists or eloping causes members to drop out of church? Are there ways we can help this situation?
7. Are there Christ centered messages presented in the church? Do you think we need more?
8. Are there seminars to help your Christian life? Do you receive handouts concerning spiritual nurture from seminar presenters or from the conference?  
How often?

9. Is the church manual followed consistently in matters of church discipline?
10. Do church boards have annual programs prepared to nurture church members?

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2011-2014 District pastor, Nyaguta  
2010- 2004 Stewardship Director South Kenya Conference  
2003-2002 District pastor, Mosando  
2002-1993 Youth and Chaplaincy Director, South Kenya Conference.