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Empowering Volunteers For Community-Focused Ministry For Families Of Inmates: Selected Churches Of The Potomac Conference

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ABSTRACT

EMPOWERING VOLUNTEERS FOR COMMUNITY-FOCUSED
MINISTRY FOR FAMILIES OF INMATES: SELECTED
CHURCHES OF THE POTOMAC CONFERENCE

by

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ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Document

Andrews University

Doctor of Ministry

Title: EMPOWERING VOLUNTEERS FOR COMMUNITY-FOCUSED MINISTRY
FOR FAMILIES OF INMATES: SELECTED CHURCHES OF THE
POTOMAC CONFERENCE

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Problem

Nearly 70% of churches in the Potomac Conference do not have ministries that
are geared at serving their communities. As a result of this problem, churches are not
growing and are not making a significant impact in their communities. They have
become internally focused congregations. Churches are missing opportunities to develop
meaningful relationships with these communities through creative externally focused
ministries. Externally focused churches believe God has called them to change
communities for God's kingdom. There is a need for churches in the Potomac
Conference to become externally focused.

Methodology

The recruiting and training of church volunteers to serve in a videoconferencing community-focused ministry for families of inmates for a period of 16 weeks in selected churches of the Potomac Conference, provided a means for the transitioning of these congregations from being internally focused to becoming externally focused and becoming more engaged with their communities. This renewal process also included an instrument that measured the effectiveness of this project over the period of 16 weeks.

Results

The results from the implementation of this strategy revealed several positive outcomes that I hope would encourage other congregations to follow. First, church members were trained to serve in a community-focused ministry. Second, this project started a revival for mission in the congregations. Third, selected churches from the Potomac Conference began a process of engaging their communities through a community-focused ministry. Fourth, church volunteers engaged in developing meaningful relationships with their neighbors. Fifth, the Seventh-day Adventist Church established a partnership with the Department of Corrections from Virginia and Maryland.

Conclusions

This project introduces several biblical principles of the externally focused church. It also establishes a clear biblical foundation for the mission of the church. If the church is to make a difference in the world, it must understand its role in the community. With the word "Go," Jesus sent the church into the community to make a difference for

the kingdom of God. This project will provide opportunities for other churches to begin a process of transitioning from an internal focus to one that serves the community. It will also continue to generate opportunities for Adventist churches to partner with the Department of Corrections in Virginia, Maryland and other states, to establish other video conferencing visitation centers for families of inmates.

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

EMPOWERING VOLUNTEERS FOR COMMUNITY-FOCUSED
MINISTRY FOR FAMILIES OF INMATES: SELECTED
CHURCHES OF THE POTOMAC CONFERENCE

A Project Document

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

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by

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APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

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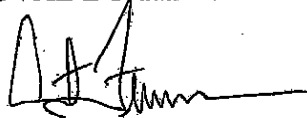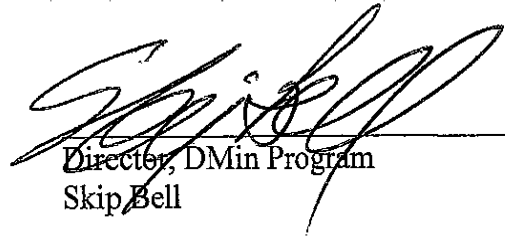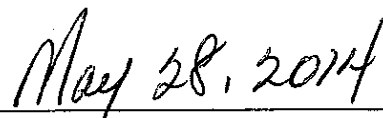Adviser,
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Personal History

Birthplace

I was born in 1963 in a small town called Tuxcacuesco in the beautiful state of

Jalisco, Mexico. Located in the central-western part of the country, this town is known

for its agricultural richness and pre-Spanish history dating back to the 10th Century.

Flanked by high mountains to the south, Tuxcacuesco sits in a valley, with a river

running through town. In 1996, I had the privilege of visiting my birth town for the first

time since my family left back in 1964. It was a moving experience.

My Family

I grew up in a dysfunctional family. When my mother was 17, she left her small

town and moved to a nearby city hoping to find a better life. It was here that she became

pregnant. In spite of the challenges and consequences this experience meant, she decided

to keep the pregnancy and gave birth to me at the age of 18. My grandmother raised me.

I never knew my father.

Life became difficult for all of us. Due to our extreme poverty, my grandmother

made the decision to leave town and venture north to Tijuana, Baja California. It was a

rough start for all of us since we did not know of any relatives that could help us.

However, through God's leading, we found a friend who gave us temporary shelter until

my mother found work. It was during this time that my younger brother was born—also out of wedlock.

Spiritual Background

My grandmother's inherited religion was Catholic. Therefore I grew up practicing this religion. Although she had no formal education, she taught us the values of integrity, service and spirituality. Attending church was a high priority for her. This instilled in me the importance of faith and trust in God. In 1966, my mother migrated to the United States with the hopes of finding a better job so she could support us. It was during this time that she met an Adventist family and eventually was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist church.

My Conversion

In 1972, my mother began the immigration process so my brother and I could enter this country legally. Two years later, we arrived in Riverside, California to start a new chapter in our lives with our mother. The first couple of years were very difficult. Not only in terms of adjusting to each other, but also in terms of learning a new language and culture. Soon, my brother and I made friends and began to feel comfortable in our new environment. The relationship with our mother, however, was another story. Since I grew up with my grandmother, there was no bond between us, and so we continued to struggle to get along. As I entered my teenage years, my feelings for her soon turned into bitterness and resentment.

At the age of 14, God stepped in and started a process of restoring my life. My mother, who was already a Seventh-day Adventist, began to insist that my brother and I attend church with her. Because of our struggling relationship, I was resistant to anything

that had to do with her. I kept making excuses for not attending church. One day, however, she insisted that I go to church. Since she would not take no for an answer, I got inside the car still wearing my pajamas. In anger, I told her I would go as far as the parking lot. She was running late, so she did not argue and simply drove off to church in downtown Riverside, California. When we arrived, she got of the car and insisted that I go in. I locked the doors and told her I would wait for her in the car. She turned away and went inside the church. I was left in the parking lot in a whirl of emotions.

What happened next changed my life forever. As I sat inside the car, the pastor of the church came out and began to talk to me. At first, I refused to acknowledge him, but as he gently insisted, I began to open my heart to him. The fact that I had never had a meaningful conversation with a male figure made an impact in my life. He listened, and genuinely cared for my pain. He was not judgmental. After a few minutes of conversation, he invited me to come inside the church. Noticing I was in my pajamas, he offered me his office where I could safely listen to the program without the embarrassment of been seeing. That day, God touched my life. I listened to music I had not heard before, and the pastor delivered a sermon that spoke of God's love, forgiveness and His desire to restore people's life. I started coming to church and soon found myself getting involved in different ministries. A few months later, I was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Pastoral Calling

My pastoral calling occurred during my early years as a Seventh-day Adventist. It came through the ministry of my first church pastor. He took time to mentor me and

involve me in the different ministries of the church. As I was serving the church, I felt called to dedicate my life to His service.

Pastoral Training

In the fall of 1982 I began my studies to become a pastor at Loma Linda University—La Sierra Campus. In a miraculous way, God took care of my school tuition through an anonymous donor. During my sophomore year, I was hired by the Southeastern California Conference and became a Youth Assistant at the Anaheim Spanish Church. I graduated in 1986 and entered into full time ministry. In 1987, I attended Andrews University to work on my Masters of Divinity.

My Immediate Family

In the spring of 1991 I married Bexy Castellón, a beautiful young lady from New York whom I met there during a youth week of prayer. God has blessed us with three healthy boys. We currently live in New Market, Virginia where I serve the Potomac Conference as Vice President for Administration.

Statement of the Problem

The Potomac Conference has 167 churches and companies that serve its territory within Virginia, the District of Columbia, and portions of two counties in south Maryland. However, as conference Executive Secretary, I have observed that almost 75% of these congregations are not growing. In spite of efforts from past conference administrations to change this trend, churches continue to plateau or die. A major contributing factor is the internal focus of these congregations. Churches are missing opportunities to develop meaningful relationships with their communities through

creative externally focused ministries. Externally focused churches believe God has placed them there to impact the community for God's kingdom. There is a need for churches in the Potomac Conference to become externally focused.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to develop and implement a strategy to transition churches into becoming externally focused congregations, by empowering volunteers to serve on a community-focused ministry through a videoconferencing program for families of inmates in selected churches of the Potomac Conference. This strategy will enhance the participation of church volunteers who will learn basic biblical principles of mission and discipleship to facilitate a change in the church.

Description of the Dissertation Process

This project dissertation approaches the topic of church growth by training church volunteers to serve on a community-focused ministry. It involved several steps, which served as the basis for this dissertation.

The first chapter serves as an introduction and provides readers with a general view of the research and study.

Chapter two provides a theological reflection for this project based on the theme of the *sent church* by exploring three key issues of mission for the externally focused church, based on Matthew 10:1-8, 28:16-20 and John 20:21 (all Scripture references are from the New International Version of the Bible, 1975).

Chapter three is a literature review on church growth. This chapter discusses the state of the church today, along with its obstacles and challenges. The chapter also examines the benefits and models of an externally focused congregation, as well as

suggestions for transitioning from an internal focused model to one that is community oriented.

Chapter four discusses the ministry context of the project as well as the development and implementation process. A proposed strategy for equipping and training volunteers to serve on a community-focused ministry for families of inmates is also introduced.

The final chapter presents the outcomes and evaluations of empowering volunteers for community-focused ministry. It reports on the impact this project had on volunteers, congregations and the community. It also discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the project. Lastly, this chapter provides conclusions regarding the strategy of empowering volunteers for community-focused ministry for families of inmates and recommendations for future implementations.

Project Expectations

This project should increase interest among fellow conference administrators, pastors and laity for more externally focused churches, as well as increase the number of externally focused churches in the Potomac Conference.

It is expected that this project will also grow the number of non-Adventist visitors in the participating churches. In addition, this project should change the attitude of participating church volunteers towards community-focused ministries as it relates to mission. This project will motivate other church members in participating churches to become involved in community-focused ministries.

It is intended that video conferencing equipment will be available to the church for use in other ministries. This project will hopefully be a model for other churches to

implement. Further, it will create an opportunity for the local church to give back to the

community that is providing a tax-exempt status.

The results of this project will be useful to all churches within the North

American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. And finally, this project will enhance my

own understanding and appreciation for mission and community focused ministry.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MISSION FOR THE

EXTERNALLY FOCUSED CHURCH

Introduction

Personal observations and anecdotal evidence of churches in the Potomac

Conference of Seventh-day Adventists suggests there are a large number of

congregations that do not have a clear understanding of their mission. The evidence is

seen in their lack of community involvement and their insistence to do ministry that only

serves church members. This chapter seeks to establish a theological foundation of

mission for the externally focused congregation by exploring the theme of the *sent*

church based on Matthew 10:1-8, 28:16-20, and John 20:21. Externally focused

churches believe they have been sent into their communities for the purpose of reaching

lost people for the kingdom of God. Therefore, their primary focus is the community.

The following three key principles of mission relating to the *sent church* will be explored

in this chapter:

1. The mission of the sent church

2. The authority of the sent church

3. The sending of the church

The Mission of the Sent Church

God is responsible for the mission of his church, and for sending the church into the world. In his infinite love for the world, God chose to reveal himself in the person of his Son Jesus Christ and invited the church to participate in the salvation of humanity through his mission. Reflecting on this, White (1949) writes,

> The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God's plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. (p. 9)

Bosch (1991) also wrote,

> Mission refers to *Missio Dei* (God's mission), that is, God's self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God's involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate. *Missio Dei* enunciates the good news that God is a God-for-people. (p. 10)

The New Testament record makes reference to God sending his church into mission through Jesus' disciples. This is clear in all four gospels. While Matthew, Mark and Luke record key references to this sending (Matthew 10:1-8; Mark 3:13-19, 6:7-12; Luke 9:1-6 and Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-49), John's record presents a slightly different approach. A careful analysis of the gospel of John will reveal that the evangelist does not approach the topic of Jesus sending his disciples into mission the same way that Matthew 10, Mark 3, 6 and Luke 9 do. However, it is interesting to note that, the theme of mission, specifically the sending of the disciples is clearly recorded in passages such as John 13:20, 17:18 and 20:21. Commenting on this, Beasley-Murray (1999) suggests, "the forms of these commissions are given by the Evangelists, who convey their content with emphasis that accord with their own insights

and situations" (p. 379). This is the key to understanding why each gospel has a different approach to the sending theme.

<div align="center">Definition of Mission</div>

There has been much debate regarding the meaning of "mission" among biblical scholars. Since it is not a biblical word like covenant, justification or gospel, determining its meaning for believers has been particularly difficult (DeYoung & Gilbert, 2011). "Mission" which comes from the Latin word *mittere* also corresponds to the Greek verb ἀποστέλλειν, which means, "to send." Bosch (1991) suggests that ἀποστέλλειν in its traditional use "presupposes a sender, a person or persons sent by the sender, those to whom one is sent, and an assignment" (p. 1). DeYoung & Gilbert also see "mission" implying at least two things to most people: "(1) being sent and (2) being given a task" (p. 19).

While this definition does provide some answers, the question regarding the real mission of the church is still debatable. Even Bosch admits, "ultimately, mission remains undefinable" (p. 9). However, as other scholars have suggested, in order to understand the true mission of the church, we must look beyond the definition of "sending" and search for the practical aspect of the mission. Speaking to this issue, Wright (2006) adds,

> It seems to me that if we define *mission* only in "sending" terms we necessarily exclude from our inventory of relevant resources many other aspects of biblical teaching that directly or indirectly affect our understanding of God's mission and the practice of our own. (p. 23)

The mission of the church is God's mission (Johnson, 2006). It is not a human activity or a set of particular human responses to the prompting of scripture or the command of Jesus. Rather, mission is the activity of God, which originated in the Garden of Eden after the fall. Referring to this, Bosch (1991) wrote, "it is the alerting

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people to the universal reign of God through Christ" (p. 33). Frost (2011) added,

"Mission is both the announcement and the demonstration of the reign of God through

Christ" (p. 24). Our mission, then, is not simply to give people information on how to go

to heaven, but to point people to Jesus Christ, as the solution for all sin. Newbigin (1995)

concurs,

> The Bible…is covered with God's purpose of blessing for all the nations. It is
> concerned with the completion of God's purpose in the creation of the world. It is
> not—to put it crudely—concerned with offering a way of escape for the redeemed
> soul out of history, but with the action of God to bring history to its true end. (pp. 33,
> 34)

Thus a safe conclusion to the meaning and purpose of "mission" would be that

mission or "sending" implies something more than someone being sent to perform a task.

It is a way of life in response to God's call to partnership in the salvation of humanity.

With this understanding, Jesus calls the twelve disciples together for the first time in

Matthew 10 and then again in Matthew 28 to specifically send them on his mission.

<div align="center">Key Principles of Mission</div>

There are several key principles of mission, relating to the externally focused

church as seen in Matthew 10:1-8, 28:16-20 and John 20:21. Understanding these

principles creates the basis for a healthy externally focused congregation.

Mission Belongs to God

The church has a mission that has been given by God, through his son Jesus

Christ. In a sense, the mission belongs to God. The biblical record reads,

> Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure
> spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. These are the names of the twelve
> apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of
> Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the
> tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas

Iscariot, who betrayed him. These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give." (Matthew 10:1-8, NIV).

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:16-20, NIV).

Again, Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." (John 20:21, NIV)

In all three biblical narratives, we find Jesus entrusting his church to his disciples, with a particular mission. Writing about the relationship between the disciples and the church, White (1940) wrote,

Jesus had called His disciples that He might send them forth as His witnesses, to declare to the world what they had seen and heard of Him. Their office was the most important to which human beings had ever been called, and was second only to that of Christ Himself. They were to be workers together with God for the saving of the world. As in the Old Testament the twelve patriarchs stand as representatives of Israel, so the twelve apostles were to stand as representatives of the gospel church. (p. 291)

At first glance, it may appear that Matthew 10 and Matthew 28 contradict each other. In Matthew 10, the mission given to the disciples is for the "lost sheep" of Israel, while in Matthew 28, the mission is for all people. However, the point here is this: in both instances, the disciples were sent into the "community" to change lives and make disciples for the kingdom of God. The following key passages will provide further insights of God's mission as it is handed to the disciples.

Mission According to Matthew 10

The particulars of the mission to the church as seen in the first mission given to the disciples in Matthew 10 are twofold. First, Jesus is responding not only to a great need that he saw as he went through all the towns and villages, teaching and preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness (Matthew 9:35), but also to the lack of workers needed to accomplish such mission. As Jesus saw the crowds, Matthew writes, "He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless…" (v. 36). Reflecting on Matthew 10 and the relationship between Jesus and the disciples, Hagner (1993) writes,

> The focus of attention now moves from the ministry of Jesus to that of the disciples. The initial response to the need for workers in the great harvest, mentioned in the preceding passage, is now seen in the empowering of the twelve to extend the ministry of Jesus. (p. 264)

According to Gundry (1994), their first mission was to try to deliver the house of Israel from the bondage of false teachings by Jewish leaders who oppressed God's people. This is the reason why Jesus instructed the twelve, not to "go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans (v. 5). Rather, they were to go "to the lost sheep of Israel." As the disciples understood this mission, they became focused on a specific territory and the people of Israel (Meier, 1990). Jesus was concerned with those that God had called into a church community throughout the Old Testament, and so his mission started here.

The second particular of the mission outlined in Matthew 10, is the transitioning period, where Jesus is not only inviting his disciples to participate in his mission, but to continue his work with the idea that soon it would become their complete responsibility. Goldsmith (2001) concurs,

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Matthew 10 shows clearly that the ministry of the apostles is a continuation of the work of Jesus himself…Jesus is preparing the ground for the post-ascension period of history when his task of mission will be entrusted to his followers. That mission will be at his command, under his authority, but he will pass on to his disciples the baton of active responsibility. (pp. 92-93)

In his instructions concerning the missionary work of his disciples, Jesus looks beyond the present situation and projects into the future as he explains the mission to the church, as well as the consequences of engaging in it. Hagner (1993) agrees,

The evangelist, however, widens the discourse to include material concerning the later, ongoing mission of the Church, with its reference to the gentile mission, and the eschatological aspects of the discourse…The discourse thus has relevance both for the sending out of the twelve and for the Church of Matthew's day and later. (p. 262)

While at the surface, Matthew's narrative of Jesus' instructions concerning the missionary work of his disciples appear to apply directly to the mission they are to undertake in Israel, the sending of the disciples here in Matthew 10 can also be viewed as a transitioning period, marking the beginning of the mission that the church was soon to carry over. These twelve disciples not only began the mission of the church as they were sent, but also marked the beginning of countless of other followers of Jesus who representing the church of Jesus Christ, have continue his work of proclaiming the good news of the kingdom. White (1949) also sees a connection between the ministry of the disciples and the church. She wrote, "It was at the ordination of the Twelve that the first step was taken in the organization of the church that after Christ's departure was to carry on His work on the earth" (p. 18).

Mission According to Matthew 28

The sending of the disciples as found in Matthew 28:16-20 is also consistent with God's mission. In both Matthew 10 and 28, the disciples are sent with specific instructions to impact the communities around them. However, as discussed above, the

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recipients of the disciple's ministry in Matthew 10 were quite different than in Matthew 28. In Matthew 10, the mission given to the disciples is to go to the lost sheep of Israel, while, in Matthew 28; the mission is to go to all nations. Reflecting on the relation between Matthew 10 and 28, Meier (1990) adds,

> The public ministry of the earthly Jesus stands under geographical and national limitations: the gospel is to be preached only to Israel, and only in the promised land. After the death and resurrection, however, this "economical" limitation falls at Jesus' all-powerful command (Mt. 28:16-20). The very same persons (the Eleven) who were previously forbidden to evangelize the Gentiles and Samaritans are now solemnly commissioned (by the same person who issued that prohibition) to extend their activities to all nations. (p. 127)

This is a new experience in the life of the disciples. Under the leading of the Spirit, and in spite of the challenges and their shortcomings, the gospel is now in their hands to continue beyond cross boundaries and new cultural settings. It is up to them now to carry the gospel to the entire world. The church today has a similar task that it must carry. It is the mandate of the Great Commission, which Jesus gave to his disciples and now rests as the sole responsibility of the church. However, there is work to be done. If the church is to seriously impact communities for the kingdom, there needs to be a reawakening of the Great Commission. Churches must understand this to be their calling and the very reason for their existence. Frederickson (2007) agrees,

> This reawakening does not make evangelizing from the Great Commission another task, or job, that a congregation must perform. Rather, as congregations have understood themselves to be missional in their very being and life from the radical Christology of the in-relationship Triune God, the Great Commission can now be an active component of the congregation's life. (p. 59)

Reflecting on this, White (1946) adds,

> Christ's last words to His disciples were: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations." Go to the farthest bounds of the habitable globe, and know that wherever you go My presence will attend you....To us also the commission is given. We are bidden to go forth as Christ's messengers, to teach, instruct, and persuade men and women, to urge upon their

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attention the word of life. And to us also the assurance of Christ's abiding presence is given. Whatever the difficulties with which we may have to contend, whatever the trials we may have to endure, the gracious promise is always ours, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (p. 15)

Mission in Terms of Relationship

A more complete reading of Matthew's 28 understanding of mission should include verses 16-17: "Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted." Restoring relationships between God and humans is the rationale for God's quest (i.e. *Mission Dei*) through the sending of Jesus, the Church and Holy Spirit to the world. This relationship is first and foremost manifested in worship, i.e. "coming to meet Jesus," as seen in Matt. 28:16-17. Worship is essential for the mission of the church. Sunquist (2013) agrees,

> The church, the body of Christ, has two basic purposes for its existence: worship and witness…As a healthy organism breathes in and breathes out, so the church goes out in mission and returns to receive needed oxygen in community worship. (p. 281)

Through worship, the church continues to build a relationship with God, which enables the body of believers to reflect more and more God's character, which is centered in love, humility, service and joy. This experience further empowers the church to take God's image into the community as a witness of having been at the feet of Jesus. As we enter in a relationship with God through worship, we also enter into a relationship with our community.

This reawakening of the Great Commission is a great start for the externally focused church seeking to engage in the mission of Jesus Christ. Energized by the calling of God in Christ Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit to reach out to people, the church can authentically live as a witness to the life that Jesus brought into the world. In

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other words, the congregation can seek to live out its unique calling to share the message and deed of Christ to its community.

Mission According to John 20

John 20:21 is another key passage where Jesus sends his disciples into mission. While this particular story does not appear to give specific details as to the mission the disciples are to carry as in the other gospels, it is still consistent with God's mission and the mission of Jesus Christ, and may even be more compelling then the Great Commission found in Matthew 28, Mark 16 and Luke 24.

According to Beasley-Murray (1999), John 20:21 introduces two important ramifications. First, the Son's mission does not end with his being "lifted up." While the form of fulfillment is to be changed, the mission will nevertheless continue and be effective. Thus the disciples are commissioned to continue Christ's work, not to begin a new one. Second, the giving of the spirit is linked with the disciples' mission, so that 20:23 should be interpreted in the light of 20:21-22. In other words, the Spirit provides a crucial element of continuity between the ministry of Jesus in the flesh and the work of the exalted Jesus through his disciples.

The sending of the disciples into mission reflected in John 20:21 is consistent with the mission of the exalted Jesus as seen in the last half of the book of John. According to Köstenberger (1998), the evangelist divides Jesus' mission theme into two sections: the mission of the earthly Jesus in chapters 1-12, and the mission of the exalted Jesus in chapters 13-21. Although at first sight the two sections may not appear to connect, a careful study of the book of John will reveal that Jesus' mission for his

disciples and the church is one of consistency and continuation with much greater

implications for the church. Köstenberger adds,

> The disciples' following of Jesus and their gathering of fruit, already referred to in the first half of the Gospel, are set on a higher, more advanced plane in the second part. Part two of the Fourth Gospel thus can be said to show not just the exaltation of Jesus but he implications of Jesus' exaltation for the mission of his followers and thus the significance of Jesus' work not just for the believers' salvation but for their mission as well, both individually and corporately. (p. 198)

It is clear in John 20:21 that Jesus sends his church into mission as he sends his

disciples into the world. "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." Reflecting on

John 20:21, Stetzer and Putman (2006) wrote,

> He proclaimed that we are sent. The church is and you are individually, God's missionary to the world. Your church is God's instrument to reach the world, and it includes reaching your community. We are *sent on mission* by God. We are to be a missional church by calling, nature and choice. We are called to be on mission in our community. (p. 31)

The Authority of the Sent Church

A second key principle of mission, relating to the sent church as found in

Matthew 10:1-8, 28:16-20 and John 20:21 is the authority of the church. Eerdman's bible

dictionary defines authority as "The possession of and right to use power" (Myers, 1987,

p. 108). Strong's Greek definition also suggests that ἐξουσία can mean moral authority,

power and influence (Strong, 2010). However, in the New Testament, authority is seen

more as a "valid inner authority" (Myers, 1987, p. 108). With this in mind, as the church

is sent with a mission, what is the authority given to the church regarding this mission?

And who is the source of this authority?

The theme of the disciples sent with authority is clear in Matthew 10:1, 28:18 and

John 20:21. In Matthew 10, ἐξουσία, "authority" is given to the disciples to drive out evil

spirits, which is also associated with healing every disease and sickness. Hagner (1993)

agrees, "the authority over demons is linked with the healing of sickness, presupposing the popular view that most, if not all, sickness was caused by demons" (p. 265). In comparison, the ἐξουσία "authority" given to the disciples in Matthew 28:18 and John 20:21 is much greater, for their mission has now larger implications. They are now invested with power to not only drive out evil spirits and healed the sick, but also to carry the full extent of Jesus' mission into the world. This new authority carried a lot more responsibilities. Reflecting on this, Hagner concurs,

> In the post-resurrection church the apostles assume great importance as the locus of authority and the guarantors of the tradition. Jesus calls his disciples to himself for the purpose of equipping them for the ministry they are now to perform in his footsteps. He gives them ἐξουσία, "authority," the very thing he demonstrated about himself in the five preceding chapters. (p. 265)

If the church is to be successful in the mission given by God, it must also understand that it is to go into mission with authority.

From the Father

Another interesting fact of the authority expressed in both Matthew 28 and John 20 is that the authority given to the church comes from the Father. This is a theme that is clear throughout the Scriptures. Reflecting on this, White (1949) wrote, "God has invested His church with special authority and power which no one can be justified in disregarding and despising, for he who does this despises the voice of God" (p. 164). God as the author of the mission is the only one invested with full authority to pass this unto His church. Thus the authority of the church is one that comes from the Father, to the Son and eventually to the church.

Through the Son

Since Jesus had come into the world to fulfill the Father's purpose, having

completed his task, the theme of the New Testament gospel is that he is now fully

invested to pass this authority unto his disciples, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending

you." Tenney (1981) agrees,

> Now he expected them to continue his work in his absence. As the Father had sent
> him to speak his words, to do his works, and lay down his life for the salvation of
> men, so he expected them to deliver his message, to do greater works than he had
> done, and give their lives in his service. (p. 193)

The externally focused church not only understands its mission, but also

recognizes the authority that has been given by Jesus Christ, through the Father. Morris

(1971) reflecting on John 20:21 writes,

> The thought that the Father has sent the Son is one of the master thoughts of this
> Gospel. It is repeated over and over. Thus is not surprising that it comes out once
> more in this solemn moment. Now, as Jesus has brought to its consummation the task
> that He came to accomplish, the task that the Father laid upon Him, He sends His
> followers into the world. The charge is given added solemnity from being linked thus
> to the mission of the Son. Their mission proceeds from His. It is only because He
> has accomplished it, that they are sent into the world. (pp. 845, 846)

The Sending of the Church

The third and final key principle of mission as it relates to the sent church, is the

"sending" theme. It is clear from the research so far that God sends his church with a

mission that belongs to the Father. It is also clear that as the church is sent into mission,

it is sent with authority. This authority, which comes from the Father, is passed on to the

Son, who in turn passes it to the church to continue the mission. In this section, an

attempt to understand the biblical meaning of "sent" as it relates to the church will be

explored. This understanding is important as we try to appreciate the biblical motivation

of the externally focused church for their mission to the community.

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Definition of Sending

The book of John uses two different Greek verbs for *sending*, ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω. While the meaning is the same for these two Greek verbs, scholars have often argued regarding the potential distinction in meaning, which can change the understanding of the *sending* theme in the gospel of John. Rengstorf (1964, p. 404) believes there is a clear distinction in the two verbs. In his words, "We can say in general that when πέμπειν is used in the NT the emphasis is on the sending as such, whereas when ἀποστέλλειν is used it rests on the commission linked with it."

Gangel (2000) appears to agree with Rengstorf. For Gangel, ἀποστέλλω emphasizes being sent with a message while πέμπω emphasizes that someone is being sent by another of higher rank to perform a special task. However, in a thorough research done by Köstenberger (1998), he believes that John's use of ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω is best explained by his preference for a word in a certain grammatical form or by stylistic variation. Of these possible reasons, he argues, "the former appears to be more prominent due to John's tendency toward 'stereotyping'" (p. 106). He concludes, "ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω occur frequently in close proximity to one another with no apparent difference in meaning. These two terms should therefore be viewed as virtual synonyms" (p. 102). Thus the conclusion for this research is that these two Greek verbs for *sending*, ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω are used by John in an interchangeably fashion and both are in reference to the concept of mission.

Sending Theme in the Book of John

A careful study of the Gospel of John reveals that the "sending" theme as it relates to the mission of Jesus and of the disciples, is one that permeates heavily

throughout the book. Over the last forty years, several attempts have been made to explain the content of John's teaching on mission. However, as Köstenberger (1998) suggests, these works have not been able to provide a thorough conceptual study of mission in this Gospel, due to their primary interest in Christology. In either case, it is without argument that the Gospel of John places a strong significance on the motif of Jesus as the sent son. Commenting on this, Köstenberger, agrees, "the sending of the Son should be considered a major concept that occurs consistently throughout the Gospel" (p. 96).

The sending theme as it relates to the Father *sending* the Son into the world is clear in the book of John. It speaks of an intimate collaboration between the Father and the Son in the accomplishment of the mission. There are approximately forty times in John's gospel, where we read about Jesus being sent (Wright, 2010, p. 210). While it is true the other gospels do not center on this particular theme, according to Wright, the concept of Jesus being sent, is not absent in Matthew 15:24; Luke 4:18, 43; Mark 1:38 and Acts 3:20 (p. 210).

Köstenberger sees several important *sending* principles of relationship between the Father and the Son in the Gospel of John that are important to understand as we try to grasp this theme. They are,

1. The one sent is to bring glory and honor to the sender (5:23; 7:18)

2. The one sent is not to do his own will but the will of the sender (4:34; 5:30, 38)

3. The one sent is to do the works of the sender (5:36; 9:4)

4. The one sent is to speak the words of the sender (3:34; 7:16; 12:49)

5. The one sent is to be accountable to the sender (chapter 17)

6. The one sent is to bear witness to the sender (5:36; 7:28)

7. The one sent is to represent the sender accurately (12:44-45; 13:20; 15:18-25)

8. The one sent is to exercise delegated authority (5:21-22, 27; 13:3; 17:2; 20:23)

9. The one sent is to know the sender intimately (7:29; 15:21; 17:8, 25)

These *sending* principles are key in understanding not only the relationship between the sender and the one sent, but also the purpose for the sending, which is the mission. Wright (2010) reflecting on this *sending* theme from an Old Testament perspective writes,

> When God sends people, it is most often either to act as agents of his deliverance and salvation, or to declare a message that somebody needs to hear…In other words, God's sending is closely connected to two of the great actions of God in and for Old Testament Israel – salvation and revelation. (p. 203)

Understanding the *sending* theme in the book of John is important to the externally focused church, for it not only mirrors the responsibility it has in relationship to the one sending, but in the task it has to carry as a result of this representation.

<p align="center">Sending Theme and the Disciples</p>

It is clear from a biblical perspective that the Son, as the one sent, not only has a clear understanding of his mission, but also understands his relationship to the one who sent him. This is important for the success of the mission in any context. As John unfolds this theme in the Fourth Gospel, it is interesting to note that the *sending* theme also applies to the disciples.

As already discussed above, Jesus chose the disciples to continue his mission here on earth. As representatives of Jesus, they were empowered and sent to go into the world and finish what Jesus had started. It is important to note here that, the message in the gospel of John as well as the other gospels is that the disciples were expected to relate to

Jesus, in the same way Jesus related to his Father. As such, they were to: know Jesus intimately; bring glory and honor to him; do his will; speak and do his works; be accountable to him; bear witness to him; represent him accurately; and exercise their delegated authority. This created the basis for the success of the mission they were now responsible for.

<div align="center">Modes of Movement in the Disciple's Mission</div>

The sending of the disciples involved more than just a simple command to go and preach the good news followed by an act of obedience on their part. While they were charged with a mission that transcended everything that they were accustomed to, it took something special for them to fully embrace the Great Commission. Köstenberger (1998) believes there are three modes of movement in the disciples' mission according to the Fourth Gospel. These are: "coming," "following," and "being sent."

The concept of "coming" to Jesus according to Köstenberger is "the beginning of 'following' Jesus, as is the case in [John] 1:39, 46, 47" (p. 176). This action as seen in the disciples' own experience suggests that there is an expectation when coming to see Jesus which may lead to placing one's faith in him. In other words, as they entered into a relationship with Jesus by coming to him, they began to believe in him. Thus by believing, it may lead to a person's "following" of Jesus.

"Following" is the other mode of movement that Köstenberger sees in the disciples' growth of their relationship with Jesus and mission. As discussed above, it is the result of "coming" to Jesus by believing in him. "Following" therefore implied not only a choice the disciples had to make, but also a clear understanding of what this meant. There is a reason for this movement. As Wright (2010) suggests,

They were to "be with him." That is, they would simply spend time with Jesus, learning from him, being trained by him, understanding his identity and mission, bearing the cost of radical discipleship, witnessing his life and teaching his death and above all his resurrection. This in itself made this group of twelve unique, so much so that when Judas dropped out, the criteria they set for whoever should replace him included the same elements – he had to have been a witness of Jesus from the days of John the Baptist to the resurrection (Acts 1:21-22). (p. 212)

According to Köstenberger (1998, p. 182), a study of the occurrences of "follow" in the Fourth Gospel yields the following insights:

1. A movement from literal to figurative following

2. A widening from the "following" of Jesus' original disciples to the "following" of every believer

3. A disciple's individual prerequisite for mission

Understanding these insights is crucial for the externally focused church, which believes that "mission" is more than an activity or response to a command from God. Rather, to follow Jesus is a way of life that is rooted in a deep conviction of a call to serve him. This can only come from a daily close walk with him and the development of a personal relationship.

The final mode of movement in the disciple's mission is "being sent." This perhaps is the most important part of this discussion, since it clearly reflects the end result of "coming" and "following" Jesus. In other words, Jesus will not send his church into mission, unless there is first a "coming" and "following" experience with him. Wright (2010) considers this as the authoritative part of the sending. He writes,

They were authoritatively *to replicate and extend the ministry of Jesus himself.* He sent them out. He gave them authority. And with that authority they were to do as he was doing – preaching the good news of the kingdom of God, driving out demons and healing the sick. What the apostles said and did, Jesus was saying and doing through them. (p. 212)

It is clear from this understanding of movement in the disciple's experience that

mission in the life of the church will only take place until there is a relationship that takes

place with Jesus, which enables every member of the body of Christ, to not only believe

in Him, but also to make the decision to follow Him. The end result of this experience

will be a church that will be ready to be sent into the community for mission.

<center>References to Sending in John</center>

There are three major references in the Gospel of John to the "sending" of the

disciples: 4:38, 17:18 and 20:21. John 4:38 is of special interest due to the fact that it is

in conjunction with Jesus' mission in Samaria. Here, the disciples are asked to join Jesus

in the harvest. There is an apparent urgency of the harvest, as pointed out by Beasley-

Murray (1999) in verses 35-38. He adds,

> The point of citing the proverb is to contrast it with the present situation: the waiting
> time is over, the time of harvest has arrived! Since the harvest is a common
> eschatological symbol, the saying if Jesus represents the gathering of people into the
> kingdom of God. (p. 63)

While it is true that Jesus did not send his disciples immediately into Samaria, the

idea of mission and harvest is clear. Jesus is anticipating the "fruit" of mission in the

"sending" of his disciples in John 4:38. While it is true that the success of the harvest

sometimes is not seen immediately, the point made here by Jesus is clear. The disciples

were chosen and sent into mission to bear fruit. It did not matter to God who labored or

toiled in preparing the way for the great harvest, which is now to be gathered in. What

matters is the conviction and clear understanding of their responsibility to which they

were chosen. Ellen White (1940), reflecting on this passage wrote,

> Jesus said to the disciples, "I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labor:
> other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors." The Saviour was here
> looking forward to the great ingathering on the day of Pentecost. The disciples were

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not to regard this as the result of their own efforts. They were entering into other men's labors. Ever since the fall of Adam Christ had been committing the seed of the word to His chosen servants, to be sown in human hearts. And an unseen agency, even an omnipotent power, had worked silently but effectually to produce the harvest. The dew and rain and sunshine of God's grace had been given, to refresh and nourish the seed of truth. Christ was about to water the seed with His own blood. His disciples were privileged to be laborers together with God. They were coworkers with Christ and with the holy men of old. By the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, thousands were to be converted in a day. This was the result of Christ's sowing, the harvest of His work. (p. 193)

Thus the relationship of 4:38 to other mission passages in the Fourth Gospel can be summarized as follows, according to Schnackenburg (1982):

Jesus' view [reflected in 4:38] already takes in the coming time of fruitfulness, in which he, as the exalted Lord, draws all men to him (12:32), does still greater works through his disciples (cf. 14:12) and gathers the one flock of believers (cf. 10:16; 17:21). (p. 452)

The other two major "sending" passages of 17:18 and 20:21 link the way in which the disciples are sent with the way Jesus is sent. The adverb "just as" ($\kappa\alpha\theta\acute{\omega}\varsigma$) makes this point clear. In other words, just as Jesus was sanctified and sent by the Father, here the disciples are sanctified and sent into the world by Jesus. Morris (1971) adds,

The mission of Christ forms the pattern for the mission of the apostles. Earlier we have read that he Father sanctified Him and sent Him into the world (10:36). He has just prayed that the Father will sanctify them and now He sends them into the world. The parallel is impressive…they are given a definite commission by their Lord. Their task is to discharge it, even as He discharged His mission. (p. 731)

There are however, some distinctive emphases between these two passages. According to Köstenberger (1998), 17:18 includes the qualifier "into the world," as a process of being set apart from the world, while 20:21 simply links the sending of Jesus and the disciples in general terms with an emphasis more on the sender/sent relationships between the Father and Jesus and Jesus and his disciples. These sending principles of relationship between Father/Son and Jesus and his disciples have already been discussed previously. In a sense they form the basis for understanding why the church is sent and

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why this is important for the externally focused church as it seeks to understand its theological basis for its relationship with the community.

Conclusion

This research explored three key principles of mission relating to the *sent church* based on Matthew 10:1-8, 28:16-20, and John 20:21. The first key principle, which deals with the mission of the church, suggests that God has a mission and he has invited his church to participate in this mission. God the Father called the church into existence through the ministry of His son Jesus Christ, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" John 3:16 (NIV), and the guidance of the Holy Spirit sent to lead all believers into truth and to remind them to keep all that Jesus taught (John 14:26). Thus, early Christians saw themselves as a people belonging to God, and together in Christ for the proclamation of the Gospel (Grenz, 2000, p. 464).

The purpose of this mission, which has been passed down to the church through the commissioning of the disciples is to restore the broken relationship between God and humanity. In his infinite love he created a plan, which included sending his Son to this world. From his early ministry, Jesus was clear as to the purpose of his mission: "And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31). Reflecting on Jesus' mission, White (1940) wrote,

> He carried the awful weight of responsibility for the salvation of men. He knew that unless there was a decided change in the principles and purposes of the human race, all would be lost. This was the burden of His soul, and none could appreciate the weight that rested upon Him. Filled with intense purpose, He carried out the design of His life that He Himself should be the light of men. (p. 92)

Not only is the mission of the church God's mission, it is also his initiative. Mission was born right after the fall of humankind. When Adam and Eve disobeyed and violated the relationship with God, in a moral and legal sense, God initiate his mission with the purpose of one day restoring his relationship with humanity (DeYoung & Gilbert, 2011). The sending of Jesus Christ to this earth marked a pivotal point in God's mission. Jesus was not only to bring honor and glory to the Father, but also to do his will which included preparing a group of disciples to continue and finish his Father's mission.

As suggested above, there are three key biblical passages that show Jesus sending the church into mission, through the sending of his disciples: Matthew 10:1-8, 28:16-20, and John 20:21. In Matthew 10:1-8, the disciples are sent into mission for three reasons. First, they are responding to a need in Galilee. Second, they are to go to their own people, the Jews. Third, their sending into Galilee begins a transitioning period, where Jesus is not only inviting his disciples to participate in his mission, but to continue his work with the idea that soon it would become their complete responsibility.

The second biblical passage which shows Jesus sending the church into mission is Matthew 28:16-20. This sending of the church differs in two ways from Matthew 10. First, the disciples are sent into mission beyond Jerusalem. Their task now is to go into the whole world. Second, while the sending in Matthew 10 marked a transitioning period, the sending in Matthew 28 ends the ministry of Jesus here on earth, and transfers complete responsibility of God's mission unto the disciples. As verse 17 clearly indicates, their unique relationship with Jesus through worship, now facilitates their mission to the community in love, humility, service and joy. They are now empowered to complete God's mission, which is to restore all broken relationships.

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John 20:21 is also clear about the mission of the church. "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." According to Köstenberger (1998), the subject of the mission of the church is seen from the beginning to the end of the Fourth Gospel. The disciples are called to follow Jesus, with the intent to continue carrying his mission. As Köstenberger puts it, "their role in Jesus' mission is one of entering into it, of "harvesting" and "bearing fruit" and of witnessing to Jesus. This, too, is the role of the church of the ages" (p. 220).

The second key principle of mission explored in this research is the authority of the church. This concept is present in all three key passages relating to the sending of the church. In Matthew 10:1-8, ἐξουσία "authority" is given to the disciples to drive out evil spirits and heal the sick. In Matthew 28:16-20, the concept of ἐξουσία is even greater since not only are the disciples asked to continue the mission given to them in Matthew 10, but they are now empowered to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything" (v. 10). In John 20:21, ἐξουσία is seen as coming from the Father, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." Since God has been active in the mission throughout the scriptures, it is not surprising that God the Father is said to do the same in John 20:21. Wright (2010) summarizes the concept well when he says,

> Jesus did not just arrive; he was sent. It is one of the most noticeable dimensions of his self-consciousness – the driving awareness that he had been sent by his Father to do his will. It is certainly one of the dominant motifs in John's presentation of Jesus. (p. 210)

God the Father is responsible for the mission of the church, as well as the ἐξουσία "authority" which he has passed on through his son Jesus Christ. As such, the church not only has a mission to carry, but the mission must be carried with full authority.

The final key principle of mission related to the *sent church*, is the sending theme, which is clearly reflected in the gospels, especially in John. According to Köstenberger (1998), the "sending of the Son" theme is a major concept found throughout the Fourth Gospel. This concept, which is related to mission, embraces the central thought of the book. In summary, the Father sends the Son with a mission. As the Son carries this mission, he is in total obedience and dependence upon his sender, the Father.

This Father/Son relationship is important for two reasons. First, it demonstrates a commitment to the mission. Before the disciples could fully embrace the task, they had to be convinced of their calling. This process was identified as a progression involving at least three steps: Making a commitment to come to Jesus, following him, and accepting the responsibility of being sent. The second reason why having a strong Father/Son relationship is important, has to do with the actual carrying of the mission. Being sent into mission is one thing, but executing and staying faithful is another. In a sense, the church is being asked to join Jesus in the harvest. The command is clear: "go and bear fruit," with the only difference that every Christian believer is now asked to go "into the world" as Jesus was sent.

The lessons drawn from this study are simple and yet crucial for the survival of today's church. The church that Jesus called into mission is an externally focused church. It was given a mission, invested with authority and sent into the community to make disciples. DeYoung and Gilbert (2011) concur, "We believe the church is sent into the world to witness to Jesus by proclaiming the gospel and making disciples of all nations. This is our task. This is our unique and central calling" (p. 26). The externally focused church believes that it has been sent by God with a mission and clearly

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understands and embraces this partnership with him. It also recognizes that it has been

invested with full authority and as such, it will always find ways to go into the

community to develop meaningful relationships that will help grow God's kingdom.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter provides a review of literature that will contribute to the

understanding of transitioning an internally focused church to an externally focused

congregation, which is consistent with the mission of Jesus Christ. Externally focused

churches believe they exist to serve their communities.

Most literature written about the church today seems to suggest that the church in

North America is in serious trouble (Olson, 2008). Rusaw and Swanson (2004) also

point out that statistics about the church suggest it has become less influential and

relevant to its society (p. 11). Sjogren (2002) agrees, "Most churches are struggling with

survival issues. For many, just staying in business financially or getting beyond a sense

of defeat is the topic at hand" (p. 5). Adding to this argument, Gelder (2007b) introduces

another serious concern; "To those of us living in the West, one of the more interesting

shifts is the growing recognition by churches in the United States that they are now in

their own mission location" (p. 1). The challenge, according to Gelder, is that while this

is a great opportunity for new and exciting ministries, the fact that congregations are

dying creates an even bigger challenge for the church. There is a vast amount of

literature on church growth and the mission of the church, but while this literature

explores key elements of growth in the church, there is little written on the fact that

transitioning a congregation from an internally focused mentality to an externally focused approach can potentially save the church.

In reviewing the literature that pertains to this project, four major areas will be explored. The first area will focus on the current state of the church within the United States of America. Key statistics reflecting the present condition of the church will be reviewed, including that of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The second area will highlight the internally focused church. Here, an attempt will be made to show how this type of congregation is a major contributor to the decline of the church. Main aspects of being internally focused will also be reviewed in an attempt to show that the church's present condition is not the best future for the church in North America, including the 168 congregations of the Potomac Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

The third area that will be explored is the externally focused church as the appropriate model for fulfilling the mission of Jesus Christ. Here, key characteristics of this model will be outlined, indicating its effectiveness on community outreach.

The final focus of this literature review will be on selected principles of transitioning the church from an internally focused model to an externally focused congregation. While there may be other transitioning principles, those explored here will be considered as basic steps for transitioning the church into a healthy church.

There are many challenges associated with this transition. Perhaps the biggest challenge will come from the church's willingness to accept the fact that unless it changes its focus, it will die.

The State of the Church in North America Today

Recent polls from the Gallup Organization and the Barna Group seem to suggest that the American church is booming (Olson, 2008, p. 16). These polls also suggest that worship attendance has increased steadily here in the United States. The main factor for this report is the apparent positive impact of the so-called mega churches such as Willow Creek and Lakewood Church, which at any given Sunday can draw more than 20,000 worshipers to its church and satellite campuses. Reflecting on this, Olson writes, "A similar scene is repeated each Sunday in hundreds of mega churches across the United States. While few reach the size of Willow Creek, more than 1,200 Protestant mega churches average more than 2,000 in weekly attendance" (p. 15).

However, in spite of these mega churches and the hundreds of books written on church growth and discipleship, the church of today continues to struggle. In research done from 1998 to 2006, Krejcir (2007) reports that nearly 50% of Americans have no church affiliation. In fact, since the 1980's, the church has seen a steady drop in membership, with some denominations reporting up to a 40% drop. Reflecting on his United Methodist experience, Winseman (2006) shares that the membership of the United Methodist church plummeted by nearly half between the years 1970 and 2004. During that same period, the church also experienced a decline in weekly worship attendance, by nearly one third. Perhaps the most startling statistic that he reports is the fact that, "in 2004, one-fourth of the United Methodist Churches in my Conference did not receive a single new member!" (p. 2)

There is even a more shocking statistic when it comes to the projection of Americans attending church. According to Krejcir (2007) about 22% percent of

Americans attended church on a frequent basis in 1992. This percentage dropped to

20.5% by the year 1995. By 2002, his research showed that the percentage of Americans

attending church frequently had dropped to 18%. He adds,

> Now, by extrapolating the data and doing some statistical evaluation and adding some
> hope for revival, we can see the figures drop to 15% of Americans in attendance at a
> church by 2025, and a further drop to 11% or 12 % in 2050. Soon, we can catch up
> with Europe, which is currently "enjoying" two to four percent of its population in
> regular Church attendance. (para. 6)

If these projections are true, it affirms the fact that the church in America is not

growing. Rather, it is in a serious crisis since the majority of Americans do not attend

church. Also, these facts coupled with other statistics lead us to conclude that the church

in the United States is a dying church. Further studies indicate that this trend is true of

every major denomination, including the Seventh-day Adventist church.

While there are other factors that are contributing to this decline, the one issue

that has impacted the church the most is the fact that by large, average churches have

become "by emotional and organizational default, inwardly focused" (Sjogren, 2002, p.

5). By becoming internally focused, the church has complicated its ministry to the point

that it has lost its effectiveness in society. Commenting on this challenge, Gibbs (2000)

suggests, "the church in North America is no longer regarded as one of the central

institutions that bonds society" (p. 218). Instead, the church has become a marginalized

institution that has lost its social prestige and influence, as well as power to change its

community.

Challenges for the Seventh-day Adventist
Church in North America

There are several challenges facing the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America today. The following list gives a general picture of the main issues this church is facing today.

Lack of Growth

In a recent report by USA Today, MacDonald (2011) reports that, in spite of recently released data showing a 2.5% church growth in North America as compared with other major denominations, Adventist leadership is concerned over the fact that this growth is not consistent with the growth the church is experiencing in the rest of the world. The report further adds, "Despite its North American roots, the church is growing more than twice as fast overseas...We don't feel that we're growing very much, and that is a source of concern, especially for North America." (para. 6, 7)

Plateauing/Declining Churches

From 2003 to 2007, church growth expert Joseph Kidder conducted a research, which studied flourishing Seventh-day Adventist congregations in North America. The intent of the study was to find out why some Adventist churches are growing and others are not. The results were discouraging. Kidder (2011) reports,

> Our research made it clear that we have many challenges to growth. Most of our churches (more than 80 percent) are plateauing or in decline. In fact, the growth rate of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the North American Division is going down. (p. 13)

Net Membership Growth

According to Beckworth and Kidder (December, 2010), the net growth in church membership is another concern of the Seventh-day Adventist church in North America. Each year the net growth in membership is shrinking in spite of efforts by North American Division, Union and local Conference leadership to reverse this trend. In 2010, North American Division Adventist Statistics reported 40,182 new members who joined the church either by baptism or profession of faith. However, in the same year 20,621 were removed from membership for various reasons leaving a net growth of only 19,561 or 1.77%. This type of growth rate is not synonymous of a healthy church and as a result, there are more and more dying Seventh-day Adventist churches in North America (Burrill, 2002).

Kingdom Growth

Not everyone thinks the Seventh-day Adventist church is in trouble. There are those that see some congregations thriving (Sahlin, 2003). The problem however with some of these churches is the fact that their growth is mainly attributed to their success in transfer growth. In most cases, these thriving congregations are large institutional churches with strong financial stability able to support the type of ministries that attract families with either small or teenage children. The fact that this type of membership growth is not kingdom growth, but rather the result of creative and well-financed ministries, is a concern for those who do not see this as the type of growth that is making a difference in the community and growing God's kingdom. Churches need to be intentional about fulfilling the mission of Jesus Christ. Based on this reality, it is safe to

conclude that even some of the large thriving Adventist churches in North America might be considered dying congregations.

Internal Focused Congregations

Another major challenge facing the Seventh-day Adventist church in North America is the large number of congregations that are internally focused. Traditionally, "the Adventist church has always been a mission-driven, action-oriented organization. A key element in the life of the local church is the variety of opportunities for members to get involved in ministry and make a difference in the world" (Sahlin, 2003, p. 51).

However, while this is true, it is also true the church has always viewed itself as a prophetic movement, called to bring people "out of Babylon." This idea has encouraged many Adventists to distance themselves from any social contact with non-Adventist friends, creating a huge gap between the church and the community. There is no doubt this has played an important role in how the church relates to its community and vice versa.

Speaking to this issue, Seventh-day Adventist researcher Sahlin (2003) adds, "The growing churches are those—among other things—with significant, non-traditional community services and active relationships with the neighborhood" (p. 19). However, since this is not the case with most Adventist churches, the concern for church leadership is the slow and imminent death of the Seventh-day Adventist church in North America. Plain and simple, those churches that are unhealthy are the type of congregations that continue to be internally focused by insisting in maintaining ministries and programs that only serve the needs of the church membership.

Mode of Evangelism

Another challenge facing the Adventist church in its effort to reach its community is the way we have traditionally done evangelism. Because of a strong emphasis on the imminent second coming of Christ, the church has traditionally employed, for the most part, a type of evangelism that is geared at bringing the largest number of people into the church through what is known as public evangelism. While this is not a bad method, the challenge here is that this type of mission outreach is not conducive to significant impact in the community surrounding the church. Unfortunately, there has been little change to this approach. Today the church in most cases continues to emphasize ministries that do not contemplate the developing of long lasting relationships in the community. This type of mission approach has not worked well in the past and will not be successful in trying to sustain long-lasting kingdom growth. If the Seventh-day Adventist church is serious about reaching communities for Christ, it must become creative in its evangelistic approach and must start looking outward as a new way of fulfilling the mission of Jesus Christ.

Need for new Vision and Strategy

Church growth expert, Kidder (February 2011) suggests that if the church has any hope to survive, ecclesiastical leadership must come with a new vision and strategy to reverse this trend. We cannot continue doing the same thing and expect different results. So what is that one thing that the church must address in order to become a healthy growing congregation? Contemporary literature suggests that if the Seventh-day Adventist church is serious about growing God's kingdom, it must come up with a new vision and strategy that is consistent with the externally focused church.

Challenges for the Potomac Conference

The Potomac Conference Corporation is the regional headquarters for the Seventh-day Adventist church in Virginia, the District of Columbia, and portions of Montgomery and Prince George's counties in the state of Maryland as shown in Figure 1 below.
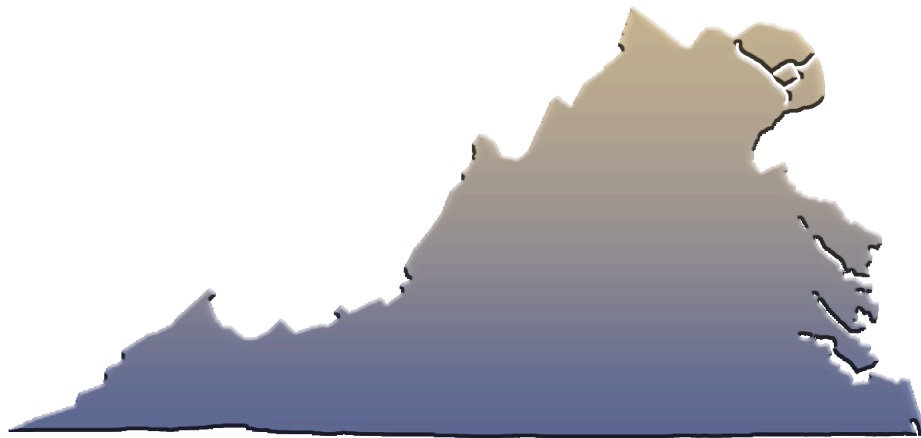
Figure 1. Territory of the Potomac Conference Corporation.

Part of the Columbia Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, it presently has 167 organized churches and companies, with a membership of 33,698 (eAdventist, December, 2011). While at the surface it would appear that this Conference is healthy due to the 10,401 baptisms reported between 2005 and 2011, a closer look at certain aspects of its congregations tells a different story.

Plateaued and Dying Churches

In December 2006, conference administration conducted a study on the growth of its congregations over the past ten years and found some interesting facts (See Appendix A). Twenty-three percent of the churches revealed some growth, while 44% showed a

plateaued state. More astonishing was the fact that 28% of Potomac churches are on a

dying path. The final 5% of congregations were so new that no data was available to

produce a measurement. While this report appears to show some encouraging figures,

mainly in the 23% of churches that reported some growth, the challenge with this data is

the fact that baptisms were the only factor taken into account to measure growth. This

creates another set of challenges that must be seriously considered.

Baptisms and Professions of Faith

Over the past few years, the Potomac Conference has seen a steady number of

baptisms and professions of faith from several congregations (see Figure 2).
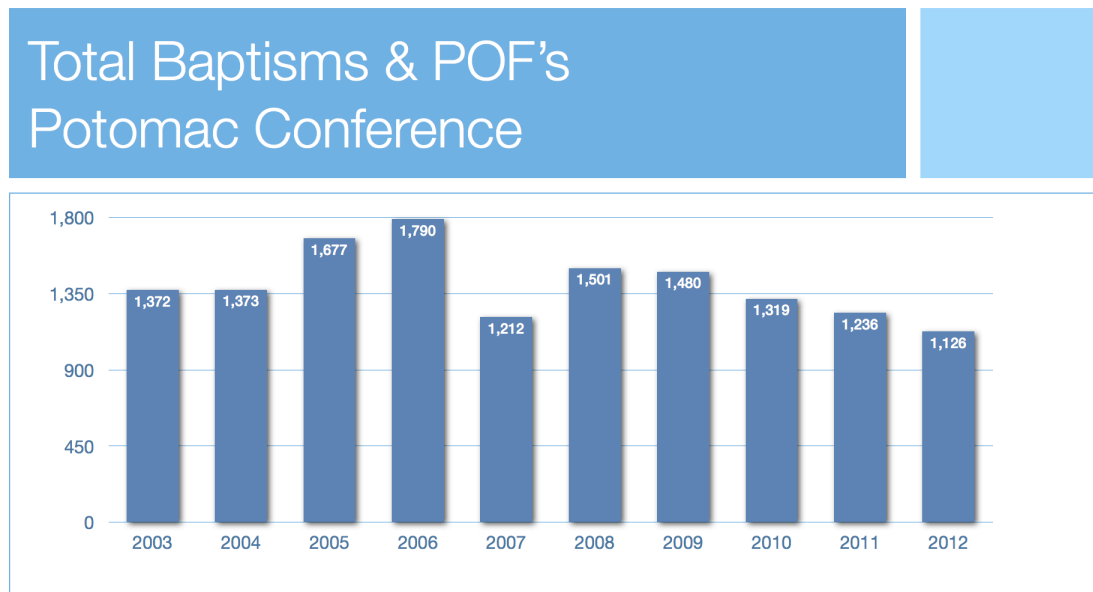
Figure 2. Baptisms and Professions of Faith.

On the surface, this would appear to suggest healthy congregations. However, as

conference administration engages in assessing some of these churches, the results show

a different picture. There are at least two concerns with the above baptism and profession of faith reports.

First, nearly 70% of baptisms reported above came from Hispanic congregations. While this is not a bad statistic, the challenge with this report is the fact that most baptisms came from first generation immigrants. According to church growth experts, there is debate as to the authenticity of these conversions. Many feel that because first generation immigrants are in a desperate need to belong, socially they are easy targets to religious groups who open their doors to them, thus bringing them into the church with little or no effort. Speaking of this phenomenon, Sahlin (2009) adds,

> There is evidence from research that two thirds of the baptisms in these congregations are among newly-arrived immigrants who already have ties to the Adventist Church, not conversions. Nonetheless, this is one of the most vibrant sectors of the Adventist movement in the U.S. and Canada. (para. 1)

If this is true, churches that report large number of immigrant baptisms may not necessarily reflect a healthy congregation due to the fact there is little or no discipling of these new converts. In most cases, the majority of these new converts end up leaving the church. This is indeed a challenge for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Internally Focused Congregations

Another challenge facing the Potomac Conference is the large number of internally focused congregations. Administration estimates that over 75% of churches in the Potomac Conference exist to serve the needs of their members. The evidence for this is the fact that although several congregations have excellent programs and ministries, these ministries are not focused on the needs of the community, but instead exists to serve the needs of their church members (Potomac Conference Corporation, 2014).

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In light of these challenges it is safe to conclude that in general, Potomac Conference churches are not healthy congregations and that the declining trends seen in most churches in the United States are also true of Potomac Conference churches. The common denominator for those congregations that are dying or have plateaued is the fact that they are not engaged in their communities. Their primary focus is internal. This reveals once again the pitfall of the internally focused church.

Characteristics of the Internally Focused Church

There are several characteristics that identify the internally focused church. While the following list is not exhaustive, it gives a summary of the most prominent.

Internal Focus

There are several factors that are contributing to the death of the church in North America. The most damaging and perhaps most fatal is the obsession of the church to look inward. Sider, Olson and Unruh (2002) agree that one of the main hurdles preventing the church from becoming a mission-oriented church is its inward focus. They go on to say that although churches are engaged in outreach activities, several of these congregations are not outreach-focused churches. "The dominant understanding is that the church exists to serve the needs—spiritual, social and relational—of the membership" (p. 147).

According to Swanson and Rusaw (2010), researcher Thom S. Rainer reported that in a recent survey of churches across America, nearly 95% of them indicated that most if not all ministries in the church are for members alone. In fact, "many churches had no ministries for those outside the congregation" (p. 32). Speaking of this challenge, Johnson (2006) suggests that this is a behavior that is usually associated with the

personality of the church. He sees this as a unique characteristic that usually develops

over a period of time. Commenting on the signs of such personality, Rainier (2012, para.

3) suggests that such personality characteristics can be damaging to the life of the church.

He writes:

> In my research of churches and consultation with churches, I have kept a checklist of potential signs that a church might be moving toward inward obsession. No church is perfect; indeed most churches will demonstrate one or two of these signs for a season. But the real danger takes place when a church begins to manifest three or more of these warning signs for an extended period of months and even years.

It is obvious that these behaviors can be lethal to the life of the church. Among

those that are most visible and damaging we find: attitudes of entitlement, wars over

music and worship service, concern over change, demand for pastoral care, inward

focused budget, and the enormous amount of time spent on committees dealing with

items that have nothing to do with the mission of the church.

In describing the complexity of this issue, Billings (2008) argues that while the

issue of the church's obsession over individuals' needs is real, the church cannot make

the mistake of going to the other extreme by suggesting that simply creating ministries

that are community focused is the solution. It is more than this. The church has to have a

strong conviction that this is the reason for their existence. Billings further argues that if

the church is going to be truly missional, it needs to allow the Holy Spirit to shape its

path in whatever way He wants. Frederickson (2007) refers to this as the "two polarities"

(p. 44). There is no question that this tension must be carefully resolved. The church

needs to be careful in how it addresses both the understanding and implementation of its

context. This is key, in understanding how God works in the world.

Trying to understand the complexities and issues of the internally focused church

can be challenging. However, one thing is clear. A church that chooses to focus on

itself, ends up creating two additional challenges: loss of identity and eventually loss of touch with the surrounding community.

Loss of Identity

Loss of identity is another characteristic of the internally focused church. This can sometimes be confused with what some church leaders call "identity crisis" (Ross, 2007). In this article, Ross writes about this problem that the Church of Christ is facing in North America. Here, the issue is seen more as a loss of certain internal characteristics that has given the church its distinctiveness for many years such as the order of worship, type of hymns sang, and even the architectural styles of the church buildings. However, while this can have certain effect on the church, this is not the type of identity that ultimately characterizes the internally focused church. The loss of identity that can seriously damage God's church is the very essence of why the church exists. This speaks to the mission and vision of the church.

Being an evangelistic church does not mean that the congregation is a missional church or that it is an externally focused church (Frost, 2011). It is much more than that. While engaging in evangelism to attract more people to the church is a good thing, it is not the essence of a missional church. Frost adds,

> This might well be correct, but applying the term missional to the evangelistic enterprise only dilutes the impact of the call to embrace the missional, making it appear that it is just another way of saying get-out-there-and-invite-your-unsaved-friends-to-church, which it is definitely not. By subverting the missional paradigm into an exclusively evangelistic enterprise, we corrupt its essential logic. (p. 24)

The true missional church not only understands its context, but also understands that it exists to serve its community and will develop not ministries, but a ministry that will accomplish this.

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The loss of identity in the church has led to a selfish attitude and lack of focus about the church's mission and vision. This is a major contribution to the shaping of the internally focused church. Without identity, the church is left to wonder in the dark. In an article dealing with church identity, Larochelle (Winter 2009) concludes that:

> An understanding of identity is important in the life of a congregation. The decisions that a church makes are rooted in this identity. Any exploration of church identity begins with an examination of how people see the nature and mission of the local church. This understanding contains characteristics that distinguish the church from other institutions within the local community. (p. 21)

If the church is to make an impact in the life of its community, it must have a clear vision of its identity by understanding its mission and vision. The lack of a clear mission and vision will always lead to internal conflict, which is a strong characteristic of an internally focused congregation.

Loss of Touch With Community

Another characteristic of the internally focused church is the loss of touch with its surrounding community. As a result, "the church in North America is no longer regarded as one of the central institutions that bonds society" (Gibbs, 2000, p. 218). This is a huge problem for the church. It means that the church has not only lost its influence, but also its power to change the community. Sjogren (2002) agrees by stating that the irrelevancy of today's church is so profound that "it is virtually invisible to the culture around it (p. 33). What has led to this terrible reality? We have already suggested that by losing its sense of mission and vision, the church lost its identity. With the loss of identity, the church created the perfect path for a complete detachment from its community. There are several indicators of a church that has lost its touch with the surrounding community.

By not Listening

The first indicator has to do with listening. Johnson (2006) suggests that the church stopped listening a long time ago. For many years, the church has spent a lot of time trying to communicate the gospel with every technique available. From evangelistic series, seminars, and special church programs, the church has always done the talking. The approach has been one of "listen to what we have to say." However, over time this practice has proven to be ineffective, as the results have shown. Johnson suggests "the goal of learning to listen to the unchurched is not the development of a method to bring them in. It is instead a serious engagement with people outside the church on the basis of respect for them and care for them as human beings" (p. 150). This implies a genuine interest in people that goes far beyond than a simple invitation to come and visit the church. Listening is a key to a strong and meaningful relationship. When the church does not listen, the message we send is one that says, we do not care and you are not important to us. The church must be intentional about paying attention to the culture that surrounds it.

There are many needs in the community that require the careful listening of the church. Unchurched people have spiritual as well as social needs. These are the same challenges that Christians face. This is why it is so crucial for the church to engage with its community, and pay close attention to its needs. Speaking on this issue, Frost (2011) strongly suggests the need for a movement of God's people not only to live among the neighborhoods, but also to become "the new future of Christ" (p. 139). This type of approach will begin to send the right message and will start creating the type of

atmosphere that eventually will help the church begin a process of reconnecting with its community.

"When churches begin to focus their collective attention on the community and really listen to what the community is saying, they will be overwhelmed with the input they receive" (Johnson, 2006, p. 162). Listening to the community is just the first step in a process of engaging the church with those trying to reconnect with the surrounding community of the church. As Johnson suggests above, engaging in this process more than likely will give the church a good overview of the needs of those surrounding the church. However, while this information can become a great resource to the church, many times it turns out to be a curse due to the lack of response from the church.

By not Responding to Community Needs

The second indicator of a church that has lost its touch with the surrounding community is its lack of response to the needs of the community. This is perhaps the greatest challenge for the church today. One thing is to become aware of the needs and another to act upon them. DaCosta (2010), reflecting on the story of Nehemiah and the challenges of its community, strongly suggests that in order for the church to transform the community, it will need a collaborative effort from other congregations as well. Hand in hand, the church not only needs to open its doors, but also walk through its communities in an effort to notice what is broken and what needs repair. She sees this reflected in the action of the church in Nehemiah's time as the church, "strengthened their hands for this good work." (Neh 2:18).

In her view, if the church is to respond to the needs of the community, it will need to consider the same approach. One church cannot do it alone. It will need the help of

other congregations. "For the church to make substantial strides in reaching our

community, we must work together… Together with at least three other churches, start

working on how to meet the first need" (p. 2). If the church is to make a difference in the

community, it must provide a proper respond to the needs surrounding her. Frost (2001)

suggests that we may not need to look far to find where the needs are. There are many

places where God is already at work. Finding these places and responding to these needs

is crucial for the relationship between the church and its community.

By not Speaking the Language of the Community

A third indicator of a church that has lost its touch with the community is its use

of religious language in its communication with the surrounding community. Johnson

(2006, p. 29) calls it a great barrier for those who are not members of the church. Gibbs

(2000) goes one step further by suggesting,

> Churches cannot stand apart from society and invite people to come to them on their
> terms. Rather, churches must go to people where they are and communicate in terms
> that will make sense to them, addressing the issues that shape their lives and speaking
> their language. (p. 39)

For many years, the church has tried to reach its community with a language that

it's foreign to the unchurched. McGavran (1990) argues that people should not be

required to cross racial, linguistic or class barriers in order to become Christians. Rather

the church is "called to immerse itself in the host culture rather than endeavoring to

extract those who respond from their own culture" (Gibbs, 2000, p. 40). It is no secret

that if the church wants to communicate its mission to its community, every effort must

be made to clarify what it wants to say in a simple and non-religious language. Doing

this will most certainly help in regaining contact with the surrounding community.

Imminent Death

A final characteristic of the internally focused church is its imminent death. It has already been pointed out that the church in North America is in serious trouble (Olson, 2008; Winseman, 2006). Goodmanson (2006) reflecting on a study by George Barna, reports that in America, 3500 — 4000 churches close their doors each year. In addition, Goodmanson also reports that Churches lose an estimated 2,765,000 people each year to nominalism and secularism. But the worst statistic that brings great concern is the fact that "half of all churches last year did not add one new member through conversion growth" (para. 2).

Another concern that points to the death of the church is the fact that the church is losing ground as the world population continues to increase. Over the last one hundred years, the world population has grown from 1.65 billion people to an estimated 6.7 billion. Yet, with all the evangelistic efforts and modern technology, the percentage of Christians in the world remains the same as in one hundred years ago (Swanson and Rusaw, 2010; Oosterwal, 1972). At this rate, if the Christian church does not do something drastically to change its course, it will not stand a chance for survival. Death will continue to plague its path until it is no more.

Characteristics of the Externally Focused Church

If the church has any hope for survival, she must find once again her identity in its mission. Why does the church exist? Who does the church serve? In addition, the externally focused church must have a clear understanding of God's mission, whose ultimate purpose is to restore the broken relationship with humanity. As such, the church will seek every possible way to develop healthy relationships with its community,

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resulting from its own worship experience with God. Although Sjogren (2002) considers

the outward-focused church "a rarity" (p. 6), he believes that if the church has any chance

for survival, it must make the transition from an internally focused church to an

externally focused congregation.

The internally focused church is different in its DNA and has a very specific

purpose. Olson (2008) believes that this transition is possible and that there is hope for

the church to grow, even in places where growth is difficult. He adds, "in every county

in America, Christian churches have the potential for growth, because in almost every

county the majority of people do not have a consistent connection with a Christian

church" (pp. 129-130). In his view, this is great news for the future of the church. As

long as the gospel is directed both internally and externally, the church has a chance to

make an impact in its surrounding community.

<div align="center">Good Deeds and Good News</div>

There are several key characteristics of the externally focused church. First,

externally focused churches believe that good deeds and good news go hand in hand

(Rusaw & Swanson, 2004). "The good deeds, expressed in service and ministry to

others, validate the good news. The good news explains the purpose of the good deeds"

(p. 24). Gelder (2007b) concurs by adding that the Christian church has always been

involved in sharing this good news to others. Yet, many times, the good news is

obscured by the lack of the practical things that are evident in God's kingdom.

Schillebeeckx (1990) reflecting on this topic suggests that,

> The church is not the kingdom of God, but it bears symbolic witness to the Kingdom
> through its word and sacrament, and its praxis effectively anticipates that Kingdom.
> It does so by doing for men and women here and now, in new situations (different
> from those in Jesus' time), what Jesus did in his time: raising them up from the

<div align="center">52</div>

coming Kingdom of God, opening up communication among them, caring for the poor and outcast, establishing communal ties within the household of faith and serving all men and women in solidarity. (p. 157)

This Christian approach is crucial for the understanding and effectiveness of the externally focused church. Without this premise, the church has no incentive to move forward in its mission. Thus, "believing that good deeds and good works go hand in hand" is crucial in the understanding of what motivates externally focused churches.

Church and Community

A second characteristic of the externally focused church is the solid conviction that the church is vital to the health and well-being of the community (Rusaw & Swanson, 2004). While this is perhaps the most important characteristic of the externally focused church, it is also the one aspect where most churches fall short. The reason for this, Rusaw and Swanson suggest, is possibly the misunderstanding of the New Testament word for *church*. In their view, because the word for church (*ecclesia*) means "the called out ones," many have seen this as an indication that the church is called to have a physical separation from the world. No doubt this has played a major role in the way many churches have seen their role in the community.

Externally focused churches will not be affected by this theological misunderstanding. In fact, externally focused churches will recognize that God has placed them in their communities for a specific reason, "to be salt, light and leaven" (Rusaw & Swanson, 2004, p. 25). In doing so, they have a clear understanding of their mission: to impact the community for God's kingdom. Externally focused churches cannot conceive the idea of being separated from their communities. They see church

and community as one entity. Reflecting on this, Rusaw and Swanson (2004) quote

Christian writer Tertullian as he addresses this topic,

> [Do we not] dwell beside you, sharing your way of life, your dress, your habits and the same needs of life? We are no Brahmins or Indian gymnosophists, dwelling in woods and exiled from life…We stay beside you in this world, making use of the forum, the provision-market, the bath, the booth, the workshop, the inn, the weekly market, and all other places of commerce. We sail with you, fight at your side, till the soil with you, and traffic with you; we likewise join our technical skill to that of others, and make our works public property for your use. (p. 26)

There is no doubt that this characteristic is crucial in the church's pursuit to

transform their community for Jesus. It is one of not only co-existence, but also

interdependence. One cannot survive without the other.

Service as an Expression of Christian Living

The third characteristic of the externally focused church is its strong emphasis on

ministering and serving as normal expressions of Christian living (Rusaw & Swanson,

2004). To this church, these are important qualities that cannot stand apart from each

other. As a matter of fact, they are so important to externally focused churches that they

are convinced that Christian growth is best experienced when people serve and give

themselves to others. I believe this is a key characteristic of church growth. However, I

would add that externally focused congregations that do this, will also experience a

transformational power both for personal growth and personal impact. Johnson (1996)

agrees that volunteers who are engaged in serving their communities are often amazed as

to the effect that this has had on their faith. Reflecting on their testimonies, several

acknowledged gaining a deeper and stronger religious faith, as well as a better

understanding and definition of beliefs and values. She added, "In devotion, reflection,

and action, faith grows through sharing in community ministry" (p. 8).

Effective Evangelism

The final characteristic of an externally focused church is its effectiveness in being evangelistic (Rusaw & Swanson, 2004). According to research done for the writing of *The Externally Focused Church*, one of the major reasons why the church is not growing is due to the fact that the church is not being effective in its evangelistic approach. This does not come as a surprise. If the church is not looking beyond its walls and truly engaging with its community, it will have little effect in being kingdom builders.

However, there is good news. According to a study initiated by Hartford Seminary and conducted by Faith Communities Today (FACT), "congregations with a strong commitment to social justice and with direct participation in community outreach ministries are more likely to be growing than other congregations." Again, this points in the direction of an externally focused church and its commitment to engage in the community. If the church in North America has any hope to survive, it must seriously consider transitioning from being internally focused to an externally focused congregation.

Transitioning to an Externally Focused Congregation

Current literature suggests several steps a church can take when transitioning from an internally focused model to an externally focused congregation. For the purpose of this literature review, only those steps considered most crucial will be discussed.

Understanding Mission

The first step in this transition requires the need to understand purpose. What is the purpose of the church? Why do we exist? Johnson (2006) reminds us that the church

is in partnership with God for the salvation of all humanity. This partnership initiated by God finds meaning through the relationship developed in worship. As a result, the church that engages in meaningful worship of the Creator will develop meaningful relationships with its community. Sunquist (2013) affirms this concept by stating,

> I look at the local church as a place of community, worship, and mission. These are the constituent parts that make up the church, and they must be seen together as the expression of the kingdom of God. (p. 15)

This understanding of mission, which relates to relationship as defined by worship is crucial in the transitioning to an externally focused church.

"Frost (2011) argues that the fact that a church is doing activity or having outreach programs for the community does not necessarily mean it is engaging in God's mission. Along the same lines, Johnson (2006) adds, "If the focus on the *mission Dei*, or God's mission in the world, becomes the way denominations package what they think is needed in the twenty-first century, we will be no better off" (p. 11). Based on these observations, it becomes evident that understanding the purpose of the church is key to the success of its mission. The purpose of the church is to proclaim "in word and deed that the kingdom of God has come in the person of Jesus Christ" (p. 14).

Swanson and Rusaw (2010) also believe that Ephesians 2:8-10 is pivotal in understanding the purpose of an externally focused church. In this passage, two concepts are explored. First, we learn how we are saved—by grace through faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9). Second, Paul reminds us why God saved us—to do the good works that he prepared in advance for us to do. In other words, every Christian who has experienced salvation through Jesus Christ is called to do good works. Swanson and Rusaw (2010) conclude,

A worthy goal would be for everyone who is a Christ follower to be living out the good works God has created us to do. God has designed us to be his hands, feet and voice in our world, and every major resource he gives us is given not just for personal experience but to make a difference in the world. (pp. 45, 46)

Mission, Sunquist (2013) suggests, is like liturgy, pastoral care or preaching, which is rooted in right thinking about the task, but it must also involve a practice. This practice becomes the expression of the church as it seeks to restore broken relationships within its community.

Cultivating a Commitment of Service

A second step in this transitioning journey requires the need for the church leader to begin cultivating a commitment of service in the lives of every church member, beyond the church walls of the church. Sider, Olson and Unruh (2002) concur by stating that one of the main responsibilities that church leaders have toward the members of the church is to "lead them into their vocation (mission) in the world, which God loves, and for which Christ died" (p. 145). Spiritual commitment is key for the success of the church seeking to become an external focused congregation. In defining spiritual commitment, Winseman (2006) suggests that George Gallup Jr. was the first to use the phrase "spiritual commitment" "to describe a spirituality that went beyond merely an inwardly focused, 'feel good' faith to one that made a real difference in daily living" (p. 50). In other words, church members that reach this level of spiritual commitment in their lives will see their faith involved in every aspect of their life, including their community (Winseman, 2006).

Building Bridges

Another key step of transitioning to an externally focused congregation is the

importance of building bridges between church and community. There are many

boundaries and barriers that separate the church and the community (Sider, et al., 2002).

Boundaries such as spiritual, geographical, demographic, cultural, class and race

represent a real challenge for the church. Overcoming these barriers "requires an

intentional effort both to welcome the community into the church and to bring the church

out into the community" (p. 154). If the church is sincerely committed to win its

community for the kingdom, it must consider the following strategies when building

bridges:

1. Welcome whoever walks through the door

2. Get better acquainted with the community

    a. Assess needs

    b. Develop a networking strategy

    c. Become familiar with available non-profit organizations

3. Develop partnerships

4. Cultivate long-lasting relationships

5. Cultivate a sense of belonging to the community

Building bridges between church and community is an important characteristic of

an externally focused church and it is essential for the survival of the church.

Making a Decision to be Externally Focused

A final step to consider in transitioning an internally focused church to an

externally focused congregation is a simple decision by the church to become involved in

the community. Swanson and Rusaw (2010) call it the "go to" strategy. In their view, the church has fallen into two kinds of categories: the attractional and missional churches. Drawing lessons from Matthew 22:2-5, they see these two type of churches reflected in this parable.

The attractional church is the type of congregation that expects the community to *come* to the events of the church. Here, you may have a congregation that sponsors several outreach ministries, but expects the unchurched to attend these events. "In the attractional model, we are asking people to substitute something they think is valuable and important for something we think is valuable and important" (p. 29). This is not a characteristic of an externally focused church.

Becoming involved in the community as a transitioning step from an internally focused church to an externally focused congregation identifies the missional church. This action will require the decision to *go out* or "Go to the streets corners" (Swanson and Rusaw, 2010). This is a key step in the life of a transitioning church. Gibbs (2000) agrees by suggesting that churches cannot remain on the sidelines, inviting people to come. Rather he adds, "churches must go to people where they are and communicate in terms that will make sense to them, addressing the issues that shape their lives and speaking their language" (p. 39).

In a recent research by the Barna Group (2011), the study indicated that most Americans remain relatively upbeat about the role that local churches play in their communities. Overall the study showed that three-quarters of U.S. adults believe the presence of the church is good for their community. This report is great news for

churches that are in a transition to an externally focused model. It shows that the unchurched is paying attention to what the church does.

There are "good works" that the church is called to do in the life of the community. Winseman (2006) reports that members of externally focused churches spend an average of two and a half hours per week volunteering in their communities. When the church has a visible presence in the community, church members will consider outreach mission important in their lives (Sider, et al., 2002).

Conclusion

Recent literature suggests one of the main reasons the church is in a state of decline is due to its internally focused approach. If the church is to fulfill its mission and have a meaningful impact in its community it must transition from an internally focused congregation to an externally focused church (Rusaw & Swanson, 2004).

Literature indicates that the church in the U.S. is in serious trouble. Over the last several years, the church has experienced a decline in membership. This statistic, coupled with the fact that more and more churches are closing their doors, is cause for serious concern (Burrill, 2002).

Current literature also shows that the Seventh-day Adventist church is experiencing the same challenges. While the numbers of new converts appear to be strong across the North American Division, the net grow is significantly low due to the large numbers of church members leaving the church. The Seventh-day Adventist church must also consider making a transition from an internally focused church to an externally focused model.

A key recommendation of current literature is the need for the church to go back to a better understanding of its mission and vision (Johnson, 2006) and to seriously consider making this transition. For this to occur, pastors, administrators and church leaders at all levels must be proactive leaders in facilitating this change. In doing so, they must understand the fact that this is God's will for the church. Therefore, it must be must treated with urgency and high priority. Successful leaders in the church growth movement are those who understand this principle and make every effort to make this a reality in the local church.

The biggest challenge that the church will face in transitioning from an internally focus to an externally focus is two-fold. First, it must regain the trust of the community (Rusaw & Swanson, 2004; Johnson, 2006). Over the years, due to its internally focus approach the church lost touch with the community. Literature suggests that if the church has any intentions of entering the community, it must first build bridges that will facilitate dialogue for a new relationship.

The second challenge in this transition has to do with opposition from those inside the church to any type of change (Johnson, 2006). While this is not a surprise, it is however the most difficult challenge that the church will face. One suggested reason for this is that over time churches develop a personality that is difficult to change. Church leaders will need to wrestle with these challenges if they are to transition God's church from an internally focus to an externally focused congregation.

Literature reviewed in this chapter has revealed important characteristics of the externally focused church. They are keys to fulfilling the mission of the church. Pastors and church leaders committed to growing externally focused congregations will need to

make some tough decisions as well as wrestle with issues of missiology, leadership, adaptability, and community integration, if they want to impact their community for the kingdom.

Finally, this research does not imply that the only reason for the decline of the church is its internally focused mentality. However, research does reveal that the church that is externally focused is not only consistent with the great commission of Jesus Christ, but also has the greatest potential to reach its community. This is also in line with what growing churches are experiencing as they move beyond their church walls and into the community. Such assessment forms the basis of this ministry study.

CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION
OF EMPOWERING VOLUNTEERS FOR
COMMUNITY-FOCUSED MINISTRY

Introduction

In order to understand the background behind this project, it is important to

understand the ministry context of both community and church where this project was

conducted as well as important demographical information. This chapter will briefly

introduce these profiles. Further, in reflection of these profiles and based on theoretical

information provided so far in the previous chapters, I will introduce the phases of the

strategy to empower volunteers for community-focused ministry for families of inmates

in selected churches of the Potomac Conference. This will be followed by actual details

of the implementation process.

Profile of Selected Communities and Churches

This project was implemented in three congregations of the Potomac Conference.

Two congregations are located in the Commonwealth of Virginia, while the third

congregation is in the State of Maryland. Following is a brief profile of these churches

and their communities as well as a summary of their present challenges.

Profile of the Alexandria Community

The Alexandria Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Church, located in the Greater

Washington D.C. metropolitan area is a congregation with 241 members that serves the

Alexandria community. Alexandria is an independent city in the Commonwealth of

Virginia located west of the Potomac River and approximately six miles south of

downtown Washington D.C. as shown in Figure 3.
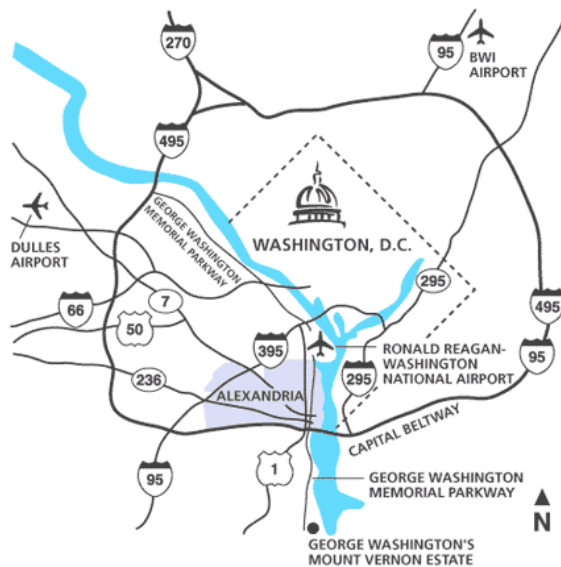
Figure 3. Vicinity map of the City of Alexandria (Alexandria, 2013)

According to the most recent official Census Bureau, the City of Alexandria had a

population of 139,966 (City of Alexandria, Virginia, 2010), with an estimated 146,300

through the end of 2012. Hispanics are a significant part of the population of this city.

The above Census Bureau reports approximately 22,535 registered Hispanics

representing countries from El Salvador, Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, Puerto Rico,

Bolivia, Peru and Colombia. They make up 16.1% of the total population. However,

these numbers are much greater when taking in consideration the large segment of

Hispanics that are not registered. This is true of any other immigrant population living in

this community.

The City of Alexandria is considered to have a strong economy due to several government agencies that employ thousands of residents. According to the city's most recent report, the top public employers are: United States Department of Commerce, United States Department of Defense, City of Alexandria, Alexandria City Public Schools, Institute for Defense Analyses, The Center for Naval Analyses, and the Pentagon Federal Credit Union (City of Alexandria, Virginia, 2012). Another important aspect of this city is that several communities in Alexandria are considered among the most expensive to live in. The median value of homes between 2007 and 2011 was $480,300.

<center>Profile of the Alexandria Spanish Church</center>

The Alexandria Spanish Church was founded in 1988 by 18 members of the Arlington Spanish Church under the leadership of pastor Ruben Ramos (Potomac Conference Corporation, 2011). Between 1988 and 2005, the church moved several times as they adjusted to the growth of the congregation. In 2005, with the approval from the Potomac Conference Executive Committee, an existing building was purchased in a community with a large Hispanic presence and plans to turn the building into a church began immediately. The church has always had a steady growth, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Membership Growth 2003-2012, Alexandria Spanish Church

Year	Baptisms Profession of Faith	Membership	Attendance
2003	50	511	309
2004	79	517	321
2005	81	552	300
2006	102	581	262
2007	44	604	172
2008	64	608	213
2009	35	600	245
2010	24	558	197
2011	14	560	199
2012	22	241	182

However, as noted in the last four years, the congregation has experienced a decline in baptisms as well as attendance. According to present and past church leadership, a few factors may have contributed to this decline. First, there is the assumption of the bad economy. The number of jobs lost has forced many church members to return to their home countries. This has made a significant impact in the attendance of the congregation.

The second assumption is the fact that with a smaller population of immigrants in the area, the evangelistic opportunities have diminished. While no one questions the possibility that these events have made an impact, the reality is that the church in my opinion has other issues that must be taken into account. I will summarize these in the next section dealing with the challenges facing these selected churches.

Profile of the Beltsville Community

     The City of Beltsville located in Prince George's County in the state of Maryland is a thriving community with a population of 16,772 (City of Beltsville, Maryland, 2010). Located approximately 7 miles northeast of the Maryland border with Washington, D.C., Beltsville has a total area of 7.2 square miles (see Figure 4). Beltsville history dates back to 1649, when the land was part of an 80,000 land grant given to Richard Snowden by Lord Baltimore of England. Snowden and his family were planters who established large plantations on which they built comfortable manor homes. The principal crop was tobacco, most of which was shipped to England. Because of the fertile soil and desirable growing conditions, the crops prospered and business for the Snowden family and other settlers became very successful (Wikipedia, 2013)

     The present racial makeup of this city is one of diversity with Whites at 26.9%. African Americans make up 33.6% of the population, followed by Hispanics at 27.1% and Asians at 9.4%. Native American, Pacific Islander and other races make up the rest 3.0% of the population. The median resident age in Beltsville is 35.7 years compared to 41.7 in the State of Maryland. The estimated median household income in 2009 was $68,561 as compared to $69,272 in Maryland. Reports also show males with a median income of $40,914 as compared to $35,645 for females.

Figure 4. Vicinity map of the City of Beltsville (Live, 2013)

Profile of the Beltsville Church

The Beltsville Seventh-day Adventist Church is currently located at 4200 Ammendale Road in the city of Beltsville, Maryland. The church is surrounded by homes to the south and west, but for the most part it sits in an open area, adjacent to Interstate 95.

The story of the Beltsville Seventh-day Adventist Church began in the summer of 1954, when Leslie C. Scofield, a registered nurse and recent theological graduate, employed as chaplain at the Eugene Leland Memorial Hospital along with Mrs. M. Anita Doyle, also a nurse, began door to door visitation in the Beltsville area (Potomac Conference Corporation, 2013). This church plant began as a project of the Review and Herald Memorial Church in Hyattsville. In November of 1954, the Potomac Conference Executive Committee voted to formally accept the Beltsville Group and appointed Elder Ned S. Ashton as their first pastor. One year later, on January 7, 1956, the Beltsville

Company was organized as the Beltsville Seventh-day Adventist Church with 67 charter members.

In the summer of 1957, Elder Charles L. White was appointed by the Potomac Conference to lead in the plans to build a school on seven and a half acres of recently purchased land. With the assistance of Dr. R. F. Wilkinson, chairman of the building committee, the Beltsville Seventh-day Adventist School was completed one year later and the church moved into the building, using the gymnasium for Sabbath services. The school was officially opened in September 1958 with an enrollment of over 50 students. The church completed its dream by building a sanctuary twelve years later. It was dedicated it during a two-day celebration in May of 1971. The Beltsville Seventh-day Adventist Church presently has a membership of 884 and the school maintains a strong presence in the community with a student enrollment of 217.

As you visit the Beltsville Seventh-day Adventist Church today, you will find a relatively young multi-ethnic congregation. The racial makeup of the church is mostly Caucasian at 53.7%, followed by 17.5% Asian, and 15% African American. Hispanics make up 5% of the congregation, followed by 8.7% of other ethnicities. Most families are well educated and financially stabled. The church is blessed with a large number of children and young people that usually attend the church school. At the present time the church has a pastoral staff of four.

In the last few years, the church has made a strong attempt to become more externally focused by creating a strong community-focused ministry. Under the leadership of Glenn Holland, Associate Pastor for community services, the church has established several services that seek to meet some of the needs in the community. These

services are: counseling, food and rental assistance, job finding, computer training, spiritual support and bible studies, and now video conferencing visitation for families of inmates.

The Beltsville Church has had an interesting growth experience. As illustrated in Table 2, the last ten years of reported baptisms and professions of faith show an up and down trend. Further, church clerk reports demonstrate that a large number of the baptisms reported are from children whose parents are members of the church. This forces the question, is the Beltsville Church a healthy congregation? How can this trend be changed? I do not believe this is a dying congregation. I also believe this church is on the right path. The reason for this is their recent mission focus and desire to serve their community. However, it is a fact the church does not have a current mission and vision statement that is consistent with an externally focused church, which reflects in most ministries still serving the needs of the congregation.

Table 2

Membership Growth 2003-2012, Beltsville Church

Year	Baptisms and Profession of Faith	Membership	Attendance
2003	12	723	299
2004	17	723	276
2005	16	733	333
2006	22	746	364
2007	12	752	354
2008	6	776	392
2009	27	806	347
2010	15	812	358
2011	5	827	319
2012	19	884	504

Profile of the Lynchburg Community

Lynchburg is an independent city of 50 square miles in the Commonwealth of Virginia known as the "City of Seven Hills" or "The Hill City." Located near the geographic center of the state and bordered by the eastern edge of the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains (see Figure 5), Lynchburg was the only major city in Virginia that did not fall to the Union in the American Civil War. Founded in 1786, it is approximately 180 miles southwest of the nation's capital, Washington, D.C. (Wikipedia, 2013).

Figure 5. Vicinity map of the City of Lynchburg, Virginia (Banner, 2011)

With a population of 77,203, the City of Lynchburg continues to grow its multicultural flavor. According to the 2010 Census, Whites still make up 63% of the population, while African Americans are at 29.3%, followed by Hispanics at 3.0%, Asians at 2.5% and 2.2% of other races. This community also features a skilled labor force, low unemployment rate, and below average cost of living.

In 2006, Forbes Magazine ranked Lynchburg the 5th best place in Virginia for business, with Virginia being the best state in the country for business (Forbes, 2006).

The median income for a household in the city was $32,234 in 2010. The median income for a family was $40,844. According to the 2010 US Census Bureau, Lynchburg ranks below the 2006 median annual household income for the United States as a whole, which was $48,200.

The community of Lynchburg houses a strong educational system, which is also home to a number of well-known private religious schools, such as Liberty University. Lynchburg is also home to Desmond T. Doss, first Adventist conscientious objector to receive the Medal of Honor.

<div align="center">Profile of the Lynchburg Church</div>

The Lynchburg Seventh-day Adventist Church was founded in 1896 under the leadership of Elder W. A. McCutchen, president of the Virginia Conference and J. P. Neff, a 23-year-old young man who accompanied him (Potomac Conference Corporation, 2013). Evangelistic services were held in a tent for several weeks through the spring of 1897. In 1902, a small group of Adventists purchased the old Presbyterian Church building on Park Avenue, then owned by the College Hill Baptists for $840.00. Elder R. D. Hottel, president of the Virginia Conference and Elder B. F. Purdham, organized the church on May 23, 1903 with 16 charter members. In 1921, under the leadership of pastor E. A. Manry, the Lynchburg church started a school with 17 students.

The Lynchburg congregation has built two church building over the past 117 years. The first church was built in 1953 under the leadership of Elder M. G. Conger in a piece of property located next to the original church they had purchased. Then in 1994, the congregation sold their Park Avenue building and began plans to build a school on George Avenue, which they named Desmond Doss School. The school was eventually

built and the congregation moved to the gymnasium to conduct its worship services. In 1996, under the leadership of Elder John Robbins, the church built their second sanctuary with a seating capacity for 325 members.

Today, the congregation with an average attendance of 149 and a school with a current student enrollment of 49 continue to struggle. The church over the years has become a multicultural congregation, with a strong emphasis in music. Although the majority of the membership is still White, there is a growing international flavor that continues to add diversity to the church. The existing racial make up of the congregation is approximate 60% White, 30% African American, 5% Asian, 3% Hispanic and 2% from other nationalities. They also run a strong child day care business, which has become very profitable over the years.

The Lynchburg Seventh-day Adventist church has ministered in this area for almost 117 years. However, in spite of their long presence in the community, the congregation has not been able to make a strong impact in the area. If the church would disappear today, the community would not miss this congregation. Table 3 below gives an overview of their growth in the last ten years.

Table 3

Membership Growth 2003-2012, Lynchburg Church

Year	Baptisms and Profession of Faith	Membership	Attendance
2003	8	222	120
2004	11	233	127
2005	15	254	123
2006	17	265	136
2007	7	257	128
2008	19	281	131
2009	6	280	144
2010	3	279	141
2011	10	284	144
2012	4	285	149

During the last 61 years, the church has managed to add 357 new members

(Potomac Conference Corporation, 2013). This averages to 5.9 members per year.

While this may not be seen as a bad number, the overall membership growth of the

church has not been consistent. Through the end of 2012, the total membership of the

congregation was only 285. But the statistic that clearly speaks to the condition of the

church is their attendance. In 2012, the congregation had an average attendance of 149

members (Potomac Conference Corporation, 2013). It is obvious from these numbers

that the Lynchburg church is not a healthy congregation.

Two concerns arise from this assessment. First, it is evident this church is in a

plateau state. Second, their lack of involvement in the community has isolated them to

the point that in spite of their long existence in the area, they are not seen as a vital part of

this community.

Challenges of Selected Churches

A few challenges emerge as a reflection from the history and profile of these selected churches in the Potomac Conference. Understanding these challenges will generate opportunities for change and kingdom growth in these and other congregations within the Potomac Conference.

Mission and Vision

All three congregations are in need of a new mission and vision that is consistent with the externally focused church. Their lack of sustainable and healthy growth in the past seems to suggest this. The Beltsville Church, while it has done a better job in terms of creating a few community-focused ministries, does not have a mission or vision that drives their ministry.

Three concerns arise from this challenge. First, it is evident that members from these congregations do not know their mission. The problem is evident in the answers given when asked about why they exist.   A healthy congregation must know why it exists and where it is going. Johnson (2006) suggests that, "many churches have enclosed themselves within the stifling structures of an identity that has limited their missional or kingdom-focused vision" (p. 14). This lack of Christ-centered identity will bring slow death to a church.

Second, a new vision that is consistent with a Christ-centered mission is also needed. For the most part, these congregations are not clear as to where they are going, or what they want to accomplish. In general terms, when asked about what they want to do in their community, their answer is: "we want to preach the Three Angel's message to

every member of this community." For churches in decline, a kingdom-oriented vision offers the only hope for renewal and growth.

Lastly, most of their programs are not centered on their mission. Holm (2004) suggests that every church has a center. This center is not only the heartbeat of the church, but should be what drives the congregation giving it energy and character. This center is the place that most reflects the passion, identity and focus of the church (p. 19). While it is true that there is much debate as to what *mission* should be, for a church not to have a common purpose that unifies their ministry is unconceivable.

<center>Training and Empowering of Church
Members</center>

Another challenge noted according to reports of members and my analysis, is the need for training and empowering of church members to do ministry. During the training of volunteers for this project, it was clearly noted that as a church, they had not had local training for any type of ministry in several years. Reflecting on the need for this, White (1947) wrote,

> God expects His church to discipline and fit its members for the work of enlightening the world….There should be no delay in this well-planned effort to educate the church members. (p. 58)

Speaking to the church leadership on the subject of empowerment, White (1947) also added,

> In every church the members should be so trained that they will devote time to the winning of souls to Christ….Let those who have charge of the flock of Christ awake to their duty, and set many souls to work. (p. 61)

The training and empowering of church members for service is essential to the health and growth of these congregations.

Community-focused Ministry

A final challenge observed in these congregations, is the need for ministries that focus on the needs of the community. Only the Beltsville Church reported several ministries that were specifically directed to meet the needs of their community. However, both the Alexandria Spanish and Lynchburg Churches did not report having community-focused ministries. This explains one of the reasons why these congregations are not growing and are not making significant impact in their communities.

Development of Strategy

In this section I will deal with the development of a strategy to empower volunteers for community-focused ministry for families of inmates based on a reflection of the profiles introduced above as well as theories and knowledge learned from books, class lectures and case studies during my tenure as a Doctor of Ministry student. The strategy includes: recruiting volunteers; training volunteers; and releasing volunteers for service.

Recruiting of Volunteers

Volunteers make up almost 100% of the membership of any church. In fact, they are the most important group in the congregation. However, many churches suffer from weak ministries, due to the lack of committed volunteers. According to Van Lon (2010) there is an oxymoron when it comes to church volunteers, and this might explain the reason for this challenge. In his view, a healthy congregation is designed to function in radically different terms. Paul describes the church in Romans 12:4-8 and 1 Corinthians 12 as a body. As such, each part of the body is specifically serving a purpose that benefits everyone as a whole. To his point, there is no such concept of "volunteering" in

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this illustration. The service provided comes out as a result of a genuine commitment to grow and strengthen the body. In the same way, church members, whether called "volunteers" or servants, need to have this same love and commitment to God's church, as they serve on community-focused ministries. Part of the strategy of this project will be to seek and recruit volunteers from selected churches in the Potomac Conference.

Selection of Churches

The selection of churches where volunteers will serve will be done from congregations within the territory of the Potomac Conference. This process will involve three steps.

First, I will have a dialogue with the Virginia Department of Corrections (VDOC), to find out where are the best places for establishing additional visitation centers. VDOC has sponsored a video conferencing visitation center for families of inmates throughout Virginia since 2006. In collaboration with New Jubilee Education and Family Life Center, a non-profit organization associated with New Canaan International Church, VDOC has provided an opportunity for thousands of families to maintain connectivity with their incarcerated loved ones. This project will provide an opportunity for Seventh-day Adventist churches to serve their communities through this ministry.

The second step will be to contact the pastors of these congregations to assess their interest in becoming part of this project. At least two pastors will be contacted from a different geographical area in the Potomac Conference.

The final step in this process will involve securing the proper church board approval for this project. I will personally attend each board and present the details of the program. I will also be prepared to answer any questions they may have.

Selection of Volunteers

The process to select the volunteers will be done on a Sabbath morning in each congregation. I will present a sermon on the mission of the church and ask for volunteers willing to participate in this project. An anonymous survey of the congregation will also be conducted before the sermon, to assess the perception and attitude of the congregation towards community-focused ministry as it relates to mission. I will then invite all interested in participating to meet that afternoon to share more details of the program and answer questions. Selection of volunteers will be done at the end of this meeting.

Anonymous Survey of Volunteers

A final step to the process of recruiting volunteers will be an anonymous survey of volunteers that will be done to further assess their perception and attitude towards community-focused ministry as it relates to mission.

Training of Volunteers

Training of volunteers for community-focused ministry is important for the success of the mission. As Johnson (1996) suggests, "The strength or weakness of the church is the commitment of its members (p. 3). If the church is going to have a strong influence in the community, it will be because of its volunteers. They are the ones that will make this happen.

This is the reason why it is important to train volunteers in the church. This is where men and women discover and develop their gifts and abilities to serve God. The word "training" is a word that denotes educating in today's world. It is related to the word 'equipping' which according to *The Free Dictionary* (2013, para. 1) is defined as "prepare, qualify, educate." Jesus' calling of his disciples as recorded in Matthew 4:19, "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men," was an invitation for training for the success of his mission.

Following the suggested principles, a seminar will be developed and shared with the volunteers to address the following topics: training for mission and discipleship.

For Mission

If volunteers are to be empowered to serve their communities, they need to have an understanding of the biblical definition of mission. Jesus said, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). Through this command Jesus was sending his church into the community to impact the community for His kingdom. Trained for mission therefore has several key elements.

Mission as Being Sent: In the New King James Version the first word in Matthew 28 verse 19 is translated as "go." This verb reveals the missiological difference between Old Testament Israel where all nations were asked to gather around Israel to learn about God and the New Testament believers who are now asked to go into the community and make disciples for the kingdom (Logan, 1994, p. 96). Burrill (1998) agrees by suggesting that disciple-making is accomplished in the process of going after people rather that

waiting for them to come to the church (p. 92). Church volunteers committed to the

mission of Jesus Christ will understand that as called disciples, they will be sent.

Mission in the Community: Another key element of mission is the understanding

that mission takes place in the community. Jesus went to the homes of the people, their

work places, and community instead of expecting them to come to him. This principle is

further illustrated in the parables of the lost sheep and the woman searching for the lost

coin (Luke 15). Burrill (1998) adds,

> Many Adventists understand how to operate the gathered church. They invite their
> friends to church meetings, evangelistic meetings, and other activities of the local
> church. This is fine, but it is not the full picture Jesus has given. The church is not
> the building—the church is the people. Therefore, wherever the people of the church
> are, there is the church. On Monday, the church may be at the office, the factory, or
> the health club. As many members interact with the world in their business and
> pleasure, they are being the scattered church. (p.18)

There is a lot of "drama" going on in the community. Drugs, abuse, murders,

injustice, hurting people, names just a few of the problems. This "drama" is destroying

communities in all parts of the world. Yet, in many places, although present, the church

remains isolated, without any influence at all. Trained volunteers will understand they

are called and sent for mission in their communities. This mission must be experienced

in the community. The community is the center for mission.

For Discipleship

The second part of the biblical definition of mission is that we are sent into the

community to do a specific a task: to change the community through discipleship.

The biblical definition of disciple is "one who learns." This comes from the

Greek word *mathetes*, which is derived from *manthanein* (Thompson, Ritzmann & King,

1999, p. 190). Jesus called twelve disciples to train them and eventually commission

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them for ministry. During this process, they spent time with Jesus learning about him

and his mission. White (1949) declares,

> The disciples were to go forth as Christ's witnesses, to declare to the world what they
> had seen and heard of Him. Their office was the most important to which human
> beings had ever been called, second only to that of Christ Himself. They were to be
> workers together with God for the saving of men. As in the Old Testament the twelve
> patriarchs stood as representatives of Israel, so the twelve apostles stand as
> representatives of the gospel church. (p. 19)

Trained for discipleship involves the following steps: spend time with Jesus,

become like Jesus, seek others like Jesus, teach others like Jesus and commission others

like Jesus.

The idea of empowering volunteers for a community-focused ministry begins

with this understanding. We are sent into the community with a specific task. DeYoung

& Gilbert (2011) agree, "the term *mission* implies two things to most people: (1) being

sent and (2) being given a task" (p. 19). Empowered church volunteers need to

understand the biblical meaning of mission and its implications for their lives.

Releasing Volunteers for Service

The final part of this strategy is to release volunteers for service through a video

conferencing visitation ministry for families of inmates. In order to accomplish this, I

will need to do the following: purchase video conferencing equipment, provide funding

for advertising, and organize volunteers.

Video Conferencing Equipment

Purchase of equipment will be done through special appropriations received from

the North American Division, Columbia Union Conference and the Potomac Conference.

Potomac Conference Prison Ministry coordinators will be responsible for installing and testing equipment.

Advertisement of Video Conferencing Visitation Program

Advertising for this ministry will be crucial for the success of the project. Each congregation will be responsible to use whatever means of communication such as television, radio, newspaper, billboards, posters and flyers to advertise this service to its community. I will assist each congregation with $2,000 to help with expenses related to this advertisement.

Organize Volunteers

Before volunteers are released for service, I will coordinate a meeting to review final aspects of this program. These are: history and philosophy of video conferencing visitation ministry, expectations of volunteers, required documents and selection of video conferencing ministry coordinator.

Implementation of Project

The implementation of Empowering Volunteers for Community-focused Ministry for families of inmates in Selected Churches of the Potomac Conference in 2012 followed a four-step process. First, there was the preparation, followed by the recruiting and training of volunteers, and then participation in the program.

Preparation

Preparation for the implementation of this project began with a dialogue between our Potomac Conference Prison Ministry coordinators and me. During the conversation, they pointed out that Virginia Department of Corrections (VDOC) was considering

asking two Adventist congregations about becoming centers for their video conferencing visitation ministry for families of inmates. We contacted the individuals responsible for this program and they confirmed their desire to partner with the Potomac Conference to establish centers in Alexandria and Lynchburg. They felt these two communities would benefit the most from this ministry, especially Alexandria, since VDOC was looking for a Hispanic congregation to establish a bilingual visitation center.

Selection of Churches

The next step in this preparation process was to contact the pastors of these two congregations and assess their interest in participating in this project. They responded positively and excited as to the opportunities this ministry would bring to their congregations. They had been praying for ideas of ministries that would connect their churches with their communities. They felt this was an answer to prayer.

Church Board Approval

Following this, I scheduled a meeting with each church board to introduce the ministry project and answer any questions they had. The project was received with enthusiasm and great support and was formally approved in February 2012 by both congregations (See Appendix B).

Video Conferencing Equipment

Another step in this preparation process was to research and purchase the appropriate equipment for this video conferencing visitation ministry. Upon some investigation, it was determined that each visitation site (with the exception of the Beltsville Church) was in need of a complete set of video conferencing equipment, with

an approximate cost of $5,500 each (see Appendix C). Equipment was purchased,

delivered to each site and installed with the help of our Potomac Conference Prison

Ministry coordinators. Testing of equipment was scheduled in conjunction with the

training of volunteers. Funds for the purchase of this equipment were secured through

special appropriations from both the Columbia Union Conference and the North

American Division. The Beltsville Church received funds from the Maryland

Department of Corrections to purchase and set up the equipment.

Advertising of Ministry

The final step in this preparation was to assist each congregation with the

advertising phase for this ministry. Each church was given full responsibility to decide

the means to accomplish this. I shared the following three-step process during the

organizational meeting:

1. Decide method of advertising. Options consisted of radio, television,

newspaper, posters and flyers.

2. Work on advertising design.

3. Implementation of advertising.

To assist with this step, funding was secured from Union and Division

appropriations allowing each congregation to receive $2,000. Money was sent to each

congregation for this purpose. Each church began the process for advertising

immediately after the organizational meeting.

Recruiting of Volunteers

The process to select the volunteers was done on a Sabbath morning in each

congregation. I presented a sermon on the mission of the church and asked for volunteers

willing to participate in this project. An anonymous survey of the congregation was also done before the sermon, to assess the perception and attitude of the congregation towards community-focused ministry as it relates to mission. I then invited the congregation back for an afternoon meeting to share more details about the program and answer questions. The response was overwhelming. A formal invitation was made for those wishing to participate in this ministry. At the end of the meeting, 42 volunteers had signed up to serve on the Lynchburg church and 46 at the Alexandria Spanish church.

Pre Anonymous Poll

An anonymous poll was done on the volunteers to assess their perception and attitude towards community-focused ministry as it relates to the mission (see Appendix D). Since the Beltsville Church was the only congregation that completed the implementation of the video conferencing visitation ministry, I am only including their pre-anonymous poll in Appendix D. Results from this poll were measured against another anonymous poll that was done at the end of six months on these same volunteers to measure any changes in these same areas.

Training of Volunteers

The training of volunteers for each congregation took place on two different Sabbath afternoons. In the first Sabbath, I introduced a seminar dealing with the topics of mission and discipleship (see Appendix E). On the second Sabbath, an organizational meeting took place to address specific items related to the video conferencing visitation ministry. Leaders of both Potomac Conference Prison Ministry and New Jubilee Education and Family Life Center, a non-profit organization associated with New Canaan International Church, assisted during the second seminar.

Training for Mission and Discipleship

To facilitate this discussion, volunteers were divided into small groups and were asked to consider two questions: what is your understanding of the mission of the church, and what is your understanding of discipleship as it relates to community-focused ministry. At least half suggested the mission of the church is to: "preach the good news of the gospel to all people," while others referred to the "the preaching of the three-angels message" as the mission of the church.

The answers provided in their small group discussion confirmed the need for volunteers to have a better understanding for the biblical meaning of mission and discipleship as it relates to the externally focused church. The seminar addressed these two topics and concluded with an appeal to begin a movement to transform each congregation into an externally focused church.

Organizing of Volunteers

The organizational meeting, which took place on a second Sabbath, became the final step in the process of training and preparing the volunteers for this project. It addressed several topics.

First, the history and philosophy of video conferencing visitation ministry was shared (see Appendix F). It was important for volunteers to understand how this ministry was started and how it was working in other visitation facilities throughout Virginia.

Second, Potomac Conference Prison Ministry coordinators and I reviewed the expectations of volunteers. These expectations included: punctuality, dress attire, courtesy, and service.

Third, a review of all required documentation needing special attention and signature by visiting families was also done (see Appendix G). These documents are: house rules for visitation, recorded and monitored video session agreement, feedback form, and visitor profile form.

Finally, a video conferencing ministry coordinator was selected. A coordinator is needed to assist with the following responsibilities: serve as the contact person for scheduling purposes with New Jubilee, coordinate the different volunteer groups, create a visitation calendar and assign volunteer groups to each visitation day, and maintain a record of all visiting families.

Implementation

The implementation of the video conferencing visitation ministry began in July of 2012. Church volunteers were organized in groups of three by the video conferencing ministry coordinator and given specific schedules to serve a week in advance. Volunteers were present half an hour before each schedule appointment to test equipment and make sure everything was ready to go.

Greeting of Visiting Families

As visiting families arrived, they were greeted with courtesy and respect. They were offered water to drink and were immediately taken to an office to complete the registration process.

Registration Process

During this phase of the visit, church volunteers asked for identification to verify their appointment and reviewed the following required documents with the visiting

guests: Participant's House Rules, and Recorded and Monitored Video Session

Agreement. After signing these documents, visiting families were taken to the video

conferencing visiting room.

Video Conferencing Visitation

The video conferencing visitation took place in a room that was set up for this

ministry. Once here, volunteers established connection with the appropriate prison to

begin the video conferencing visitation. During the one-hour visit, volunteers were asked

to monitor the call to assist with any technical issues and to assess needs of visiting

families that the church could assist with. Once the one-hour session ended, guests were

taken back to the registration table to formally end the visit.

Evaluation of Visit

The final step of this video conferencing visitation process is an evaluation taken

by church volunteers on the guest's experience through a feedback form. This

information is important for the church as they look for ways to improve the visitation

experience of families from the community. Also, it gives the church an opportunity to

offer additional family support services that they may have available.

For the next several months, participating congregations through their volunteers

hosted a number of families from the community, through this video conferencing

visitation ministry. However, due to unforeseen congregational issues, including the

change of pastor in one of the churches, and the lack of a fully implemented advertising

plan, the implementation phase did not go as planned in the original selected churches.

Visitation results were minimal.

Challenges and Opportunities of Implementation

In the midst of some challenges dealing with the original implementation of this project, new opportunities became available. Following is a brief overview of these challenges and opportunities.

Challenges of Project

The implementation of this project was originally intended for two selected churches of the Potomac Conference: The Alexandria Spanish and Lynchburg churches. However, due in part to a failure in the advertising process as well as other internal issues, both congregations were not able to fully implement this project (see letters from church pastors in Appendix H). Every effort continues to be made to keep this project moving forward. Word from current church leadership is that they are working on the advertisement phase and plans to initiate visitation are scheduled for January 1, 2014. I will continue to oversee this process until it is completed.

Opportunities of Project

In January 2013, the Beltsville Seventh-day Adventist Church, under the leadership of Pastor Kermit Netteburg along with their three associate pastors inquired about the community-focused ministry project that was being implemented in Virginia.

After our initial dialogue, they felt their church would be a perfect candidate for this type of ministry since they were in the process of trying to transition their church from being an internal focused congregation to one that was more externally focused. Arrangements to select a group of church volunteers were immediately done along with a dialogue with the Maryland Department of Corrections.

Steps to implement the project in this new church followed the same process as the original selected churches. Training of volunteers was done on February 2013. The implementation phase in the Beltsville Church began in March of 2013. This church became the third congregation to engage in this project.

Conclusion

Several churches in the Potomac Conference are experiencing lack of growth, lack of training for members, and lack of community-focused ministries. As a result of this, attendance is usually low and there is no presence in the community. Church members come to fulfill their responsibilities and then go home without making a real impact in the church and community.

This project was developed and implemented with the hope of making a significant impact in two churches of the Potomac Conference. It was developed under my leadership as Conference Executive Secretary. It consisted of two main parts: recruiting and training of church volunteers and their participation in a community-focused ministry.

Internal church issues, as well as an incomplete advertising process in both congregations, affected the full implementation of the project in the original selected churches. However, these churches have benefited from a large number of trained members, lay involvement, video conferencing equipment, new community-focused ministry, and a greater sense of community presence. In addition, because of this project, a third church from the Potomac Conference was selected and able to implement this project for four months in the state of Maryland. This has given the Adventist Church

exposure and an opportunity to partner with state agencies to assist with community needs.

I am committed to continue overseeing the full implementation of this project, as well as finding new opportunities to establish additional visitation centers in other churches within the Potomac Conference.

CHAPTER 5

OUTCOMES—EVALUATION, CONCLUSIONS

AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the effectiveness of Empowering

Volunteers for Community-focused Ministry for families of inmates in Selected Churches

of the Potomac Conference and to make recommendations for future modifications and

usage. Two types of instruments were used to measure the effectiveness of this project:

(1) Congregational and Volunteer Poll, and (2) Survey from visiting families. Following

I will present a brief description of the outcomes, along with corresponding conclusion

and recommendations.

Outcomes

There are several outcomes that suggest positive results from the implementation

of this project. These outcomes were reflected in: the volunteers, the participating

congregations, the communities, the Potomac Conference, and the Seventh-day Adventist

Church in North America.

Volunteers

A congregational poll and a volunteer poll was taken in each church at the

beginning of the project to assess both the congregation and volunteer's perception and

attitude towards community-focused ministry as it relates to mission. However, since the Beltsville Church was the only congregation that completed the project, for space purposes, I am only including their polls. Initial results from these polls revealed three facts: (1) more than 50% of church members had not lead a person to Christ in the last ten years, (2) a large percentage of church members are serving in internal-focused ministries, and (3) the top four barriers for the church in becoming more involved in the community are: lack of training, too busy dealing with own problems, too busy serving in internal-focused ministries, and lack of passion for the lost. (See complete polls in Appendices D and I).

After the project implementation in the Beltsville Church, a final poll of volunteers was done to see if there was any change in their perception and attitude regarding mission and community-focused ministries as well as spiritual growth. (See poll in Appendix J). Significant changes were noted in several areas, including spiritual growth, relationship with non-Adventists, understanding of discipleship, and perception of community-focused ministry. Other areas also suggested positive outcomes from this project. Following is a brief summary of these changes.

Spiritual Growth

Q6 Has this project contributed to your spiritual growth? One hundred percent of the volunteers indicated this project contributed to some type of spiritual growth in their lives. This is not a surprising result. According to experts in the field of assessing motivation and outcomes from volunteers involved in community ministries, spiritual growth usually ranks high as a result of their volunteer experience. Johnson (1996),

agrees, "Volunteers often tell of several ways in which their experience in community ministry has affected their faith" (p. 7).

Non-Adventist Relationships

Q7 How has your relationship with non-Adventists changed? Forty seven percent reported being more open to share Jesus with non-Adventists, 29.4% indicated having a better understanding of their spiritual needs, and 23.5% suggested being more comfortable relating to non-Adventists.

Understanding of Discipleship

Q11 How much did this project change your understanding of discipleship? Sixty four percent indicated having experienced a major change, while 29.4% reported some change, and 5.9% very little change.

Perception of Community-focused Ministry

Q12 Which of the following views has this project most changed about community-focused ministry? Seventy percent of volunteers agreed that community-focused ministries should be the central focus of every church, and 29% believe it is consistent with the Great Commission.

Changing Church to a Community-focused Congregation

Q13 How will you contribute in the future toward changing your church to a community-focused church? Sixty five percent indicated they would continue to volunteer in this ministry, while 35% committed themselves to recruit others to serve on community-focused ministries.

Lasting Effects From This Project

Q14 What long-lasting effects do you expect to experience in your church as a result of this project? Thirty five percent of volunteers suggested they would expect the church would generate more interest for community-focused ministries, 29% indicated the church would develop more community-focused ministries, 18% believe the church will become a community-focused church, and 17% hoped the church would invest more resources for community-focused ministries.

Best Part of Project

Q9 What did you enjoy most about this project? Thirty five percent suggested meeting people, 29.4% praying with people, 29.4% talking to people, and 5.8% helping people.

Personal Evaluation

Q10 What would you do different? Forty seven percent suggested they would invite visitors to church, 41% would pray with them, 5.8% indicated would offer bible studies, and 5.8% be more friendly.

<div align="center">Congregations</div>

The following positive outcomes were noticed in the congregations as well as a result of this project:

1. It generated excitement in the congregation

2. A revival for mission was started

3. Church members were trained

4. Church members were involved in community-focused ministry

5. A new community-focused ministry was started

Community

The Alexandria, Beltsville and Lynchburg communities also benefited from this project as follow:

1. Three visitation centers were established on three different communities.

2. The following number of families have been served from each community: Alexandria (5), Lynchburg (2), Beltsville (204).

3. Feedback from visiting families through a visitation survey was positive (see survey in Appendix K). Visitors reported being thankful to have such visitation center available in their community. They also gave high marks to their overall visitation experience, including the service provided by the volunteers.

4. Three Adventist congregations began a process of engaging their communities.

Potomac Conference

Positive results from this project also benefited the Potomac Conference:

1. Three new congregations implemented community-focused ministries within the Potomac Conference territory.

2. It generated interest for other churches to implement community-focused ministries. Presently, the Manassas and Community Praise Center congregations are engaged in dialogue regarding starting similar visitation centers in their communities.

3. This project began a partnership with local state agencies to address he needs of the community.

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The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America

The Seventh-day Adventist Church made history in North America by partnering with both Virginia and Maryland's Department of Corrections for this video conferencing visitation for families of inmates program.

Commonwealth of Virginia

Virginia's Department of Corrections gained two additional visitation centers as a result of this project. A third visitation center is currently being considered in the community of Manassas.

State of Maryland

As a result of this project, the State of Maryland has initiated a video conferencing visitation for families of inmates in partnership with the Beltsville Seventh-day Adventist Church. They are considering developing a similar program as Virginia throughout the state, with the assistance of the Beltsville Church.

Conclusions

This project was an attempt to develop a strategy and implementation to transition selected congregations in the Potomac Conference from an internal focus to one that is external, through empowering volunteers for community-focused ministry for families of inmates. The Great Commission of Jesus to his disciples in Matthew 28:18-20 was to "Go" into the communities and make disciples for the kingdom. However, a closer look at verses 16 and 17 will bring to light the fact that engaging in mission is the result of entering into a personal relationship with God through worship.

God is a God of relationships. From the beginning, His original plan was to maintain a close bonding with mankind. However, because of sin, the perfect relationship with Adam and Eve was broken, creating the need for a plan of restoration. Worshipping God is a crucial step in restoring this broken relationship. It is the acceptance of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and our commitment to come to Him in a relationship. As a result of our worship and relationship with Him, His mission becomes our mission as we seek to restore broken relationships within our communities.

A large number of Seventh-day Adventist churches in the Potomac Conference are not in line with this commission due to their internal focus. The ministries of such congregations continue to serve the needs of the church members, instead of those of the community around them. While they exist in a community, their focus is not centered on the needs of the community. As such, they are missing opportunities to build meaningful relationships.

Empowering Volunteers for Community-focused Ministry for families of inmates has proven to be a tool that can be effective in transitioning congregations to become externally focused by empowering volunteers to serve in community-focused ministries. However, this project has both strengths and weaknesses that must be analyzed. Following is a brief summary of the strengths and weaknesses I have observed during its implementation.

Strengths of the Project

There are several definite strengths and advantages of using the Empowering Volunteers for Community-focused Ministry for Families of Inmates project.

Training of Volunteers

As Johnson (1996) suggests, "The strength or weakness of the church is the commitment of its members, the laity" (p. 3). As volunteers, they are the muscles that make community ministries a success. However, volunteers need to be equipped to become effective in the task they are being invited to do. When Jesus called the twelve disciples, he spent time with them, training them and preparing for his mission. White (1946) agrees,

> In the training of His disciples, the Saviour followed the system of education established at the beginning…They were with Him in the house, at the table, in the closet, in the field. They accompanied Him on His journeys, shared His trials and hardships, and, as much as in them was, entered into His work. Sometimes He taught them as they sat together on the mountainside, sometimes beside the sea, or from the fisherman's boat, sometimes as they walked by the way…They were attentive listeners, eager to understand the truths they were to teach in all lands and to all ages. (pp. 84-85)

If the church is serious about making an impact in the community, we must be continually training volunteers within the church for service in community-focused ministries.

Building Relationships

Building relationships with the community is another strength of this project. As volunteers host visiting families and engage with them through this video conferencing visitation ministry, it serves as an opportunity for church volunteers to know their neighbors and build meaningful relationships with them. As previously stated, this is a powerful practical manifestation of *Missio Dei*, which can only derive from true worship. Sunquist (2013) adds,

> A church that is growing in holiness is attractive to people who are trapped in sin and see no hope of change. This will be seen, practically, in relationships—for love is only seen in relation to another, and sanctification is really a matter of growing love.

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Thus, a church that is growing in holiness will find ways of loving and caring for the needy, the deaf, the blind, and those with other personal challenges. (p. 292)

This was Jesus' method for reaching people. White (1946) concurs,

Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me." (p. 143)

Externally focused congregations will grow through relationships. Stark (1996) suggests the early centuries of the church, Christ's followers, through their compassion and kindness, served the people around them. As a result, it is estimated that the early church grew at a rate 40% per decade during its first several centuries (p. 6). Thus the conclusion is that a church that develops long-term, trusting relationships with the community is the one that has an opportunity to influence its culture (Rusaw & Swanson, 2004, p. 94). This project creates an opportunity for church volunteers to build such relationships in the community.

Awareness of Community Needs

Another strength of this project is the opportunity for the church to become aware of the needs of the community through its volunteers. As they participate in the video conferencing visitation program, volunteers have an opportunity to dialogue with the visiting families as well as listen for any particular needs during their visitation. In addition, information gathered through an evaluation form at the end of the visitation is also valuable in assessing the needs.

It is important for the church to know the needs of the community in order to be more effective in its mission. Volunteers who are active in externally focused ministries often agree on the benefits this brings. For some, seeing the needs of people, serve as a

motivation to act in response to those challenges. Others see this as a motivation for a greater commitment as they see people in their neighborhoods as people and not just strangers living in the same area. As one volunteer reported, "This involvement brought to light a greater awareness of the needs and a greater commitment to giving to alleviate the needs" (Johnson, 1996, p. 5).

Positive Response from Community Members

The response from both inmates and their families regarding this ministry and the relationships built were positive. Appreciation was shared for caring for the needs of the community. In addition, families of inmates expressed gratitude to the volunteers for their genuine interest in their well-being and for the friendships developed through this process. There are several families that continue to rely on this ministry for means of communicating with their relatives. Because of this, church volunteers continue to engage with them building long-lasting relationships.

Video Conferencing Visitation Program

A final strength of this project is the implementation of the video conferencing visitation program. Thanks in part to the Department of Corrections, and their new partnership with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Adventist congregations now have an opportunity to engage in this type of community-focused ministry in different parts of the country. As an example, the state of Maryland is now looking at the Beltsville Seventh-day Adventist Church for assistance in creating other visitation centers throughout the state. It is my commitment to continue working with both state officials and local churches to expand and enhance this ministry for the benefit of the community.

<center>Weaknesses of the Project</center>

There are several weaknesses that were observed with this dissertation project and that must be taken in consideration in future implementations.

Time

This project will require more than six months to eventually see meaningful relationships built in the community. Expecting so see immediate numerical growth in the congregation will also be a challenge. However, service provided through these relationships will be one of the greatest impacts of the externally focused church. In addition, as the church becomes more involved in the community and relationships are built, this ministry will have a significant impact in the numeric growth of the church.

Vision

Since the local church pastor does not originate this project, it can be a challenge to cast this vision and maintain the necessary excitement through this project. This requires direct and constant communication with the local church pastor as well as an open dialogue regarding the direction of the congregation.

Funding

Another weakness of this project is the need for funding the purchase of the video conferencing equipment to be used in the visitation aspect of the project. While there were special appropriations secured for this project, future congregations may not have access to funding for this type of project. This may force the church to consider funding the equipment from their local funds, thus becoming a disincentive for them.

In closing, I believe this project overall has been a blessing to all three churches, even though two congregations are still in the implementation phase. The awareness and excitement this has produced in other congregations within the Potomac Conference will be used to hopefully begin a process of transitioning these churches into externally focused congregations by empowering their volunteers to serve on community-focused ministries, which will be more consistent with the mission of Jesus Christ.

Recommendations

There are several recommendations that will assist in the strengthening of this project for future implementations.

1. More direct contact with congregations. Although I had several contact with the original selected congregations in the first phase of the implementation, I would recommend visiting these congregations at least once a month during the second phase of the implementation to ensure the required steps are taking place.

2. Communicate regularly with ministry coordinator. I would also recommend visiting at least once a month with the ministry coordinator as well. Church volunteers are busy and can easily lose sight of the importance of the ministry. Communicating by phone or email is not sufficient. I believe a face to face meeting to affirm the coordinator's leadership is important.

3. Advertising phase. Being more involved in the advertising phase will also ensure better results. My recommendation is to set up an advertising committee even before the training phase and to meet on a regular basis with this group to maintain continuity and focus on the project. Relying on the leadership of the pastor and ministry coordinator to execute this can become a challenge for them. Churches face many issues

and they can easily become a distraction to those involved in the local leadership. I would also suggest for the church to begin advertising the video conferencing visitation ministry as soon as the local church board approves it. This will give the church more time to introduce its community-focused ministry to the community.

4. Be present during visitations. Although I made every effort to be present during some visitations, I would strongly recommend the need to have more presence during these visitations. Several benefits arise from doing this. First, you will expose yourself to what volunteers are experiencing during this ministry; second, you will have an opportunity to thank and affirm volunteers for their ministry; third, volunteers will be encouraged by your presence; and fourth, you will be able to have a better picture of how the project is going and make the necessary adjustments and recommendations for future implementations.

APPENDIX A

POTOMAC CONFERENCE STUDY

December 2006

Summary of Churches

23%
5%
28%
44%

Growing
Plateaued
Dying
No Data
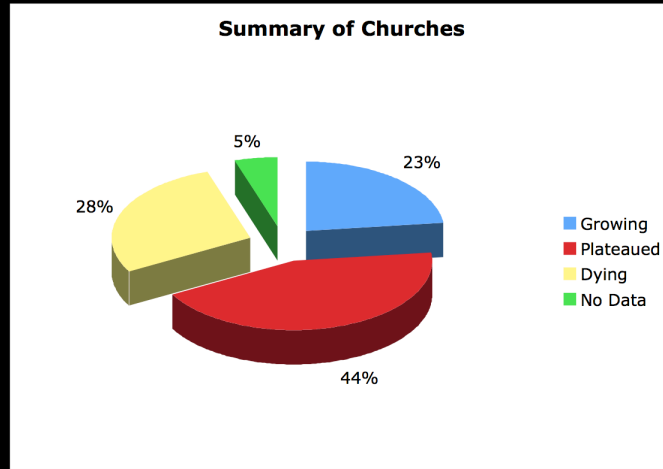
APPENDIX B

APPROVAL LETTERS FROM CHURCHES

2812 Franklin St, Alexandria VA 22306
A Spanish Speaking Congregation, Potomac Conference
P: (703) 474 - 1519 Church Clerk

IGLESIA
ADVENTISTA
DEL SEPTIMO DIA

February 1st 2012

Andrews University
Institutional Review Board
4150 Administrative Drive, Room 210
Berrien Springs, MI 49104-0355

Dear Institutional Review Board,

The ALEXANDRIA SPANISH SDA CHURCH is happy to grant Pastor Jorge A. Ramirez institutional consent to conduct a study and gather research data for his Doctor of Ministry project on the topic: "Video Conferencing Visitation for Families of Inmates: Selected Churches of the Potomac Conference of Seventh-day Adventists."

We are anticipating that this ministry project will be a great blessing to our church and local community. I hope this satisfies your requirement. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Pastor Ramiro Menéndez   Douglas Ebanks
                                                 Church Clerk

February 12, 2013

Andrews University
Institutional Review Board
4150 Administrative Drive, Room 210
Berrien Springs, MI 49104-0355

Dear Institutional Review Board,

Our church board has voted to proceed with a pilot program with the Maryland Department of Corrections to do video conferencing for inmate families. To assist the Beltsville Seventh-day Adventist Church as we move forward with this project, I am happy to grant Pastor Jorge A. Ramirez consent to conduct a study and gather research data for his Doctor of Ministry project on the topic:

"Video Conferencing Visitation for Families of Inmates: Selected Churches of the Potomac Conference of Seventh-day Adventists."

We are anticipating that this ministry project will be a great blessing to our church and local community. I hope this satisfies your requirement. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Glenn Holland

Glenn Holland
Pastor for Community Ministries

Lynchburg Seventh-day Adventist Church
19 George Street Lynchburg Virginia 24502
Phone: (434) 239-8466

February 7, 2012

Andrews University
Institutional Review Board
4150 Administrative Drive, Room 210
Berrien Springs, MI 49104-0355

Dear Institutional Review Board,

The Lynchburg Seventh-day Adventist Church is happy to grant Pastor Jorge A. Ramirez institutional consent to conduct a study and gather research data for his Doctor of Ministry project on the topic: "Video Conferencing Visitation for Families of Inmates: Selected Churches of the Potomac Conference of Seventh-day Adventists." We are anticipating that this ministry project will be a great blessing to our church and local community. I hope this satisfies your requirement. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Pastor Mike Hewitt

APPENDIX C

VIDEO CONFERENCING EQUIPMENT

RTZ

Sales Order

Date	Sale's No.
4/18/2012	124767

RTZ Audio Visual Associates
6725 Santa Barbara Court,
Suite 103
Elkridge, MD 21075

Telephone #	540-886-0771
Fax #	540-886-5734
E-mail	glena@pcsda.org
Contact	MARY ANN A/P

DUNS# 19-064-2686   Fed Id# 52-1579640   NAICS# 421410   SIC CODE# 5043   CAGE CODE# 88919

Bill To:	Account #	362467	Ship To

Bill To	Ship To
POTOMAC CONFERENCE SDA (VA) MARY ANN A/P 606 GREENVILLE AVENUE STAUNTON VA 24401	Alexandria Spanish SDA Church PS Jose Menendez 6215 Quebec Place Berwyn Heights, MD 20740

Salesman	Project	PO. #	Terms	Ship Via	Ship Date
GDL		Jorge Ramirez	Net 15	Drop Ship	4/18/2012

Item	Quantity	Description	Unit Price	Total Price
1132	1	LifeSize Express 220 - MicPod	4,129.41	4,129.41
21001132	1	LifeSize Express 220 - Assurance Maintenance Services (1-year)	472.50	472.50
37LD452B	1	LG MODEL 37LD452B 37" DISPLAY	550.00	550.00
MTMU	1	MTMU Chief Universal Mount	135.00	135.00
FCS100	1	CHIEF FCS100 CAMERA MOUNT	77.25	77.25
Shipping	1	Shipping Charges - will be added to invoice	0.00	0.00

Subtotal	$5,364.16
Sales Tax (5.0%)	$0.00
Total	**$5,364.16**

Credit Card Authorization:_____

SO Entered By:	GDL

RTZ

Sales Order

	Date	Sale's No.
	4/18/2012	124768

RTZ Audio Visual Associates
6725 Santa Barbara Court,
Suite 103
Elkridge, MD 21075

Telephone #	540-886-0771
Fax #	540-886-5734
E-mail	glena@pcsda.org
Contact	MARY ANN A/P

DUNS# 19-064-2686   Fed Id# 52-1579640   NAICS# 421410   SIC CODE# 5043   CAGE CODE# 88919

Bill To:	Account #	362467	Ship To
POTOMAC CONFERENCE SDA (VA) MARY ANN A/P 606 GREENVILLE AVENUE STAUNTON VA 24401			Lynchburg Seventh-day Adventist Church PS Mike Hewitt 19 George Street Lynchburg, VA 24502-4837

Salesman	Project	PO. #	Terms	Ship Via	Ship Date
GDL		Jorge Ramirez	Net 15	Drop Ship	4/18/2012

Item	Quantity	Description	Unit Price	Total Price
1132	1	LifeSize Express 220 - MicPod	4,129.41	4,129.41
21001132	1	LifeSize Express 220 - Assurance Maintenance Services (1-year)	472.50	472.50
37LD452B	1	LG MODEL 37LD452B 37" DISPLAY	550.00	550.00
MTMU	1	MTMU Chief Universal Mount	135.00	135.00
FCS100	1	CHIEF FCS100 CAMERA MOUNT	77.25	77.25
Shipping	1	Shipping Charges - will be added to invoice	0.00	0.00

Subtotal	$5,364.16
Sales Tax (5.0%)	$0.00
Total	**$5,364.16**

Credit Card Authorization:_____

SO Entered By:	GDL

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APPENDIX D

VOLUNTEERS PRE-PROJECT POLL

Q1 What is your gender?

Answered: 17   Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
Male	**52.94%**	9
Female	**47.06%**	8
Total		17

1 / 12

116

Q2 What is your ethnicity?

Answered: 17   Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
Caucasian	35.29%	6
African-American	47.06%	8
Hispanic	11.76%	2
Asian	5.88%	1
Other	0%	0
Total		17

2 / 12

117

Q3 What is your age bracket?

Answered: 17   Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
18-25	**0%**	0
26-34	**5.88%**	1
35-49	**17.65%**	3
50-64	**58.82%**	10
65-Older	**17.65%**	3
Total		17

3 / 12

118

Q4 How long have you been a Seventh-day Adventist?

Answered: 17   Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
Not SDA	**5.88%**	1
1-5 years	**5.88%**	1
6-15 years	**0%**	0
16-25 years	**11.76%**	2
26-40 years	**29.41%**	5
All my life	**47.06%**	8
Total		17

4 / 12

119

Q5 In which of the following church ministries do you spend the most ministry time? (choose one)

Answered: 17   Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
Adult Ministries (including Worship)	**64.71%**	11
Youth Ministries	**5.88%**	1
Children Ministries	**5.88%**	1
Community/outreach Ministries	**35.29%**	6
I am not currently serving	**5.88%**	1
Total Respondents: 17		

5 / 12

120

Jorge - Volunteers - Beltsville (Pre)

Q6 Have you volunteered for a community-focused ministry prior to this?

Answered: 17   Skipped: 0
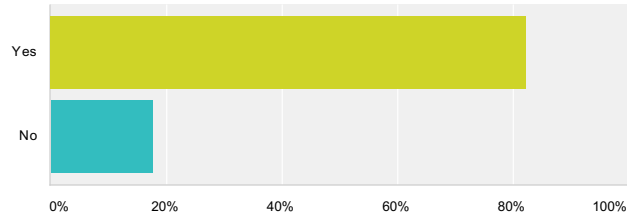
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	82.35%	14
No	17.65%	3
Total		17

6 / 12

Q7 To what degree is your church currently involved in community-focused ministry?

Answered: 17   Skipped: 0
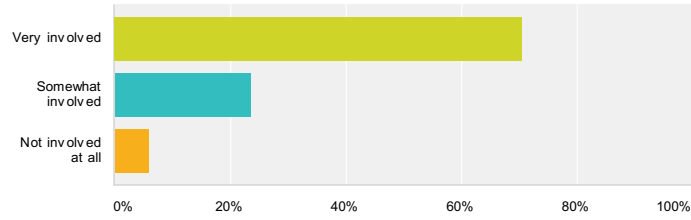
Answer Choices	Responses	
Very involved	**70.59%**	12
Somewhat involved	**23.53%**	4
Not involved at all	**5.88%**	1
Total		17

7 / 12

122

Q8 What is your understanding of discipleship? (Choose one)

Answered: 17   Skipped: 0
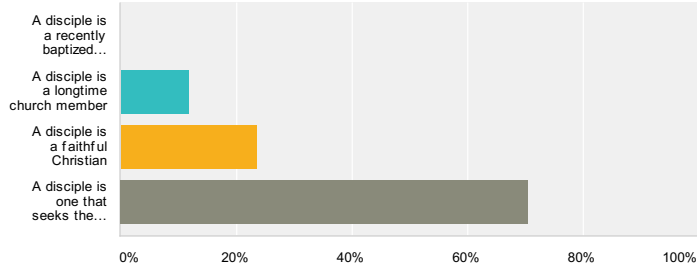
Answer Choices	Responses	
A disciple is a recently baptized Christian	**0%**	0
A disciple is a longtime church member	**11.76%**	2
A disciple is a faithful Christian	**23.53%**	4
A disciple is one that seeks the lost	**70.59%**	12
Total Respondents: 17		

8 / 12

123

Q9 Is your perception of inmate families that most of them are to some degree criminal themselves?

Answered: 17   Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Agree	11.76%	2
Agree	5.88%	1
Neutral	23.53%	4
Disagree	35.29%	6
Strongly Disagree	23.53%	4
Total		17

9 / 12

124

Q10 Please prioritize the top three barriers to your church being more engaged with your community

Answered: 17   Skipped: 0
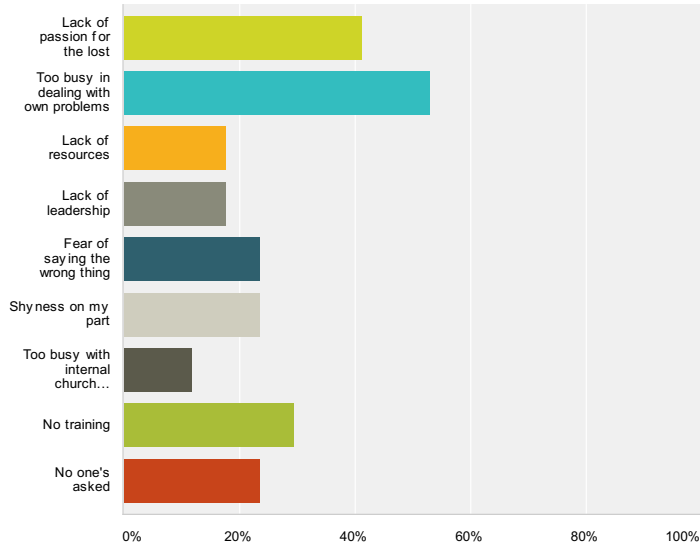
Answer Choices	Responses	
Lack of passion for the lost	**41.18%**	7
Too busy in dealing with own problems	**52.94%**	9
Lack of resources	**17.65%**	3
Lack of leadership	**17.65%**	3
Fear of saying the wrong thing	**23.53%**	4
Shyness on my part	**23.53%**	4
Too busy with internal church ministries	**11.76%**	2
No training	**29.41%**	5
No one's asked	**23.53%**	4
Total Respondents: 17		

10 / 12

125

Q11 How do you feel about volunteering for this project?

Answered: 17   Skipped: 0
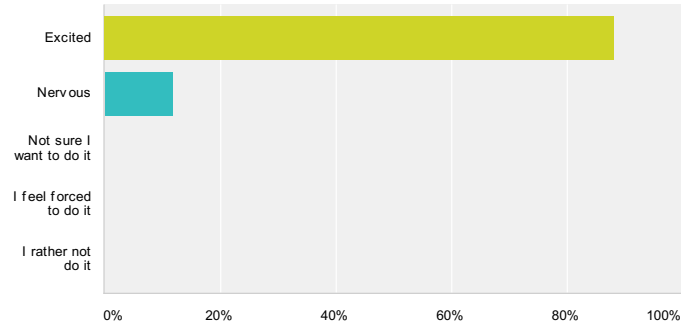
Answer Choices	Responses	
Excited	**88.24%**	15
Nervous	**11.76%**	2
Not sure I want to do it	**0%**	0
I feel forced to do it	**0%**	0
I rather not do it	**0%**	0
Total		17

11 / 12

126

Q12 What are your personal expectations from this project? (choose one)

Answered: 17   Skipped: 0
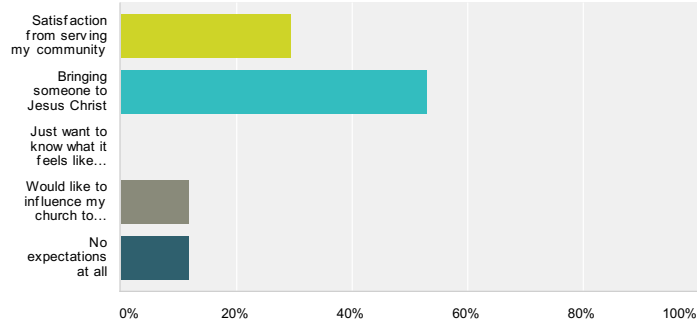
Answer Choices	Responses	
Satisfaction from serving my community	**29.41%**	5
Bringing someone to Jesus Christ	52.94%	9
Just want to know what it feels like to serve	**0%**	0
Would like to influence my church to become a community-focused church	11.76%	2
No expectations at all	**11.76%**	2
Total Respondents: 17		

12 / 12

APPENDIX E

MISSION OF THE CHURCH SEMINAR

Mission and Community Seminar
Volunteers for Community-focused Ministry
by
Jorge A. Ramirez

May, 2012

Understanding the Biblical Definition of Mission

♣ "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Matthew 28:19-20 (NKJV)

♣ Through this command, Jesus is sending His church into the community to impact all communities for His kingdom.

♣ This biblical understanding of mission has several key elements:

Sent for Mission

- ♣ "Go" First word of Jesus' command.

- ♣ Missiological difference between OT Israel and the NT church.

- ♣ OT: All nations were asked to gather around Israel to learn about God

- ♣ NT: Believers are asked to GO into the community and make disciples for the kingdom.

- ♣ Disciple-making is accomplished in the process of going after people rather than waiting for them to come to the church.

- ♣ Believers committed to the mission of Jesus Christ will understand that as called disciples, they are sent for mission.

Sent for Mission in the Community

- ♣ Mission takes place in the community

- ♣ Jesus went to the homes of the people, their work places and community instead of expecting them to come to him.

- ♣ Biblical examples in Luke 15:

- ♣ Parable of the Lost Sheep

- ♣ Parable of the Lost Coin

- ♣ Believers committed to the mission of Jesus Christ will understand that as called disciples, they are sent for mission in the community.

Sent for Mission in the Community to Make Disciples

- ♣ Mission takes place in the community for one specific task: to make disciples.

- ♣ Definition of Disciple: "One who learns" (Greek: *Mathetes*)

- ♣ Jesus called twelve disciples to train them and eventually commission them for ministry

- ♣ They spent time with Jesus learning about Him and his mission

- ♣ Ellen White: "The disciples were to go forth as Christ's witnesses, to declare to the world what they had seen and heard of Him." (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 19)

- ♣ Disciple-making involves volunteers building meaningful relationships with the community by:

Sent for Mission in the Community to Make Disciples

- ♣ Spending time them

- ♣ Modeling a Christ-like life

- ♣ Teaching them to observe all things

- ♣ Releasing them to make other disciples

- ♣ Believers committed to the mission of Jesus Christ will understand that as called disciples, they are sent for mission in the community to make other disciples.

APPENDIX F

TRAINING OF VOLUNTEERS (PART 2)

Video Visitation

"We Help Bridge The Gap"

MAINTAINING CONNECTION

BETWEEN

FAMILIES AND INMATES
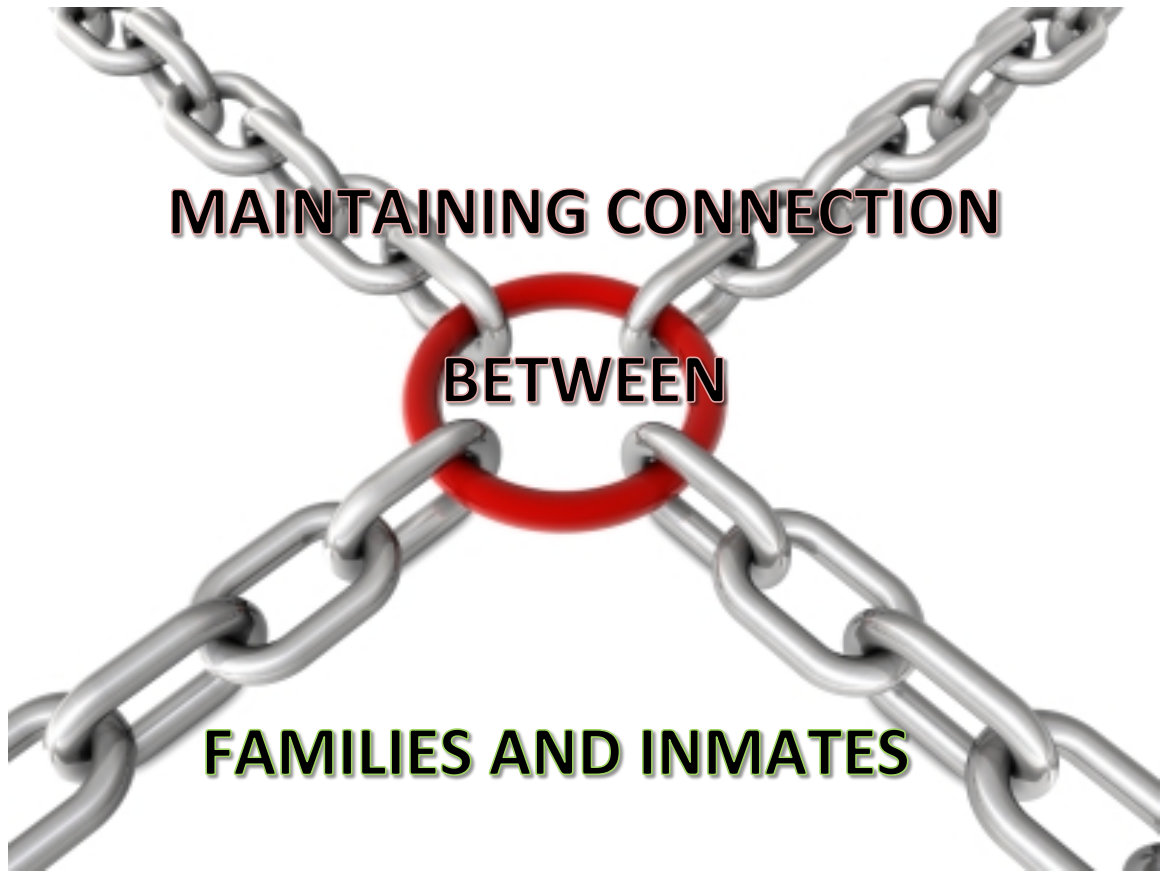
A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN NEW JUBILEE EDUCATIONAL AND FAMILY CENTER,INC. AND THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS TO PROVIDE VIDEO CONFERENCE CALLS BETWEEN INMATES AND THEIR FAMILIES

Why Video Visitation?

1. Reduced family visit expenses
in travel and lodging costs.
2. Motivation for improved behavior by
inmates to receive visits.
3. Maintains family connectivity.
4. Decreased staff for inmate monitoring and
check-in process.
5. God centered opportunities for family
ministry by volunteer facilitators.

God's Calling

Will You Answer?

THE LORD'S CALLING ON US

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world

James 1:27

CURRENT PARTICIPATING FACILITIES

1. Wallens Ridge State Prison
2. Augusta Correctional Facility
3. Powhatan Correctional Center
4. Fluvanna Correction Center
5. Deep Meadow Correction Center
6. Coffeewood Correctional Center
7. Sussix 1 Correction Center
8. Haynesville Correctional Center

CURRENT VISITOR CENTERS

1. New Jubilee Education Family Life Center In Richmond
2. Norfolk United Methodist Church In Norfolk
3. Lynchburg Seventh Day Adventist Church In Lynchburg
4. Alexandria Spanish Seventh Day Adventist Church In Alexandria (Projected May Startup)

© Ron Niebrugge

THE PROCESS
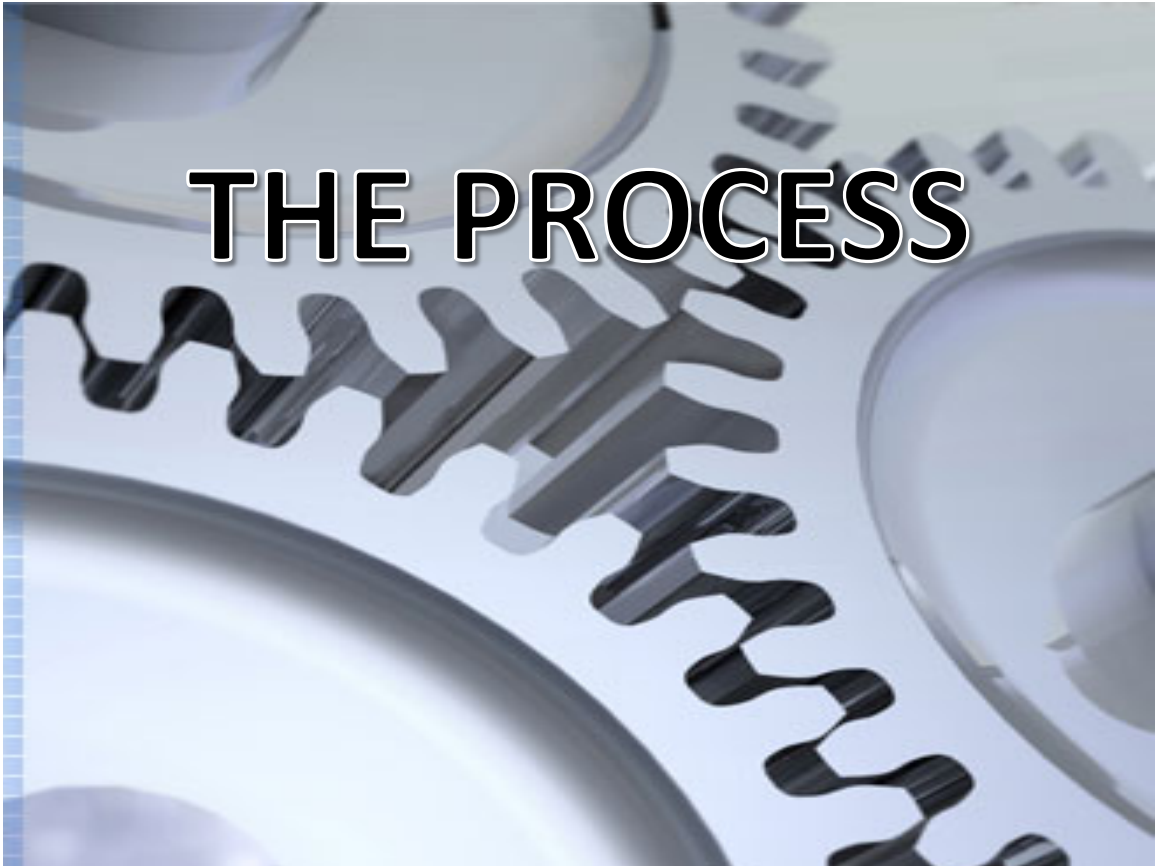
PRE VISITATION

- *"PRAY WITHOUT CEASING"* But especially before a visit for the holy spirit to take control of us as vessels and use us to god's glory!!!

- Visitors should arrive 30 minutes before visit. Explain forms and get signoff.

- Make hardware connection with the facility 15 minutes before first visit.

DURING VISIT

- AT LEAST TWO VOLUNTEERS SHOULD BE IN THE ROOM TO MONITOR CALL AND MAKE SURE THINGS REMAIN ORDERLY.
- (VISITOR PROFILE EVALUATION SHEET)

OUR MINISTRY

1. Develop and maintain a resource directory to facilitate fulfilling of visitor needs.
2. Should the visitors not show up ask the inmate if the assignment team may take that time to visit with him or her
3. As we stay surrendered to the holy spirit's leading he will provide opportunities greater than we could ask or think

APPENDIX G

VISITING FAMILY FORMS

Beltsville Seventh-day Adventist Church
Video Conferencing Visitation Program
Participants House Rules

Please keep in mind that you are in a church building. So we ask that you consider that very important fact when conducting yourself in the company of those who have volunteered their time to make this joyous occasion happen for ALL involved.

1. We ask that you refrain from <u>ANY</u> vulgar language and <u>ANY</u> profanity
2. We ask that you <u>DO NOT BRING, SMOKE, CONSUME ALCOHOL OR ILLEGAL DRUGS</u> on these grounds while visiting with us, and the person whom you are scheduled to visit.
3. There will be a volunteer present with you during your visit with us at all times to answer any questions you may have. A volunteer will be present while you have your live video visitation call to monitor, and correct any technical difficulties that may occur.
4. We ask that if you eat and/or drink that you do so in the designated area provided for you. Eating and/or drinking will not be permitted in the video visitation room at anytime.
5. We ask that you adhere to the dress code specified to you in the MDOC/VIDEO VISITATION packet.
6. We ask that you be on time in order to maximize the time allowed for your visit. Remember there are other scheduled times for other visitors who expect to get their allotted time. There will be no modification for tardiness.
7. We ask that you provide proof of identification. (Driver license or some other picture ID)
8. MDOC monitors and records all video visits.

Beltsville Seventh-day Adventist Church, our pastor Glenn Holland and volunteers thank you for trusting us and the Maryland Department of Corrections to be able to provide this service for you and your love ones. Our desire is that this visit was not only important to you, but that it was also intimate as well. We want you to know that you are not limited to just our Video Conferencing Visitation program, so we encourage you to stop by anytime you need us. At the close of your visit, should you desire anything in addition a volunteer will introduce you to other services and programs made available to you, your family and friends.

_____   _____
Visitor Signature & Phone Number   Print Name & Date

BELTSVILLE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

VIDEO VISITATION

Recorded and Monitored Video Session Agreement

Maryland Department of Corrections and Beltsville Seventh-day Adventist church informs all visitors who are conducting video visits that all active video calls are monitored and recorded. MDOC reserves all rights of video recordings for the sole purpose of collecting data for operation accuracy, improvements, and future program expansions.

I acknowledge, understand, and agree my video visitation call is being monitored and recorded.

Signature by visitor required

Date:_____

BELTSVILLE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
Video Conference
Visitor Profile Evaluation Sheet

Pre-evaluation: *This is the time to go over the dress code/rules list, and talking to the visitors before their conference call is activated. (Use the 30 minutes wisely)*

1. While conversing with the visitors listen for ministry needs that our church can minister to
   - Does the visitor attend church? Are they members of a church?
   _____
   - Could the visitors and any other family member or friends not present benefit from any ministry in the Beltsville Seventh-day Adventist church? If yes which ministry?
   _____
   - Did you discern any red flags (Concerns)? If yes, what were the red flags?
   _____

Monitor the call: *Conversations between inmate and visitors must be in line with MDOC regulations*

2. Listen to conversation and look for non-verbal communication
   - This is an opportunity to understand the visitor maybe better than you could prior to the video visit. Both parties tend to become more transparent during this time. Did you hear any ministry needs? If yes, what were the needs?
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

Post visit: *Close the door*

3. *Would the visitor like a follow up call from the assigned outreach team member?* _____
   - It is very important for the visitor to fill out the Post evaluation sheet
   - If the visitors would like to be contacted by the assigned team member fill out the provided space below with contact information

Name: _____
Telephone Numbers: _____
Preferred time to call: _____
Date of visit: _____
Assigned team members name: _____

Survey Instrument
Video Conferencing Visitation for Families of Inmates

Feedback Form

The Beltsville Seventh-day Adventist Church is interested in your opinion and suggestions concerning your video visitation experience. Please take a few minutes and fill out this feedback form.

1. Was the visitation center easy for you to find?   Yes   No

2. Was the picture and sound adequate for your visit?

Inadequate   1   2   3   4   5   Adequate

3. Was the visitor center neat and clean?

Inadequate   1   2   3   4   5   Adequate

4. Were you treated cordially and with respect?

Inadequate   1   2   3   4   5   Adequate

5. Were all your questions readily answered by the visitation center volunteers?

Inadequate   1   2   3   4   5   Adequate

6. Would you be interested in any of the following family support services?

      ___ Parenting classes
      ___ Single parenting seminars
      ___ Finance seminars
      ___ Family counseling
      ___ Christian education
      ___ Children programs: Pathfinders, adventurers, bible classes

7. Do you have any suggestions to improve this video visitation program?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Name:_____   Date:_____

APPENDIX H

LETTERS FROM PASTORS REGARDING

INCOMPLETE PROJECT

IGLESIA
ADVENTISTA
DEL SEPTIMO DIA

August 10th 2013

To whom it may concern,

This is to certify that the Alexandria Spanish Church has been involved in a Community-focused ministry since January of 2012. This ministry which deals with visitation for families of inmates through a video conference system was approved by our church board back in February 2012. The selection of volunteers as well as the required training was conducted in May of the same year. Visitation project as scheduled to begin on July ,1 2012. However, due to unforeseen challenges and a change in pastoral leadership, the complete implementation of this project has been delayed.

Elder Ramirez has been tirelessly working with us in making sure this ministry project is successfully implemented. On July 27, 2013 he conducted a second training with new volunteers. While we have had a few visits, our goal is to fully serve our community through this visitation ministry. We anticipate this project will be a blessing to our church and community. Thank you for your prayers on our behalf.

Sincerely,

Angel Barrios, Pastor
Alexandria Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Church

LYNCHBURG SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

19 George Street Lynchburg Virginia 24502 – (434) 239-8466

12-29-2012

Jorge Ramirez
Vice President of Administration
Potomac Conference of Seventh-day Adventist
606 Greenville Avenue
Staunton, VA 24401

RE: PRISON VIDEO CONFERENCING VISITATION MINISTRY

Dear Jorge,
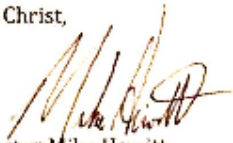
This letter is to give you an update as to the status of the Prison Video Conferencing Visitation Ministry for families of inmates here in Lynchburg, Virginia. As you know, we launched this program early this year and had hoped to complete the six-month trial period by December 31 of this year. However, due to the following circumstances, we have not been able to accomplish this.

1. A lack of leadership for this ministry. A leader was assigned to lead this project and he initially worked very hard to organize our staff and facilitate training. Unfortunately shortly after this time his regular employment commitments demanded a lot more of his time and he did not follow through as promised.

2. A lack of advertising. The leader who committed to this project assured me that he was working on advertising so this ministry could launch effectively but he did not get any further than requesting a public service announcement with the local media even though he was given a generous budget to purchase quality advertising.

3. The ministry leader assigned to this project did not receive the level of accountability that was needed. I made a mistake by not stepping in and finding a new leader for this ministry. In hindsight I should have thanked him for what he had accomplished and reassigned this project to another willing and capable leader. Our congregation is excited about this ministry and the opportunity it will afford us to minister to families in need.

Even though we have failed to effectively launch this ministry up to this point progress is now being made. We have hired someone to develop a television

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commercial and we are finalizing an agreement with a local newspaper to begin running an ad for the next six weeks. This ministry is organized and ready to go but we need to solicit interested families who are in need of the services this ministry will offer. Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at the number below.

In Christ,

Pastor Mike Hewitt
Ph# (434)485-1280

APPENDIX I

CONGREGATIONAL PRE PROJECT POLL

Q1 Statement of consent for participants in congregational poll: I understand that my participation in this congregational poll is voluntary and that I am not being compelled to participate.

Answered: 88   Skipped: 0
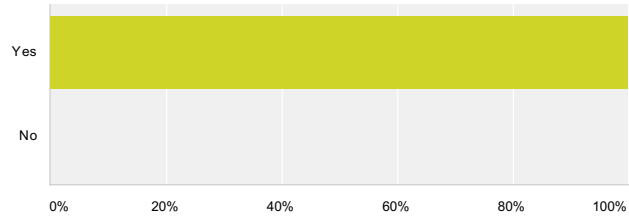
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	100%	88
No	0%	0
Total		88

1 / 15

156

Q2 What is your gender?

Answered: 88   Skipped: 0
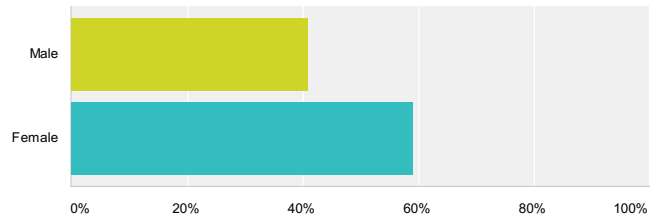
Answer Choices	Responses	
Male	**40.91%**	36
Female	**59.09%**	52
Total		88

2 / 15

157

Jorge - Congregation - Beltsville (Pre)

Q3 What is your ethnicity?

Answered: 88   Skipped: 0
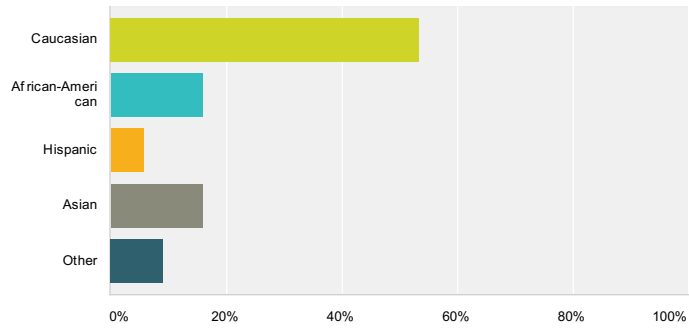
Answer Choices	Responses	
Caucasian	53.41%	47
African-American	15.91%	14
Hispanic	5.68%	5
Asian	15.91%	14
Other	9.09%	8
Total		88

3 / 15

Jorge - Congregation - Beltsville (Pre)

Q4 What is your age bracket?

Answered: 88   Skipped: 0
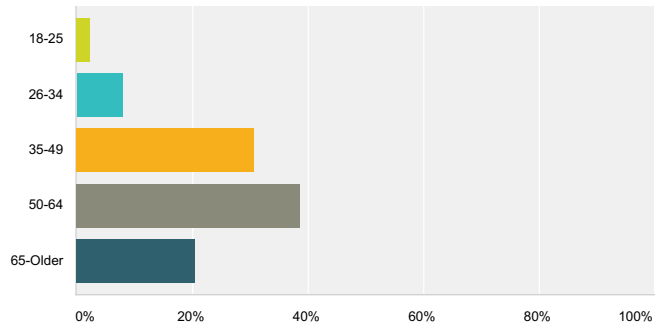
Answer Choices	Responses	
18-25	**2.27%**	2
26-34	**7.95%**	7
35-49	**30.68%**	27
50-64	**38.64%**	34
65-Older	**20.45%**	18
Total		88

4 / 15

Q5 How long have you been a Seventh-day Adventist?

Answered: 88   Skipped: 0
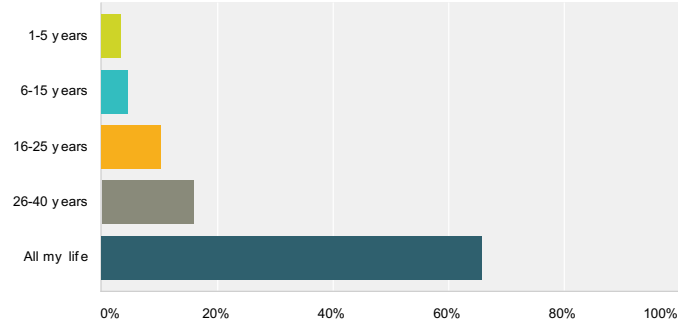
Answer Choices	Responses	
1-5 years	3.41%	3
6-15 years	4.55%	4
16-25 years	10.23%	9
26-40 years	15.91%	14
All my life	65.91%	58
Total		88

5 / 15

160

Q6 In which of the following church ministries do you spend the most ministry time? (Choose One)

Answered: 88   Skipped: 0
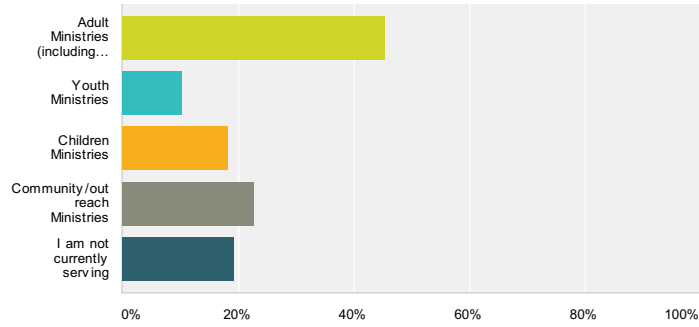
Answer Choices	Responses	
Adult Ministries (including Worship)	**45.45%**	40
Youth Ministries	**10.23%**	9
Children Ministries	**18.18%**	16
Community/outreach Ministries	**22.73%**	20
I am not currently serving	**19.32%**	17
Total Respondents: 88		

6 / 15

161

Jorge - Congregation - Beltsville (Pre)

Q7 Have you volunteered for a community-focused ministry prior to this?

Answered: 88   Skipped: 0
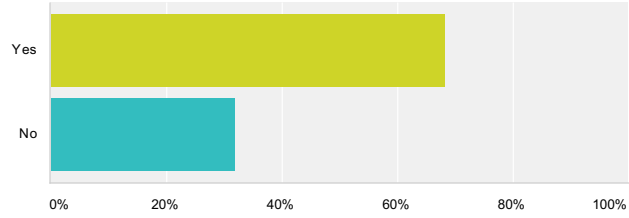
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	**68.18%**	60
No	**31.82%**	28
Total		88

Q8 To what degree is your church currently involved in community-focused ministry?

Answered: 88   Skipped: 0
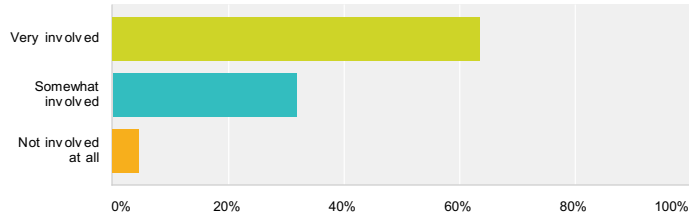
Answer Choices	Responses	
Very involved	**63.64%**	56
Somewhat involved	**31.82%**	28
Not involved at all	**4.55%**	4
Total		88

8 / 15

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Q9 What is your understanding of discipleship? (Choose one)

Answered: 88   Skipped: 0
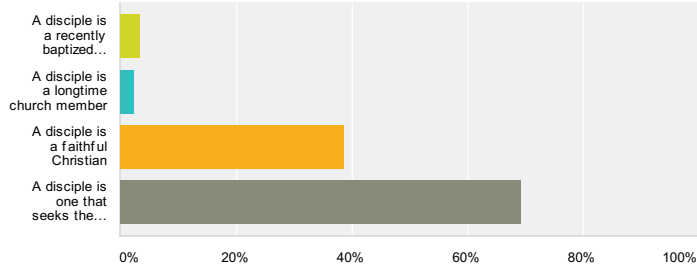
Answer Choices	Responses	
A disciple is a recently baptized Christian	3.41%	3
A disciple is a longtime church member	2.27%	2
A disciple is a faithful Christian	38.64%	34
A disciple is one that seeks the lost	69.32%	61
Total Respondents: 88		

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164

Q10 Is your perception of inmate families that most of them are to some degree criminal themselves?

Answered: 88   Skipped: 0
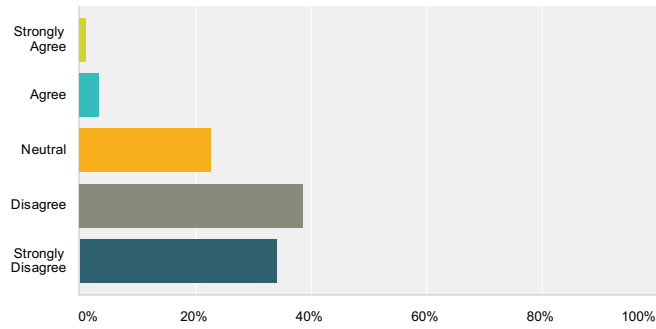
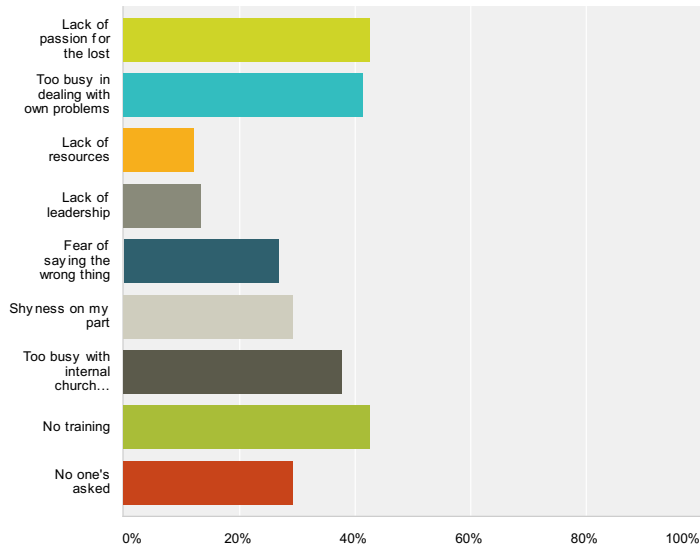| Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Agree	**1.14%**	1
Agree	**3.41%**	3
Neutral	**22.73%**	20
Disagree	**38.64%**	34
Strongly Disagree	**34.09%**	30
Total		88

10 / 15

165

Q11 Please select the top three (3) barriers to your church being more engaged with your community.

Answered: 82   Skipped: 6

Answer Choices	Responses	
Lack of passion for the lost	42.68%	35
Too busy in dealing with own problems	41.46%	34
Lack of resources	12.20%	10
Lack of leadership	13.41%	11
Fear of saying the wrong thing	26.83%	22
Shyness on my part	29.27%	24
Too busy with internal church ministries	37.80%	31
No training	42.68%	35
No one's asked	29.27%	24
Total Respondents: 82		

11 / 15

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Q12 My church is already well known in this community

Answered: 88   Skipped: 0
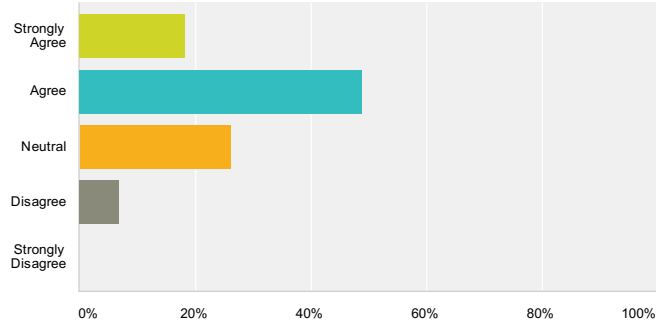
Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Agree	**18.18%**	16
Agree	**48.86%**	43
Neutral	**26.14%**	23
Disagree	**6.82%**	6
Strongly Disagree	**0%**	0
Total		88

12 / 15

167

Q13 How many people have you personally led, or helped lead, to a relationship with Christ in the past 10 years - resulting in baptism?
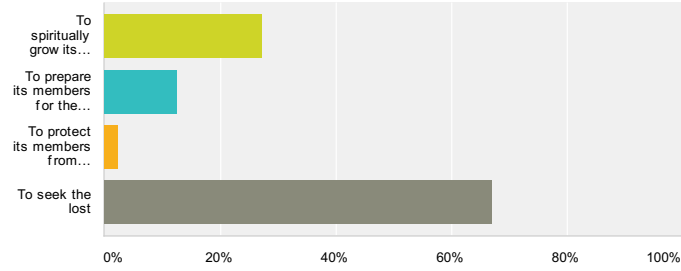
Answered: 88   Skipped: 0
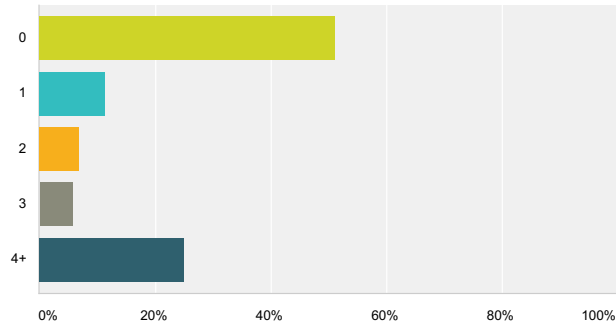
Answer Choices	Responses	
0	**51.14%**	45
1	**11.36%**	10
2	**6.82%**	6
3	**5.68%**	5
4+	**25%**	22
Total		88

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Q14 What is the main purpose of the church? (Choose one)

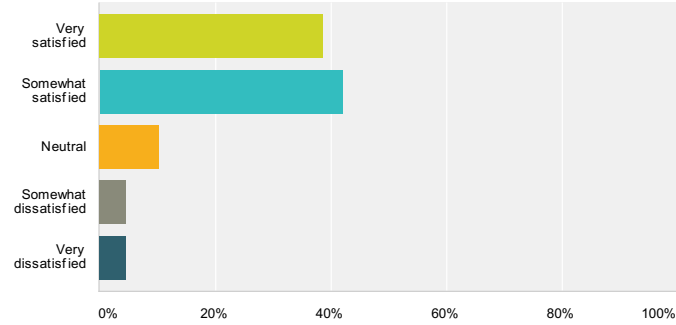Answered: 88   Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
To spiritually grow its members	27.27%	24
To prepare its members for the second coming	12.50%	11
To protect its members from worldliness	2.27%	2
To seek the lost	67.05%	59
Total Respondents: 88		

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Q15 To what degree are you satisfied with the church?

Answered: 88   Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
Very satisfied	38.64%	34
Somewhat satisfied	42.05%	37
Neutral	10.23%	9
Somewhat dissatisfied	4.55%	4
Very dissatisfied	4.55%	4
Total		88

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APPENDIX J

VOLUNTEERS POST PROJECT POLL

Q1 What is your gender?

Answered: 17   Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
Male	**52.94%**	9
Female	**47.06%**	8
Total		17

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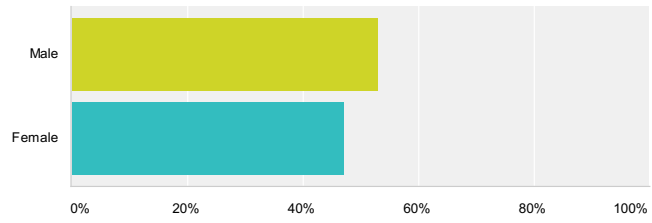
Q2 What is your ethnicity?

Answered: 17   Skipped: 0
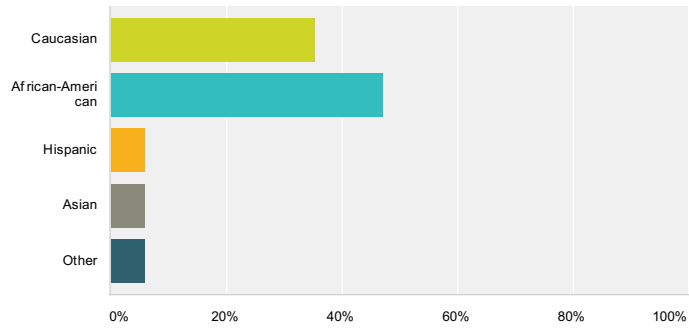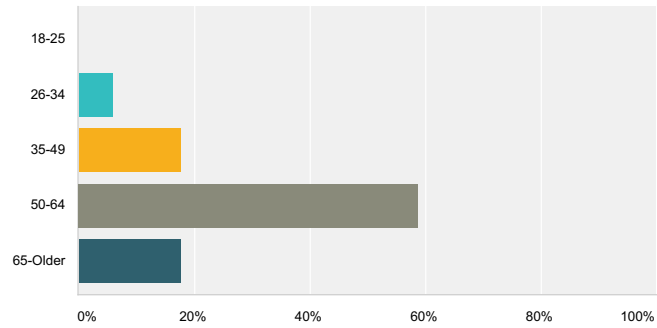
Answer Choices	Responses	
Caucasian	**35.29%**	6
African-American	**47.06%**	8
Hispanic	**5.88%**	1
Asian	**5.88%**	1
Other	**5.88%**	1
Total		17

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Q3 What is your age bracket?

Answered: 17   Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
18-25	0%	0
26-34	5.88%	1
35-49	17.65%	3
50-64	58.82%	10
65-Older	17.65%	3
Total		17

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Q4 How long have you been a Seventh-day Adventist?

Answered: 17   Skipped: 0
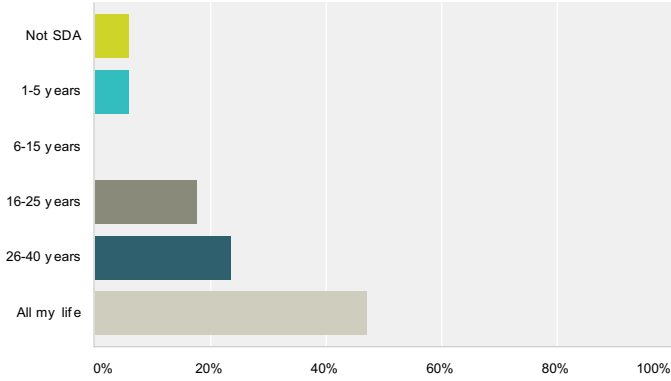
Answer Choices	Responses	
Not SDA	**5.88%**	1
1-5 years	**5.88%**	1
6-15 years	**0%**	0
16-25 years	**17.65%**	3
26-40 years	**23.53%**	4
All my life	**47.06%**	8
Total		17

Q5 What was your experience in this project?

Answered: 17   Skipped: 0
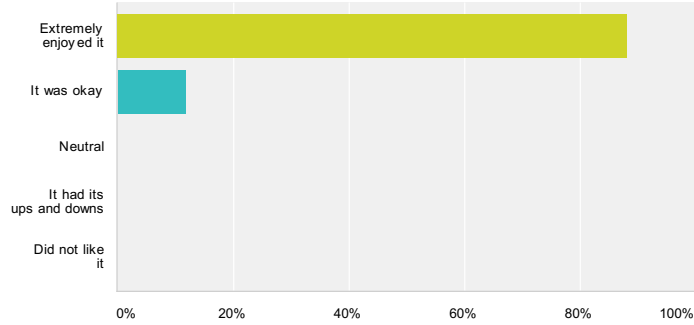
Answer Choices	Responses	
Extremely enjoyed it	**88.24%**	15
It was okay	**11.76%**	2
Neutral	**0%**	0
It had its ups and downs	**0%**	0
Did not like it	**0%**	0
Total		17

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Q6 Has this project contributed to your spiritual growth?

Answered: 17   Skipped: 0
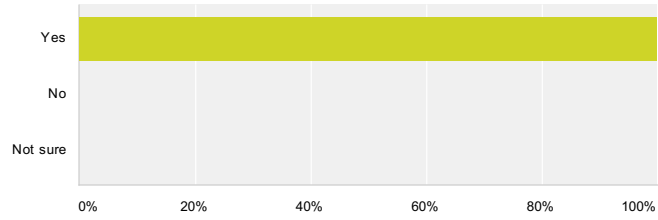
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	**100%**	17
No	**0%**	0
Not sure	**0%**	0
Total		17

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Q7 How has your relationship with non-Adventists changed?

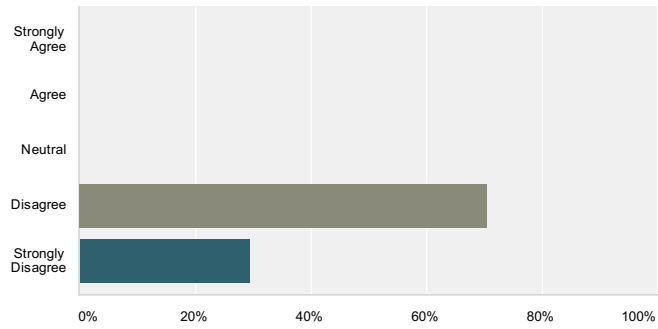Answered: 17   Skipped: 0
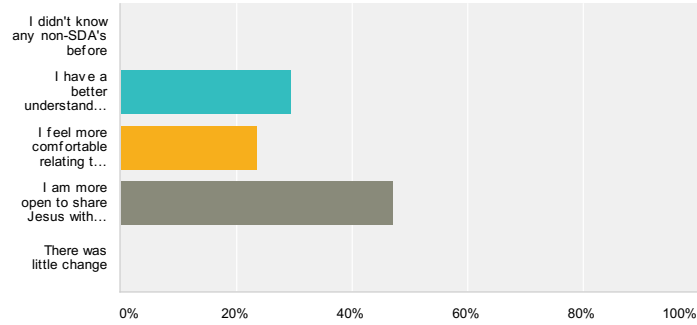
Answer Choices	Responses	
I didn't know any non-SDA's before	0%	0
I have a better understanding of their spiritual needs	29.41%	5
I feel more comfortable relating to them	23.53%	4
I am more open to share Jesus with them	47.06%	8
There was little change	0%	0
Total		17

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Q8 Is your perception of inmate families that most of them are to some degree criminal themselves?

Answered: 17   Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Agree	**0%**	0
Agree	**0%**	0
Neutral	**0%**	0
Disagree	**70.59%**	12
Strongly Disagree	**29.41%**	5
Total		17

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Q9 What did you enjoy most about this project?

Answered: 17   Skipped: 0
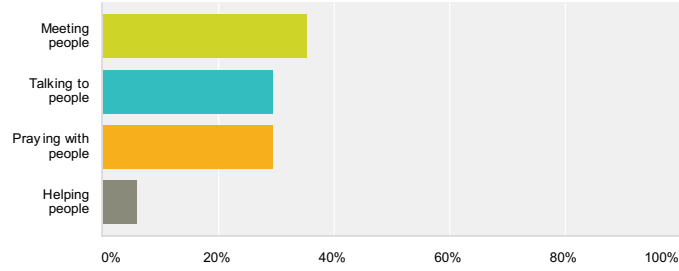
Answer Choices	Responses	
Meeting people	35.29%	6
Talking to people	29.41%	5
Praying with people	29.41%	5
Helping people	5.88%	1
Total		17

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Q10 What would you do different?

Answered: 17   Skipped: 0
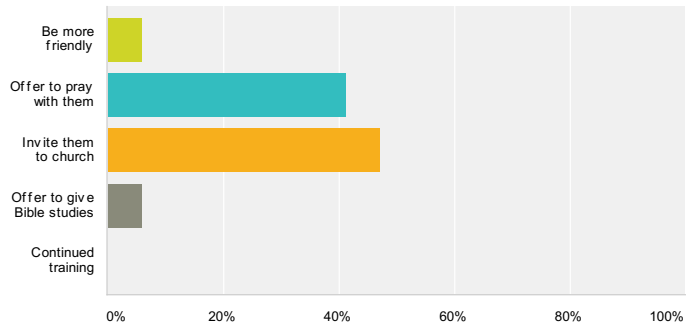
Answer Choices	Responses	
Be more friendly	5.88%	1
Offer to pray with them	41.18%	7
Invite them to church	47.06%	8
Offer to give Bible studies	5.88%	1
Continued training	0%	0
Total		17

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Q11 How much did this project change your understanding of discipleship?

Answered: 17   Skipped: 0
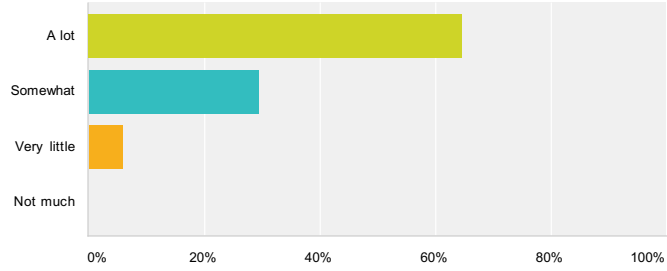
Answer Choices	Responses	
A lot	64.71%	11
Somewhat	29.41%	5
Very little	5.88%	1
Not much	0%	0
Total		17

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Q12 Which of the following views has this project most changed about community-focused ministry?

Answered: 17   Skipped: 0
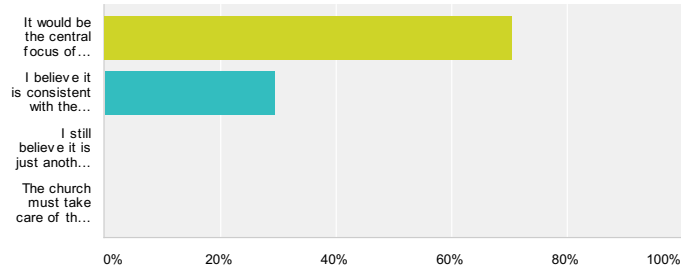
Answer Choices	Responses	
It would be the central focus of every church	**70.59%**	12
I believe it is consistent with the great commission	**29.41%**	5
I still believe it is just another ministry of the church	**0%**	0
The church must take care of the members needs first	**0%**	0
Total		17

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Q13 How will you contribute in the future toward changing your church to a community-focused church?

Answered: 17   Skipped: 0
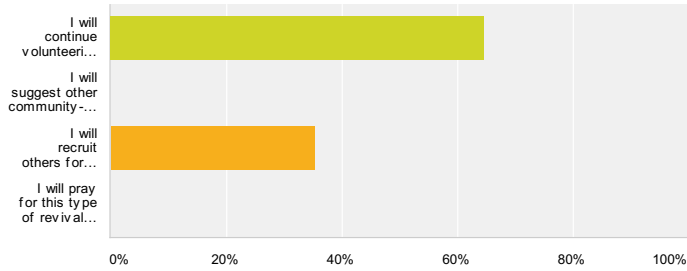
Answer Choices	Responses	
I will continue volunteering in this ministry	**64.71%**	11
I will suggest other community-focused ministries	**0%**	0
I will recruit others for service in community-focused ministries	**35.29%**	6
I will pray for this type of revival in my church	**0%**	0
Total		17

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Q14 What long-lasting effects do you expect to experience in your church as a result of this project?

Answered: 17 Skipped: 0
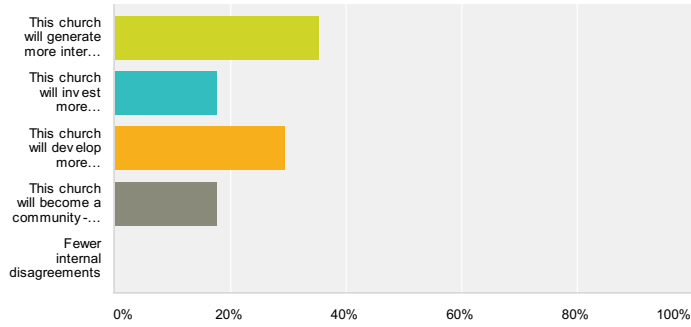
Answer Choices	Responses	
This church will generate more interest for community-focused ministries	35.29%	6
This church will invest more resources for community-focused ministries	17.65%	3
This church will develop more community focused ministries	29.41%	5
This church will become a community-focused church	17.65%	3
Fewer internal disagreements	0%	0
Total		17

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Q15 How has this project changed your view of discipleship? Please share your view before and after the project. If your view has not changed, please indicate so.

Answered: 15   Skipped: 2

#	Responses	Date
1	A disciple is one that seeks the lost.	7/31/2013 8:20 PM
2	Discipleship is to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. To do the things Jesus did. This project has encouraged me to serve.	7/31/2013 8:17 PM
3	I used to believe that discipleship was simply being a faithful Christian. I now believe that discipleship is about bringing others to Christ	7/31/2013 8:15 PM
4	Discipleship is to be engaged in the mission of Jesus Christ.	7/31/2013 8:12 PM
5	Discipleship is about serving as Jesus did.	7/31/2013 8:09 PM
6	It has given me a better understanding of why I exist to save souls	7/31/2013 8:08 PM
7	No change	7/31/2013 8:06 PM
8	Discipleship is about seeking the lost	7/31/2013 8:02 PM
9	I must be like Jesus. Jesus seeks the lost. I must do the same.	7/31/2013 8:00 PM
10	I must do what Jesus did. Share the gospel.	7/31/2013 7:58 PM
11	Discipleship is becoming like Jesus. Yes. Sharing the gospel.	7/31/2013 7:55 PM
12	No change	7/31/2013 7:53 PM
13	I should serve others. This is discipleship. To do what Jesus did.	7/31/2013 7:47 PM
14	Discipleship is about bringing others to Christ.	7/31/2013 7:44 PM
15	My concept of discipleship was so wrong. Thanks to this project, I now realize that to be a disciple is to be like Jesus. Jesus came to save the lost. I just [want to] do the same thing.	7/31/2013 7:41 PM

Q16 **How has this project changed your view of service and community-focused ministry? Do you firmly believe that every church should have a community presence? If your view is different, please indicate so as well**

Answered: 15   Skipped: 2

#	Responses	Date
1	The church exists to serve the community.	7/31/2013 8:20 PM
2	The church is the center of the community. As such, it should have a strong influence. Yes, every church should have a community presence.	7/31/2013 8:17 PM
3	Yes, to community presence.	7/31/2013 8:15 PM
4	The church should be the center of the community. It is there to make a difference.	7/31/2013 8:12 PM
5	The church has been called to serve the community.	7/31/2013 8:09 PM
6	This church is on the right path. It's becoming community-focused.	7/31/2013 8:08 PM
7	I	7/31/2013 8:06 PM
8	The church should always serve the community.	7/31/2013 8:02 PM
9	Yes. The church is the center of the community.	7/31/2013 8:00 PM
10	I believe the church should give the community hope. The church should impact community.	7/31/2013 7:58 PM
11	Church should be outward focused.	7/31/2013 7:55 PM
12	Yes. The church should serve the community.	7/31/2013 7:53 PM
13	The church should have an external focus. We should impact our communities.	7/31/2013 7:47 PM
14	The church should be about service. It should be a light in the community.	7/31/2013 7:44 PM
15	My church.(I) Should exist to serve our community.	7/31/2013 7:41 PM

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APPENDIX K

VISITING FAMILIES SURVEY RESULTS

Survey Instrument
Video Conferencing Visitation for Families of Inmates

Feedback Form *Results – 37 surveys*
*(Survey result tallies in italics***)**

The Beltsville Seventh-day Adventist Church is interested in your opinion and suggestions concerning your video visitation experience. Please take a few minutes and fill out this feedback form.

1. Was the visitation center easy for you to find?   Yes—*36*   No—*1*

2. Was the picture and sound adequate for your visit?

Rating	**Inadequate**	1	2	3	4	5	**Adequate**
Total		*0*	*0*	*1*	*7*	*29*	

3. Was the visitor center neat and clean?

Rating	**Inadequate**	1	2	3	4	5	**Adequate**
Total		*0*	*0*	*0*	*2*	*35*	

4. Were you treated cordially and with respect?

Rating	**Inadequate**	1	2	3	4	5	**Adequate**
Total		*0*	*0*	*0*	*1*	*36*	

5. Were all your questions readily answered by the visitation center volunteers?

Rating	**Inadequate**	1	2	3	4	5	**Adequate**
Total		*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*37*	

6. Would you be interested in any of the following family support services?

> *_5_* Parenting classes
> *_9_* Single parenting seminars
> *_1_* Finance seminars
> *_6_* Family counseling
> *_0_* Christian education
> *_11_* Children programs: Pathfinders, adventurers, Bible classes

7. Do you have any suggestions to improve this video visitation program?
 Online sign up; reduce fee; offer discount for weekly visits

Name:_____   Date:_____

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VITA

Name: Jorge A. Ramírez

Background: Born on November 19, 1963 in México, but raised in Southern California. I have one younger brother, and one younger sister. I was baptized into the Adventist Church at the age of 14. My first Seventh-day Adventist school experience was Loma Linda University (La Sierra Campus).

Family: Married on May 5, 1991 to Bexy Castellón born in Brooklyn, New York. We have three children, Reuben (20), Ryan (17) and Reiss (17).

Education:

2002-Present Andrews University Theological Seminary
Doctor of Ministry - Dissertation (Evangelism and Church Growth)

1987-1989   Andrews University Theological Seminary
Master of Divinity

1982-1986   Loma Linda University (La Sierra Campus)
Bachelor of Arts in Pastoral Ministry

1978-1982   John W. North High School (Riverside, CA)
High School Diploma

Ordained:

1992   San Pasqual Academy (Southeastern California Conference)
Current ministerial credential from Potomac Conference

Experience:

2007-Present Executive Secretary, Potomac Conference (Staunton, VA)

2000-2007   Senior Pastor, Santa Ana Bilingual Church (Santa Ana, CA)

1994-2000   Senior Pastor, Loma Linda Spanish Church (Loma Linda, CA)

1992-1994   District Pastor, Oceanside-Fallbrook Spanish Churches (San Diego County, CA)

1989-1992   Associate Pastor, San Diego Central Spanish Church (San Diego, CA)

1985-1987   Youth Pastor, Santa Ana Spanish Church (Santa Ana, CA)