The Development And Implementation Of A Program For The Assimilation Of New Members In The Lexington Seventh-day Adventist Church

Tim Peterson
Andrews University
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ABSTRACT

THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A PROGRAM FOR THE ASSIMILATION OF NEW MEMBERS IN THE LEXINGTON SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

by

Tim Peterson

Adviser: Doug Kilcher
Problem

At the Lexington Seventh-day Adventist Church evangelism is important to church growth. However, better assimilation is needed to keep new members in the church. In the past, many people were baptized, but did not stay active. Therefore, this dissertation is an attempt to meet the needs of those who were baptized after an evangelistic meeting in October 1997.

Method

This project is the development and implementation of a program to assimilate new members into the Lexington,
Kentucky, Seventh-day Adventist Church. Primary research focuses on the theology, theories, and currently employed methods of assimilating new members. The literature survey includes reflections from Scripture and the writings of Ellen G. White, as well as other principles and practices drawn from a variety of other sources. The study reports on a survey of the new members taken immediately after they were baptized. A second survey was taken six months later to determine if the program helped to assimilate them.

**Results**

Nine out of the thirteen people who were baptized were assimilated into the church. Those who attended the assimilation events felt good about the process.

**Conclusion**

Special events help assimilate new members. However, more personal effort needs to be done to reach the new members who stop coming to church.
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A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Tim Peterson
June 1999
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APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

Douglas R. Kilcher
Adviser

R. Clifford Jones

Nkosiyabo Zvandasara

Ricardo Norton
Director of D.Min. Program

Dean, SDA Theological Seminary

Werner K. Vyhmeister

July 23, 1999
Date approved
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background

This dissertation topic was chosen by drawing on my previous studies and experiences in pastoral ministry. In every church I have pastored, the attendance record was half of the official membership record. I wondered why this was true and what could be done to prevent it. The current members would say, "Those people came to a prophecy crusade, got baptized and never came back." After being involved with some prophecy crusades, I noticed that this did happen to some people. I wanted to develop a system of assimilation to change that.

It appeared that many new members are not well grounded in their faith. Many of them came into the church because they attended a prophecy crusade, but they have not grown since they were baptized. I wanted to develop a system of assimilation that would enhance spiritual growth.

I spent a lot of time studying about discipleship and activating and training the laity. I have found it difficult to change the way current members function in the church.
New members, however, are easier to teach because they are more willing to learn. Perhaps this is because I was their first spiritual leader. I taught them much of what they know about Adventism. They looked up to me as a spiritual friend. So I want to do the best possible job I can for these new people so they could give their best for God.

Early in my ministry I was inspired by Daniel Caslow. I heard him speak at a pastors' meeting. He developed a series of Sabbath school quarterlies for new members called "Profiles" and a training manual to go with it.¹ It sounded like a great idea. I knew I wanted to try his lessons in this project.

Rick Warren impressed me with the process he uses to assimilate new members into his church. He takes them through a four-step process: (1) becoming a member, (2) maturing as a Christian, (3) discovering a place of ministry, and (4) getting involved in the mission of the church.² What is particularly inspiring is that he has had great success in using this model for ministry. In fifteen years his church has grown from one family to over 10,000 people in attendance at worship services each week, while at the same time planting twenty-six other churches. This was

done without the church owning its own building. If it can work in that environment, it can work anywhere. I have used ideas from several of these steps for this project.

Seventh-day Adventists have special needs. They have a health message from the Bible that is unique among Christians. I thought it would be helpful to reinforce this in an assimilation process.

Many of the teachings in a prophecy seminar are different to new members and need to be reviewed. The prophecy crusade contains so much information and it comes so fast that it is hard to grasp it all. Thus, I realized that it would be good to review that information.

I did some research on spiritual gifts, and decided that this would be a good subject to present to new members. I hoped to get them involved in ministry before they became satisfied with just attending.

It would be great to see new members effectively share their faith with their friends. In the past I have seen new members do some damage by ineffectively sharing their faith with fervency. I wanted to provide a process to help new members learn how to properly share their faith. New members have the most contacts with non-members. I thought it would be very helpful to train them on how to share their faith in order to reach more people.

Small groups is also a good way to build up people
Small groups is also a good way to build up people spiritually. So many topics can be taught to new members that it is hard for one person to do it all. It is also hard to match time schedules. Small groups are a great way to meet both needs. Small groups can meet at different times with different leaders. This way every new member could attend something.

The project was conducted in the Lexington Church. The church had 325 members in a city of more than 230,000 people. The pastor had one church. There was another Adventist church in the city with 100 members that served mostly African American members. No record was kept of the effectiveness of assimilating new members after meetings in the past.

The members of the church were mostly conservative and professional. The church was like the community which was also conservative and professional. The University of Kentucky was there along with several hospitals and a major electronics company. The church members were made up of variety of age groups and nationalities. The church had the ability to appeal to a wide variety of people.

Purpose of the Dissertation

The purpose of this dissertation is to develop a strategy that will effectively assimilate new members into the Lexington, Kentucky, Seventh-day Adventist Church.
Expectations from This Dissertation

I hope this dissertation will help newly baptized members learn the basic beliefs and practices of Adventist Christianity, develop new close relationships, learn how to share their faith, practice a healthy lifestyle, discover their spiritual gifts, get involved in ministry, and feel more comfortable in the church.

This dissertation will help church members get involved in the assimilation process by having them conduct small groups and some of the assimilation classes. This dissertation will also help me become more proficient as a program developer and teacher and will sharpen my skills in helping new members become better assimilated into the church. This dissertation will provide a tool that other pastors and lay leaders may use to more effectively assimilate new members into church membership.

Finally, this dissertation will show how the traditional Sabbath school class may be altered to better meet the needs of newly baptized members.

Justification for the Dissertation

Two years before I arrived in Lexington, more than twenty-five people were baptized at the end of a prophecy crusade. When I came, however, only five were attending. What happened to the rest? Why were they not attending
church? This is not a unique situation. This dissertation is a search for a strategy that will improve the follow-up process of prophecy crusades and other evangelistic programs in Lexington, Kentucky.

In any church organization, there is a need for orientation and assimilation of new members. Alan F. Harre reports that it is estimated that two million Protestants in the United States are put on inactive lists or removed from church rosters every year. It is the contention of this dissertation that many are inactive because they were not fully assimilated. The problem of assimilation exists in all churches.

The problem of assimilation also exists in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. According to Monte Sahlin there are more than one million former and inactive Seventh-day Adventists in North America. That is more than the current SDA membership of North America. It is logical to assume that many of these individuals were never assimilated into the church. According to Sahlin, most of them still believe the message, they would like to reunite with the church, and they even have friends in the church. They just need to be

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1Alan F. Harre, Close the Back Door (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1984), 7.


3Ibid.
assimilated.

The format of the traditional church is not geared for orienting new members into total church life. The established members already have relationships within the church. This causes the new members to feel like outsiders. An environment must be created to provide equality to make it easier for new members to form friendships and become active participants in the mission of the church. New members also need education to increase their understanding of the Bible, and church life.

Defining Terms

Assimilation is the process of making a new church member an active church member. According to Ervin R. Stutzman, responsible church members have ten characteristics:

1. They are growing spiritually.
2. They are faithful in worship attendance.
3. They have many friendships in the congregation.
4. They belong to a fellowship group.
5. They identify the church as “our church.”
6. They have roles or tasks appropriate to their spiritual gifts.
7. They identify with the goals of the church.
8. They understand the values of the church.
9. They are concerned about stewardship.
10. They bring other people to Christ and the church.¹

An assimilated member is a responsible member. This means more than having one’s name on the church’s membership

records or attending once a month. A truly assimilated church member will attend church nearly every week. They will contribute financially to the church through tithes and offerings. It is also reasonable to think that they will understand, accept, and practice the fundamental beliefs of the church. They will get together with members of the church during the week outside of official church meetings. They will also participate in the ministry and mission of the church. A truly assimilated member is active in church life.

**Connections** is a seminar to help people understand and use their spiritual gifts.

**New Member** is a person who has recently joined the church, usually by baptism. However, new members can also join a church by making a profession of faith or transferring from another Seventh-day Adventist Church.

**Prophecy Seminar or Crusade** is a series of presentations for the public to help them understand Bible prophecy and accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

**Retention** is keeping a person as a member of the church. It does not mean that they are active. This is different from assimilation because an assimilated member is an active member and a retained member can be a member on the books.

**Sabbath School** is a Bible study class that usually
takes place on Saturday morning before a worship service in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

**Small Group** is a group of six to twelve people that meets to study, pray, and fellowship to support each other.

**Spiritual Gift** is a gift or gift cluster given by God to help Christians minister to others. It is a special ability like teaching, leadership, or hospitality.

**Limitations**

This dissertation is a study of a six-month assimilation process at the Lexington Seventh-day Adventist Church. It began October 29, 1997, at the end of a prophecy crusade and ended April 30, 1998. This study does not include transfers into the church during this time, nor does it include those members that were re-baptized at the end of the crusade.

This study tracked the attendance, ministry involvement, small-group participation, seminar attendance, spiritual-gifts knowledge, number of friends made within the church, and understanding of the beliefs of the church.

This study sought to discover the needs of the new member and how to meet those needs. It sought to learn the best environment for new members, what to teach new members, what can be done before they join, and what the first year is like for a new member. It also investigated what some churches are currently doing to meet these needs.
Method

Literature Review

First, I reviewed the literature on assimilation of new members and of selected existing programs to discover what strategies and approaches were being used successfully. I also wanted to see if my previous personal ideas were correct or needed to be modified. I began my research by scanning the James White Library at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. I looked for books on new-member assimilation. Then I looked for periodical articles and dissertations written on the subject.

Second, I consulted my personal library. I purchased some books on assimilating new members and found as much helpful information as I could.

I then went to Asbury Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, to do further research, where I found a large number of dissertations from various denominations that were helpful in my research.

Program Development and Implementation

I developed a six-month, six-step assimilation process and implemented it after an Amazing Facts crusade in October 1997. The six steps include the following:

1. Two thirteen-week courses by Daniel Caslow (that are part of a year-long assimilation program) were used for a
special Sabbath School class to help assimilate new members. These lessons focus on teaching the basic beliefs of Adventist Christianity. I taught these classes.

2. The Connections Course on Spiritual Gifts was planned to help the new members discover their spiritual gifts and get involved in the church. A church member was responsible to teach this class.

3. A prophecy seminar on video was shown on Wednesday nights to review what new members had learned in the evangelistic meetings they attended. I was responsible for this class.

4. A training program on how to start a Bible study with a friend was conducted in order to teach new members how to share what they have learned with the people they know. A church member taught this class.

5. A cooking and nutrition class was conducted for new members as they incorporated dietary changes into their lives. A church member taught this class.

6. Each new member was invited to join a small group. This was to help them become friends with people in the church. Some church members had small groups.

I used a journal to keep track of dates, times, names, and impressions.

Evaluation

The participants were surveyed at the beginning and end
of the six months to see how they had benefitted from this assimilation process and how they assessed the overall program. I personally and carefully evaluated the assimilation program. Finally, I drew conclusions and made recommendations on how to more effectively assimilate new members in the future.

Results

This project helped to assimilate nine out of thirteen new members in the Lexington, Seventh-day Adventist Church after a prophecy seminar was held in October of 1997.

When the new members participated in the assimilation process, they became assimilated. When surveyed, they felt the events helped them to grow and stay in the church.
CHAPTER TWO

A THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR A PROGRAM ON ASSIMILATING NEW MEMBERS IN THE CHURCH

This chapter considers a number of elements presented in Scripture on the concept of assimilation. Biblical examples are given, along with Ellen White’s counsel, on the importance of assimilation.

Assimilation in the Beginning

The first case of assimilation occurred when God created the first human being, Adam. Before God created man He prepared an environment in which humans could flourish and grow (Gen 2:8, 9).¹ After creating Adam, God spent time acquainting Adam with his new surroundings and providing for his physical needs (Gen 1:29, 30). God provided for Adam’s social needs by creating Eve (Gen 2:18, 20-25). God taught the new people everything they needed to know to help them succeed the tests they would face (Gen 2:16, 17). God also gave them work to do (Gen 2:15). This shows that even

¹All Scripture references are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.
perfect people in a perfect environment need to be assimilated when they are new.

Assimilation in the Old Testament

The idea of assimilation can also be found in the nation of Israel. God wanted Israel to reach out to other people and assimilate them (Isa 14:1). God gave Israel specific commands on how to treat others to win them and assimilate them.

The Jews came in contact with several people that were not of their faith. There were non-Jews who came to live in the land of Israel and there were others who became familiar with the Jews that were scattered in other parts of the world. In comparison with their Gentile neighbors, the Jews of the Dispersion were generally more prosperous, of superior morality, more admirable in family life, and better educated on the average.¹ These qualities appealed to the more thoughtful of the Gentiles and many of the nobility belonged to the sympathizers with the Jewish religion, especially women (Acts 16:13; 17:4, 12). As a result, they attended the synagogues of the Jews, listened to the reading of their Scriptures, were attracted by their exalted, monotheistic concept of God, and often became converts to the Jewish faith. There was a need to assimilate these

¹SDA Bible Dictionary (1979), s.v. "Proselyte."
converts into the nation of God.

When a person became a Jew through baptism by immersion, and circumcision (if a male), the assimilation process was not finished.¹ Before they could participate in the temple services and eat consecrated food, the new member had to offer a burnt sacrifice.² When the new members accepted every requirement of the law, they were considered full-fledged Jews. However, the attitude toward them was often ambivalent, principally because the sincerity or thoroughness of their conversion was often suspect.³ This attitude made it hard for new members to feel fully accepted.

There were many people who did not become fully assimilated into Judaism. The number of full proselytes was small at all times, mainly because few of the Gentiles were willing to accept circumcision.⁴ Only one proselyte is mentioned by name in the NT, “Nicolas a proselyte from Antioch” (Acts 6:5). There were some who left heathenism but were not fully assimilated into Jewry (Acts 10:2; 13:16, 26, 50; 16:14; 17:4, 17; 18:7). They loved the Jewish nation and religion (Luke 7:5), and financially supported it (Acts

¹Ibid.
²Ibid.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
10:2) but did not become Jews. There were others that visited the synagogue services, refrained from immorality and the eating of unclean meat and blood, but were not fully assimilated into Judaism.\(^1\) There were still others with a stronger connection, who kept the Sabbath, the Jewish feasts, and observed all ritual regulations, but did not get assimilated into Israel.\(^2\) There were also several non-Jews who lived in Israel that were called "strangers," but did not get assimilated into the church of God. During the time of Solomon, there were 153,600 strangers in Israel (2 Chr 2:17). There was a need to assimilate people in Israel.

God did several things to help assimilate new people into His nation even before they were baptized and circumcised. One thing God did to reach people and assimilate them was to meet their physical needs. He tried to do this through His faithful people. This was true before and after they were baptized. God loved these people and wanted to assimilate them by deeds of kindness. Therefore, God provided a way for needy people to obtain food and clothes through His nation (Deut 10:18). God permitted all to glean from the fields in Israel (Lev 19:10; 23:22). Israelites were required to help the poor (Lev 25:33). This helped to assimilate Ruth, when she moved to Israel with her

\(^1\)Ibid.

\(^2\)Ibid.
mother-in-law, Naomi (Ruth 1:16). Under normal circumstances a Moabite was not allowed citizenship in Israel (Deut 23:3). The gleaning process enabled her to meet and marry Boaz and become great-grandmother of David, and an ancestor of Christ (Matt 1:5, 6).

Another way God helped to assimilate new people into Israel before and after they were baptized was to create a safe environment. God made sure that judgment was executed fairly for all (Deut 10:18; 24:19-21). Israelite judges were supposed to treat everyone properly (Deut 1:16; 24:17; 27:19). Cities of refuge provided a place to flee if someone was being accused of a crime and needed a safe place to wait for a fair trial (Num 35:15). Israelites were not supposed to mistreat or abhor others, but love them, remembering how they were treated in Egypt (Exod 22:21; 23:9; Deut 10:19; 23:7). The people of God were to love others as themselves and treat others like someone who was born among them (Lev 19:34). God condemned the mistreatment of others (Ezek 22:7, 29). God promised to bless the people of Judah before their captivity in Babylon if they would amend their ways and not oppress others (Jer 7:6; 22:3). When the people returned from captivity in Babylon, they were to give strangers a portion of the land of whatever tribe the stranger was staying with and treat them as if they had been born among the people of Israel (Ezek 47:23). The treatment of people
created a good environment to assimilate new members.

A third way God helped to assimilate new people before they were baptized was to invite them to participate in the religious ceremonies of Israel. Non-Jews could participate in the feast of weeks (Deut 16:11); rest with Israel on the day of Atonement (Lev 16:29); bring offerings (Num 15:14-16); experience the forgiveness of God (Num 15:26); enter into a covenant with God (Deut 29:11); have their prayers answered (1 Kgs 8:41-43; 2 Chr 6:32, 33); keep the Sabbath (Exod 20:10; 23:12; Deut 5:14); receive blessings from God (Isa 56:6); and rejoice in all the good things that God had given to them (Deut 26:11). The main ceremony they could not participate in until they were baptized and circumcised was the Passover (Exod 12:43, 48, 49; Num 9:14).

God also used teaching to help assimilate people into the church. God provided several ways to instruct people in His ways. Parents were to instruct their children in the homes (Deut 6:7). Wherever there were ten or more adult males, a synagogue was established.\(^1\) God provided schools, like the school of the prophets, to instruct people in religious matters (1 Sam 19:20). Religious leaders were also sent throughout the country to teach the people (2 Chr 17:7-9). It was also required that the law be read to all the people every seven years at the time of the Feast of

\(^1\)SDA Bible Dictionary, (1979), s.v. “Proselyte.”
Tabernacles (Deut 31:10-13). Everyone was to be present and learn from the reading of the law at the assembly of all the people. God wanted His people to understand His word to better assimilate them into His church.

There were several types of laws that God taught the people. He taught them the moral laws (Exod 20:1-17), health laws (Lev 11), ceremonial laws (Exod 25-30), and civil laws (Deut 16:18-25:19). He also taught them history as recorded in the Pentateuch, and other Old Testament books as they were written. From the fall, God taught His people through prophecy. He gave Adam and Eve hope that a Deliverer from sin would come. He was going to be a seed of the woman (Gen 3:15). He promised a deliverance from Egypt through Abraham (Gen 15:13, 14). Through Isaiah and Daniel and other prophets, God gave them prophecy to give them a hope of better things to come.

In the Old Testament there was a great need to assimilate new people. God provided many ways to encourage assimilation to take place. Unfortunately, it was not successful because the people of Israel were not assertive in welcoming new people.

**Jesus and Assimilation**

Part of Jesus’ ministry was assimilating new believers into His church. Jesus did not focus on baptism as the climax of his disciple’s experience. Not one baptism of the
twelve disciples is mentioned in the Bible. Instead, Jesus spent time working with them after their baptism to equip them into leaders for His church. In his book *Jesus Christ Disciple Maker*, Bill Hull identifies a process that Jesus used to assimilate His new members. First, Jesus invited the disciples to "come and see" what He is like (John 1:38-39). Second, Jesus asked them to follow Him (Mark 1:16-20). Third, Jesus called the twelve to "be with Him" as workers (Matt 9:37, 38). Finally, Jesus promised them great blessings to "remain in Him" (John 15:7, 8). This assimilation process began when Jesus invited the disciples to get acquainted with Him and continued as Jesus lead them to deeper levels of commitment.

The needs of new believers were important to Jesus. He warned people not to harm any new person in the faith. "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt 18:6). The term "Little ones" is not only talking about children. It is also a reference to people who are new in the faith. Jesus wanted new believers to be treated well.

Jesus created a safe, loving environment to help assimilate new people. Jesus loved his new members (John

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15:9). This loving environment helped His disciples grow. The golden rule applied, "as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (Luke 6:31). Jesus treated new members like He wanted to be treated. Jesus said how He wanted to be treated, "I was a stranger and ye took me in" (Matt 25:43). Jesus' disciples were strangers at first, but He warmly welcomed them into His church. The story of the good Samaritan showed that Jesus would accept and help outcasts. A lawyer asked Jesus, "who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29). The essence of Jesus' response was to treat everyone like your neighbor, even an undesirable person. Jesus treated new members like neighbors.

Jesus taught new Christians several things to help assimilate them. Through the Sermon on the Mount Jesus taught them Christian living. Through the Olivet discourse He taught them about the coming destruction of Jerusalem and His second coming. Jesus explained the spiritual lessons of the parables (Mark 4:11). Jesus pointed out how He was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah (Luke 24:27, 44, 45). In his book The Lost Art of Making Disciples, LeRoy Eims shows how instruction was part of Jesus' plan for assimilating the disciples. First, Jesus selected them (Luke 6:12-13). Second, Jesus associated with

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them (Matt 4:18-22; 9:9). Third, Jesus taught them (Mark 4:11). Instruction was an important part of Jesus’ assimilation process.

Jesus made sure that the disciples understood that instruction was part of His assimilation process. Just before Jesus ascended to heaven He told Peter to “Feed My Sheep” (John 21:17). Jesus wanted new members to be taught. In the gospel commission, Jesus told the disciples to teach twice. Jesus said, “Go” . . . “teach” . . . “baptize” . . . “teach” (Matt 28:19-20). Jesus wanted His disciples to teach new members before they were baptized and teach them more after they were baptized. Teaching was an important part of assimilation to Jesus.

Jesus created a social environment to help assimilate His disciples. Jesus spent a lot of time with his disciples. For three-and-a-half years he spent night and day with them. He taught them everything He could. They watched Him, they heard Him, and they asked Him questions. He loved them and became part of their lives. When Lazarus died, Jesus wept because He deeply cared about him. He was not ashamed to call them brethren (Heb 2:17). He called them friends (John 15:15). Jesus created a positive social environment in which his disciples could flourish.

Part of Jesus’ assimilation plan included leading people into ministry. When He called the twelve, He gave
them power to do ministry (Matt 10:1). When he called the first four from their fishing business, he said, “I will make you fishers of men” (Matt 4:19). This indicated that He had a job for them to do. When Jesus appointed another seventy disciples, he sent them out two by two to reach others (Luke 10:1). When he sent them out, he said, “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2). Jesus wanted more and more new members to become workers.

In Christ’s assimilation process he taught his disciples to trust God for their future. When He sent them out on short missionary journeys, they were not to take provisions for themselves. They were to trust that God would provide (Luke 10:4). In His Sermon on the Mount, one key point He made was for His followers to trust God to provide for their physical needs (Matt 6:33). Jesus showed them many times of His ability to provide for their needs. He fed multitudes from a handful of food (John 6:1-14). He calmed storms (Mark 4:39). He walked on water and gave Peter the ability to walk on water too (Matt 14:25-31). He also had Peter pull money out of a fish’s mouth to pay a tax for the temple for both Jesus and Peter (Matt 17:27). Jesus spent a lot of time giving them reasons to trust Him to provide for their needs.
Not all of those who followed Jesus were fully assimilated. Jesus tried to assimilate Judas but He was unsuccessful. Judas walked away after following Jesus for several years. Then Judas betrayed Jesus (John 13:21-30). Jesus did the best job possible trying assimilate Judas, yet Judas was not fully assimilated. This shows that it can be the new members fault when they are not assimilated. Not everyone can be assimilated. Many others turned away from following Jesus too (John 6:66).

Assimilation in the New Testament Church

Assimilating new members was important to the early church. The early church needed to quickly develop a plan to care for its new members. The church grew rapidly as new members were added daily (Acts 2:47). Three thousand souls were added to the church in one day (Acts 2:41). The apostles did several things to help assimilate these new members.

The New Testament church helped assimilate new members by providing help for their physical needs. If someone lost a job, or was poor and needed help, the believers pooled their resources together to help those who were in need (Acts 2:44, 45; 4:34, 35; 6:1).

The early church also provided a way to meet the social needs of new believers. They met regularly to eat, pray, and have fellowship (Acts 2:46, 47). They were a favorable group
The early church provided new members with the opportunity to learn more about their faith. Peter encouraged believers to add several virtues to their life (2 Pet 1:5-8). Peter also encouraged the new believers to learn the simple parts of the Bible (1 Pet 2:2, 3). Paul encouraged the Colossians to become “rooted and built up” in Jesus and “established in the faith” (Col 2:7). Paul asked the new believers in Thessalonica to study (1 Thess 4:11). Paul also instructed his young convert Timothy to study (2 Tim 2:15). Paul told Timothy that one reason the Scriptures were written was to instruct new believers (2 Tim 3:15-17).

In the New Testament new members were assimilated by giving them work to do. The gospel was passed on from person to person (2 Tim 2:2). Therefore each new person was prepared to share the gospel. The new members were instructed in spiritual gifts to help them find a place of service (Eph 4:11-14; Rom 12:1-10; 1 Cor 12:4-31; 1 Pet 4:8-11). Ellen White comments on the success of this type of training for new converts.

When men of promise and ability were converted, as in the case of Timothy, Paul and Barnabas sought earnestly to show them the necessity of laboring in the vineyard. And when the apostles left for another place, the faith of these men did not fail, but rather increased. They had been faithfully instructed in the way of the Lord, and had been taught how to labor unselfishly, earnestly, perseveringly, for the salvation of fellow men. This careful training of new converts was an important factor in the remarkable success that
attended Paul and Barnabas as they preached the gospel in heathen lands.\textsuperscript{1}

The concentrated effort at assimilating new members contributed to the success of spreading the gospel. It helped the new members to increase in the faith instead of decline when the evangelists left.

The New Testament church used "shepherds" to help assimilate the new members (1 Pet 5:2; Acts 20:28). Barnabas was a shepherd to help assimilate Paul (Acts 11:25, 26). This was important because "false shepherds," or "wolves," tried to deceive the new members and others (Matt 7:15; Acts 20:29; 2 Pet 2:1). Ellen White says,

Paul had a keen sense of the conflict which every soul must wage with the agencies of evil that are continually seeking to deceive and ensnare, and he had worked untiringly to strengthen and confirm those who were young in the faith. He had entreated them to make an entire surrender to God; for he knew that when the soul fails to make this surrender, then sin is not forsaken, the appetites and passions still strive for the mastery, and temptations confuse the conscience."\textsuperscript{2}

The shepherd spent time helping the new believer become victorious over attacks by the enemy. The shepherd gave practical lessons on how to live as a Christian.

The relationship between the shepherd and the new people became close. The shepherd was more than a teacher.


\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., 298-9.
Paul described the mentoring relationship between the shepherd and the new member as a father and son relationship (1 Thess 2:11). The shepherd was a prayer partner for the new members. Paul mentions praying for his new believers several times (Col 1:9-10; Eph 1:17-19; 3:16-18; Phil 1:9-10; 2 Thess 1:11-12; Phlm 6). The shepherds felt responsible for the spiritual well-being of the new members. "The Apostle Paul felt that he was to a large extent responsible for the spiritual welfare of those converted under his labors. His desire for them was that they might increase in a knowledge of the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He had sent."¹

John described three levels of spiritual maturity: fathers, (those of mature faith), young men, (those of growing faith), and little children, (those of new faith) (1 John 2:12-13). The more mature ones would "shepherd" the less mature ones to grow in their faith. Shepherds encouraged the new members to put into practice the things that they learned (Phil 4:9). The apostle Paul longed for the new members to be faithful. He said, "that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain" (Phil 2:16). A shepherd was a good friend, teacher, prayer partner, and encourager.

¹Ibid., 262.
Ellen White's Counsel on Assimilating New Members

Seventh-day Adventists believe that Ellen G. White was given the gift of prophecy.¹ Ellen White spoke about caring for new members. Therefore, it is appropriate to investigate her writings to discover what she said about assimilating new members.

New Members Need Attention

In the Bible it is clear that new people need help to become assimilated. Ellen White agreed with that idea. She recognized that new members need attention to assimilate them.

After individuals have been converted to the truth, they need to be looked after. The zeal of many ministers seems to fail as soon as a measure of success attends their efforts. They do not realize that these newly converted ones need nursing - watchful attention, help, and encouragement. These should not be left alone, a prey to Satan's most powerful temptations; they need to be educated in regard to their duties, to be kindly dealt with, to be led along, and to be visited and prayed with. These souls need the meat apportioned to every man in due season. No wonder that some became discouraged, linger by the way, and are left for wolves to devour. Satan is upon the track of all. He sends his agents forth to gather back to his

¹According to the article, "White, Ellen Gould (Harmon)," Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, ed. Don F. Neufeld (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1975), 1406-1418, Mrs. White lived from 1827 to 1915. An extensive biography of Ellen G. White has been written by Arthur L. White, Ellen G. White, 6 vols. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1985-90). She is noted as a co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as well as a lecturer and counselor to it. She is a prolific writer whose literary output exceeded 100,000 pages. The SDA denomination believes that her writings contain insight and authority.
all. He sends his agents forth to gather back to his ranks the souls he has lost. There should be more fathers and mothers to take these babes in the truth to their hearts, and to encourage them and pray for them, that their faith be not confused.”¹

White’s words are strong and clear about the need to help new members become assimilated in the church. Ministers and current members alike are to help these new members. The work of the church is not only to baptize people, but also to help the ones who are baptized to become assimilated.

**Current Members Need to Help**

Ellen White recognized that ministers have a part in assimilating new members, but they can never perform the work that the church should do. "God requires His church to nurse those who are young in faith and experience, to go to them, not for the purpose of gossiping with them, but to pray, to speak unto them words that are 'like apples of gold in pictures of silver.'”² The members can read the Bible to them, give them the promises of God, and draw their attention to heaven and eternity.

She especially encouraged the mature members to be involved in helping these new people. "It is the duty of the older members of the church to devise ways and means to

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provide help and sympathy and instruction for those who have conscientiously withdrawn from other churches for the truth's sake."¹ Many new members have been cut off from support from friends, family, and former churches, and they are in need of extra support that the longtime Christian can help provide.

Current members who help new members do not have to be experts. Lay persons may not be as good as the evangelist or pastor that originally brought the new members into the church, but they can still help. Ellen White said, "If they are humble men of God, they may present the truth in such a way as to arouse and impress the hearts."² According to White, there is a great need for church members to be actively involved in the assimilation process.

**New Members Need to Study**

Ellen White recommended that teaching be a part of the assimilation process. She said that new members have a need to be taught thoroughly to "confirm and establish them in the faith and educate them like well-drilled soldiers how to meet the enemy's attacks and vanquish him."³ When new members are properly taught, it helps them to be victorious

¹Ibid., 351.
²Ibid., 336-337.
³Ibid., 340.
over temptation.

She pointed out that part of the responsibility for learning rests with the new member. Many do not make progress in the Christian life because they do “not see the necessity of constantly learning more of Jesus.”¹ Some new members can look back after a year and see that they have not grown. At first they were happy and joyous, but when trials came, they faced difficulty, they struggled with some sinful habit, and lost confidence and peace and became discouraged. They neglected prayer and Bible study. They lacked knowledge and experience and were overcome. They didn’t recognize temptation or know how to resist it. White said that new members need to be taught “how to yield to the power of the Holy Spirit, that these souls may be fully and firmly established in the truth.”²

Ellen White cautioned new members about being too dependent on man instead of God. It is important that new members ask counsel from those who are more experienced. However, “Ministers are but human beings, men compassed with infirmities. Christ is the One to whom we are to look for guidance.”³ New members need to be taught to gather strength


²White, Evangelism, 470.

³Ibid., 343.
from God and His word rather than depending upon other human beings.¹ New members need to know the proper place of God and man in their experience.

Ellen White pointed out that when new members are not properly taught, it leaves them like infants. "The experience of young converts never reaches beyond the ABC in divine things. They are always babes, always needing to be fed upon milk, and never able to partake of true gospel meat."² When they are properly taught, new members will grow up to become mature, productive Christians.

Ellen White gave counsel on several subjects that new members can benefit from. New members need to understand such topics as "unchristian habits and practices,"³ "tithes and offering,"⁴ "various line of church work,"⁵ and the "foundation principles"⁶ of church life. New believers are to learn everything they can about Jesus, so that the life and character of Christ becomes their own. More of Ellen White's counsel on topics that are good for new members can be found in chapter 3.

¹Ibid., 284.
²Ibid., 355.
³White, Testimonies, 5:172.
⁴Ibid., 6:447.
⁵White, Evangelism, 338.
⁶Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1900), 57-58.
New Members Need to Work

One purpose of assimilating new members is to equip productive church members. Ellen White said, "One Christ-loving, devoted member will do more good in a church than one hundred half-converted, unsanctified, self-sufficient workers."¹ This statement makes assimilation an important part of the church. She points out the difference one person can make when faithful for Christ.

Ellen White recommended that every new member be given a job assignment in the church. "Everyone who is added to the ranks by conversion is to be assigned a post of duty. Everyone should be willing to be or to do anything in this warfare. When church members put forth earnest efforts to advance the message, they will live in the joy of the Lord and will meet with success. Triumph always follows decided effort."² Not only will their service be a blessing to others, but it will also be a blessing to new members. It will help them to grow stronger spiritually and will give them a satisfying joy that they can not find anywhere else.

White said the minister and/or the leaders of the church are responsible to see that new members are active.

They should not be at all satisfied with their success until they can, by their earnest labors and the blessing of God, present to Him serviceable Christians,

¹White, Testimonies for the Church, 5:114.
²Ibid., 7:30.
who have a true sense of their responsibility, and will do their appointed work. The proper labor and instruction will result in bringing into working order those men and women whose characters are strong, and their convictions so firm that nothing of a selfish character is permitted to hinder them in their work, to lessen their faith, or to deter them from duty.¹

If new members are given the proper instruction and the right job to do, it will help assimilate them.

The new members are to be put to work immediately. "When souls are converted, set them to work at once. And as they labor according to their ability, they will grow stronger. It is by meeting opposing influences that we become confirmed in the faith."²

Ellen White did not give a time for them to wait before they begin working in the church. They are to start as soon as they are converted. However, she did caution against moving too fast. "We must learn not to move too fast, and require too much of those who are newly converted to the truth."³ Each person moves at a different pace, therefore, it is important to move fast enough for some and not too fast for others.

According to White, the main work that new members are to be trained for is reaching the lost. "Personal

¹White, Evangelism, 345.
²Ibid.
responsibility, personal activity in seeking the salvation of others, must be the education given to all newly come into the faith."¹ Winning souls is the most important work a new member can do.

Those who are most actively employed in doing with interested fidelity their work to win souls to Jesus Christ, are the best developed in spirituality and devotion. Their active working formed the means of their spirituality. . . . Teach them by giving them something to do, in some line of spiritual work, that their first love will not die but increase in fervor. Let them feel that they are not to be carried and to lean for support on the church; but they are to have root in themselves.²

The work of soul winning will be the greatest blessing that can be given to the new member to help them grow spiritually and become less of a burden to the church.

White said that when a new member is selfish it drains his or her spiritual life.

Nothing saps spirituality from the soul more quickly than to enclose it in selfishness and self-caring. Those who indulge self and neglect to care for the souls and bodies of those for whom Christ has given his life, are not eating of the bread of life, nor drinking of the water of the well of salvation. They are dry and sapless, like a tree that bears no fruit. They are spiritual dwarfs, who consume their means of self.³

She said the opposite is also true. When a new member becomes active in soul winning they become less selfish.

Let them taste the joy of winning souls for Him. In

¹White, Evangelism, 352.
²Ibid., 356.
³Ibid., 357.
their love and interest for the lost, they will lose sight of self. The pleasures of the world will lose their power to attract and its burdens to dishearten. The plowshare of truth will do its work. It will break up the fallow ground. It will not merely cut off the tops of the thorns, but will take them out by the roots.¹

Soul winning helps perform a work of reform and is a positive influence in the life of the new member.

Summary

The concept of assimilation is clearly indicated throughout the Bible and the writings of Ellen White. There are several ideas about assimilating new members in these writings. There are five characteristics of assimilating new members that occurred several times throughout the Bible and the writings of Ellen White. First, there is a need to create an environment that is conducive to assimilating new members. Second, the church must be prepared to care for the physical needs of new members who have financial difficulty because of their new faith. Third, the social needs of new members must be met. Fourth, the new members need to be taught several things. Finally, the new members need to be given a task. This detailed information clearly indicates that from God's perspective there is a need to assimilate new members.

¹White, Christ's Object Lessons, 57-58.
CHAPTER THREE

A THEORETICAL BASIS FOR A PROGRAM ON ASSIMILATING NEW MEMBERS IN THE CHURCH

This chapter presents a theoretical basis for assimilating new members in the Lexington Church, based on research in the literature concerning this topic. It points out the various needs of new members and what the church can do to help meet those needs. It tells what a new member needs to know and do, and what kind of environment is best to assimilate them. This information can help any church to successfully develop an assimilation process.

There Is a Need to Assimilate New Members

A new member has many needs. When these needs are not met the new member is likely to leave the church. This is a problem in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Of the 1,000 people added to the Seventh-day Adventist Church each day in 1985, 278 left.¹ That means, in 1985, one fourth of the new members left before the end of the year. One fourth of the new members were not assimilated. That is a problem.

This is not just an Adventist problem; it is problem in every denomination. In one Protestant church, 1,000 new members were added in eight years but only two stayed.\(^1\) When church members give time, money, and effort to reach new people and then they see them leave, they wonder what can be done to keep these new members.

Assimilation of new members is a problem that churches need to deal with. According to Gayle Crowe, a typical church retains one half or fewer of its converts.\(^2\) Pastors, evangelists, church administrators, and church members are not satisfied with these figures. This points out the need to have better methods to keep new members.

There will always be some new members who leave the church. The Bible says in 1 Tim 4:1, "Some shall depart from the faith." Even though the Bible says some will leave the church, it is not acceptable for the church when they do. Expecting it does not make it less painful or less of a problem. Churches must do everything they can to keep new members from leaving.

Why Do New Members Leave the Church?

There are many reasons new members leave the church.\(^3\)


\(^2\)Gayle M. Crowe, "Incorporating New Members into the Local Church" (D.Min. dissertation, Harding Graduate School of Religion, 1987), 42.

John Savage, in a more detailed study, mentions four reasons people leave the church: (1) 45.5 percent leave because of the pastor, (2) 32 percent leave over another member, (3) 26 percent leave because of a family member, and (4) 18 percent leave because they feel overworked.² Gayle Crowe says that when people don't feel needed they leave the church. She discovered that 44 percent of those who don't feel needed leave the church, 89 percent stay when they feel needed.³ People leave the church when it is not an important part of their lives. Other people, the organization of the church, personal beliefs and habits, and the pull of the


²Savage, 45-46.

³Crowe, 63,
Devil can take people away from the church.

What Helps Assimilate New Members?

People have a positive or negative impact on whether a new member stays in the church. One influential person is the spouse. Indifference or antagonism on the part of the spouse can hinder a new member from staying. A spouse can also be a positive influence to help establish a new member. When the spouse is a faithful church member, he or she can encourage the new member to be faithful. The apostle Paul said that the believing spouse can have a positive influence on his or her unbelieving partner: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband" (1 Cor 7:14). A spouse is one person who can help assimilate a new member.

A parent is another person who can dramatically affect the assimilation of a new member. Gayle Crowe points out that children of members are the highest percentage of those who remain faithful.¹ This is understandable because parents have a natural influence on their children. When the parents are faithful members of the church, the atmosphere of the home encourages the children to practice their beliefs. Parents help their children integrate beliefs into their lives before and after they are baptized. When these

¹Ibid., 51.
children attend church, they are accepted by at least some of the people there. The parents who love them are there to make sure they feel welcome. It is also likely that they have already been attending church awhile before they were baptized. The influence of parents can help assimilate new members.

The current members of the church are a key group of people that determine whether a new member becomes assimilated or not. According to Suzanne Braden in her book, The First Year: Incorporating New Members, "Only the laity of the church have the power to decide that the new member is truly one of us."\(^1\) If current members make new members feel like they are part of the church, it will help to assimilate them. Braden encourages the church members to be involved in the assimilation process. She says that, it is hard for the pastor to help assimilate more than six to ten new members per year.\(^2\) The pastor cannot do it all; the laymen need to be involved in the assimilation process.

Church members need a healthy attitude about receiving new members. Joel Heck says, "The attitude that assimilation is the responsibility of the new members is one of the key


\(^2\)Ibid., 21.
barriers that affects assimilation."¹ The current members must make sure that the new members are incorporated into the life of the church. It is not the job of the new members to make sure they get assimilated. The majority of the church members should be in favor of assimilating new members and be willing to actively help in that process in order to have an effective assimilation process.

It is important for current members to encourage new members to attend assimilation events at the church. It is not enough to have an announcement in the bulletin or make a verbal announcement from the pulpit. Heck says, “A face-to-face invitation to attend one of our programs is more appealing than a bulletin announcement.”² New members must not be treated as a group; they must be invited individually.

Newcomers want to be contacted after they visit a church. Alfred L. Detter discovered that when a church fails to follow up visitors it can make the newcomers feel like they are not needed or that the church is doing fine with those who are already members.³ Encourage them to keep

¹Joel Heck, New Member Assimilation (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1988), 14.
²Ibid., 29.
coming to church and begin to study the Bible with them. When they are baptized, they will already feel assimilated.

It is better to have the members involved in this visitation rather than a pastor.

Research in the United Methodist Church indicates that eighty-five percent of laypersons visited in their homes within thirty-six hours after worship attendance will return; sixty percent of those visited within seventy-two hours will return, and fifteen percent of those visited within one week will return. Each of these percentages is cut in half if the pastor, rather than a layperson, does the visiting.¹

Church members have an important role in helping to assimilate new members into the church.

The fourth group of people that greatly affects the assimilation of new members is the leaders of the church. This includes, but is not limited to, the pastor. Crowe shows that those who do not know the leadership of the church are likely to leave the church.² If the church wants to assimilate new members, the leaders need to be active in getting to know the new members. When new members are introduced to as many leaders as possible and are favorably impressed, it helps the new members feel like they are part of the church.

People can be the most important factor in whether a

¹Dirk J. Hart, Building Bridges: The Art and Practice of Evangelistic Calling (Grand Rapids, MI: Church Development Resources, 1988), 43.
²Crowe, 64.
new member is assimilated or not. They may also be the hardest to deal with because there are so many different people involved. It is a great blessing when all of the important people in a new member’s life are in favor of the new member’s decision to join the church and are helping him or her to follow through with it. People are one factor that helps determine if a new member will stay or leave.

Another factor is that new members need to know and accept the vision and goals of the church. Gary McIntosh says, "Effective assimilation must include defined expectations so that the body can be unified in its vision."¹ When new members know and accept the vision and goals of the church they will desire to make their new church the best that it can be. When new members know their part in accomplishing the church’s vision and goals, they will give their effort into fulfilling it. The result will be an assimilated new member.

Braden recommends that new members get information that will help them become more familiar with their new church.² Give the new members a packet of helpful information such as a church directory, a map of the facilities and what takes place in each room, a list of current officers with a brief

²Braden, 23.
description of what the positions involve, a list of church library resources, and a schedule of events for the year. This will help the new members know what happens in their new church. A recent pictorial directory will help new members learn names of other members and will assimilate them faster. This will help them understand and accept the vision and goals of the church.

A third factor that helps new members stay in the church is a willingness to conform to the lifestyle of the church. In his book, The Apathetic and Bored Church Member, John Savage discovered that 73 percent who made lifestyle changes and 87 percent who were already living a proper lifestyle stayed, but only 29 percent of those who did not conform to lifestyle expectations remained.¹ Shame over not living up to expectations may lead to inactivity. The inactivity might also reflect that the new member disagrees with the beliefs. Therefore, this research suggests that in order to assimilate new members it is important to help them conform to the lifestyle of the church.

Many new members do not change their lifestyle when they join a church. Albert Gordon discovered in his study of forty-five Protestant converts that, "no evidence [exists] that the values of the forty-five converts have changed in

any significant degree, as a consequence of their conversion."¹ Another study of religious change among Catholics found that only half experienced inner changes as a result of becoming baptized Catholics.² This may be why churches have trouble assimilating new members. An effective assimilation process must help new members adopt the lifestyle of the Scriptures.

Belief in the doctrines of the church can be another factor that determines if a new member will stay. Crowe shows that when new members accept the doctrines of their church, 85 percent remain faithful; yet only 8 percent remain faithful when they do not have ownership of the beliefs.³ It makes sense that when a person does not agree with a volunteer organization, they will not stay with it. This shows that doctrines are one significant factor in keeping a new member.

According to the literature on assimilating new members, other people, acceptance of the vision and goals of the church, a willingness to make lifestyle changes, and doctrines all help new members stay in the church.


³Crowe, 62.
What Happens During the First Year?

Suzanne Braden has concluded that by the end of the first year, 50 percent of all new members fade from commitment.\(^1\) Therefore, the first year is a crucial time for a new member to be assimilated. In his book, *New Member Assimilation*, Joel Heck says, "Within six months, 89 percent of the people who will become inactive do so."\(^2\) That means the first six months are very important. Therefore, most of the effort to assimilate new members should be directed to the first six months and last up to a year.

Crowe believes the first few weeks are the most crucial time in a new member's experience. "The more instruction, fellowship, and watchful discipline a church provides in the first few weeks, the more likely the new member will mature into a participating member."\(^3\) All three of these writers agree that the new member need attention early.

During the first year, new members need training. Heck referred to a study on 4,000 converts in India and concluded that post-baptismal training is more influential in whether new members remain and grow in the church than even the motives that originally attracted them to Christianity.\(^4\)

\(^1\) Braden, vi.

\(^2\) Heck, 17.

\(^3\) Crowe, 83.

\(^4\) Heck, 10.
People can be attracted to Christianity from impure motives, like the fear of burning in hell. But when they get to know the true character of God, they become more established in the faith. Post-baptismal training during the first year can help new members understand God and the true teachings of the Bible. When they know God and His teachings, they are more likely to be secure in the church.

It is also important to keep a new member attending church during the first year. According to a study done by John Savage, attendance is the first behavioral indicator of dropout and is one of the most sensitive indicators of what is happening to the parishioner.¹ For a new member who is struggling attendance stops quickly. Therefore, in order to assimilate a new member, a lot of effort must be given to keep him or her coming every week.

How Does Commitment Affect Assimilation?

Donald Thomas believes, "it is important to positively reinforce a new member’s commitment otherwise he or she is likely to leave."² The level of commitment a new member has for the church can determine if he or she will be assimilated or not. The church must have a plan to reinforce the commitment that the new member has made when he or she

¹Savage, 57.

²Donald S. Thomas, "What Happened to Your New Members?" Church Administration, March 21, 1979, 29.
joined the church. Thomas places part of the responsibility of commitment on the church.

Charles J. Coleman, William C. Toomey, and Richard L. Woodland look at commitment from the new member's perspective. They give three characteristics of a committed new member: (1) New members believe in the norms, values, and ideas of the group, (2) their behavior corresponds with those beliefs, and (3) they are willing to stay with the group in spite of occasional feelings to leave.\(^1\) If the church can help the new member see the positive benefits of the first two, they will have good reasons to stay. They will stay in the church even though they will occasionally feel like leaving.

Raymond Ellis points out that commitment involves the whole person.\(^2\) Therefore if the church program positively impacts the new members' whole being, their commitment to the church will increase. The more areas of their life that are benefitted by the church program, the more likely they will stay. A church program that includes social events like fellowship dinners, mental and spiritual activities like


Bible classes, and recreational events like volleyball, will produce a more committed new member.

Prescott Lecky suggests a context that makes it easier for commitment to increase. When new beliefs and practices are presented in a context that appears normal and familiar to the new member, they reinforce his or her commitment. Lecky discovered that when a new idea seems to be consistent with what the new member already believes and fits with the individual's conception of himself or herself, it is accepted and assimilated easily. If it is inconsistent with what they believe or how they want to live, it will be resisted and is likely to be rejected.\(^1\) Therefore, the more fully the new ideas agree with the current thinking, the more likely the new member will stay committed to it and assimilate it into his or her life. The church should strive to be similar to what the new member is used to.

Helping new members identify with the church's heritage and its contemporary goals are what Lyle Schaller says will reinforce their commitment.\(^2\) However, it is easier to keep new members if they are committed to the contemporary goals rather than the heritage. Heritage is helpful; it helps new members know that the church has a good past, but they


cannot be a part of the local church's past because they were not there. Part of our denominational heritage is taught in the prophecy meetings and that is good, but new members want to be part of an exciting present and have hope for the future. Therefore, a church needs a variety of contemporary goals that new people can quickly identify with. Braden recommends sharing the church's mission statement and mission objectives with the new members in order to communicate the contemporary goals.¹

According to Crowe, a slower, more reasoned approach to making a decision is better for long-term commitment than a quick decision made because of a high-pressure approach.² When people make a quick decision to be baptized, they can reverse their decision just as quickly. If they leave quickly they will miss hearing many good reasons to stay. When new members have studied for several weeks before they are baptized, they are more apt to stay compared to those who hear the message for the first time during a prophecy crusade and make their decision for baptism. Crowe has also discovered that when older people make a commitment to Christ they are more likely to stay with that decision.³

When older persons make a decision, they have years of

¹Braden, 23.
²Crowe, 79.
³Ibid., 49.
experience on which to base their decision. This helps them make a firmer commitment.

Another study by Crowe shows that the higher the income, the more likely the new member will stay committed, but the longer they take to convert.\(^1\) The reason for this may be because those with a higher income are generally more educated and will think through a decision before making a commitment. This increases the chances that they will stay with the commitment.

Additionally Crowe points out that when the income level of the new member is similar to the current members' the new member is more likely to stay committed.\(^2\) People feel more comfortable with other people who are similar to them. When there are a variety of income levels in the church, it is helpful to introduce the new member to people in the church who are on a similar income level. People can have friends from various income levels, but they may feel more comfortable when they know that there are others who are in similar financial situations.

According to Richard D. Vangerud three personal factors can weaken the commitment level of a new member: (1) being negative about life, (2) having unmet personal needs, or (3)

\(^1\)Ibid., 66.

\(^2\)Ibid., 88.
wanting to be alone.\textsuperscript{1} The church can do a good job of teaching the doctrine and lifestyle benefits of being a member of the church, but that may not be able to meet every need of the new member. The gospel message should change a person from being negative about life to being positive. If the person is negative after baptism, a better understanding of the gospel should help. Friends from the church may help meet some of the new members personal needs. When a new person wants to be left alone, it may help them to know the benefits of being with others. Being alone can be contrary to the assimilation process. These deeper needs that Vangerud mentions may be too hard for an assimilation process to meet; personal counseling may be the answer for a person struggling with these issues.

In her studies, Crowe has discovered that the people least likely to keep their commitments fall into five categories: (1) those who have psychological needs, (2) those who are society misfits looking for friends, (3) those with a low income, (4) those who come as mass media interests, and (5) those with lifestyles contrary to biblical standards.\textsuperscript{2} Special cases like people who have psychological needs and society misfits looking for friends


\textsuperscript{2}Crowe, 93.
may require special professional help. The average church's assimilation program cannot provide all the necessary ingredients to help with these needs. People with low income may require lots of funds to help meet their needs, which many churches do not have. The Seventh-day Adventist Church receives many good interests from mass media, but a large percentage of them do not commit to the church. Many Adventist churches are able to help people who have lifestyles contrary to biblical standards, but it can be difficult and time-consuming. If a new member is victorious, it is great, but when he or she continues to struggle year after year, it is draining.

The church is not a psychiatric treatment center. There are limits on what the church can do for people. God is powerful and can heal all things, but many churches cannot specifically address every need in their assimilation program. Therefore, the most effective assimilation process should be designed for those who are average. Special needs can be addressed according to the specific church's ability to meet them.

After new members make a commitment, they evaluate the commitment they have made. Everett M. Rogers and F. Floyd Shoemaker report that people go through four stages before they make a commitment: (1) Gain the knowledge needed; (2) Try out the idea; (3) Make the commitment; and (4) Evaluate
the commitment.\textsuperscript{1} New members evaluate the commitment they have made to join the church when they are in the assimilation process. Therefore, the assimilation process must help the new members make a good evaluation. If they conclude that this church is really going to benefit them, they will stay. Donald S. Thomas says that, when new members stop coming, it can generally be traced to the fact that nothing of a positive reinforcement of commitment took place.\textsuperscript{2} The church that helps reinforce the new member's commitment will have a better chance of assimilating them.

\textbf{What New Members Need to Know}

New members need to know biblical reasons for what they believe. It would help them to know the twenty-seven fundamental beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. Elmer Towns says, "The teaching program should equip the new members so well that they in turn can teach others also."\textsuperscript{3} When they can teach others, they will know the material themselves. Ellen White also emphasizes the importance of teaching new members well by saying, "Members should be taught so well


\textsuperscript{2}Thomas, \textit{Church Administration}, 29.

\textsuperscript{3}Elmer Towns, \textit{Evangelize Through Christian Education} (Wheaton, IL: Evangelical Teaching Training Association, 1979), 85.
that they can thrive on their own without a minister.”

Many people are not firmly tied to their church. Crowe points out that four out of ten American Protestants will change church affiliation. Many new members changed denominations to become a Seventh-day Adventist, and they will change again unless they have good reasons to stay. When they are well grounded in Adventist beliefs, they will have many good reasons to stay.

Why Teach New Members?

The first reason new members need to be taught is because of the benefits Bible study brings. In his book, How to Study the Bible for Yourself, Tim LaHaye gives eight benefits to Bible study: (1) It makes strong Christians by assuring them of salvation (1 John 5:13), (2) it strengthens their prayer life (Matt 7:7, 8; 1 John 5:14, 15), (3) it brings them cleansing from sin (John 15:3; Eph 5:26; Ps 109:9), (4) it fills their life with joy (John 15:11), (5) it gives them peace (John 16:33), (6) it helps the new members make better decisions (Ps 119:105), (7) it provides them reasons for their faith (1 Pet 3:15), and (8) it helps new members succeed (Ps 1:1-3). When new members have a

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1White, Evangelism, 381.
2Crowe, 5.
3Tim LaHaye, How to Study the Bible for Yourself (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1976), 14-27.
strong, regular personal intake of the Word of God, they will progress to become faithful, mature, and dedicated disciples.

Steven Harper says that Christianity is a life to be lived, not just a creed to be believed.¹ That means the job is not finished when people are baptized; they also need to be taught how to live. New Christians need opportunities and encouragement to learn and put into practice what they have discovered.

Most new members want to learn, grow, and be better than they were before. According to Savage, one reason some people are on the brink of leaving the church is because they do not think being part of the church is making a difference in their lives.² New members want to experience the benefits of their new life in practical ways. New members aspire to obtain genuine spiritual growth. People want to grow, and they want to live up to what is expected of them. It would be good to expect great things from new members and see them grow to fulfill it.

Learning and development are a big part of the Christian’s life. Gary Ball has determined that when new members fail to grow, the church suffers because leaders do


²Savage, 49.
not develop.¹ Assimilating new members can build them up and improve the quality of the church.

Teaching is important but can be overemphasized. McIntosh says that doctrinal differences have little to do with the dropout rate, because people are more apt to leave out of boredom rather than disagreement.² In addition, Savage has discovered that 20 percent of the people have theological problems with the church, either those staying in or those dropping out.³ As important as learning and growing are, it is not the ultimate problem that takes people away. New members may be more willing to stay if they believe the message more. However, many of them do not stick around long enough to learn it. Special classes and literature should be available for the new members who want it. This will greatly benefit those who use them.

What to Teach New Members

The primary topic new members should be taught is the Bible. Crowe showed that people with a good knowledge of the Bible are less likely to drop out than those who have little knowledge.⁴ A course in how to study the Bible would be good.

¹Gary L. Ball, “The Effects of a Discipleship Program on the Local Church” (D.Min. dissertation, Asbury Theological Seminary, 1990), 139.

²McIntosh, 89.

³Savage, 59.

⁴Crowe, 24.
for new members to take. It would help new members if they knew how to study and understand the Bible for themselves. The assimilation program should be geared to ground new members in the Word of God. New members need to closely search the Word of God for strong evidence that sustains the fundamental doctrines.

It would be helpful for new members to hear the same messages from the prophecy lectures again. White says it is just as important to have the second series as it was to have the first.\(^1\) The Seventh-day Adventist interpretation of Scripture may be new or strange to new members, and they will be in danger of losing the impact of the truth and/or receiving false ideas if they do not hear the message again.

New members need to be instructed in the twenty-seven fundamental beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists that were not adequately covered in a series of prophecy lectures. According to White, this may include topics such as stewardship, health reform, spiritual gifts, and service to God.\(^2\) It is important to teach people well so that they will be faithful followers of God. White adds, “When new members are taught to bring a faithful tithe to God it strengthens and blesses them.”\(^3\) When new members are strengthened and

\(^1\)White, *Evangelism*, 334.

\(^2\)Ibid., 343.

\(^3\)Ibid., 381.
blessed, it builds up the whole church. The church becomes full of workers for God and the Holy Spirit cooperates with them.

How to Teach New Members

Conducting a special class for new members can help assimilate them. Detter mentions four benefits of a special class for new members: The participants will learn the (1) beliefs, (2) philosophy of ministry, and (3) practices of the church, and (4) will form continuing friendships.¹ These are very good reasons to have a new members’ class.

The class should meet more than once. According to a study by Crowe, the best results of a special class come when they meet weekly and continue for nine months, a year, or longer.² In order to have better attendance by new members, it is good to have a long-term class prepared for them.

When teaching a class for new members, the teacher must consider that adults learn at different rates. Research by Ellis shows that students who are twenty to thirty-five years old develop most rapidly.³ Other students may have a harder time comprehending the material that is being

¹Detter, 58.
²Crowe, 41.
³Ellis, 29-30.
presented. The teacher will have to consider the learning level of the students when teaching the class.

Another way to reinforce the truth in new members is to give them literature. White says that, *Patriarchs and Prophets*¹ and *The Great Controversy*² are excellent books to help establish new members in the truth.³ The first book explains the beginning of evil in the universe and how evil got started on earth. The second book shows how evil will be eliminated from the universe and how earth will be restored to God’s original intentions.

The *Desire of Ages*⁴ is another good book for new members. White says that this is a good book for all to have.⁵ This book helps the reader understand the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. White also recommended *Daniel and the Revelation*⁶ by Uriah Smith.⁷ This is a book that was contemporary in her day. A good modern set of books on the


⁵White, *Evangelism*, 366.


prophecies of Daniel and Revelation is written by C. Mervyn Maxwell, called _God Cares_. These are all good books for a new members library.

### What New Members Need to Do

New members need to have something to do in the church immediately following their baptism. Many current members are not involved in the ministry of their church because nothing was expected of them when they joined. Tom Watson discovered that 95 percent of all Christians never lead another person to Christ. If new members are encouraged to become active when they join, it could help to correct the problem of inactivity. Churches must be intentional about getting their new members involved when they are baptized. If new members enter the fellowship assuming that nothing is required of them except their gift of money and irregular attendance at services of worship, then they will easily adopt the point of view where inactivity is an assumed part of church membership. Research by Dawson Bryan shows that unless new members are active in church within thirty to sixty days, they will become a liability.

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Ellen White says that some new members will be so filled with the power of God they will want to become active right away.¹ They will work so hard that they will have neither time nor the interest in causing problems. Their one desire will be to carry the truth to regions beyond. When new members are put to work, it strengthens their faith. Getting new members involved in the ministry and mission of the church is one of the best ways to keep them in the church.

**Spiritual Gifts Help New Members Serve**

According to Gary McIntosh, three elements must be present when using spiritual gifts to involve new members in ministry: (1) a way for people to identify their gifts and get involved, (2) a number of entry places of service, and (3) a flexible spirit that allows for the creation of new ministries.² When new members are involved in service, they are more likely to stay and become assimilated into the church. A plan to identify spiritual gifts and place new members in a ministry is a good part of the assimilation process.

McIntosh adds that the new members are more likely to get involved in a ministry if these five questions are

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¹White, *Evangelism*, 354.

²McIntosh, 92.
asked: (1) ask them to help meet a specific need, (2) ask them to make a written commitment, (3) ask them to serve based on values or goals rather than guilt or judging, (4) ask them to help a cause that attracts their attention, and (5) ask them by personal invitation.¹ These five questions will help motivate a new member to be involved in ministry. It lets them know that they are needed and that their commitment will be taken seriously. It lets them know that you are not trying to manipulate them into service, because you are asking them to do something that they really want to do. It lets them know that you care about them because you are taking the time to personally invite them to get involved. When new members are invited into ministry with these five questions they will feel good about getting involved in the church and will want to stay involved. That will lead to assimilation.

What Happens When New Members Serve?

McIntosh mentions that when sixty out of one hundred active members are working in real service it is a good indicator of a healthy church.² Being an active part of a healthy church brings a high level of satisfaction among members and growth in the number of members. Unless new

¹Ibid., 91.
²Ibid., 90.
members become involved in the activities of the church, they will never truly feel satisfied with the church. When new members do not use their spiritual gifts for service, they become obese with knowledge, they are hampered from reaching out, and they are likely to drop out. When new members fail to demonstrate the love of God to the world by helping to meet the needs of others, their interest in spiritual things will end. Knowledge is good, but unless it is used in service, it is wasted. New members need to be involved in service in order to be assimilated into the church.

What New Members Need to Have

When new members have a healthy environment, it should help assimilate them into the church. It will help them grow closer to God and to the church members, which will increase their chances of staying in the church.

A Healthy Spiritual Environment

White says that new members must be surrounded by influences most favorable to spiritual growth.\(^1\) The kind of spiritual environment a new believer experiences will play a large part in his or her subsequent Christian growth, or lack of it. The spiritual temperature of the church can control, to a certain extent the vitality of the new

\(^1\)White, *Evangelism*, 337.
member's life. A lukewarm or cold church environment can be devastating to a new Christian's growth. Gary Kuhne adds to this idea by saying a person generally conforms to the characteristics of his or her environment.¹ When new members have a healthy spiritual environment within the church, it should help them stay.

Steven Harper believes that good programs cannot substitute for a healthy spiritual environment.² Good programs are helpful, but passing on good devotional habits does more to build up the new members. When the lives of church members are spiritually alive, it can be contagious for the new members. When Jesus wanted to help His disciples grow, He associated with them to provide a healthy spiritual environment. This same process should be successful in assimilating and building up new members today.

A Healthy Small-Group Environment

Small groups can provide a context for learning from the experiences of others by modeling appropriate beliefs and behavior. A small group provides an environment to put spiritual ideas into practice right away. This verifies their validity and develops spirituality in the people who

¹Gary Kuhne, Dynamics of Personal Follow-up (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 35.
are involved. Small groups provide accountability. Robert
Brink points out that self-correction is prone to self-
deception.¹ It is easy to be self-deceived, but others can
help prevent that. When the members of a small group know
each other well, they can bear one another’s burdens,
confess their faults to one another, rebuke, exhort, and
admonish one another with the Word of God, songs and prayer.
Small groups can effectively make disciples of Christ, when
the new members are accountable to a small-group leader and
a group of peers who will teach them the spiritual
disciplines established by Christ.

Small groups provide shepherding. According to Flavil
R. Yeakley, one of the main reasons for the declining growth
rate in some churches is the lack of shepherding.² Some
churches have a large number of baptisms, but they also have
a high dropout rate. Small groups can provide care for new
members, which will help keep them in the church. This is
illustrated in the experience of John Wesley’s new converts.
Wesley’s small groups produced amazing results when his
evangelistic efforts were compared to George Whitefield, who
did not use small groups. One decade after George Whitefield

¹Robert J. Brink, “Discipleship Through Small Group
Ministry in a Local Congregation of the Church of God”
(D.Min. dissertation, Asbury Theological Seminary, 1992),
59.

²Flavil R. Yeakley, Church Leadership and Orientation
was gone it was hard to find one of his converts. But according to Heck, many of John Wesley’s converts could be found involved in small societies and churches, groups that met together for spiritual support.¹

One way to measure the health of a congregation is to count the groups that are alive and functioning within it. New members can find meaning and satisfaction within a church that has good small groups. Studies done by Lyle Schaller suggest that six to seven small groups per 100 active members of the church make a healthy small-group environment.² These groups do not have to be in people’s homes. They can be Sabbath school classes.

New members should not have to wait to join a small group until they join the church. Heck says that it is more effective to assimilate new members if they are part of a small group before they join, than to try to assimilate them for six months after they join.³ It is helpful to get people into a small group as soon as they become interested in the church.

A Healthy Social Environment

A healthy social environment can also help assimilate

¹Heck, 14.
²Schaller, *Assimilating New Members*, 96.
³Heck, 33.
new members. When there is a good social environment in the church, it is easy for the new members to make friends who will help them stay in the church. According to Schaller, twenty factors can help hold people in a church: nationality, denomination, the minister, tasks, relatives, the enemy, social class, crisis, group life, community building within the church, programs and ministries, place and building, heritage and nostalgia, growing old together, church secretary, liturgy, congregational style, organizational structure, choir director and theological stance (for 10-20% of Protestants, this is the main point).\(^1\) It is significant that nearly half of these twenty points have to do with the social environment. That means having a healthy social environment is important to assimilate new members.

The church that focuses on making a good first impression will be better at assimilating new members. Heck says that what people communicate in the first four minutes will determine whether they will become strangers or remain friends.\(^2\) When members of the church want to make a positive impression, they will act in a winsome manner toward the new members. When current members know how to meet new members, it will help assimilate the new members.

\(^1\)Schaller, 24-33.

\(^2\)Heck, 28.
The current members should not wait until someone is a member of the church before they become friends with them. Donald F. LaSuer has found that, in growing churches, people are invited to belong before they are ever baptized.¹

Belonging has to do with personal relationships, and the love and care people experience when they are invited to fellowship, involvement, and service. Belonging is like courtship and caring. Joining is like the wedding ceremony. Joining celebrates the fact that they are already part of the community. For effective assimilation to take place, friendships should be developed before people join the church. Jesus described this idea in Matt 25:35 where He said, “I was a stranger and you brought me in.” Churches should warmly welcome new people if they expect to hold them.

It helps when both the pastor(s) and the people work to make friends with new members. Detter discovered that 44 percent of new members say the pastoral staff helped them feel accepted into the church and 40 percent say it was the members of the church.² That means both pastoral staff and the members help assimilate new members into the church. Churches with a healthy social environment have pastors and


²Detter, 81.
members who actively makes friends with new members.

According to Ervin Stutzman a church in Toronto invites visitors to accept Christ in the middle of each service. They immediately get some literature and meet with a counselor before the preaching is finished. Those who accept Christ are invited back to church the following Thursday to meet a small-group leader. They are asked to join a small group that will meet for the next sixteen weeks. The group will contain at least two committed Christians and no more than three visitors. This helps to build good relationships between visitors and the committed Christians. After this group is over they will be invited to a different group with more people that lasts another thirteen weeks. This broadens their friendship base. By the time they are baptized, they have many friends in the church. Ninety-five percent of the new members who go through this process stay in the church.¹

Friendships play a significant role in assimilating new members. McIntosh says that new members must have at least seven friends if they are going to stay in the church.² That makes friendship an important factor in whether a person is assimilated into the church. Heck has discovered three reasons why friendship is important for assimilating new members: (1) 75-90 percent join a church because of the

¹Stutzman, 59-60.

²McIntosh, 81.
influence of a friend, (2) 90 percent of those active after six months had six or more friends, and (3) 98 percent of those inactive had fewer than six or more friends after six months. Friendship is important to the assimilation process.

Assimilation takes place when churches make it easy for new members to break into the church's social fabric. Schaller points out that to someone in the fellowship circle of the church, the line between the membership circle and the fellowship circle, is no higher than the line printed on the gymnasium floor. But to the new member who is outside the fellowship circle there is a concrete barrier six feet thick and thirty feet high. A church with a healthy social environment recognizes this problem and makes it easier for new members to make friends with the current members. The current members invite the new members over for dinner and/or help them make friends with others in the church.

Christianity is a community-based religion, not a religion to be practiced in isolation. There is no such thing as a solitary religion. According to Bernard Jones, when a new member commits himself to Christ, he commits

\(^1\)Heck, 21-24.

\(^2\)Schaller, 128.
himself to the church community.¹ The social environment of the church can be important in assimilating new members.

Several things can have a negative impact on the social environment of the church. Schaller has discovered twelve ways to keep people from joining a church: do not invite them, short pastorates (most productivity comes between years four and six), long-term subsidies, focus on building space, depending on the building instead of the people to reach others, being a single-cell instead of a multi-cell church, seeking to cooperate with other churches instead of having a distinctive mission and purpose for your existence, cutting back on programs means having fewer entry points, putting the responsibility of attendance on "them" instead of taking the initiative to invite them, shifting the agenda from ministry to maintenance, taking their first "no" literally instead of continuing to persevere a relationship with the people, and not being focused on who you are trying to reach.² Most of these negative points affect the social climate of the church. When the social climate of the church is sour, it will be harder to assimilate new members.

When a church does not have a healthy social environment, this can be harmful to new members. It is like

²Schaller, Assimilating New Members, 53.
asking a corpse to take care of a baby. No baby can survive long in that situation. Unfortunately, many new members do not survive long in some churches. When we genuinely care for people, they will be impressed. James Engels says new members will probably never forget the church that remembers to care for them.\(^1\)

Part of having a healthy social environment is to keep in contact with new members, especially when they start to slip away. According to Savage, "after persons have dropped out, they wait 6-8 weeks to see if anyone will come to them to find out why they have left. If no help comes, they reinvest their time elsewhere."\(^2\) When new members do not come to church, they are waiting for someone to come find them. Savage says there are four reasons people leave the church: (1) 45.5 percent leave because of the pastor, (2) 32 percent leave over another member, (3) 26 percent leave because of a family member, and (4) 18 percent leave because they feel overworked.\(^3\) Almost all of these reasons are related to the social environment. When a church has a healthy social environment, it makes it easier to assimilate new members.

\(^1\)James F. Engel, *What's Gone Wrong with the Harvest?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 53.

\(^2\)Savage, 60.

\(^3\)Ibid., 45-46.
Summary

There is a great need to improve the church's ability to assimilate new members. The information shared in this chapter explained the needs of a new member and what can be done to help meet those needs. If church members and church leaders work together and understand the needs of new members, better assimilation could take place. It is important to follow up an evangelistic effort with an assimilation program that will last for at least six months, because if the commitment of the new members is not reinforced, they will likely become inactive.

A new member has many needs that need to be addressed during an assimilation process. New members need to learn more information, they need to become involved in ministry within the church, and a special environment can improve their chances of being assimilated. The contents of this chapter helped form the theoretical basis for an assimilation process implemented in Lexington, Kentucky.
CHAPTER FOUR

CURRENTLY EMPLOYED METHODS OF MEETING

THE NEEDS OF NEW MEMBERS

This chapter explores five currently employed methods for reaching new members. A Southern Baptist developed the first one. Seventh-day Adventists use the next two. A church consultant working in cooperation with the Fuller Theological Seminary developed the fourth one. The last one was developed at the Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois, and Curtis Rittenour adapted it for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The purpose of this section is to provide some examples of what is being done to assimilate new members. The five examples represent a variety of approaches from different sources. They give the reader an idea of what can be done to implement the information shared in chapters 2 and 3.

Rick Warren Material

The first example is by Rick Warren of the Saddleback Valley Community Church in Orange, California. Rick is a Southern Baptist and a graduate of Fuller Theological
Seminary. Warren believes that churches need to set up a process for new members to be assimilated. He thinks the church must be intentional about each step in the process if it wants to be effective because assimilation does not happen by accident. He realizes that when churches effectively assimilate new members, they grow. Warren says, "Churches that make new member assimilation a priority and have a plan for doing it are usually blessed with growth." He helped a church grow from one family to over 10,000 in attendance.

The first step in his plan was to formulate an assimilation strategy. Each church is different, therefore the assimilation strategy for each church must be different. This strategy for each church can be determined by the way it answers these questions:

1. What does God expect from members of His church?
2. What do we expect from our members right now?
3. What kind of people already make up our congregation?
4. How will that change in the next five to ten years?
5. What do our members value?
6. What are new members' greatest needs?
7. What are our long-term members' greatest needs?
8. How can we make membership more meaningful?
9. How can we assure that members feel loved and cared for?
10. What do we owe our members?
11. What resources or services could we offer our members?
12. How could we add value to what we already offer?²

¹Warren, 311.
²Ibid.
These questions help separate what a new member needs compared to what a current member needs. They help the church members realize what it is currently doing to meet those needs and what it can do better. The questions help the church to clarify what it expects from its new members. These questions help the church understand the present and prepare for the future. The questions help a church gather the right kind of information to help it assimilate new members.

The second step in putting together an assimilation strategy is to answer the five questions new members are likely to ask themselves when they attend a new church:

1. Do I fit here?
2. Does anybody want to know me?
3. Am I needed?
4. What is the advantage of joining?
5. What is required of members?¹

If church members have positive answers to these questions ready to give to a new member, it is likely it will have a successful assimilation program.

The third step in forming an assimilation strategy is to communicate the benefits of being a member. People used to join churches because everyone else did. Now they need commitment in order to join a church. Warren gives five excellent reasons to join a church that create commitment:

¹Ibid., 312.
1. It identifies a person as a genuine believer.
2. It provides a spiritual family to support and encourage them in their walk with Christ.
3. It gives them a place to discover and use their spiritual gifts.
4. It places them under the spiritual protection of godly leaders.
5. It gives them the accountability they need to grow.¹

The church is a family, not an institution. Many people are lonely today and they will join the church that fills that need. Warren says, "People are not looking for a friendly church as much as they are looking for friends."²

These three steps helped the Saddleback church to form an assimilation strategy. They discovered their uniqueness and used that to keep new members. They consider what the new member is thinking and provide helpful information to help a new member stay. They also do their best to communicate the benefits of being a member at their church. If all churches would think through an assimilation strategy, it would make them more effective in assimilating new members.

After developing an assimilation strategy, Warren established a new-members class. He recommends that the senior pastor teach at least part of this class so that the new members can feel that he cares about them. He says that this class is the most important class in the church, and it

¹Ibid., 313.
²Ibid., 312.
sets the tone for what is expected of the new members.

This class is taught in one day and lasts four hours. He says that spiritual growth and basic doctrines are not appropriate for the new-members class. He lists nine things the new-members class should cover:

1. What is a church?
2. What are the purposes of the church?
3. What are the benefits of being a member?
4. What are the requirements for membership?
5. What are the responsibilities of membership?
6. What is the vision and strategy of this church?
7. How is the church organized?
8. How can I get involved in ministry?
9. What do I do now that I am a member?1

The focus of this class is on church life rather than beliefs. These questions help assimilate new members who agree with the fundamental Bible teachings of the church. These questions are designed to incorporate new members into a local church.

Many things can be done to provide a quality new-members class. Warren suggests using video clips, a notebook with fill-in-the-blank curriculum, small-group interaction, stories to personalize the history, values, and direction of the church, and a good meal together. The class can be taught differently, depending on the age groups. At Warren's church, they have a level for elementary children, one for junior high and high school, and one for adults.

There are four elements to the course: salvation,

1Ibid., 316-317.
statements, strategy, and structure. Here is an outline of the course:

I. Our Salvation
   A. Making sure you are a Christian
   B. The Symbols of Salvation
      1. Baptism
      2. Communion

II. Our Statements
   A. Our Purpose Statement: Why we exist
   B. Our Vision Statement: What we intend to do
   C. Our Faith Statement: What we believe
   D. Our Values Statement: What we practice

III. Our Strategy
   A. Brief History of Saddleback
   B. Who we are trying to reach (our target)
   C. Our life development process to help you grow
   D. The S.A.D.D.L.E. B.A.C.K. strategy

IV. Our Structure
   A. How our church is organized for growth
   B. Our affiliation
   C. What it means to be a member
   D. What is my next step after joining?

V. The Saddleback Quiz

These points are well thought out and cover essential information about that local church. It is good to have a quiz at the end to see what the people understand.

According to Warren, the most important element of this class is the membership covenant. This is a summary of what the church expects of its new members. It gets them to commit to growing after they are a member. Here is what the covenant involves:

1. I will protect my church
   ... by acting in love toward other members
   ... by refusing to gossip
   ... by following the leaders

2. I will share the responsibility of my church

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1Ibid., 318.
... by praying for its growth
... by inviting the unchurched to attend
... by warmly welcoming those who visit

3. I will serve in the ministry of my church
... by discovering my gifts and talents
... by being equipped to serve by my pastors
... by developing a servant heart

4. I will support the testimony of my church
... by attending faithfully
... by living a godly life
... by giving regularly.¹

These are all good points, even though it may not be specific enough on what godly living is, this covenant makes many of the expectations clear. New members will have a good commitment to the church if they sign this covenant.

A third aspect of Warren’s assimilation process is what he does with people after they join. The first thing he does is make the initiation ritual special with the following: (1) giving them a certificate with a photograph, (2) introducing them to the congregation as one of us, and (3) having a banquet for the new members where they share their testimony. Warren also invites new members to his house one Sunday evening so they can get to know each other better. He sends a one-year anniversary card of their baptism and puts their personal milestones, like birthdays, in the newsletter. He concludes this idea by saying, “People need more than a warm handshake at the end of the service in order to feel like they belong.”² These are all excellent

¹Ibid., 321-322.
²Ibid., 324.
ways to make the person joining the church to feel special. This will increase his or her chances of being assimilated.

The second ingredient Warren adds after a new member joins is to create opportunities that build relationships. Warren believes that friendships are the key to retaining members. His church has as many social events as it can to help build relationships. The most effective way members have found to cultivate new friendships is by having weekend retreats. In a two-day retreat, people can spend more time together than they can in a whole year of church services. They also use name tags to help people remember names.\(^1\) This is a great idea. It is even better for the events to be specifically designed to get people to become friends instead of expecting it to happen naturally.

The third ingredient Warren uses after a new member joins is small groups. As new members come in they start new groups. They want the church to grow larger and smaller at the same time, larger to feel like they are part of something significant, smaller to make them feel like they are part of something intimate. He says, “Small groups are the most effective way of closing the back door of your church.”\(^2\) Small groups can accomplish many things if they are done well. They are an excellent way to keep track of

\(^1\)Ibid., 325.
\(^2\)Ibid., 327.
new members in a caring, personal way. This is especially true when the church is large. He does not emphasize small groups so much that members do not need corporate worship. It is important that the people realize that they are part of a larger team.

The fourth ingredient Warren adds to help assimilate new members after they join is to keep the lines of communication open. He says, “Informed members are effective members.”¹ It is important to repeat things to the point of redundancy. Use every means you can to make your announcements. Also, have communication flow back. Warren uses three methods of gathering information. First, people fill out cards to get information to the staff. These cards are diligently followed up. The message is given that these cards are taken seriously and people use them. Warren also has a telephone ministry. Staff simply call through the directory on a systematic basis to see how people are, if they have prayer requests, and if they have anything to say to the staff. The small-group leaders are the third way of passing information back to the staff.

The three elements of Warren’s assimilation process are good for any church: have an assimilation strategy, have a new-members’ class, and have a plan to help new members after they join. The specific details on how to implement

¹Ibid.
these three points will be different for every church. Warren's ideas can be tailored to fit another local situation. If his points are followed, it will help assimilate new members.

Oregon Conference Material

The Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventists gives the second example of an assimilation method. Conference leaders have prepared a discipleship manual for new members.¹ There is a leader's book and a student's book. Thirty lessons in the book cover three areas: spiritual gifts, spiritual growth, and small groups. The leader's guide also contains a monthly report form and information to help the leader conduct the course.

These lessons are designed to be given by a layman, who is encouraged to meet with the new member on Friday nights to go over the material. The lay person is encouraged to identify and help meet the needs of the new member, not just teach the material. He or she is to be a friend and spiritual guardian.

There are four purposes to this course: (1) to take born-again believers and teach them the things beyond salvation, teaching them that they are at the beginning of a

¹Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Discipleship Training (College Place, WA: Color Press, 1987).
lifelong commitment, (2) to help new members become a part of the body of Christ, teaching them how to function within the body, (3) to continually place a challenge before the believer that is greater than the previous, so as to stimulate growth, and (4) to develop potential leaders for use in future ministries.\(^1\)

The spiritual-gifts section is good, but it would be better if persons had more information about how the church functions and what the needs are. This would help new members know how they could use their gifts to help.

The spiritual-growth section covers how to have a devotional time with God. It teaches new members how to pray, study the Bible, and share their testimony. These are excellent lessons to have. Other lessons are helpful, too, such as getting acquainted with Ellen White's writings, living victoriously, church attendance, communion, and anointing services. This section could contain many more subjects.

The small-group lesson is the last page of the book. It appears that the small groups are designed to follow this course. I would rather see the new member in a small group right away rather than waiting for three months.

This is a good resource for one-on-one ministry. It could also be used in a group setting. It does not teach the

\(^1\)Ibid., 4.
leader about any other aspects of assimilating new members. It assumes that the mentor knows what he or she is doing and this is a resource to help them do it. It is ready to use, which is helpful so that most laymen can use it.

**Welcome Family Album Material**

The third example of an assimilation method is the *Welcome! Your Church Family Album*. This is an excellent, but limited resource to help assimilate new members. It accomplishes what it sets out to, which is provide information that will help new members understand and be proud of their new denomination. It is one resource among many that needs to be provided to help assimilate new members.

This book has many helpful features. A baptismal certificate comes with it, as well as a place for new members to put pictures of their baptism. There are two chapters on what baptism means, one on salvation, and one on what is expected of church members. Then in the section on the church, the first two chapters are "Who Are We?" and "How Did We Begin?" Then the church’s worldwide organization is explained. This is followed by a description of the activities found in a local church. A brief directory of the institutions of the church, followed by a brief summary of

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the beliefs of the church is included. A section on stewardship comes next, then a list of a few helpful resources. Another impressive feature is the glossary of unique Adventist terms. The closing challenge is to get involved in the ministry of the church by using one’s spiritual gifts.

The book is beautifully illustrated and provides lots of helpful information. It would be a helpful addition to a new-members class, where someone can go over the material with new members to make sure they get the most out of it. It would be nice if they did not have to glue or tape pictures of their baptism into this book. It would be nicer if they could put them into clear plastic pockets. This is a quality addition to the church’s assimilation process.

Assimilation Seminar

The fourth example of an assimilation method is the Assimilation: Closing the Back Door self-study kit by Robert E. Logan.¹ This seminar is designed to help a church evaluate its current situation and produce a more effective assimilation process. The kit includes four sessions with audiotapes and fill-in-the-blank notes.

The first session is how to become sensitive to

newcomers. This session helps the church realize what visitors go through when they come to the church. This session includes a list of twelve ways to make the church more attractive to visitors:

1. Provide adequate parking.
2. Station attendants in the parking lot to assist visitors.
3. Clearly identify the main entrance.
4. Appoint greeters who are gifted for the task.
5. Station greeters strategically.
6. Assign people to seek out the visitors immediately after the service.
7. Train ushers to do their job well.
8. Post signs pointing to entrances, nursery, restrooms, classrooms, auditorium, etc.
9. Ask for people to invite visitors into their homes.
10. Ask people to fill out a registration card.
11. Assign someone to call first-time visitors.
12. Be sure that the bulletin contains enough information to help a total stranger participate in the service without embarrassment.¹

Some of this information is not helpful for a small church. The best information is to have good greeters, to have people ask visitors home for a meal, and to follow up people who visit by contacting them during the week after they attend.

The second session contains information for a church to design an assimilation process. Logan compares this process to what a restaurant does when it serves its customers.² In this session there is a helpful list of twelve stages of how people relate to the church.

¹Ibid., 4.
²Ibid., 6.
1. No awareness
2. Some awareness
3. Attendance once
4. Attended several times
5. Regular attenders
6. Workers
7. Policy makers
8. Inner core
9. Less-than-regular attenders
10. Occasional attenders
11. Special occasion attenders
12. Ex-members.

This list helps the church realize that there are eight different kinds of people who need to be assimilated. Each one of these eight types of people needs to be treated differently. Therefore, the church needs a strategy for each type. These eight types can be summarized in two categories: those coming towards the church and those going away from the church. The assimilation strategies can be summarized the same way: trying to win people in the first place, and trying to win them back.

The second point of session two helps to discover why people join a church. Logan points out that most people join because of relationships. Therefore, he suggests the church identify people who are good at relating well to new people and intentionally use them for that purpose. Use them to introduce newcomers to other people in the congregation. This is a great idea.

The third point of this session is to evaluate the

1Ibid., 8.
church's regular attenders. This helps the church determine its potential success at assimilating new members. If the church is rapidly growing, then the current assimilation process may be working fine. If the church does not want to grow, then it will not be as responsive to new people. There is an evaluation form to determine if the regular attenders are organized for assimilation. It is good to discover the condition of the church so that the direction and priorities can be established.

The fourth point that Logan covers in session two is why people leave the church and what can be done to stop them. The best thing is to contact them when they miss three consecutive weeks, then again after they miss three more weeks, and every three weeks after that for three months. If they have not responded for three months, they usually will not come back. One can alternate how they are contacted, either by phone, letter, or personal visits. This is a good plan, but three weeks between contact is too long for a new member. They need to be contacted every week they miss for six months; then the three-week system Logan suggests would be appropriate.

Logan closes this session by looking at the program menu of a church. It is important for leaders to know how each program impacts the assimilation process. There are evaluation forms to determine which programs attract new
members and which ones inhibit them. The forms also include places to record attempts to change problems that may exist.

Session three teaches three ways to reach and incorporate newcomers. The first step is to start small groups. Here are seven characteristics of these groups:

1. Caring
2. Healing climate
3. Feeling of closeness
4. Meaning
5. Inclusiveness
6. Enthusiasm
7. Leadership.¹

He does not define these characteristics but simply lists them. It would help if they were explained.

Next, Logan lists five ways to build up the small-group program of the church in order to assimilate new members.

1. Release gifted people to lead groups.
2. Provide support structures for leaders.
3. Allow group multiplication to avoid leadership fatigue.
4. Aim at responsive populations.
5. Practice techniques of effective group formation and function.²

Logan lists at least three suggestions for each of these points. Here, he points out that new members need to be placed in new groups. There is a questionnaire designed to evaluate each group according to the seven characteristics of a healthy group. This helps one to see on paper how the small groups are doing.

¹Ibid., 20.
²Ibid., 21-22.
In this session Logan points out the need for a new-members class. Logan suggests that it be called a newcomer's class, because some people have not yet decided to be a member and therefore they will not come to the class. He does not recommend that it be called a pastor's class either, because some people might think that is a class for people who want to become a pastor. I think he makes a good point here. He says the purpose of this class is to acquaint people with the church. They learn the vision and values of the church. He includes in this class discovery of spiritual gifts and involvement in ministry. I think it is good to get people involved in the ministry of the church even if they are not yet members. A newcomer's class like this can help that happen.

This session finishes with how to design a comprehensive assimilation strategy. Step one is to use appropriate tools, but Logan does not give you the tools. You have to get other seminars to have the tools. Step two is to recruit a taskforce to evaluate, plan, and implement the plan. The last step is to provide appropriate leadership to facilitate the change. Here he refers to another source to find out what an appropriate leader is. This can be frustrating if you do not have the other sources. These appear to be simple statements on paper, but they require lots of time and effort to accomplish what he specifies.
Session four is about empowering and equipping leaders. It starts with five ways to motivate leaders.

1. Motivate by example
2. Motivate by reaffirming core values
3. Motivate by picturing the future
4. Motivate by communicating confidence
5. Motivate by consistent encouragement.¹

Logan suggests leadership meetings be conducted twenty times a year for two hours each meeting. He says leaders can lose their vision in one month. That makes it important to meet regularly with small-group leaders to keep them motivated. There is a large amount of helpful information on leadership development in this session.

The second part of session four is about concentrating on recruiting and developing leaders. Here are five ways this can be done:

1. Pray for more leaders
2. Identify and challenge potential leaders
3. Encourage risk-taking by creating a climate in which leaders are free to fail
4. Celebrate small wins
5. Provide systematic coaching and training.²

The first three are the most informative. The first point makes it a spiritual process. The second looks for a variety of gifts, people with strengths, and passion for ministry. The third allows people to try creative things. This is a great idea. He rewards people who develop the most creative

¹Ibid., 31.
²Ibid., 32.
ministry each year. Most of those ministries start out as failures. People who try new things, even though they fail, are rewarded. It is a healthy concept to encourage people to try new things.

The third part of session four explains in detail what happens in the leadership meetings. There is vision casting, huddle time, and skill development. Logan explains how to coach each leader individually: (1) Visit their meetings and debrief them, (2) Contact them before and after important events in their ministry, (3) Help them plan effectively, and (4) Help them with personal growth. I appreciated his attention to detail in this section. There are some helpful worksheets at the end of this session to help someone become a better leader of leaders.

This seminar gives some good guidelines for developing an assimilation process. But half of it is a small-groups manual. If the church’s main emphasis for assimilating new members is small groups then this is a great manual. However, enough small-group seminars exist to cover that material. This would have been a better seminar if Logan had covered more information on the assimilation of new members.

Connections Spiritual Gifts Seminar

The fifth current method of assimilation is a spiritual
gifts seminar called "Connections."¹ This seminar was designed to help new members and current members discover their spiritual gifts and find a place of ministry.

Each forty-five minute Connections class is divided into three parts: introduction, discovery, and summary. The three-minute introduction involves a welcome, a review of the last lesson, and an overview of the current lesson. The forty-minute discovery section involves individual activities, a small-group exercise, or a video vignette. The two-minute summary reviews the important points of the lesson.

Connections is a comprehensive study and implementation process to get people involved in service for Christ. There is a 274-page leader’s book, a 203-page implementation book, a 173-page participant’s book, and a 56-page consultant’s book. Two videos illustrate the spiritual gifts concept and help train the consultants. Also a sheet of paper in the kit tells you how to review it.

The course contains eight sessions lasting 45 minutes each, including these eight topics:

1. What is connections?

2. Where should I serve?

3. Why can’t you be more like me?

¹Bruce Bugbee, Don Cousins, and Bill Hybels, Connections Training Kit (Portland, OR: Baby Boomer Ministries Resource Center), 1996.
This seminar can be done in eight weeks or as a weekend seminar. It is not supposed to be taught in one day. There is too much material to digest.

There are three guidebooks to the Connections program. First, there are leadership and participants' guidebooks. The leader's book contains the same information as the participants' book, plus helpful information for the leader to use when teaching the course. It helps leaders teach better when they know what the participants see in their book. There is a recommended amount of time for each section to help the teacher stay on track. There is a place to write notes in the lesson to help teach. Each session begins with a list of items needed to teach the class, the objectives, and an outline. Each session has a key Scripture text. Transparencies are used with the lessons. They are pictured in the book at the spot where they are to be used, which is helpful for the teacher.

The second guidebook is the implementation guide which is the key to making this program work. There are three phases to operating a Connections program in the church. A
leadership commitment, which involves forming a Connections team and commitment of the church board; ministry preparation, which involves getting the current ministry leaders to accept and participate in the Connections process; and finally, Connections implementation, which is conducting the Connections course to the entire church.

The third guidebook is the consultant's guidebook. After individuals take the seminar, they attend a one-hour personal consultation with a trained consultant. The consultant helps confirm their giftedness and leads them into three options for service. The level of ministry the participants should be in is determined by their maturity level and availability. The consultant's manual gives a thorough job description for the consultant. It covers training the consultant, conducting the interview, and how to follow up the interview.

There are three steps to get this program started in the local church. The first step is to form a Connections team. The team goes through the program and decides what tasks each person will perform. When the team is informed and committed, it then presents a proposal to the church board. The implementation guide is full of helpful information to prepare the proposal. Questions that may come up are covered in the manual. When the church board accepts the idea, it must also accept going through the plan.
The second step to get Connections started in the church is to involve your ministry leaders who are not on the board. The current leaders need to write job descriptions. There are ministry description forms, samples, and a reference section to help the ministry leaders make the descriptions. Not only will they make out their own descriptions, but they will also write descriptions for assistants who will help them. Ministry leaders prepare job descriptions for everyone involved in their area. This prepares the way for new members to get involved immediately. New members can start at an entry level and develop ministry skills. Experienced members who get involved in a new or different ministry can start at whatever level they can handle. The Connections team edits the descriptions and puts them in a book for the consultants to use.

The third step to get Connections started in the church is to present the program two more times before it is presented to the church. First, present it to members of the Connections team who have not gone through it yet. Second, present it to any leaders who have not gone through it yet. You can conduct another trial run, if necessary, before you open it to the church.

Conducting the Connections seminar and implementing it into the church is a major task. The larger the church, the
more people you have to take through the process. It is not just teaching members the concept of spiritual gifts. It is also conducting personal interviews and finding them a place of service, as well as training the people to conduct the seminar before it starts. Also, some people may not participate in this program. It is important to have a plan to work with those people and get them involved in the church another way. Connections is a good, thorough program, but it is complicated and time-consuming.

There are three difficulties with the Connections course. It is so complex, the teacher needs to be well prepared to present it. It is so broad you need a team of people to make it successful. It takes eight weeks to finish the course and some new members would have a hard time waiting that long before they get involved.

There are several benefits to using this course. It is laid out well and informative, with a variety of teaching elements that flow well. The leader’s guide is well designed. The information is well organized and flows in a chronological order. When the program is implemented, it requires full commitment from the church leaders. That means the leaders must unite to make this program a success. Connections helps to discover the best place a person can serve the Lord. It helps people to get involved soon by matching the new members with the job they are best suited
for. It creates a strong church program by getting the laity involved in ministry. This is one of best outlined programs I have ever seen. It prepares the church and the new members to succeed.

Summary

This chapter covered some current methods that are being used to assimilate new members. Each of these current methods utilized some of the information from chapters 2 and 3, including ideas like being intentional about assimilating new members, having a special class for new members, using small groups in the assimilation process, giving new members information to acquaint them with the church, and getting new members involved in ministry. They all were designed to give new members the special attention they need during their first six months of membership in the church. The usefulness of these methods depends on the ability, desire, and needs of the church wanting to assimilate new members.
CHAPTER FIVE

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROGRAM

This chapter explains the development of the program used to assimilate new members in the Lexington, Kentucky, Seventh-day Adventist Church. This chapter explains how an assimilation process was set up within the church through the church board, the nature and format of a new-member’s Sabbath School class, a Wednesday evening prophecy seminar, a two-part nutrition class, a weekend witnessing seminar, and various small groups. An evaluation of the program is given in chapter 6.

How the Program Was Presented to the Church Board

The assimilation program was presented to the church after it was first discussed in a planning meeting for the church. The church board members set up a planning committee to give direction to the ministry of the church. It wanted to determine what the needs and interests of the church were. The board members used two methods of research: (1) they took several surveys of the members, and (2) the church members were invited to a brainstorming session.
The surveys were distributed on different Sabbaths during the month of October 1996. The surveys were handed out at the beginning of the worship hour and were collected at the end. The results were tabulated and prepared for the planning committee.

The brainstorming session was held in the afternoon on Sabbath, January 11, 1997, following a fellowship dinner. The congregation was divided into several small groups. Each group had a leader from the planning committee who asked these six questions:

1. What is unique about our church?
2. What is the purpose of our church in this community?
3. What do you like most about the ministry and mission of our church?
4. What would you like to see happening that is not now happening?
5. What specific ways should we reach out to the community?
6. What can we do to help the members of the church?

Each group also had a secretary from the planning committee who recorded the responses to these questions. The responses were reviewed by the planning committee. The planning committee met several times and used this information, along with the results of the surveys, to develop a mission
It was during the planning committee meetings that the need to care for new members was discussed. The church did not want to baptize new members and then watch them leave. The six components to help assimilate new members were shared with the planning committee at that time. They liked the idea so much that they decided to elect a new-member coordinator and a new member committee to monitor the progress of new-members. The planning committee presented the assimilation process idea to the church board as part of their report.

When the assimilation plan was presented to the church board on May 18, 1997:

1. They were shown the Profiles study guides that could be used for a Sabbath school class for new members and told that the pastor could teach the class.

2. They discussed the Bible prophecy videos by Doug Batchelor that could be used on Wednesday nights after John Bradshaw’s evangelistic meetings.

3. It was suggested that a nutrition seminar be held to help the new people adjust to their new diet. The health and temperance leader had already agreed to teach it, who was a Registered Dietician and had experience teaching people about nutrition.

4. A witnessing training course was introduced as a way
to help new members reach out more effectively to the people they know. The witnessing course was conducted at the Lexington Church on April 27, 1997, and it was well received. The board agreed that this would be a good seminar for new members to attend. One of the church members agreed to teach the class.

5. It was recommended that the church purchase the Connections spiritual gifts implementation seminar. A member agreed to be a spiritual gifts coordinator and teach the class to new members. The board agreed to purchase it and use it in the church.

6. The need for small groups was mentioned. A member was needed to be a small-group coordinator, but no name was presented at that time. It was referred to the nominating committee to find the right person. When the pastor preached about the need for small groups on September 26, 1996, many of the members agreed with the need. The board members were familiar with small groups and were eager to have them as part of the church program.

When all of these components were presented to the church board in this context, they voted to proceed with each one. The entire planning committee report was taken to a business meeting and was voted on June 29, 1997. Five of the six components were carried out as a follow up to John Bradshaw’s meetings. The rest of the chapter explains the
contents of each class and what happened when each component was presented within the church.

The Sabbath School Class

One component of the assimilation process was a new-members Sabbath school class. There are four good reasons to have a new-members class: New members learn (1) the beliefs, (2) the philosophy of ministry, and (3) practices of the church, and (4) are encouraged to form continuing friendships.\(^1\) These benefits made having this class an important part of the assimilation process.

Daniel Caslow's Profiles Sabbath school lessons were chosen for the new-members class. The Profiles series contains four booklets that have thirteen lessons each, one lesson for each week, which means there are enough lessons for the class to last one year. Gayle Crowe discovered that the best results of a special class come when they meet weekly and continue for nine months, a year, or longer.\(^2\) As part of this assimilation process, the class lasted for six months.

The Profiles series was designed to help assimilate new members by teaching them basic beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This series addressed topics that were not adequately covered in the series of prophecy lectures.

\(^1\)Detter, 58.

\(^2\)Crowe, 41.
According to White, the topics that should be included are stewardship, health reform, spiritual gifts, and service to God.\(^1\) All of these topics are included in the Profiles series.

The new-members Sabbath school class was divided into two parts: 9:30-9:45 a.m. was spent talking about current events and sharing prayer requests and praises; 9:45-10:35 a.m. was spent discussing the lesson.

The class was held in a room at the church-school building. The new members sat in rows behind tables. The tables gave them a place to put their books. The teacher was in front of them behind a lectern.

The class was open for the new members to ask questions and make comments. Students who were too embarrassed to talk did not have to. Some new members said, "It is nice to have a class for us to ask questions without feeling intimidated by members who have been Adventists for a long time." They recognized that they were on a different knowledge level than the other church members and that this class was just for them.

Students were encouraged to get to know each other better during the class. Class members were introduced to each other. When new members came to the class, they were introduced to the class and each current member gave his or

\(^1\)Ibid., 343.
her name. Sometimes one person would try to say the names of all the class members. This helped the people to learn each other's name.

The new members were personally invited to come to the Sabbath school class and were given a copy of the first Profiles book. Announcements were also put in the church bulletin and made from the pulpit each week for one month after the class started to encourage the new members to come.

The first thirteen-week course, called "New Life,"\(^1\) was offered from November 1, 1997, until January 31, 1998. Its purpose was to teach new members how to study the Bible to meet their personal spiritual needs. After each lesson the student was to respond to a thought question.

Here is a description of each lesson in Book 1: Lesson 1, "Beginning a New Life," explains how the Christian detaches from sin and is joined to Christ. Lesson 2, "Belong to the Great Family," explains the benefits and responsibilities of being a child of God. Lesson 3, "Christ Your Righteousness," tells us how we can receive the righteousness of Christ in our lives today. Lesson 4, "Acceptance and Assurance," explains that you are accepted by God and can have the assurance of that fact based on His

word. Lesson 5, "You Have a Helper," is about how God can help you in your daily life. Lesson 6, "You Can Win," is about how the Holy Spirit can help overcome sin in your life. Lesson 7, "Your Bible and You," teaches you how you can study the Bible and understand it. Lesson 8, "You Talk With God," is about how you can be blessed by prayer. Lesson 9, "Handling Your Unbelief," tells us how we can learn from the mistakes of those who doubted and the past. Lesson 10, "Focusing Your Life," teaches you how to be transformed by God instead of conformed to the lifestyles of this world. Lesson 11, "Christian Growth," is about continually growing in your life as a Christian. Lesson 12, "You Can Witness," emphasizes the joy of sharing your faith with others. Lesson 13, "Christ Your Perfecter," offers the challenge to keep on growing all the way with Christ. This is the end of the first lesson book.

Book 2, "Christian Discipleship."\(^1\) was designed to teach the new member how to live a Christian life to glorify God. After each lesson there is a section to reflect upon one’s commitment to Christ. It asks the student to reflect on the blessings of God.

Here is a description of each lesson in Book 2: Lesson 1, "The Profile of a Disciple," helps define what a disciple

Lesson 2, "The Disciple and God," teaches how God can be reflected through you. Lesson 3, "The Disciple Follows Christ," emphasizes the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Lesson 4, "The Disciple’s Mind and Heart," is how your walk with God can positively affect your mental and physical health. Lesson 5, "The Disciple’s Time," is about the blessings of keeping the seventh-day Sabbath. Lesson 6, "The Disciple’s Home and Family," describes God’s ideal for the family. Lesson 7, "The Disciple’s Lifestyle," explains how Christian dress and grooming is different from that of the world. Lesson 8, "His Friends and Recreation," This lesson contains Bible guidelines for true and lasting friendship as well as appropriate social activities. Lesson 9, "The Disciple’s Possessions," explains the principles of giving to the cause of God. Lesson 10, "The Mark of Discipleship," points out the difference between simply observing religious traditions and truly being obedient to God. Lesson 11, "The Disciple Keeps the Sabbath," is about how to properly keep the Sabbath. Lesson 12, "His worship and Fellowship," is about our need to attend public worship services and how to conduct ourselves when we are worshiping. Lesson 13, "The Disciple and the Kingdom," This lesson is about examining yourself spiritually so you will be prepared for the world to come.

Prophecy Seminar
The second component of this assimilation program was a prophecy seminar. The prophecy seminar was an important part of the assimilation process because it reviewed what the new members had learned in the first series. Ellen White says, "It is just as important to have a second series as it was to have the first." A prophecy series on video was used for a Wednesday night meeting. This series began on October 29, 1997, and ended on April 15, 1998.

The prophecy seminar that was used is called, "The Next Millennium Prophecy Seminar" and was taught by Doug Batchelor, director of Amazing Facts Ministry from Sacramento, CA. There were twenty-two lessons in the series called "Storacles of Prophecy." A storacle is a unique word that was developed by combining the words "historical," "story," and "oracle." The idea is to use Bible stories from the Old Testament that explain symbols from the book of Revelation to teach Bible prophecy more effectively.

This seminar was used because Doug Batchelor is from the same organization as the evangelist who held our prophecy meetings. This was to help tie the two seminars together. The Doug Batchelor seminar was recorded in November 1997 and then shown when our other meetings were over.

The class started with a welcome and a question-and-answer period. Doug’s wife asked questions about the Bible
that were written by people who attended that seminar and Doug answered them. This lasted from 7:30 to 7:45 p.m.

From 7:45 to 7:50 people stood up and sang. Then Doug asked the people to shake hands with people near them. This helped to create a better atmosphere. Then from 7:50 to 8:25 p.m., Doug taught the lesson. From 8:25 to 8:30 p.m., there was a quiz and an appeal for people to make a decision based on what they heard.

New members were invited to the video series the last three nights of Bradshaw's meetings. John Bradshaw invited people to attend the next series by making announcements from the front and by personal invitation. A handout was given to all the new members to remind them of the upcoming series of meetings. We also made announcements in church from the pulpit, as well as in the church bulletin.

En-dor," is on what happens to a person after death. Lesson 10, "Cities of Ash," is about hell. Lesson 11, "Resting the Land," is about the 1,000 years of Rev 20. Lesson 12, "Bowing to Babylon," is about the identity of the beast of Rev 13. Lesson 13, "The Mark of Cain," is about the mark of the beast. Lesson 14, "A Heavenly Model," is about the heavenly sanctuary. Lesson 15, "Cleansing the Temple," is about the seventy weeks of Dan 9:24-27, the 2300 days of Dan 8:14, and the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. Lesson 15, "A Tale of Two Women," teaches how to identify the true church. Lesson 17, "The Daughter’s Dance," helps the student identify prophetic Babylon and encourages people to come out of it. Lesson 18, "Windows of Heaven." is about giving tithe and offerings. Lesson 19, "Ten Times Wiser," is about health principles of the Bible. Lesson 20, "Proving the Prophets," gives the biblical tests of a prophet and encourages people to discover the prophetic gift of Ellen White. Lesson 21, "Voice in the Wilderness," is about adopting a biblical Christian lifestyle but following the principles of modesty, simplicity, and purity. Lesson 22, "Above the Crowd," is the final appeal to be faithful to God and follow Him, to make the decision if not already made, to affirm the decision if recently made.

Nutrition Class

The third component in this assimilation process was a
cooking and nutrition class. This class was taught to help the new members incorporate dietary changes into their lives. Ellen White says that "health reform" is a topic that needs special emphasis for new members.

The course was created and taught by a church member, who is a Registered Dietician and had been an Adventist for two years. This two-part course was called "Eating for Life." New members were invited to come to the class through announcements in the bulletin, from the pulpit, and by personal invitation.

The first class was taught November 16, 1997, from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. The teacher presented the benefits of a vegetarian diet and practical ways of incorporating this diet into ones life.

The second class was taught on December 14, 1997 from 3:00 to 4:00 PM. The teacher presented the benefits of whole foods verses refined, carob verses chocolate, the harmful effects of sugar and caffeine, and how to prepare a healthy breakfast.

The nutrition class was conducted in the fellowship room beside the kitchen in our school building. A special table with a mirror above was used so that demonstrations could be seen easily by those attending.

Each class began with prayer. Handouts containing

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White, Evangelism, 343.
recipes and information on healthful living were given out at the beginning of each class. Then from 3:05 to 3:30 p.m. the teacher taught nutritional information and the participants shared testimonies. From 3:30 to 3:45, demonstrations were given on how to prepare the foods that were discussed. The final 15 minutes the students tasted the food and talked. Questions were allowed throughout the class.

Witnessing Class

The fourth component of this assimilation process was a witnessing class. This class was conducted to help teach new members how to start a Bible study. Tom Watson discovered that 95 percent of all Christians have never led another person to Christ. ¹ Many new members try to share their faith, but are unsuccessful and even turn people away from Christ because of their improper approach. This class was designed to help new members share their faith effectively, without turning people away.

The seminar, called "Last-Day Witnessing Lay Training Program" and was developed by an Adventist pastor Tony Cirigliano. Tony lives in Morgantown, North Carolina. The seminar was taught in Lexington on Sabbath, November 8, 1997, from 2-5 p.m. and Sunday morning, November 9, from 10-

¹Watson, 18.
12 a.m. The class was taught by a local church member who was trained by a man from Tony Cirigliano’s church.

Five sessions were included in this seminar. Session 1 taught what to say to get a Bible study started with a friend, how to be a friend, and how to prepare and share a personal testimony. In session 2, the class shared experiences of trying to get a Bible study started, and read some inspiring quotes. Session 3 taught important points to remember when giving a Bible study, how to lead a person to Christ, and how to pray with someone. Session 4 was about preparing for success by praying, memorizing Bible verses, and asking for decisions. Session 5 was a final exam.

The class was held in the fellowship room in the school building. Participants sat around a table that formed a square. The teacher stood behind a lectern on one side of the square. People were invited to come to the class by announcements in the bulletin and from the pulpit and by personal invitation.

Each session lasted for one hour and contained four components: prayer, lecture, personal testimonies, and time to call someone and invite them to start a Bible study. Each session started and ended with prayer. The first three sessions were conducted in the first day. The last two sessions were conducted on the second day.

To graduate, the student had to start a Bible study,
fill out the Bible study lessons, give their testimony to the whole class, pass the exam, and attend all the sessions.

Small Groups

The sixth component of the assimilation process was small groups. People were invited to come to the classes by announcements in the bulletin and from the pulpit and by personal invitation.

There were four different small groups. One group met on Friday night. The members went through a series of Bible studies. They began with prayer and then studied the lesson, discussing each question to help each person understand it. Then they finished with prayer and visited for a while. The class was conducted in the fellowship room at the church. This group met all year.

Another group met on Thursday morning in the home of a church member went through a book on prayer. Each person read the same chapter each week and discussed the contents when they met together. The group did not think it was important to discuss everything in the chapter, but spent most of the time talking about other things. The members focused more attention on each other than the book. The group met all year.

The women’s ministries group met once each month. Each meeting was different. One time the members met for an evening meal at a restaurant. Another time they met for
breakfast at the church. At other meetings they had guest speakers teach them about important issues facing women. Each meeting would last about one hour. The meetings would begin and end with prayer. There was also time to ask questions. The group met all year.

The mothers of preschoolers had one meeting during this six-month study. It was an informal meeting where the mothers brought their children. The children played while the mothers talked. After one hour they ate a potluck meal together.

Summary

This is how the assimilation process unfolded in the Lexington church. The church board initiated a planning committee, and the assimilation process emerged from the desire of the members to keep the new members who joined the church through public evangelism. Various members of the church combined their efforts to make this happen. One component, the spiritual gifts seminar, did not go as planned, but the program as a whole did help to assimilate new members into the church, which was the goal of the program. The evaluation of the program follows in chapter 6.
CHAPTER SIX

EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM

This chapter is an evaluation of the program presented in the Lexington Seventh-day Adventist Church from October 29, 1997, through April 30, 1998. This evaluation is based on the results of two surveys that were taken from the new members and the journal evidence that was written while the program was being conducted.

The Surveys

The first survey, called "Welcome to the Church! Survey of New Members," was given to the new members after they were baptized. (See Appendix A for a copy of this survey.) The survey was given to the new members by personal contact in November 1997. They were not mailed to the new members. There were thirteen new members, and eight (62%) of them filled out their surveys. (See Table 1.) Clyde, Donia, Frances, and James filled out the surveys in their homes when I visited them. Angie, Eula Mae, Jim, and Stephanie were given the surveys when they attended the new-members class. They brought the survey back the following week. The
TABLE 1
RECORD OF THE NEW MEMBERS SURVEYED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of New Member</th>
<th>Survey 1</th>
<th>Survey 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Angie</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Clyde</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Debbie</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Donia</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Eula Mae</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Frances</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Helen</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. James</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Jenny</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Jim</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Jodie</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Shannon</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Stephanie</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Y= Yes, filled out the survey; N= No, did not fill out the survey.
five who did not fill out their surveys were not attending church and/or were unresponsive to the attempts to reach them at home.

The second survey, called "Follow-up Survey for New Members Six Months Later," was given to the same new members in May of 1998, six months after they were baptized. (See Appendix B for a copy of this survey.) The same eight people who filled out the first survey also filled out the second one. This survey was given out in the same manner as the previous one. Four of them were given in the home and four of them were given out in the new-members class. The five who did not fill out the first survey were not contacted about the second one.

There were fourteen questions on each of the two surveys. The questions on each were the same except questions 9, 10, and 11. Question 9 asked, “Did you have previous contact with the SDA Church?” On the first survey, question 9 also asked, “What type of contact did you have?” The second survey changed the follow-up question to, “How has it helped you as a member of this church?” Question 10 in the first survey asked, “Would you attend a Wednesday night prophecy video seminar?” Question 10 on the second survey asked, “Did you attend the video prophecy seminar on Wednesday nights? Yes/No? If so, how has it helped you?” Question 11 on the first survey asked, “Would you attend a
nutrition/cooking class?" On the second survey it asked, "Did you attend the nutrition/cooking class? Yes/No? If so, how has it helped you?"

The goal of the survey was to measure how effective the assimilation process was. Five areas were monitored through this survey: (1) to discover if there was any growth in knowledge of the Seventh-day Adventist beliefs among the new members, (2) to ascertain if the needs of the new members were being met, (3) to determine if new members were developing relationships with current members, (4) to see if the new members were becoming involved in ministry within the church, and (5) to know the interest of the new members in attending the assimilation events.

The Results of the Surveys

What New Members Learned

Three questions on the survey asked about the new member's knowledge: question 1, 13, and 14. Question 1 asked the new members, "How well do you understand the Seventh-day Adventists beliefs?" They were to circle an answer from 1 to 10. 10 meaning they knew the beliefs well, and 1 meaning they had a poor understanding of the beliefs. Seven of eight said they understood the SDA beliefs at level 5 or better. (See Table 2.)
### TABLE 2
GROWTH IN UNDERSTANDING BELIEFS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 1</th>
<th>Survey 1</th>
<th>Survey 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Angie</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Clyde</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Debbie</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Donia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Eula Mae</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Frances</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Helen</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. James</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Jenny</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Jim</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Jodie</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Shannon</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Stephanie</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1="poor understanding"; 10="excellent understanding"
Angie and Eula Mae grew in their knowledge of the beliefs during the assimilation process. Clyde, Donia, Frances, James, and Stephanie stayed the same. Jim decreased in his understanding.

Question 13 asked, “Can you name three pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church?” After six months, Angie, Clyde, Donia, Eula Mae, James, and Stephanie could name Ellen White. Angie, Eula Mae, and Stephanie could name more than one pioneer after six months.

Question 14 asked, “What are the five levels of Seventh-day Adventist Church organization in the world?” Stephanie could name all of the levels of church organization, although she did not name them specifically. Angie and Donia could name the local conference after six months.

The Needs of New Members

Questions 2 and 12 sought to discover the needs of new members. Question 2 asked, “What subjects would you like to know in more detail?” (See Table 3.) There were four spaces under this question for them to fill in their own answers. Angie, Eula Mae, and Stephanie said they would like to be better witnesses. Donia and Jim said they wanted to know everything they can about the Bible. Clyde and James said they wanted to know more about prophecy. Angie also mentioned she would like to know more about family issues.
TABLE 3
THE NEEDS OF THE NEW MEMBER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 2</th>
<th>Survey 1</th>
<th>Survey 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Angie</td>
<td>Witnessing, Finances, Marriage, Parenting</td>
<td>Witnessing, Dating, Finances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Clyde</td>
<td>Bible Studies, Prophecy</td>
<td>Heaven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Debbie</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Donia</td>
<td>Everything</td>
<td>Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Eula Mae</td>
<td>Serve and approach others</td>
<td>Nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Frances</td>
<td>Jesus' life, Creation</td>
<td>Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Helen</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. James</td>
<td>Live commandments</td>
<td>Revelation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Jenny</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Jim</td>
<td>The Bible</td>
<td>Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Jodie</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Shannon</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Stephanie</td>
<td>Salvation, Repenting, Witnessing, Christlikeness</td>
<td>Witnessing, Meekness, Christlikeness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Eula Mae also said she would like to know more about how to serve God. Stephanie also said she would like to know more about prayer, repenting, and salvation. Frances said she would like to know more about the life of Jesus and Creation.

The twelfth question asked, "What are some ways that we can help you grow in your faith?" There were four blank lines under this question that they could fill in with their own answers. There were two ways that the new members wanted help from the church: Clyde, Frances, and Jim said they wanted more help with Bible study. Angie, Clyde, Eula Mae, Frances, James, Jim, and Stephanie said they wanted more support through spiritual friendships, visitation, or small groups.

**Relationships within the Church**

The third question asked, "How many friends do you have in this church?" (See Table 4.) Angie, Donia, Eula Mae, Jim, and Stephanie remained active and had seven or more friends. Debbie, Helen, Jenny, and Shannon became inactive and had three friends or less. (Even though they did not fill out a survey, it was evident that they did not have friends within the church.)

The fourth question on the survey asked, "Are you part of a fellowship group within the church?" None of the new members were part of a small group, although Eula Mae and
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Member</th>
<th>Survey 1</th>
<th>Survey 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Friends</td>
<td>Number of Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Angie</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>7+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Clyde</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>4-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Debbie</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Donia</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>7+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Eula Mae</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>7+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Frances</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>4-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Helen</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. James</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>4-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Jenny</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Jim</td>
<td>7+</td>
<td>7+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Jodie</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Shannon</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Stephanie</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>7+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stephanie considered the Sabbath school class a small group.

The eighth question, "Do you have a prayer partner within the church?" was on the survey to find out if the new members had a spiritual friend in the church. All who filled out a survey had friends in the church, but only Angie and Jim said they had prayer partners.

The ninth question was "Did you have previous contact with Seventh-day Adventists before joining this church?" (See Table 5.) Angie, Clyde, Donia, Eula Mae, Frances, James, and Jenny had previous contact with the church. All except Jenny remained active. Debbie, Helen, Jim, Jodie, Shannon, and Stephanie had no previous contact with the church. Debbie, Helen, and Shannon are inactive and Jodie is sporadic. Only Jim and Stephanie of those who had no previous contact remain active. All seven who had previous contact took Bible studies prior to the meetings. Those who had previous contact with the church said it helped them feel more comfortable when they came to church. They also said it helped them understand the Bible better because they had been studying with someone before they came. These two things made it easier for them to make a decision to join the church and stay with it.

Involvement in Ministry

The fifth question was "Do you know what your
TABLE 5
PREVIOUS CONTACT WITH SDA CHURCH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Member</th>
<th>Previous Contact</th>
<th>Active</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Angie</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Clyde</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Debbie</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Donia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Eula Mae</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Frances</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Helen</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. James</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Jenny</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Jim</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Jodie</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Shannon</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Stephanie</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
spiritual gifts are?" Eula Mae and Stephanie knew what their spiritual gifts were. The answer to this question is low because we did not have a spiritual gifts seminar.

Question 6 asked "Are you involved in a ministry within this church?" Stephanie was the only new member involved in a ministry.

The seventh question asked "Do you know how to share your faith with someone else?" All of those responding to the survey said they wanted help in sharing their faith.

**Interest in Assimilation Events**

Question 10 asked, "Have you attended the video prophecy seminar on Wednesday nights?" Clyde and Frances were not able to come out at night. The other six respondents came to at least one class, and they all said it helped them to understand the Bible better. The survey pointed out that child care was a need for mothers with small children.

Question 11 asked, "Did you attend the nutrition/cooking class?" Four new members wanted to attend the cooking school, but none of the new members attended. This class was offered between Thanksgiving and Christmas, and people said they were too busy to attend.

These surveys provided insight into the experiences of the new members. It pointed out what they learned, what they needed, if they formed relationships with current members,
if they got involved in ministry, and what their interest was in attending the assimilation events.

**Journal Evidence**

On October 25, 1997, eight new members were added. On Nov. 8, 1997, four more new members were added. On December 13, 1997, one more new member was added. A total of thirteen new members were added to the Lexington Church. A journal was used to track the attendance of these new members at the assimilation events for six months.

**Church Attendance**

Attendance patterns began to emerge quickly for new members. One week after her baptism, Debbie stopped attending. (See Table 6.) She came back four weeks later on November 22, but did not come back after that. Two weeks after Helen was baptized, she stopped attending. Helen came back on December 6, but did not come back after that. James also stopped attending two weeks after he was baptized. However, four months later he began to attend again. Frances did not attend after she was baptized because her health did not permit her to attend church regularly. Jenny attended for two months, but then stopped attending. Shannon attended sporadically for three months then he stopped attending.
TABLE 6

CHURCH SERVICE ATTENDANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-8</td>
<td>6-13</td>
<td>3-10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7-14</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clyde</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debbie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eula Mae</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frances</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>James</td>
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<td>Jenny</td>
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<td>Jim</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stephanie</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Jodie attended regularly for four months, then her attendance became sporadic. The other four, Angie, Donia, Eula Mae, and Jim, had regular attendance for the six-month evaluation period. Within six months most of the new members had established a pattern of attendance.

When a new member stopped attending they were called on the phone to determine how they were. They were called once a week for a month if they did not respond. Then they were called once a month for three months. After that the calls stopped.

By the end of six months, three were not attending church, but they were not inactive. Stephanie moved away and was attending at her new location. Frances and Clyde became ill and both died a few months after the evaluation period ended.

**Sabbath School Class**

Of the thirteen people baptized, eight attended the new-members Sabbath school class at least once. (See Table 7.) Three of the four inactives did not attend this class. The two who died never attended the class. The seven who remained active attended the new-members class.

**Wednesday Night Prophecy Series**

A series of prophecy lectures on video by Doug Batchelor was presented on Wednesday nights from October 29,
TABLE 7
NEW MEMBERS' CLASS ATTENDANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Class Attendance</th>
<th>Active Member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Angie</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Clyde</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Debbie</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Donia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Eula Mae</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Frances</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Helen</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. James</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Jenny</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Jim</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Jodie</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Shannon</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Stephanie</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1997, through April 15, 1998. The first Wednesday night, five new members came. The second Wednesday night, three new members came. After two months, two new members were attending. After three months, only one new member was attending.

On April 22, 1998, a different series of prophecy lectures on video by Kenneth Cox began on Wednesday nights. The first night three new members were there. A new member who was baptized at a previous series in 1996, yet had not attended church regularly, started attending every Wednesday night. Two other people who were baptized at that series in 1996 started coming too. Another lady who had been baptized at a crusade three years earlier began to attend. It was her first time to come out to a regular Wednesday night meeting. Also, a couple who were newly baptized at a prophecy crusade in a city thirty miles away began attending these meetings.

Cooking Class

None of the new members came to the cooking class. The comments received indicated that they were so busy because of the holidays that they could not come.

Witnessing Class

Jim, Jodie, and Stephanie attended the witnessing class. This was two-day event. This first part was given on Sabbath afternoon for three hours. The second part was
conducted on Sunday morning for three hours. Jim and Jodie did not attend the second day of class. Of the three who attended, all three are still attending church.

**Small Groups**

Sunday, November 9, 1997, Stephanie and Jodie attended a women’s prayer breakfast. This meeting was sponsored by women’s ministries. Their regular meeting was once a month. None of the new members attended any of the other women’s ministry meetings. Donia came to a mother’s group that was held on a Wednesday morning, January 21, 1998. That group met only once during the six-month evaluation period. There were two other small groups. One met on Thursday mornings and the other met on Friday evenings. None of the new members attended either of these meetings.

**Summary**

The most disappointing element of this evaluation chapter is not having the surveys from Debbie, Helen, Jenny, Jodie, and Shannon. (See Table 1.) That missing information could provide further insight that could help assimilate new members better.

However, the evidence that was gathered confirms that when new members attend at least three of the events that were planned, it will help assimilate them. (See Table 8.) Of the seven people who are still attending the Adventist
church (not counting Clyde and Frances), all of them attended more than one assimilation event, four attended three events, and one attended four events.

The evidence also shows that when new members attend fewer than two events, they are less likely to be assimilated. Of the four who are inactive, only one of them attended more than one assimilation event, one of them did not attend any, the other two attended one event a few times.

This is confirmed by Gayle Crowe, who also discovered that when church programs attract new members to attend two or three events per week, they will stay.¹ When new members just attend the church service they are likely to become inactive. When the new members see that they are part of a church that will meet their needs, they are likely to stay.

¹Crowe, 64.
TABLE 8
NUMBER OF EVENTS ATTENDED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Classes Attended</th>
<th>Active Member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Angie</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Clyde</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Debbie</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Donia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Eula Mae</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Frances</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Helen</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. James</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Jenny</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Jim</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Jodie</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Shannon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Stephanie</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
CHAPERN SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A new member has many needs that have not been met in the past. This has resulted in a high dropout rate of converts to the church. If these needs are addressed by the church, more new members would be assimilated and the body of Christ would be built up more than it is today.

Summary

This dissertation is divided into two parts. The first part, chapters 1-4, is an examination of the need for a program to assimilate new members in the church. The second part, chapters 5-7, is an explanation and evaluation of the program that was presented in the Seventh-day Adventist church in Lexington, Kentucky.

Chapter 1 describes the reason this dissertation was written. There is a need for better ways to assimilate new members in the church. The church must not merely plan to keep new members, it must also help them grow spiritually and socially.

Chapter 2 contains a theological basis for assimilating new members. An analysis is made of assimilation at
creation, in the old testament, during the ministry of Jesus, in the new testament, and from the writings of Ellen G. White. A summary is given of the main points found in this chapter.

Chapter 3 records what the literature said about the needs of the new member, what happens during the first year, how commitment affects the assimilation process, what the new member needs to learn and do, and what environment is best for assimilating new members. This information forms the theoretical basis for the assimilation program.

Chapter 4 is a review of five current methods of assimilating new members. A description of each program is given with analysis of the effectiveness of each program.

Chapter 5 describes the development and implementation of the program that was used in Lexington, Kentucky. A description of how the program was presented to the church board is given. Each of the five components is explained in detail including: (1) reasons the class was included in the assimilation process, (2) contents of the class, (3) how the class was conducted, and (4) how people were invited to attend each class. The chapter ends with a summary.

Chapter 6 is an evaluation of the assimilation program that was conducted in Lexington, Kentucky. Analysis was done of the surveys that were filled out by new members and the journal evidence, which contained the attendance records of
journal evidence, which contained the attendance records of the new members at assimilation events and worship services.

Chapter 7 includes the final summary of the dissertation, the conclusion and recommendations for further study on the topic of assimilating new members.

Conclusions

After attempting this project, it became clear that it was too formidable a task to develop each of the components of this process at one time. When the John Bradshaw Prophecy crusade was over, everyone involved was tired, but there were people who needed to be prepared for baptism and others who wanted to study the Bible further. This took away time, energy, and attention that was to be given to the new members.

The research was a valuable step in creating an awareness of the needs of new members and what can be done to meet those needs. The members who were involved in the project learned some of the needs. It would have been better if all of the members were taught the needs of new members and how they could help assimilate them. This would help the entire church work together to assimilate new members.

Conducting seminars and classes can be a costly way to assimilate new members. If the current members were more active in the assimilation process of the new members by befriending them, it would be more effective and cost less.
develop to hold people in the church. Programs do not take the place of friendly people.

The small-group component of the assimilation process could have been better if two or more small groups were specifically waiting to receive and assimilate the new members from the evangelistic meetings. A concentrated effort on giving personal invitations by the group leaders and several others would have improved results too. This would let the new members know that they are among friends and increase their chances of attending.

The assimilation process was affected by the holidays more than was expected. The Bradshaw meetings finished just before Thanksgiving. Over Thanksgiving many people were away and it was hard to visit them. After Thanksgiving, people were preparing for Christmas. Again it was difficult to find people at home; thus they were unable to attend the programs. Many of the church members were spending time with their families, which kept them from helping in the assimilation process. When the holidays were over, two months had gone by and the excitement of having new members had worn off. The process of assimilating new members needs to be done when the new member joins in order to succeed.

It would have helped this assimilation process be more successful if there had been a back-up plan to teach the spiritual gifts class when the member assigned to teach the
class was unable to. This limited the new member's ability to get involved in ministry. It is a good idea to have a back-up plan for each assimilation component.

**Recommendations**

There are several recommendations that can improve the assimilation process and contribute to the study of assimilating new members into the church. More research needs to be done and better methods need to be developed. As society changes, so do the needs of the new members. Ongoing research is needed to keep up with these changes.

A plan is needed to follow up the unbaptized interests of an evangelistic meeting. This plan would complement the assimilation process. A group of people should be prepared for this task who are not involved with the assimilation process. It is difficult for the same people to assimilate new members and continue to minister to the interests.

Every church could benefit from electing a new-member's coordinator and a new-member's team. The coordinator would oversee the assimilation process, he or she would chair the assimilation team meetings, and he or she would be a member of the church board. Each team member would be in charge of one assimilation event. The head greeter and the social committee chairman could also be part of the team. The team could track the progress of all new members to make sure they were becoming assimilated into the church. The team
could meet once a month throughout the year.

The assimilation process should include a way to teach the current members about the needs of new members and what they can do to help meet those needs. This will help the church provide a better atmosphere for assimilating new members.

A small-group study guide for new members could be developed to meet the needs of new members. The book would be a participant's book that the new members would use in their small group. The new members would learn more about their new church in a small group with the help of some new friends. The book could be filled with information such as Rick Warren shares with his new members.¹

An assimilation plan should contain a variety of interesting options for a new member to choose from. The components in this dissertation are not the only ones that new members could benefit from. A variety of methods could be used to assimilate new members. There is not one plan that fits everyone or every situation. A variety of options would increase the chances of a new member attending one or more assimilation events.

More study needs to be done on the assimilation process. New information should be discovered and new courses should be developed. A better understanding of the

¹See pp. 51-60.
various types of new members could give direction to the best type of assimilation process to conduct. It would be beneficial to know more about how new members respond to felt-needs seminars, witnessing classes, and spiritual gifts-based ministry involvement. Not much has been written about these topics.

Another important study would be to compare the effect different evangelistic approaches have on assimilation. There are several approaches to evangelism: live evangelism via satellite, video evangelism, a live visiting evangelist, the local pastor, crusade style, Revelation seminar style, small-groups, and personal Bibles studies. Are new members better assimilated when the evangelist is there in person? Is a live broadcast over satellite better than a video seminar? Are there no difference between the them? Does the style change the method used to assimilate new members?

It might improve the new member's understanding of the church if a different church officer was introduced at the new-member's Sabbath school class each week. An explanation could be given about what each church officer does in the church. The new members would recognize the leaders of the local church more quickly.

Pastors, conference administrators, and laymen could benefit from a book that gives guidance on how to assimilate new members from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective. The
needs of the new members should be understood by everyone in the church. It can make a difference between a positive or negative experience with the church. When new members are well received into the church, it can contribute to his or her relationship with the Lord for eternity.
Appendix A

Welcome to the Church!
Survey of New Members

Name:________________________________________
Address:_______________________________________
Phone:________________________________________

1. How well do you understand the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church?
   (Poor) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Well)

2. What subjects would you like to know in more detail?
   1. ____________________________________________
   2. ____________________________________________
   3. ____________________________________________
   4. ____________________________________________

3. How many friends do you have in this church?
   1-3 4-6 7+

4. Are you part of a fellowship group within this church? Yes/No
   If so, who is your group leader?__________________________

5. Do you know what your spiritual gifts are? Yes/No
   If you answered yes, what are they?
   1. ____________________________________________
   2. ____________________________________________
   3. ____________________________________________

6. Are you involved in a ministry within this church? Yes/No
   If you are involved, what ministry is it?___________________
   If you are not involved, what ministry would you like to be involved in?______________________________

7. Do you know how to share your faith with someone else? Yes/No
   Would you like help that would make it easier for you? Yes/No

8. Do you have a prayer partner within the church? Yes/No
   If so, who is it?__________________________________
9. Did you have previous contact with Seventh-day Adventists before joining this church? Yes/No
   If so, what type of contact did you have?

10. Would you attend a Wednesday night video prophecy seminar? Yes/No

11. Would you attend a nutrition/cooking class? Yes/No

12. What are some ways that we can help you grow in your faith?
   1._________________________________________________
   2._________________________________________________
   3._________________________________________________
   4._________________________________________________

13. Can you name three pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist church? Yes/No
   1. __________________________________
   2. __________________________________
   3. __________________________________

14. What are the five levels of the Seventh-day Adventist Church organization in the world?
   1._________________________________________________
   2._________________________________________________
   3._________________________________________________
   4._________________________________________________
   5._________________________________________________
Appendix B

Follow-up Survey for New Members
Six Months Later

Name:____________________________________________________
Address:________________________________________________________________
Phone:_________________________________________________________________

1. How well do you understand the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church?
   (Poor) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Well)

2. What subjects would you like to know in more detail?
   1. ____________________________________________________________
   2. ____________________________________________________________
   3. ____________________________________________________________
   4. ____________________________________________________________

3. How many friends do you have in this church?
   1-3 4-6 7+

4. Are you part of a fellowship group within this church?
   Yes/No If so, who is your group leader?

5. Do you know what your spiritual gifts are? Yes/No
   If you answered yes, what are they?
   1. ____________________________________________________________
   2. ____________________________________________________________
   3. ____________________________________________________________

6. Are you involved in a ministry within this church? Yes/No
   If you are involved, what ministry is it?
   If you are not involved, what ministry would you like to be involved in?

7. Do you know how to share your faith with someone else? Yes/No
   Would you like help that would make it easier for you? Yes/No

8. Do you have a prayer partner within the church? Yes/No
   If so, who is it?
9. Did you have previous contact with Seventh-day Adventists before joining this church? Yes/No
If so, how has it helped you as a member of this church?

10. Have you attended the video prophecy seminar on Wednesday nights? Yes/No
If so, how has it helped you?

11. Did you attend the nutrition/cooking class? Yes/No
If so, how has it helped you?

12. What are some ways that we can help you grow in your faith?
1. ________________________________________________________________
2. ________________________________________________________________
3. ________________________________________________________________
4. ________________________________________________________________

13. Can you name three pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist church? Yes/No
1. ________________________________________________________________
2. ________________________________________________________________
3. ________________________________________________________________

14. What are the five levels of the Seventh-day Adventist Church organization in the world?
1. ________________________________________________________________
2. ________________________________________________________________
3. ________________________________________________________________
4. ________________________________________________________________
5. ________________________________________________________________
Appendix C

Journal Entries

Wednesday October 29, 1997         5 present 3 missing
Sabbath November 1,                7 present 1 missing

Week 1 after meetings:
called Debbie on Thursday; missed her Wednesday night. She
called back on Friday said she would be at church and the
book sale on Saturday night. I invited her to the new
members class but she did not think she would make it for
that. Missed James on Wednesday also tried Thursday and
Friday evenings to reach him but could not. He did come on
Sabbath. I gave each one who came on Wednesday night a
lesson book for the new members class and invited them to
come. Helen, Jodie, Stephanie, and Eula Mae came. Clyde,
James, Debbie did not come. All of those that I did not give
a book to did not come. Some of those I gave a book to did
not come.

Wednesday Nov. 5                     3 present 5 missing

Debbie did not come to church or book sale on Sabbath. Jodie
was not in church but she came to the book sale. Stephanie
brought her mother to the Wednesday night Bible class. They
stayed and looked at the health food store. She also invited
a neighbor to attend. He came two times. She spent some time
with Rocco and Paulette on Tuesday evening. Rocco and
Paulette invited Jodie and Stephanie to the Woman’s prayer
breakfast. Paulette will invite Helen and Debbie too. Eula
Mae gets a ride to church from members.

Sabbath Nov. 8                      4 present 4 missing
                                      4 new members added

Wednesday Nov. 12                   3 present 9 missing

Called James and Helen on Sunday, and called Debbie on
Wednesday.
Spiritual Guardians

1. Stephanie        Rocco/Paulette
2. Jodie           Rocco/Paulette
3. Eula Mae        Helen P. & Harrell S.
4. Donia           William/Marla
5. Jim             Carol
6. Angie           Eleanor
7. Shannon         
8. Frances         Helen P.
9. Helen           Annette
10. James          Judy R. & Joan H.
11. Debbie         Helen P. & Emma T.
12. Clyde          Erich

Sabbath Nov. 15    6 present 6 missing

Saturday night 1 present 2 others called for recreation. Friday night concert 1 present.

Activity sign-up sheets were in the foyer Nov. 8 & 15 and several new members signed up to get involved in recreational and social activities.

Helen left note for Debbie on her door. Emma called her and talked about the Wednesday night studies and Deborah promised to come but did not. Emma did this on her own.

I met with Frances on Tuesday to have a study about jewelry because she did not take off her ring for her baptism. She thought maybe it was a mistake to join the church. Helen visited with her and encouraged her to pray about it if she get peace she should take it off if not don’t worry about it. Frances is 76 and the ring was her mother’s. She is not married.

I had Helen ask Harrell to pick up Eula Mae and become a spiritual guardian to her.

Stephanie is interested in a trip to Israel. Invited Stephanie and Jodie for lunch after church but neither was able to come.

Wednesday Nov. 19  4 present 8 missing
Sabbath Nov. 22    9 present 3 missing
Wednesday Nov. 26  2 present 10 missing
The day before Thanksgiving
Sabbath Nov. 29 5 present 7 missing

Jim had surgery, Helen had Thanksgiving with Annette, Frances unable to get around, visited her on Tuesday, Dec. 2. Began child care during worship services to help Donia.

Wednesday Dec. 3 3 present 9 missing

Called Jim, doing good, will there on Sabbath. Talked to James he will try to be there on Sabbath. Talked to Helen she would like to get back.

Sabbath Dec. 6 6 present 6 missing

Helen was back after missing several weeks. Jodie missed second Sabbath in a row. No new members attended the nutrition class on Dec. 7. Three were in Sabbath school. Debbie called Helen P. to ask for some food. Helen studied with Frances. Tony was to pick up Jim but he felt sick. It was snowing on Sabbath.

Wednesday Dec. 10 1 present 11 missing
Wednesday mothers groups 1 new member attended.

Sabbath Dec. 13 5 present 7 missing
Jenny is baptized.
Talked to James Friday night but he didn’t come. Judy took him some jelly. Saturday night one new member came to the Christmas party. Debbie called to ask for more food, a refrigerator and a bed.

Wednesday Dec. 17 3 present 10 missing
Jodie back even though her voice was gone

Dec. 24, 27 and 31 I was gone.

Sabbath Jan. 3 6 present 7 missing

Frances broke her leg and is in hospital. Helen out of town for several weeks.

Sabbath Jan. 10 7 present 6 missing
We had communion, Shannon left before foot washing. Frances in rehabilitation. Helen gone.

I was sick on Wednesday.

Sabbath Jan. 17 7 present 6 missing
Wednesday Jan. 21 2 present 11 missing

Sabbath Jan. 24 5 present 8 missing
It was snowing. Jodie left after Sabbath school. Went to visit James on Tuesday. Said he would come on Wednesday but did not. Called Shannon to invite over for Sabbath dinner but he did not call back. Gave out *The Great Controversy* in Sabbath school class.

Wednesday Jan. 28. 0 present
Thursday woman’s meeting 0 present

Sabbath Jan. 31 5 present 8 missing

Wednesday Feb. 4 No services.
Sabbath Feb. 7 No services.
Wednesday Feb. 11 0 present

Thursday talked to Shannon. He had been working out of town. Seemed happy that I had been calling to keep up with him.

Sabbath Feb. 14 7 present 6 missing

Afternoon 2 new members attended the 5 love languages seminar. Tuesday I called Clyde and Donia. Helen P. is visiting Frances twice a week in a nursing home. Jim attended the friendship banquet on Sunday.

Sabbath Feb. 21 5 present 8 missing
Wednesday Feb. 25 1 present 12 missing
Sunday Feb. 22 woman’s group 0 present
Thursday small group 0 present

Sabbath Feb. 28 7 present 6 missing
Helen is having car trouble. Jenny is having personal problems. Talked to Debbie.

Sabbath March 7 6 present 8 missing
visited James gave him the 27 Fundamental beliefs book. He is getting the Review. He started smoking again. Sent cards to Frances, James, Jenny, Helen, and Debbie from the Sabbath school class. Ken and Lola took Donia out for dinner. Judy wrote James a letter.

Wednesday March 11 2 present
Sabbath March 14 7 present 6 missing
James back, Donia coming regular.

Wednesday March 18 1 present
Sabbath March 21 6 present 7 missing
Frances in nursing home, Angie gone for weekend, Jenny sick, Jodie's grandma sick, Helen still had car trouble. James is back. Snowy day. Called Shannon and Jodie.

Wednesday March 25 1 present  
Sabbath March 28 7 present 6 missing  
James there third time in a row. Jodie is working on Sabbath.

Wednesday April 1 1 present  
Sabbath April 4 6 present 7 missing  
Jodie working in Sabbath at power plant until June. James is not there. Frances went home but in a wheelchair.

Wednesday April 8 1 present  
Sabbath April 11 5 present 8 missing  
Helen questions our view of the millennium. Saw Frances this week she is eating bacon. James back. Jim was sick. Stephanie missed.

Wednesday April 15 1 present  
Sabbath April 18 7 present 6 missing  
Sent invitations to Shannon, Helen, Jodie, Jenny, Deborah to new Wednesday night series by Ken Cox. Called Shannon, Helen, Jodie, Deborah. Only talked to Helen. Picked up James for church and had him over for dinner and saw Holy Land videos that afternoon. During Sabbath school Stephanie wanted to know the others better so we had each person tell us about themselves. Saturday night vespers Stephanie there. Showing Roger Morneau tapes.

Wednesday April 22 3 present, began new series  
Sabbath April 25 4 present 9 missing  
Wednesday April 29 3 present  
Sabbath May 2 5 present 8 missing  
Stephanie came over for lunch watched Israel tapes.

Wednesday May 6 2 present  
Sabbath May 9 Missed attendance  
Stephanie moved to Florida  
Sabbath May 23 4 present 9 missing  
Campmeeting until  
Wednesday June 10 2 present  
Sabbath June 13 4 present 9 missing  
Wednesday June 17 2 present  
Clyde in hospital  
Sabbath June 20 5 present 8 missing
Wednesday June 24       2 present
Sabbath June 27         4 present 8 missing
Wednesday July 1        2 present
July 2 called Helen she is attending another church. But she is still free from smoking. Left message with Shannon.

Sabbath July 4          5 present 7 missing
Jodie is back.

Wednesday July 8        2 present
Sabbath July 11         4 present 8 missing

Frances dies on July 11. Clyde dies on July 14.
Wednesday July 15       3 present
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VITA

Education

1979 AA degree in Electronic Service Technology from Southeast Community College in Milford, NE.

1986 BA in Theology at Union College in Lincoln, NE.

1989 M. Div. from Andrews University Theological Seminary at Berrien Springs, MI.

1999 D. Min. from Andrews University Theological Seminary at Berrien Springs, MI.

Ministry Experiences

1982 Camp counselor at Glacier View Ranch in Colorado.

1983-84 Student Missionary in Kwang Ju, South Korea.

1984 Student Literature Evangelist in Southeast Kansas.

1985-86 Bible Worker for the Good Neighbor Center. A Seventh-day Adventist Community service center in Lincoln, NE.

1985 Task-force pastor in Boulder and Louisville, Co.

1986 Part-time pastor in the Sedan, Independence, and Coffeyville district in Kansas from May through September.


1993 Pastor in the Powell and Greybull district in Wyoming from April through September.


1998-present Associate pastor of the Keene church in Texas.