2016

A Record Year for Church Growth.

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Recommended Citation

Trim, David, "A Record Year for Church Growth." (2016). Faculty Publications. 458.
https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pubs/458

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The 10/40 Window. The “10/40 Window” (see map on p. 92) is a missiological concept that identifies the parts of the world that are least evangelized by Christianity, where rival world religions are strongest, and where there tend to be particular issues relating to religious liberty, poverty, and related socioeconomic and cultural factors. All these combine to make church growth very difficult. Since the early 1990s, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has prioritized the 10/40 Window. It is appropriate, then, to take stock of how we are doing, and charts 3–7 illustrate the global progress of the “great Second Advent movement.” As chart 4 shows, the great majority of the world’s people live inside the 10/40 Window—yet the reverse remains true for Adventist church members. The difficulties faced in evangelizing in the 10/40 Window mean this is probably inevitable but the sheer scale of dissonance between the distribution, on the one hand, of the world’s population (chart 4) and, on the other, of Seventh-day Adventist congregations (chart 5), ministers (chart 6), and members (chart 7) is very striking. Looking at these charts, one can grasp immediately that the Adventist proportions in the 10/40 Window are roughly in inverse proportion to those of the world’s population as a whole. It is striking, too, not only that the percentage of Seventh-day Adventist church members inside the 10/40 Window is relatively low, but also that the millions of church members we have there (see Global Mission table 3) themselves make up a small proportion of the population of those countries. Chart 8 was discussed above, but it also illustrates how the ratio of Adventists to population is eleven times better outside the 10/40 Window than it is inside; with the figure for the 10/40 Window countries less than a quarter of the global average. There is still much to do if the billions who live in the 10/40 Window are to be reached with the good news of Jesus and the prophetic truths of the angels of Revelation 14.

A Global Church. The days when church membership was largely in North America. Western Europe and Australasia are long gone. Much more needs to be done to reach West Africa, North Africa and the Middle East, East Asia, much of Southern Asia and Southeast Asia, and the great cities of Europe, in all of which ratios of members to population are very poor. We should recognize (and thank God) for the extraordinary growth in Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa and some parts of Southeast Asia in the last fifty years. This growth is illustrated in chart 3, which illustrates the distribution of church members, by world division, as though Adventists made up a global village of one hundred. In 1899, five of every six Seventh-day Adventists lived in North America. Nearly sixty years ago, in 1960, it was 26 of every hundred. Today it is six per cent. This is an extraordinary realization of our pioneers’ hopes, dreams, and faith. We have gone into all the world. While much still remains to be done, to finish the work Jesus gave to His followers, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has global foundations on which to draw as it seeks to reach the world for Christ.

Attendance. Attendance, the fifth Report to include statistics on church attendance and it is important to note that not all regions of the world are currently counting attendance at Sabbath School and divine service. We hope, by the end of the quinquennium, that the published figures for attendance will be broadly accurate; but for the moment, though in some divisions counting is done comprehensively, total figures for attendance are not yet reliable in many unions and, consequently, in most divisions. We look forward to receiving and to publishing accurate numbers for the totals regularly attending Seventh-day Adventist church services, including Sabbath School.

A Seventh-day Adventist statistical archive consisting of past statistical reports, tables, and documents is available online at: www.adventiststatistics.org.

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—Statistics within this report compiled by Kathleen Jones and Lisa Rasmussen.