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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPMENT OF AN EVANGELISM MODEL FOR
THE SILVER SPRINGS SHORES SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH

by

Creaton Leopold Francis

Adviser: Clifford Jones

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: DEVELOPMENT OF AN EVANGELISM MODEL FOR THE SILVER SPRINGS SHORES SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Name of researcher: Creaton Leopold Francis

Name and degrees of faculty adviser: Clifford Jones, D.Min., Ph.D.

Date completed: August 2005

Problem

From 1994 to 2003, the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church in Florida had difficulty attracting and retaining members despite yearly evangelistic crusades and other efforts at soul winning. The purpose of this project was to develop and introduce a plan designed in response to this challenge, one tailored toward the specific needs of the Silver Springs Shores Church.

Method

In order to develop a model that would specifically address the needs of Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church, a thorough demographic study of the local community was conducted. The project entailed a feasibility study of the

community and target groups during its evangelistic campaigns. To enhance the effectiveness of the church's evangelistic programs (for example, making them more culturally sensitive, more capable of retaining membership, engaging youth, and drawing new members of people affiliated with other denominations), a study was conducted of various evangelical approaches taken by other communities. Specific proposals were then formulated.

The Results

The specific proposals included (1) making changes to evangelistic meeting structures and styles, (2) focusing on methods of engaging individual church members to become more involved in church activities, including evangelistic meetings themselves and community outreach programs, (3) increasing and improving involvement of young people in church services and other church programs, and (4) revising the church service itself to make it more meaningful and interesting for various age groups. A number of the project's recommendations have already begun implementation with initial promising results. The changes thus far have sparked excitement and enthusiasm among members.

The Conclusion

The project has already begun to help improve the evangelistic efforts of the church. Church members have already begun to be more active in distributing literature in the community and soliciting potential members for Bible study. The church is engaged in more community projects and has participated in programs that combined its own choir members with those of other faiths. Church services have been revised to be more engaging. The fast pace at which changes are occurring in our society calls for

constant and relevant changes in church programs. Revisioning evangelism and programs in the church to challenge the mind-set of new generations can only champion church growth in unprecedented ways.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

DEVELOPMENT OF AN EVANGELISM MODEL FOR
THE SILVER SPRINGS SHORES SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH

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

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This dissertation is dedicated to my wife Valrey as well as to my son, daughter, beloved granddaughter, and a host of church friends and relatives who deserve my highest commendation and gratitude for their fervent support, intercessory prayers, never-ceasing inspiration, and motivation. The term “wonder woman,” often a caricature for a superstar in the world of animation, is an apt characterization of my wife. She has been superb in her dedication to excellence and magnificent in her devotion to see me finish the challenge of this project. My family has kept me focused despite the many times I have felt like giving up. My wife has often discouraged my despondency with a resounding affirmation that she has not known me to be a quitter. She consistently penetrated my psyche with her reassuring confidence. It was difficult to be away so often, including many summers, from my wife and my granddaughter, from whom I had seldom been separated, but my wife’s self-sacrificing love and her determination to see me fulfill my dream made me do it. Today, I not only share this dream with her by celebration, but I ask that she share this degree with me. You are one of a kind, Valrey Dawn.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Public Evangelism and Change

Public evangelism is probably the most widely used soul-winning method within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A greater number of people are introduced to the gospel during church-led public meetings than in any other context. Indeed, these evangelistic meetings have proven to be very effective ways of accelerating the growth of church membership. A congregation that holds a successful evangelistic meeting benefits in a number of ways. These benefits include increased baptisms as well as increases in finances and building programs. Furthermore, the entire congregation typically benefits from the accompanying spiritual renewal. Effective evangelism entails more than just preaching a series of sermons. It necessarily includes membership involvement in soul-winning programs. In *Gospel Workers*, Ellen G. White writes that it is important to train the laity to labor in their communities because they will be more effective in dispensing the word of truth: “Any where there is an establishment of believers, the ministers should seek to train the laity to become co-laborers with them in the fields and their efforts will have greater success.”¹

¹Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1915), 196.

The structure and format of evangelistic meetings is also key, as is the passion, faith, and training of those involved. Church-related programs that share the gospel in new and exciting ways will attract more listeners. Evangelism, therefore, should be well-planned and organized, and all who assist in evangelistic programs should be properly trained. Ellen G. White emphasizes this aspect a great deal in works such as *Gospel Workers*, *Evangelism*, and the *Testimonies*. She remarks that misrepresentation of the message can be injurious to the harvesting of souls. In 1888, she wrote in the *Review and Herald*: “One worker who has been trained and educated for the work, and who is under the control of the Holy Spirit, will accomplish far more than ten laborers who will go out deficient in knowledge and weak in faith.”¹ Clearly, soul winning must follow a divine mandate and must be sustained constantly by prayer and careful planning. Henry T. Blackaby writes the following in the summary chapter of his book, *Experiencing God*:

When God invites you to be involved with Him, He is wanting to reveal Himself to you and to a watching world. Therefore, He will ask you to be involved with Him in a God-sized assignment. When you are confronted with such a great assignment, you will face a crisis of belief. You will have to decide what you believe about the God who called you. How you respond to God will reveal what you believe regardless of what you say. Following God will require faith in action. Without faith you cannot please God. When you act in faith, God is pleased.²

Factors That Negatively Impact Church Growth

The repeated failure of this pattern over an extended period of time is cause for real concern. The first step is always to isolate the reasons for the failure. Based on

¹Ellen G. White, “Be of One Mind,” *Review and Herald*, May 29, 1888, 337.

²Henry T. Blackaby, *Experiencing God: How to Live the Full Adventure of Knowing and Doing the Will of God* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994), 145.

research conducted during the writing of this dissertation, the following are some primary reasons why a church, over a period covering five to ten years, may experience little or no growth through its evangelistic efforts:

1. The problem may be due to a lack of motivation to grow numerically. Perhaps members of the congregation find the status quo comfortable, fearing that if the church begins to grow rapidly, they might lose their identity and the fellowship that a smaller church group offers.

2. It is also possible that there is a general lack of spirituality among the members. While it can be comfortable to enjoy the sense of belonging that comes from church membership, it is not always as easy to meet the demands for lifestyle changes that might accompany increased spiritual growth.

3. At other times the problem has less to do with the congregation and more to do with the community in which the church is located. When the local community is unfriendly or culturally or ethnically different from the members of the church, evangelism becomes much more difficult.

4. Sometimes the problem lies with the very method of evangelism being used by the church for soul winning. If one particular method is overused for an extended period, it might lose its effectiveness. In such cases, a change in approach can bring novelty and excitement.

5. Finally, the problem might stem from a lack of excitement and enthusiasm in the place of worship. Failure to make worship service appealing or attractive may result in a failure to attract newcomers to the congregation. This is especially the case when the

potential converts have been accustomed to stimulating church serves in their previous places of worship.

When Change Is Necessary

Whatever the cause for the failure of church programs, when public evangelistic efforts are accompanied by a decline in membership, finances, and enthusiasm for soul winning, a church must look for new methods to introduce and reintroduce the gospel. Undertaking any sort of major revisions to programs takes courage and dedication. While change is not always easy for a congregation, it is nonetheless sometimes required. Regarding necessary changes, Ellen G. White wrote in 1885 that “the Work is progressive and should have sufficient room for improvement when change is important.”¹

Changes must not entail the compromise of principles, however, even when they are made for important reasons, for instance, to accommodate the needs of a multi-cultural congregation. In his book *Church Next: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry*, Eddie Gibbs quotes Chuck Smith, the founding pastor of Calvary Chapel, who cautions that spiritual leaders must be careful about the motives behind the change they advocate. Furthermore, he emphasizes that mutual accountability should be given to the one advocating the change and those involved in the process for change:

Church leaders must learn that people need to be released to use their God-given gifts in response to a God-given calling. The task of the leader is to serve in a mentoring relationship of mutual accountability so that discernment may be exercised

¹Ellen G. White, “The Great Need of the Holy Spirit,” *Review and Herald*, July 23, 1885, quoted in idem, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1970), 105.

to identify the true motivation of the person being mentored while providing wise counsel and spiritual support.¹

Church leadership must take the initiative to introduce necessary changes in programs that will keep the interest of all groups within the congregation. It is possible to vary the styles of worship and ministry without changing the focus. Anywhere progress is taking place, there will be inevitable changes occurring at the same time. The more the congregation is involved in the process of change, the more they will be able to see it as progress. Often, change needs to be introduced gradually in order to gently lead the congregation into an understanding and acceptance of the change. In his book *Margin*, Richard A. Swenson writes about four types of pain that spiritual leaders may experience when they introduce change for the sake of progress: (1) the pain of progress, (2) the pain of problems, (3) the pain of stress, and (4) the pain of overload. He says:

People everywhere are in anguish, and progress does not seem to care. . . .

Stress, frustration, and oftentimes despair unexpectedly accompany our unrivaled progress. . . .

Despite uninformed claims of the progress we have made in the last few decades, we live in an unprecedented day with unprecedented problems. . . .

High levels of stress follow as naturally after progress as does exhaust after traffic. . . .

Overloading is a painful occurrence. Yet, in one form or another, it happens daily to nearly every one of us.²

¹Church Smith, quoted in Eddie Gibbs, *Church Next: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2000), 70.

²Richard A. Swenson, *Margin: How to Create the Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves You Need* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1992), 21, 39, 57, 73.

The Problem: The Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church

From 1994 to 2003, public evangelistic efforts by the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church in Marion County, Florida, yielded few positive results. Large amounts of money and effort were spent on evangelistic programs and other efforts at soul winning. Nonetheless, baptismal numbers remained low and the church membership attrition rate remained high. Clearly, a search for new methods and approaches to sharing the gospel was necessary.

The best way to ensure the success of public evangelistic efforts is to have set goals and definable objectives. In light of this and with the aim of improving soul winning in the local community, this dissertation focuses on formulating specific goals and objectives for the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church. The result is a working model for revision of the evangelical programs of the church with the goal of making them more effective (more culturally sensitive, more capable of retaining membership, engaging youth, and drawing new members of people affiliated with other denominations).

An evaluation of the specific case of the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist church has led to the identification of the following as some of the causes for the problem of membership retention and increase:

1. The difficulty finding employment in the area has meant that many new church members end up having to leave the community shortly after their arrival.
2. The highly religious nature of members of the local community makes it less easy to convert people to Adventism. Over 90 percent of the members of the local community are already committed and active members of other denominations and have

demonstrated strong resistance to proselytizing (especially by Seventh-day Adventists who are perceived as worshipping on the wrong day and having too many lifestyle constraints).

3. A high death rate in the church has increased the membership attrition numbers. (A large percentage of church members are retirees.)

4. Apostasy has led to a number of members leaving the church.

5. Many church members find they have to be out of the area for extended periods of time (because of work and other responsibilities).

6. A good number of high school graduates leave the area to attend colleges, universities, and to join the military services. (Until recently there were no four-year institutions of higher education in the area, only one junior college.)

7. The format of worship style and structure has not been optimal for this particular church and its members.

8. Members have not been adequately engaged in church services and evangelistic efforts.

As a final note, one special challenge for church leaders in this particular community deserves mention. The culturally diverse nature of the community, which reflects differences in race, nationality, and sharp differences in economic and social status, leads to challenges in developing what must necessarily be a cross-cultural outreach program. A respect for cultural diversity is a necessary component of an effective religious leader.

Purpose of the Project

This project focuses on soul winning within the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church community. The purpose of this project has been and is to create, introduce, and begin initial evaluation of a new plan that would solve the problems of high membership attrition rates and low baptismal rates.

In designing the model for the church, the goal was to tailor it to the specific needs of the church and its community, making sure not only to take into consideration socio-cultural and socio-economic status of the community and the format of worship style and structure most appropriate for this church, but also to engage church members as fully as possible in the entire process. The project calls for full engagement of church members in the implementation of the action plan and in its evaluation. Indeed, an important and specific goal of this project is to encourage and enable church members to become more involved in nearly every aspect of the church's soul-winning activities. The goal is a real partnership between pastor and congregation.

In order to develop an effective partnership between laity and pastor, it is essential that the laity receive the kind of training that can help them develop the skills they will need as well as the confidence in their abilities to answer questions about their beliefs. Equipping the laity with the tools to labor for souls and empowering them to hold public meetings in their neighborhoods can stimulate enthusiasm and excitement within the congregation. One positive consequence of the ongoing work of the laity might be a better response from the community to attend public campaigns. Clearly, the larger the attendance at these meetings, the greater will be the prospect for baptism. This project also calls on the laity to be more involved in the local community through community projects. Creating a more friendly church in the community will enhance the community

members' responses to invitations from the church. In the outreach activities, members will be asked to target their own neighborhoods, particularly focusing on people they know and with whom they interact in their everyday lives, thus lessening rejection from the invitees. In short, this project emphasizes keeping evangelism alive for all members who have a passion for soul winning.

From its inception, this project has involved the laity. Initially it entailed soliciting the help of a committee of trained laity from the church to evaluate materials, tools, and personnel used in past campaigns in view of the community's need. Once the causes for poor results in baptisms had been determined and the needs of the community were ascertained, the process of designing a new method for soul winning began. The process of evaluation will continue so that the specific details and goals of the project can evolve along with the situation in the local community and church. Church members who are called upon to be involved in project development are also called on to be involved in ongoing field studies and literature distribution. This entails, for one, having regular Sabbath Field Days, days when members go out into the community, in small groups and pairs, creating personal contacts with members of the community, distributing literature, and engaging in other evangelistic efforts. Some of the benefits that may come to the church from Sabbath Field Days include (1) the church being better advertised in the community, (2) more interest in Bible studies coming from the community, (3) people in the community and members of the church becoming better acquainted, (4) the backup of literature as witness where members fail to make an impact, and (5) friendships between members and potential converts, making for a smoother conversion process.

The new model proposed by this project entails employing means to keep baptism a focus throughout the year. Every member is being asked to make a commitment to disciple at least one person to the church every year. The project calls for the scheduling of a baptismal goal for each month with members being asked to make it a matter of prayer and commitment to fulfill this goal. The project further calls for an overall church goal for each year based on membership, allowances naturally being made for incapacitated members to work at their own pace. In addition to soul winning, the plan calls for heavier emphasis on retention programs in an effort to reduce the dropout rate of new members. The project calls for a campaign against preventable losses to be launched. This will increase awareness of missing and absentee new members during their initiation process.

A very important aspect of the project is the actual full implementation of the new model for public evangelism. Some specific recommendations emerging from the first stage of the project are as follows:

1. Invitations to public meetings needed to be sent out to the community earlier than two weeks in advance of beginning night.
2. There needed to be increased spending and focus on training church members to be Bible workers as well as more engagement of members during public meetings.
3. Public meetings would be most effective if held in neutral meeting places rather than the Sanctuary.
4. More emphasis needed to be placed on the recruitment of family and friends to attend evangelistic meetings.

5. Evangelistic meetings needed to include more opportunities for congregational participation in singing hymns rather than focusing primarily on featured guest singers.

6. Efforts needed to be made to add more of a revival spirit to the singing of gospel hymns.

7. The resident pastor needed to engage more actively with guests before, during, and after the meetings.

8. Follow-up study with potential new members needed to be more proactive and intense.

9. Better retention of new members would be obtained by drawing them into mentoring groups geared toward their specific needs.

10. Better results would be obtained from spending more time preparing candidates for baptism and Sabbath keeping.

11. It is important to take care in not prematurely performing baptisms.

12. It would need to be made very clear to baptismal candidates, especially those with dependents, that the church's primary obligation to any member is spiritual nurturing.

13. Literature distribution in the community would be more effective the more individual church members were encouraged to be personally involved in the process.

14. More lay involvement needed to be encouraged and lay training conducted in Bible study and Bible work.

15. Committees needed to be engaged in constant evaluation of the process and providing regular feedback to members.

16. Committees and sub-committees would need to further provide detailed reports regarding the results of the project to the church at regular intervals.

17. There needed to be a flexible attitude toward the revision of worship styles as necessary (to make it more culturally inclusive and engaging for various age groups). A children and youth service needed to begin in January 2005.

18. The church should celebrate its success, and “the priesthood of all believers” (1 Pet 2:9) will characterize the celebration.

It was determined after the first stage of the project that successful evangelism in the Silver Springs Shore community would entail efforts on the part of church members to build a more cohesive bond between themselves and the community. One major purpose of this project continues to be to help make that happen. It was determined that much emphasis needed to be placed on personal evangelism with each member of the church becoming actively engaged in building friendship ties within their neighborhood. Everyone must continue to work more closely with and diligently among their neighbors. This one-to-one approach minimizes dependence on leadership for church growth and makes each member feel more that he or she belongs and is accountable for soul winning in the church. This all naturally leads to a team spirit among its participants with each and every member feeling involved either directly or indirectly. Some members have been involved in the planning process, others have been involved in the implementation process, and those who have not been directly involved have supported the project through prayer and finances. The congregation thus far has been and will continue to be informed of the progress of each program that is implemented and will be asked to evaluate every level of success achieved in these programs. An important part of this

project is having the congregation agree on the programs from the beginning. This approach helps ensure team spirit among those who support programs and a greater satisfaction among those who play an active role in implementing them. Reggie McNeal explains that there is an advantage to the spiritual leader who is a team player:

The leader prepared for the challenge of the new century will be a learner. . . . Team approaches to ministry help satisfy the hunger of the community. Because team spirit captures the power of the community, it carries some significant benefits. Teams encourage and support the risk needed to bring about behavioral change. Teams create synergy both in formulating vision and in turning it into reality.¹

A team player must continue to broaden the base of leadership accountability and mentor associate leaders so that their responsibility will become less and the responsibility of the diligent few will not become overburdened with church work. They must train the congregation to work for souls and strive to make every member feel accountable for church growth. The expression the “priesthood of all believers,” found in 1 Pet 2:9, reflects this principle. Training is essential in the effort to make people feel capable of soul-winning efforts. The primary reason for non-involvement is fear of not knowing how to defend the truth. Furthermore, when members are made to feel accountable for new members, there tends to be less criticism of and less cynicism about failed programs.

Justification for the Project

The dissertation proposes relevant changes to the evangelistic approach of the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church in Florida. These changes are expected to enable the church to have greater success in its soul-winning efforts, both

¹Reggie McNeal, *A Work of Heart: Understanding How God Shapes Spiritual Leaders* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 73.

increasing baptisms and leading toward better retention of members. This goal is clearly in line with the disciple-making philosophy of the Seventh-day Adventist church. The Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church has been involved in building expansion programs over the past few years and is ready to accommodate the new members all Adventists are called upon to solicit. This dissertation will help them fulfill this goal.

Definition of Terms

In the context of this dissertation, the words *model*, *methods*, and *programs* are used interchangeably to refer to the proposed new approaches to public evangelism and membership retention.

Community of faith is a reference to the congregation of worshippers who share the same set of beliefs.

“*The priesthood of all believers*” is a biblical expression used by Peter in 1 Peter 2:9 that means making every believer become responsible to minister the gospel to those who still need conversion.

Laity refers to those within the congregation without pastoral training.

The terms *souls* and *soul winning* refer to the non-Adventists whom the church desires to see become members by conversion.

Context or *contextual* refer to the setting or situation being studied.

Adventist Truth refers to the gospel adopted by Adventism that is used in ministry.

The terms *socio-cultural* and *socio-economic* deal with the social climate in relation to culture or economics or finances relative to culture.

Mechanism is from the word *mechanics* and means the way things are done or by what method they are done.

Evangelistic tools relate to the material things used to get the job done during an evangelistic campaign.

Sabbath Field Days are Sabbaths when the church congregation goes out into the community to witness and to distribute literature, conduct surveys to find out Bible study interests among nonbelievers, and getting better acquainted with the community.

Revisioning evangelism means to give evangelism a new focus that is more relevant to the current need.

Limitations of the Dissertation

While the model developed by this project could clearly provide guidance to other churches, its target is much more specific. This project focuses on developing, implementing, and beginning evaluation of an evangelistic model that is adaptable specifically to the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church and its community for the purpose of getting better results in baptism from public meetings and better retention of members. The formation of the model developed by this project depends on the baptismal history of the church under study throughout the period 1994 to 2003 as well as other data. The full evaluation of the success of the project will require this same amount of time. Thus, this dissertation can determine its success only to a very limited degree.

Methodology

The first stage of the project was the planning and preparation of the model specifically designed for the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Sources in support of the research stage included a wide range of books written on church growth and development both from Adventist and non-Adventist perspectives. The James White Library was especially useful in providing resources on the subject of evangelism. The Bible and works by Ellen G. White also provided valuable insights and information. The Bible provided the basis for biblical motifs that illustrated certain methods of soul winning. And Ellen G. White's writings provided counsel on methods and approaches to evangelism. Other materials such as church records and community statistical reports, including those relative to population, employment, cultural mix, church-growth ratio, and nominal churches, were very useful. The Internet served as an important resource in the process of this project, providing access to community data and other relevant material.

Literature used for evangelism by the church over the focus period, from 1994 to 2003, was studied to see if the themes and messages were relevant and if there was any overlap. The speakers used during this period were analyzed to see if they had demonstrated creativity and if they had been appealing. Congregational participation during public meetings was explored to see if it revealed a high level of engagement. The structure of meetings was analyzed, looking at issues such as musical selections and format. This stage of the project also included work and research with members of the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church. Church committees helped assess membership growth, focusing on baptisms during the period from 1994 to 2003. Trained and experienced laity from the church were relied upon to evaluate the success rate of baptisms resulting from public and personal evangelism during this time period.

Once an initial plan was formulated, its implementation began. This stage included some of the following: The Personal Ministries Committee planned and organized field evangelism programs for the entire church membership. The church was organized into groups on designated Sabbaths to conduct surveys of the community as a first step toward increased engagement with non-church members. Training of the laity began, helping lay people become more ready and better equipped for both personal and public evangelism. Young people were empowered to initiate programs to attract other young people. They were given the latitude to plan their own youth programs and implement them with very little supervision. They were also generally given more leadership responsibilities in the church. Outreach programs for the community were developed and implemented and more public meetings were planned. Congregational participation in planning church programs, and membership accountability were encouraged. Combined lay efforts in public campaigns were encouraged so that soul winning would become a more shared joy of the congregation. New members were trained to work with experienced ones in witnessing.

The model proposed by this dissertation was designed to improve congregational participation by focusing on consistent engagement of church members in soul-winning efforts. It places heavy emphasis on making evangelism more exciting and attractive to members and visitors alike. It goes beyond recommending revisions of church programs themselves, however. It also encourages that strategies are planned that will circumvent some of the major problems of the community that contribute to the loss of members as well as the slow church membership growth. It recommends, for instance, that church members get involved in more networking within the community in order to help find

employment for new members (see chapter 2 for more on employment problems in the community).

Results

The first steps already taken toward implementation of the recommendations of this project have encouraging results. Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church members have demonstrated a willingness to get involved in more networking within the community in order to help find employment for new members. They have been successful in getting some members of the community to attend church services through friendship ministry and exchange visits to some of their church programs. The church member surveys have solicited interest in Bible studies and initiated contacts for literature. The Seventh-day Adventist biblically sound preaching and the friendship bonds between members of the church and their neighbors have made it much easier for many of the friends of the church to become converts to the Adventist church. The increase in outreach programs for the community has met with great success. There has been a high level of community and member participation in Summer Day Camps, Pathfinder Field Days, Vacation Bible School, and Field Trips. The participation in programs such as ones that combine the church's choir with choir members of other faiths, including participating in inter-denominational Christmas Carols and Easter Cantatas, has proven to be a source of spiritual revival for church members and a positive way of increasing awareness of the Adventist church in the community.

The increased number of public meetings seems to have renewed fellowship and worship among members. Furthermore, all church worship services have been made more exciting while remaining spiritually vibrant. The analysis of evangelistic literature

used during the period from 1994 to 2003 had revealed that there had been a constant overlap of materials used in the community so that the literature failed to spark new interest. The process of making the literature more relevant and appealing has begun. Revival singing has become an important and regular part of public meetings. The more vibrant engagement in the singing of hymns has been found to be more appealing to the audience than the previous emphasis on images projected on screens.

The training of the laity has made the church more ready and equipped for personal and public evangelism. The level of confidence has been raised among those who received the training to give Bible studies, solicit interest, and deal with objections. One very successful aspect of the evangelistic efforts of the laity has been the regular meetings during which members can share experiences with the group. They share stories of successful encounters with neighbors as well as stories of rejection. Oftentimes, humor has been very helpful in diffusing the embarrassment and frustration that might otherwise inhibit a member's ability to continue personal evangelistic endeavors.

The increased focus on young people has yielded positive results. As a part of this project, the church has made a deliberate effort to place capable young people in prominent leadership roles and has further given them wide latitude in planning their own worship styles and implementing programs that will attract more young people to the church. This new empowerment of young people has given rise to greater enthusiasm among them to recruit their friends to participate in church activities, which has in turn significantly increased the number of young church members as well as the attendance of services by young non-members. In fact, the turnout during youth programs is now much greater than during adult meetings. There is also greater involvement by non-member

peers from the community. Church leaders have begun to tap into the creative thinking of young minds while also drawing on their technical abilities in formulating new and more dynamic approaches to soul-winning and worship. One caveat must be offered here, however. It is not always easy to balance young people's demand for creativity with adults' demand to remain traditional. It is nonetheless incumbent on leaders in this generation to be aware of the fact that they have to address both issues of the generation gap, if they ever hope to keep the church attractive to young people in this generation. The Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church membership is primarily comprised of senior adult members, who were, especially initially, quite apprehensive about some of the young people's programs that were introduced by the project. With time, some of the apprehension dissipated and together some senior adults and younger people have been enjoying worshipping together.

If the church continues to see failures in the types of methods employed for evangelism and does nothing about it, the problem of decline will continue to persist. The goal of this project is to effect changes from the present level of dissatisfaction to a new level of satisfaction that will reflect the church's mission to fulfill Matt 28:19, "make disciples of all men." This project is all about empowering members to make disciples everywhere there is an opportunity. As a result of proposals made in the context of this project, the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church is currently aggressively pursuing changes in programs that will enhance growth at a more successful rate than any preceding period of public evangelism.

CHAPTER 2

PROFILE OF THE SILVER SPRINGS SHORES SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH AND ITS COMMUNITY

Evangelistic programs must necessarily take into consideration factors relating to the community in which a church is located. In light of this, the first part of the current chapter profiles the Silver Springs Shore Seventh-day Adventist Church relative to its location in the Silver Springs Shores community, a suburb of Ocala, located in Marion County, Florida. The second part of the chapter profiles the church itself in terms of its history, members, membership retention record, pastors, social climate, responses to change, and its spirituality.

Profile of the Silver Springs Shores Community

The Ocala area is famous for being the site of one of Florida's best citrus farming industries and for being horse-breeding country. It is also the location of the Silver Springs River, another central Florida featured attraction. Silver Springs Shores lies east of the city of Ocala and is approximately ten miles from the township. Ocala is not a very large city but is well known for its pristine beauty, low crime rate, low cost of living, and very good summer and winter climates. This mid-central city is in close proximity to some of Florida's great attraction sites, such as Disney World and Daytona Beach. The spread of the city and the land space for resident homes make the area very attractive to

people who want to get away from overcrowded city living and traffic congestion. Ocala has a population of approximately 46,000 living on an elevation of seventy-three feet and a land area of 38.6 square miles. The city is culturally diversified, featuring a fairly large racial mix (see Appendix A, Illustrations 3 and 4).¹ Ocala offers a more rustic atmosphere for a more peaceful living environment than that of a fast-paced metropolitan lifestyle.

One focus of this chapter is to examine factors in the Silver Springs Shores Church community that may have contributed to the problem of slow church growth over the period from 1994 to 2003. The chapter is divided into ten sections, each dealing with a different aspect of the church and its community. The sections offer an analytical view of the socio-cultural and socio-economic status of the Silver Springs Shores area. Because employment problems have played a major role in the rapid attrition rate of members in the community, a profile of employment in the community is offered. Other factors are explored, such as the impact of a strong church-going community. This chapter also offers a brief history of the church, an examination of church membership growth from 1994 to 2003, a look at the membership dropout rate of the church for the same period, the pastor turnover rate during the entire life of the church, the social status of the church, and how the congregation has responded to change since the implementation of the model proposed by this dissertation. Whether or not the factors under consideration have had a negative impact on church growth, an examination of them should help to determine the best approach to take in order to improve results in membership growth in the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church.

¹*Ocala, Florida: Detailed Profile, 2004*, <http://www.city-data.com/city/ocala-florida.html> (30 September 2004). (See this document for details on the population

An Analysis of the Data of the Socio-Economic and Socio-Cultural Status of the Church Community

The Community

The Silver Springs Shores Church is located in a multi-national community, and the church perfectly reflects the community with its unique blend of approximately twenty-seven nationalities. The community is also one with marked socio-cultural diversity and socio-economic disparity stemming from different socio-economic and socio-cultural groups.

The racial and national diversity in the community is divided as follows: non-Hispanic Whites make up 69.6 percent of the total population. Blacks make up 22.1 percent of the population, Hispanics, 3.9 percent, American Indians, 1.0 percent, with the final 3.4 percent of the population made up of other races. The non-Hispanic White population can further be divided into groups of descendants from Germany (17.3 percent), Ireland (13.7 percent), England (12.1 percent), the United States (15.7 percent), Italy (6.5 percent), and France (4.3 percent). Alien residents of the area make up the remainder of the population (13.9 percent).¹

While, historically, the population of the area initially grew at a slow pace, this changed due to the influx of people that began a number of years ago. Once the influx began and the population of the area began to increase, investors became part of those who came in as opportunists, purchasing uncultivated lands and developing them into

composition of Ocala and other related information relative to the area of square miles and elevation of the city.)

¹Ibid. (See this document for more information on the cultural and employment profiles of the population of Ocala.)

residential areas. As entrepreneurs began to invest more in the area, Ocala gradually developed into a well-established city. This further increased the influx of people. Today, the Ocala population is primarily made up of four social groups: (1) the indigenous people of the area, (2) the retirees, (3) the professional working class, and (4) immigrant workers. The indigenous groups are those who occupied the farm lands of the region before the region was developed into a city. Their ancestors can be traced back to early European settlers who came as investors to the region. People came to escape the overcrowded cities with their spiraling crime waves and or simply to escape cold northern climates. They also came for the generally high quality of life to be found in the area. A large number of the newcomers were, and continue to be, retirees migrating in from other parts in the country. The low price for land and the low cost of living made the region an attractive place for retirement. There was also an influx of professional working-class people. Some came to the area because of job transfers and others came in as entrepreneurs. A large part of the population is made up of what can be called immigrant workers. These people are largely hired by the farmers to work their farms on an annual basis.

The farming and horse industries deserve special attention as they have contributed much to the social, cultural, and economic structure of the region. The farm owners are ethnically diverse, as are the people they hire to work on the farms. It was this industry that initially attracted people to the region, and from its beginnings it was a racially mixed community. The region continued to develop and expand into a city attracting people of different nationalities, and until today the city has maintained its cultural diversity. The region is also noted for being one of the best horse-breeding areas

in the nation, and horse racing and horseback riding are popular sports and an economic strength to the region. The training of horses for horse racing and horseback riding creates jobs for immigrant workers who are part of the cultural mix of the region. The horse industry has also attracted people in the horse-racing business from all over the world. This influx of people coming to the area because of the farming and horse industries has made the region a climate for social interaction among many nationalities and is a big boost to the economy.

While the price for land in the area is rapidly increasing and the housing industry is also becoming a strong competition with many other developing counties, the affordable cost of living has continued to contribute to the cultural mix of the region. People who could not afford to own homes in overpopulated cities because of the escalating and exorbitant prices could afford to own decent, spaced-out homes in Ocala. Another contributor to the socio-cultural mix of the community was the large number of south Florida residents who evacuated south Florida in 1992 because of Hurricane Andrew. The hurricane devastated south Florida and a large population of socio-culturally mixed people came to Ocala.

One key feature of the region is that despite the economic differences between segments of the population, the various economic communities remain culturally diverse. In the end it is not culture that determines where one lives or one's status in the community, but rather socio-economic status. Social status in the Silver Springs Shores community is differentiated by wealth and professionalism. The upper social class distinguished themselves by their residences and their exclusive gated communities. Highly professional and economically well-off people live in houses with values starting

at \$500,000. Meanwhile, the median household income in Ocala in 2000 was \$30,888.00 while the median house value was \$77,600.00.¹

The Silver Springs Shores area is a suburban part of Ocala that in 2000, according to the latest census, had a population of 45,942. Of this number, 47.3 percent (or 21,726) were male and 52.7 percent (or 24,217) female. The population growth census reports that only 350 people were added to the Ocala population between 1997 and 2000. From the time of the 2000 census to the writing of this dissertation, there has been an increase in houses built within the area and the price of land has tripled. Although there is no available census report on the population growth since 2000, it is evident from the increase in traffic on the roads and the increase in homes built between 2000 until 2005 that the population increased by at least 25 percent during this period. As of 2000, the median age of the population was thirty-nine. The statistics show a relatively low number of younger residents. The pace of growth is constant and this has led to the rise in cost of living, and the price of land has been gradually increasing as the demand for land gets greater. Land price is becoming almost as competitive as more developed suburban communities within a hundred-mile radius of Ocala.

The region continues to attract more married people than singles. The Silver Springs Shores community is very family oriented. People with children are particularly attracted to the community because it provides a good shelter for parents who want to keep their young children away from the corrupting influence of crime and violence. The largest percentage of the population is married. Based on the 2000 census of the region

¹Ibid. (See this document for more details on the median household and income value in Ocala in 2000.)

48.8 percent of the adult population is married with 10.1 percent being widowed. Meanwhile, only 23.7 percent of the adult population is unmarried, 14.6 percent divorced, and 3.0 percent separated.¹ The community has a strong Christian orientation and marriage is generally strongly supported as are other traditional family values.

Relevance for the Church

While the social structure of the church in many ways reflects the community, in other ways, it is quite different. For instance, worshippers occupy the same pews despite their social class in the community. The challenge for a church in an area like that of Silver Springs Shore is to smoothly blend all the various cultures into the church programs. Not surprisingly, this often requires compromise. The blend of cultures in worship settings has always made ministry exciting and challenging for church leaders of every generation. Although some church leaders would rather pastor a one-culture church group, it is becoming more and more typical in urban America for pastors and church leaders to be called to serve in culturally mixed communities that reflect the matrix of society. In 2000, Eddie Gibbs meaningfully addressed this issue, writing:

The majority of church leaders through the Western world find themselves ministering in a rapidly changing cultural context that is both post-Christian and pluralistic. Consequently their outreach ministries are as cross-cultural as those of their more traditional missionary counterparts seeking to make Christ known in other parts of the world.²

A respect for cultural diversity is a necessary component of an effective religious leader. Too often, religious leaders intentionally or unintentionally try to transform

¹Ibid. (See this document for the marital profile of the Ocala population in 2000.)

²Gibbs, 27.

cultures within their congregational setting, but as Reggie McNeal puts it, “Culture also serves God’s purposes. He uses it to shape the hearts of leaders. Culture defines our connectedness to the world in which we live and defines our distinctiveness from it by its different components.”¹

Touching on the kind of relationship that should characterize the church in a culturally mixed community, Gibbs also wrote, “People who first learn how to live with themselves will have no problem living with others.”² It is in the church’s social setting that the community will most likely see how its members interact. If church members cannot live and relate well with their neighbors and co-workers, they will have difficulty witnessing to them. The community will also find it hard to disassociate members’ behavior from their church affiliation. Members in the church represent a segment of the community; therefore, a bad reflection of any member in the community will have a bad reflection on the church.

Gibbs continues: “Cultures permeate every aspect of life, and each culture provides its own lens through which people within the culture view the world around them. Culture defines what is normative and plausible among a group of people according to its worldview.”³ This is quite typical of the Silver Springs Shores community where the cultural structure is determinative by all of the fore-going factors that create such an attraction for the people living in the area. The cultural composition of the community inevitably affects the way programs of the church are planned. The

¹McNeal, 73.

²Gibbs, 139.

³Ibid., 27.

complexity of the community can be seen as what makes ministry in the region so unique and challenging.

Another specific area of concern for the Silver Springs Shores Church is the economic status of the specific members of the community who make up the church congregation. Not surprisingly in a largely retirement community, the majority of members of the Silver Springs Shores Church live on a fixed income. As retirees, they subsist on their Social Security benefits. This makes their contribution to the church very small, but many of them are very faithful and consistent with their weekly or monthly financial support to the church. Projects that require large financial support from members often have static response because it requires them to make greater sacrifices that many of them cannot afford. Sensitivity to members' financial status minimizes the number of appeals for financial support from these fixed-income members.

Financial projects of the church are supported several ways by members. Members often resort to soliciting funds from friends or relatives to support financial projects. The church would also venture out into fund-raising programs through small projects to finance bigger projects that require larger financing. By its fund-raising methods, the church was able to raise more than \$400,000 in less than four years to finance its new building project. This was quite a financial accomplishment for the church but the members were motivated to do it based on the urgent need of the building. The church budget continues to meet all its financial obligations but the finances are still not strong enough to take on new programs.

C. Kirk Hadaway points out that “the economic status of the community also seems to have an independent effect on church growth.”¹ This statement is quite applicable to the situation that exists in the Silver Springs Shores Church community. Members subsist mainly on retirement benefits and cannot afford to make large contributions to the church; therefore, the church has to plan its programs based on its economic viability. The community is not very liberal in giving to church programs either and this limits what financial risk the church can take in financing new projects that require large spending.

Examination of Employment Opportunities as a Stabilizing Factor for Church Members Transferring to Ocala

Employment is difficult to find in the Ocala area, especially for beginning professionals and non-professional, skilled workers. Entry-level salaries are very low compared to other counties in Florida. In fact, Marion County’s salary scale is rated among the lowest in the country. The economy is controlled by a few wealthy farmers and highly paid professionals. Although cost of living in the area has risen, the salary scale remains almost the same.

Some of the main industries that provide employment for the population include the following: educational, health and social services (23.1 percent); retail trade (13.3 percent); arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services (10.3 percent), and other departments making up the other percentage (53.4 percent). The radical influx of people and businesses into the area after 2000 has clearly changed the situation somewhat (see Appendix A, Illustration 5). Furthermore, the younger generation

¹C. Kirk Hadaway, *Church Growth Principles: Separating Fact from Fiction*

of farmers are also opening up avenues for change. Many of them are downsizing their farms and some are turning to other types of investments.

Although Silver Springs Shores is conveniently located only eleven odd miles from the center of Ocala (about a nineteen-minute commute), the job market in the area is slow, with a low turnover rate. It is thus nonetheless difficult to find employment while living in this community. Several other factors make the situation even more difficult for newcomers to the area. For one, there is a sort of monopoly by a certain business sector of the community that regulates the kind of enterprises coming to the area, and it tends to be the same set of employers in control and the same set of employees that contracts jobs in the community. If one is not already a member of either of these groups, it is very difficult to find work. The sole exception to this monopoly is among small private investors who can afford to hire only a few workers. Because of the overall situation, employees are very cautious about retaining their jobs, leading to a low rate of turnover.¹

Since most jobs in the area require professional training and skill, it is difficult for unskilled or non-professional workers to avoid having to rely on welfare. The closest, more developed cities that could help to alleviate some of the unemployment and economic problems that people living in the area face, lie at least ninety miles from Ocala. Commuting back and forth from any of these major cities can be difficult and expensive. It is clear that the unemployment problem has contributed a great deal to the

(Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1991), 200.

¹*Ocala, FL Business Data, 2004*, <http://www.city-data.com/business/econ-O-Florida.html> (September 30, 2004). (See this document for a detailed listing of employing industries, jobs, and matching salary scales.)

attrition rate of church members who are often forced to move away in order to find employment elsewhere.

The Religious and Educational Climate in the Community

There has recently been a paradigm shift in the community from farming to scholastics. This is largely due to the demands of newcomers to the area, but it is not limited to new residents. While the older generations of farmers and their offspring were not educationally motivated, higher education for the new generation now receives greater attention. Professionals who have moved into the area have been lobbying to raise the educational level of the local community college from a two-year degree college to a four-year degree college. This goal was achieved in 2004. While up to 2000, 70.1 percent or higher of the population achieved only a high-school diploma (19.4 percent earned a bachelor's degree or higher, only 6.5 percent earned graduate or professional degrees, and 4.0 percent went on to do post-graduate work), today the situation is much different and is continuing to change.¹

The community is very strongly religious as measured by church attendance. It is one of a few places with such a vast number of churches in such close proximity in proportion to the size of its population. The average church-going population may range anywhere from 80 - 90 percent. The strong church attendance may result from the large number of people with a strong religious background who have traditionally moved into the area upon retirement. The early retirement settlers coming to the area demonstrated a

¹*Ocala, Florida: Detailed Profile, 2004.* (See this document for further details on the educational profile of the population of Ocala up through 2000.)

commitment to a religious life and a deep conviction in their beliefs. Many of them have held fast to their commitment over the years.

The strong support of Christian schools in the area is evidence of the robust church-going community.¹ Three public high schools serve the area compared to five Christian academies. Ten elementary/middle public schools serve the Ocala area while there are ten Christian elementary/middle schools operated by churches (see Appendix A, Illustration 10). Furthermore, the number of church-operated schools is on the increase.² The strong emphasis on church-affiliated schools suggests that members of the community want to continue to build and maintain a highly religious and moral community.

While the community reflects a very cohesive social lifestyle, it is nonetheless deeply divided on religious issues. Even if younger generations are more open to change, the older generations (the majority of the population) tend to remain strongly committed to their church affiliations. In light of the intensely religious nature of the people in the community, it has proven to be a real challenge even to get people to attend evangelistic meetings that are sponsored by other denominations. The fact that people tend to be very defensive of their own beliefs makes it very difficult to help convert people to the Adventist faith.

¹Ibid. (See this document for a report on Ocala's school profile.)

²Ibid.

Church-Growth Patterns and the Unchurched Population in the
Community (1994 to 2003)

Writing in 1993, Stanley J. Grenz, Evangelical pastor and author, suggested that the Evangelical population of churchgoers is among the fastest growing in the nation. He commented on the unprecedented respectability of the Evangelicals within the last two decades and further stated that while Evangelical congregations are mushrooming, other more mainstream denominations are struggling to maintain their membership.¹ This reflects the situation in the Silver Springs Shores Community.

The success of the Evangelical movement in the area may be partly due to the manner in which congregations are formed and meet. Evangelical congregations seldom own their own buildings or become engaged in church building. Instead they often rent storefront buildings as worship centers. This method of church planting makes it much easier to establish churches at a faster rate than getting into the financing of building projects.

The Silver Springs Shores community has a high concentration of churches and churchgoers. The area has thirty-three churches, all within a one-mile radius of each other. While twenty-seven of these churches are more established, six are Evangelical storefront churches. Three of the six shopping centers in Silver Springs Shores community have Evangelical storefront churches, while one plaza has four such churches. Nine of the churches in the area were established sometime in the past ten years. Five of these were Evangelical churches. It is not only the Evangelical churches that are growing in number, however. A number of splinter groups from larger

¹Stanley J. Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology: A Fresh Start for the 21st Century* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1993), 15.

congregations have been starting their own churches. Currently, there are signs posted around the community indicating the coming of new congregations. In fact, several groups have contacted the Silver Springs Shores Church about rental of the building for Sunday services. Perhaps considering just how many people in the community regularly attend church, all of this is not surprising—even if the number of churches does seem excessive. More than 95 percent of the community's population attends church.

As one would expect, of special interest to churches are the less than 5 percent who do not attend religious services. While these people will occasionally go to church when invited to special events, they have demonstrated an unwillingness to commit to anything religious. Church days seem to conflict with their other interests, including sports, fellowship with friends, or work-related duties. The problem does not appear to be that they are unable to make commitments, however. While they tend to have readily available excuses for staying away from church, some of them have made strong commitments to secular things of interest to them. The reasons why they demonstrate an unwillingness to commit to church must be more complicated than this, but it is likely that some of the people who stay away from church may be doing so in reaction to bad experiences with the church or its members.

It is nonetheless reassuring that so many of them are willing to attend church functions when befriended by church members. It may be that this segment of the population would be more easily converted to Seventh-day Adventism than members of the community who already have strong religious affiliations. My experience has shown that people who already hold religious beliefs not only tend to be quite resistant to changing their religious affiliation, but also they usually have many serious questions

about the changes they will have to make in their lives. In short, while the unchurched are more resistant to evangelistic efforts than their church-going counterparts, once they show interest, they are less concerned about the changes a religious affiliation will entail and more inclined fully to accept the truths to which they have been exposed. The special difficulties in converting people to Seventh-day Adventism generally result from people's attachment to another religious group: its particular place of worship, its community, and its doctrines. For these reasons, the unchurched population in the community is of special interest to the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Attracting new members will entail a focus on organization, commitment, and consistency in pattern of worship and doctrine. According to C. Kirk Hadaway, "commitment that keeps people coming back week after week" is key to a church's success and growth. This "generally takes more than a 'wonderful' worship service," continues Hadaway. "Warm fellowship, concern for one another, opportunities for meaningful service, and seriousness about learning" are key to making members feel that the church is a place they want to be.¹ It is important that prospective new members find this kind of environment in the church if they too are going to want to commit themselves to a new religious affiliation.

Profile of the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church

A Brief History of the Church

The Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church grew out of a forty-five-member Branch Sabbath School class affiliated with the Ocala Seventh-day

¹Hadaway, 195-196.

Adventist Church. The reason for starting a new church was two-fold: (1) The Silver Springs Shores Community was rapidly expanding, and the perception was that it needed its own Seventh-day Adventist Church; and (2) some of the members involved in the split were unhappy with their reception at the Ocala church including their exclusion from participation in many of the worship activities. The first official service of the new church took place in a rented building on August 10, 1985. The first person to officiate in the church services was C. C. Weiss, a retired pastor. The small group of members were excited about their new church and energetically began their journey of faith. Their first project was a plan for a new church building.

The generous donation of \$500 by one of the new members began the nucleus of blessings that would grow into the final building fund. The infant church moved from one rental building to another as it accumulated funds to build its own church. In 1987, it founded its permanent place of worship. The celebration of their new church building commenced with a police motorcade that escorted the members from their rental building to the grand opening of the sanctuary on June 20, 1987.

The story of the beginning of the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church is truly remarkable. The determination of the few faithful members and the leading of the Holy Spirit brought the church into being out of three years of slumbering recess of dreams into a reality of hope. Some members sold property, donating portions to the acquisition of the church. Others gave from their savings. Finally, the actual erection of the church building was completed by the Maranatha Flight Volunteer Builders. It was like the early church of Acts 2 where the believers sold all that they had

and shared or distributed what they acquired from the sale of their property so that the work of the gospel could be enhanced.

The few members who began the Silver Springs Shores Church were initially able to raise \$25,000 to purchase the land for the church. Within another short span of time, they raised an additional \$45,000 or more to commence the building. It was the providential leading of the Holy Spirit that made it possible for the members to occupy the church building with complete furnishings three years after the project began.

Since C.C. Weiss, a number of pastors have provided leadership in the church: Pastor Glen Holland, 1987-1988; Pastor LeRoy Albers, 1988-1989; Pastor Wayne Niemeyer, 1989-1995; myself, 1995-present. The dynamic leadership of these pastors led to the expansion of the church and gave rise to the need to start a private church school to serve members with school-age children. The school opened in 1991, serving the members' children until 1995 when it was closed due to lack of financial support.

The early church group was multi-cultural and the church continues to be so today. The cohesive beginning of this ethnic group is just as strongly represented today, and the church body continues to be purpose driven. The church membership grew from 45 to 215 between 1987 and 1993 when the church first experienced internal conflicts. Members began to be dissatisfied with the church's leadership and gradually began to drift apart. Some members transferred to other congregations. By 1995, the divide among membership over leadership required the intervention of conference personnel. The dispute was eventually resolved with the transfer of the pastor, but church membership had decreased. The church gradually recovered from this membership loss but continues to be afflicted by a high membership attrition rate. The present church members are very

resilient and are determined to recreate history for the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church by making evangelism a focus for church growth. The church is hoping to become the most attractive soul-winning church in the community.

Examination of the Church's Membership Data (1994 to 2003)

The membership growth pattern for the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church between 1994 and 2003 has been up and down, with the most consistent pattern being from 1994 to 1997. Quite often the number of members dropped from the church record in a given year has exceeded the number of members gained for that same year. From 1994 to 2003, while a total of 171 members were added to the church, 143 members were lost. The following is a year-by-year description of the church's efforts to promote membership growth during the ten-year period of primary focus in this study.

In 1994, the total membership added to the church was sixteen while the total number of members dropped was nine. This represented a loss of more than half the gain in that year. Nine of the sixteen new members were added to the church through baptism, one by profession of faith, and six by letter transfer. Three of those who dropped out did so through letter transfer, two by death, and four by apostasy. The 1994 baptisms were a result of lay efforts as no public evangelistic program was held that year. By the end of that year, church membership was at 187, making a total membership increase of seven from the previous year.

The next year began a new adventure in public evangelism. In 1995, the very successful Seventh-day Adventist Net 95 Broadcast featuring tele-evangelist Mark Finley reached a phenomenal number of viewers across North America and around the world,

including a wide range of non-Adventists. Baptismal results for that year in many Adventist churches were tremendous, but for the Silver Springs Shores Church, it was nothing more than the usual. Despite all the attention given to soul winning in 1995, only four members were added to the church through baptism. The year ended with a total membership of 193, an increase of six members.

In 1996, Mark Finley conducted his second tele-evangelistic broadcast, but, again, the baptismal results for the Silver Springs Shores Church were minimal. Shortly after the Net downlink, another evangelistic event was held by a guest evangelist from the Florida Seventh-day Adventist Conference. Again, the resulting number of baptisms was minimal. Twenty-seven members were added to the church that year, twenty-one of whom became members through baptism and six by letter transfer. In 1996, church membership went up from one 193 to 209.

In 1997, the Silver Springs Shores Church saw its first membership decrease during the time frame under study. This was also the year that clear fluctuations in the membership growth pattern began, a pattern that reflects the difficulty in maintaining stability of membership in the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church. That year, the church gained fifteen members through baptism, three by profession of faith, and four by letter transfer. But, that same year, the number of church dropouts exceeded this number of members gained. The result was that overall church membership had fallen by the end of 1997 from its 1996 level.

The most significant year of membership growth, during the time frame under study, was 1998. Twenty-two new members were added to the church through baptism,

ten by letter transfer, and one by profession of faith. While the previous year had ended with a total of 207 members, 1998 ended with a total membership of 231.

In 1999, the church took a break from public meetings in order to focus more on the lives of church families. The Family Life department sponsored a successful two-week Family Life Seminar, and, that year, the church baptized seven new members and added another six members by letter transfer. The year ended with a total membership of 230, having had a number of dropouts.

The next year, the church benefited from the 2000 Net Broadcast and an evangelistic meeting, both held by Doug Batchelor. That year, three new members were baptized into the church, ten came in through letter transfer, and two joined the church by profession of faith. The fifteen new members balanced against dropouts left the church with a membership of 232 by the end of 2000.

In 2001, Evangelist Richard Halverson conducted a Field Evangelism Campaign for the Ocala area assisted by students from Southern Adventist University. Three churches hosted the meetings: the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church, the Ocala SDA Church, and the Belleview SDA Church. Three members were added to the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church from that effort. The church baptized an additional three members that year, six came in by letter transfer, and one by profession of faith, making the total addition for that year, thirteen. The number of dropouts that same year exceeded the number of members gained, and 2001 ended with church membership at 228.

The next year of significant membership loss for the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church was 2002. Although, the church took advantage of another downlink broadcast coming out of Canada, no baptisms resulted. Three new members did join the church

through letter transfer, however. Taking into account all the dropouts, the year ended with a total membership of 214.

The final year under consideration is 2003. That year the church added a total of sixteen members: six were baptized into the church and ten came in by letter transfer. That same year, however, the church sustained a loss of twenty-two members.

As is clear from the above data, what has most severely affected membership growth in the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church is the alarming dropout rate. If the steady growth over the years had not been counterbalanced by the rapid dropout rate, the pattern of church growth would be reason for optimism. Clearly, the church urgently needed to implement a better evangelistic working model that would both promote membership growth and retain members.

In response to the situation, it is important not to fall into what Howard Hanchey calls a static triumphalism, a thinking that “the way things are is the way they ought to be.”¹ This type of mind-set stifles church growth. Church maintenance is important, of course, but as long as the work of mission has been accomplished. If the focus is exclusively on maintenance when there is still a mission to be accomplished, this counters the mandate given by Jesus in Matt 28:19, 20. According to Hanchey, this is precisely the root cause for growth failures in many churches. “The more church members and spiritual leaders obsessively cling to the way things are now, that is, the

¹Howard Hanchey, *Church Growth and the Power of Evangelism: Ideas That Work* (Cambridge, MA: Crowley Publication, 1990), 20.

status quo, the less able they become to respond to the many opportunities God is placing before them.”¹ Hanchey continues as follows:

Static triumphalism tends to win in older denominations. . . . To apply a farming image used by Jesus in the Gospels: The more we fill our personal barns-no matter what those barns may be and what they may contain-with the good things that matter to us, the more that self-absorption will characterize our common life (Luke 12:16-21).²

Clearly, maintenance alone will not suffice for either spiritual or numerical growth. Achieving healthy church growth entails a balance between evangelism and maintenance. Furthermore, when church members become involved in the work of evangelism, they directly help to increase membership and also receive personal blessings in the process. The nurturing of new members leads to greater fulfillment in church life.

Study of the Church's Membership Dropout Rate

As shown above, the membership dropout rate of the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church has contributed to the constant decline in membership since 1993. The average membership increase per year is eighteen: eight who became members by letter transfer, eight by baptism, and two by profession of faith. At the same time, each year, on average, the church loses twenty members: six through letter transfer, two by apostasy, four who simply are absent or missing, four by death, and four who go off to college. This trend could continue well into the twenty-first century if something is not done to minimize the problem.

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 21.

The many factors negatively affecting growth and stability in the region make it a real challenge to maintain membership stability in the church. The economic situation of the community is a primary contributing factor to the dropout rate of members.

Employment opportunities are very low in the Ocala area, and if this does not change in order to accommodate the influx of people coming to the area to live, the church will continue to see this dropout trend. There is not much the church can do to address this problem. Significant change in this area can only come when the region begins to have more established corporations and more investors. The church is limited to widening its influence in the employment arena through networking in order to help members find employment. Currently, the church has some employment agencies that it has worked through to obtain employment for some newcomers to its fellowship.

Another contributing factor to the church's dropout rate is the loss of members through death. The death ratio is high precisely because the region attracts a high number of retirees who in turn make up a large percentage of the church membership.

Approximately 90 percent of church members are retirees. Some years, the four members that the church loses through death represent half the membership gain.

Pastor Turnover in the Church

The church has had five pastors since its establishment in 1987, with two of them serving during the period under study (1994-2003). The first of these two served for six years, which is a good tenure for any pastor in that district. Having always had a high pastoral turnover rate, it took the church some time to get adjusted to a long pastoral tenure, however. After the first of these two pastors was transferred, the district was changed from a two-church to a one-church district. During the long break before a new

pastor was brought in for the district, the church was pastored by interim office personnel from the Florida Seventh-day Adventist Conference. As the current pastor, I am the first Black pastor in the history of the church.

A pastor/membership conflict in 1995 led to a membership split in the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church. This conflict stemmed from culturally different perspectives on the part of the pastor and the members regarding church administration as well as ministry. The predominantly West Indian congregation perceived the pastoral role and associate church leaders differently from the way the White American pastor saw these same roles.

Hadaway suggests that a church with a vision of growth and mission must have a pastor who fits that profile. He adds that profiling church and pastor according to ethnicity also often leads to the best results in soul winning. Profiling pastors according to the congregation's needs is important for its vision for growth. Furthermore, argues Hadaway, the pastor must "fit the model as a catalytic leader." He continues:

Most specifically a church should look for someone with a vision and who understands how to work with and lead people in a loving and encouraging way. This sort of pastor is interested in developing people and in allowing them and empowering them to use their gifts. The catalytic pastor cares about people and is available to offer them counsel, but does not allow his or her church to drift aimlessly.¹

Hadaway's comments regarding the pastor fitting the profile of the church seem to be right on target. The cause for failures in church growth sometimes depend to a large extent on the type of leadership it has. Choosing a pastor to match the congregation's needs can be essential to the success of a church. If a pastor enters a church that has a

¹Hadaway, 197.

vision for building, he would do well to fit that profile, and the same is true for any other aspect of ministry within the church. Success to any church is contingent upon the meshing of the leadership and the profile of his or her congregation. Conflict in leadership and congregational needs often affect the process of growth in churches, especially when there is a long tenure of service.

The Social Climate of the Church

The church atmosphere is inviting to all, and visitors are made to feel very welcomed, receiving friendly greetings from the ushers and greeters as well as the general church members. An official congregational greeting time is also held during every church service. During this greeting time, a special greeting song is sung by the congregation, and members move among the pews, greeting one another and the guests—who have been identified by the church clerk and the pastor.

Church members are regularly and actively involved in the church's recreational programs which involve youth and adults together. A Social Committee plans weekend social activities. The Family Life Department keeps the church busy with field trips. Pathfinders keep the membership busy on activities such as walkathons and bikathons. And the Sabbath School and Adventist Youth Departments keep the church active with picnics and community services. The church holds regular pot-luck and fellowship dinners for members and visitors alike. Member support for and involvement in these programs is usually very strong.

The social aspect of life is very important and is closely tied to the emotional. The social life of the family, the church, and the community will help to keep an emotional balance. As Richard Swenson puts it:

Whether family and friends or community and church, the existence of intact, functioning, healthy nurturing systems of social support are as good a resource for replenishing depleted energy reserves as can be found. Love, affection, nurturing, intimacy, connectedness, bonding, attachment, empathy, and community . . . these are “feel good” words for a reason: because they are good.¹

The majority of the church’s members have shown themselves to be honest and resilient when there are difficult circumstances facing the church. They have learned from past experience to stand firm together in defense of what is right. As Ellen White says, “Stand for the right though the heavens fall.”² The church has had its share of adversity, which has emotionally shaken some of the members, but the members as a whole have stood firm together and have drawn emotional strength from one another. In 1994, the church was faced with some difficulties, but the majority of the members faced the struggle with confidence that the Lord would get the church out of its dilemma. In the end, the church did triumph. Shortly thereafter, the church was faced with another crisis that caused the above-mentioned division in membership. A large percentage of the members left the church, and those who remained had to deal with their resultant emotional pain. It was the task of the new pastor to restore emotional energy to the church members.

The high death rate of members is another source of emotional stress for the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church. The church regularly provides overwhelming support for its bereaved members, which often helps people gain the emotional strength for a smooth return to their normal lives.

¹Swenson, 111, 112.

²Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1952), 57.

During my tenure as pastor, there has been no major confrontation among members over church issues. Even during the election of church officers, usually a tumultuous and divisive time for churches, members have demonstrated remarkable strength of character. While there are at times disagreements on issues during church board and member meetings, the atmosphere always remains cordial, and it is actually a delight to chair these meetings.

The Congregation's Response to Change

In *Leading Congregational Change*, Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem, and James Furr deal with understanding the dynamics of change for leadership in the twenty-first century. They argue, based on shared experience, that it is somewhat unrealistic to expect to make changes without anticipating conflict. Even in biblical times, God's people were often resistant to God's proposed changes. Certainly, it should not be surprising to see the same thing happening in the twenty-first century.¹

The situation in the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church is perhaps even more pronounced. Any church congregation that has a membership overwhelmingly made up of retirees can expect to have the majority of the congregation strongly resistant to change. Older members tend to be more steeped in tradition than their younger counterparts. Furthermore, change for the elderly is often very frightening as it represents starting all over again. Especially for the sake of the elderly, members should be helped to understand the reasons for and the dynamics of any necessary change. As much as

¹Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem, and James H. Furr, *Leading Congregational Change* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 7.

possible, they must also be involved in the process of change. Furthermore, change must be slow and gradual.

As explained by C. Kirk Hadaway in *Church Growth Principles*, “Evangelistic outreach and recruitment are the primary methods through which plateaued churches achieve breakout growth and are the primary ways that growing churches continue to grow.”¹ At the same time, he continues,

The age structure of a congregation has an impact almost as great as that of evangelism. . . . Churches that are dominated by older adults are much less likely to grow than are churches dominated by baby boomers (or churches that are not dominated by any one age group). . . .

For churches which are currently dominated by older adults, however, the future is not bright, and it is no surprise that few are growing. . . . Once a church reaches the point where it is dominated by older adults; it has long since lost the ability to attract younger persons. There are usually no programs to attract younger adults and sometimes very few resources for children and youth. . . . Churches dominated by older adults will less likely meet the needs of potential members who are younger than the current membership.²

When the proposal to build a new fellowship hall and to renovate the sanctuary was first presented to the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church congregation, church members initially responded negatively to the immediacy of the need for such a large building project, with one of their primary concerns being finances. After much discourse on the benefit to the church and the presentation of a good financial explanation of its financing, however, the proposal received overwhelming approval. Plans went into effect immediately. Members of the congregation had needed to understand the nature of the program and its objectives before they could become committed to the venture. The greatest success of any program depends upon good timing, proper planning, and support.

¹Hadaway, 193.

²Ibid., 194.

“All churches are not created equal,” says Hadaway, and because each church has to be taken according to its context, there are some things that may not be able to change by time or circumstances. Nonetheless, generally, that which cannot be changed can either be overcome or exploited.¹ “Whether a church is overcoming its settings or not, that setting has an effect on the church. . . . From a growth perspective, the setting (as well as the age of the church) makes it that much easier or that much harder for a church to grow.”²

“What cannot be changed can be overcome”: this suggests exactly what this project proposes to do in its approach to change, so that growth may be fully realized and maximized in the Silver Springs Shores Church over the next ten years.

Spiritual Renewal in the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church

The Silver Springs Shores SDA Church has always sensed its need for spiritual renewal. Sometimes it is quite easy to get sidetracked by planning and implementing church-building programs, finances, and other church-related programs and forget the most important source of vitality for the church, that is, spiritual renewal. It is important that time and emphasis are consistently put into planning new evangelistic approaches that can galvanize the need for spiritual renewal among the congregation and soul winning for the years to come. The last evangelistic campaign was conducted at the church by the Southern Union Evangelists in September and October of 2004. There was quite an experience of spiritual renewal and soul winning in the church as a result.

¹Ibid., 200.

²Ibid.

Nineteen prominent members of the church renewed their covenant with the Lord, and twenty-nine members were committed to church membership by baptism. It was truly a time of spiritual refreshing for the church.

CHAPTER 3

A THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR EVANGELISTIC RENEWAL AT THE SILVER SPRINGS SHORES SDA CHURCH

Introduction

The current chapter deals with formulating a biblically based evangelistic renewal program for the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church. Preaching the gospel as a vehicle for church growth stems back to the early Christian Church, and to the evangelistic efforts of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus Christ. In Acts 2, we find theological support for renewal through the preaching of the Word on the day of Pentecost. In Acts, we are told that when the Word is preached by individuals empowered by the Holy Spirit, church growth will soar to unimaginable proportions. Still today, as so well put by C. Kirk Hadaway, “evangelism remains the strongest predictor of church growth and spiritual renewal.”¹

Evangelism is to the church as fuel is to a locomotive. It energizes the church spiritually and keeps it mobile. Evangelism revitalizes the church and keeps in the forefront of members’ minds such characteristics of the church as eternity, unity, purity, harmony, diligence in Christian service, brotherhood, piety, and all the virtues of Christian living. Evangelistic renewal is probably the single most effective means of

¹Hadaway, 192.

helping draw a person toward an experiential encounter with Christ. It revitalizes and rejuvenates a person, as well as reaffirms and reiterates what needs to be done in the process of seeking a personal relationship with Christ.

The spiritual renewal experienced by the members of the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church has provided evidence of the benefits of evangelistic preaching. When the church members have been spiritually cemented by evangelistic renewal, they have tended to remain united in Christ. Something happens when a desiring heart hears the Gospel presented in new and exciting ways, even if it is the same message repeated. When people respond excitedly to the Gospel and make decisions for Christ through the spoken word, there seems to be a higher level of spiritual renewal within the body of believers. This “call[s] us to move beyond surface living into deep spiritual living,” writes Richard J. Foster. “Superficiality is the curse of our age,” and “the doctrine of instant satisfaction is a primary spiritual problem.” As aptly put by Foster, more than “a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people,” what we need today are “spiritually deep people.”¹

Spiritual renewal invites the Christian to experience a new level of relationship with Christ. It is an experience that every believer should have because it is the transforming agent in the believer’s life that makes him or her become more like Christ in character. Richard Foster describes spiritual renewal as the doorway to liberation from the haunting fears of worthlessness and inadequacy. It is God who gives us spiritual renewal when we receive His grace, and by receiving God’s grace, the believer can be

¹Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1978), 9.

transformed by God.¹ Leo Tolstoy writes, “Everybody thinks of changing humanity and nobody thinks of changing himself.”² Foster takes this up and admonishes believers to

be among those who believe that the inner transformation of our lives is a goal worthy of our best efforts. . . . Jesus taught that we must go beyond the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees (Mat 5:20). . . . Thus the extent to which we have gone beyond the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees is seen in how much our lives demonstrate the internal work of God upon the heart.³

Spiritual renewal can be a painful process for some while for others it may be the most exhilarating experience of their lives. It all depends on the circumstances that bring about spiritual renewal. Sometimes an individual may experience it because of tragedy in his or her life. Sometimes the experience may come from a time of evangelistic experience within a church setting, or it may be from a relationship with someone. However it may happen, it is a union of the individual and the Holy Spirit. And whether or not the necessary growth is painful, individuals and churches necessarily benefit from the growth and renewal. As Howard Snyder puts it in the foreword of Jerram Barnes’s book, *Shepherd and Sheep* the sometimes painful growth involved in spiritual renewal “is part of the cost of embracing the Spirit’s renewing work in the church today.”⁴

“Evangelism and renewal are at their foundations,” writes Michael Gleason, “sovereign work of the triune God. The church’s response is to maintain an attitude of

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 8.

⁴Jerram Barrs, *Shepherds and Sheep: A Biblical View of Leading and Following* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1983), foreword.

dependency in prayer and in works of obedient service.”¹ Acts 2:42-47 is a classic example of evangelism and spiritual renewal taking place simultaneously. As the disciples evangelized Jerusalem, the multitude of listeners marveled at what was taking place around them, and the Bible records that within that single day, over three thousand souls were added to the church. Not only was it a day of phenomenal evangelistic outreach but it was also a day of phenomenal growth and great spiritual renewal for the early church.

It is important to keep in mind that evangelistic efforts should be deliberate in targeting specific needs of individuals or groups. Michael Gleason observes that the success of the New Testament church was partly because the church “used a variety of evangelistic activities and methods,” most being “chosen to meet specific physical, spiritual, or emotional needs of individuals or groups it was attempting to reach.”² Renewal may take place in three ways, according to Gleason. These are renewal through small groups, renewal through support groups and outreach ministries, and renewal through relationships. Effective support groups and outreach ministries work with specific needs of the community, which, again, is a key part of successful evangelism.³ Furthermore, example is important. People are often renewed when they observe other people whose lives have been transformed by Christ. Spiritual renewal is the life blood of the church and of the Christian’s life. It is the foundation of faith in God and the only

¹Michael Gleason, *Building on Living Stones: New Testament Patterns and Principles of Renewal* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1996), 15.

²Ibid., 17.

³Ibid., 53.

substantial evidence that conversion has taken place.¹ It is spiritual renewal within the body of believers that will witness to the latter day outpouring of the Holy Spirit according to Joel 2:28.

The Biblical Model for Shepherding

The Bible is replete with the concept of Shepherding. It is a biblical terminology often used in association with the people of God and those who assume pastoral care of them. The author of Psalms uses the terminology to refer to his own experience as a sheep-herder and even to the point where he made the transition from being a shepherd to a king and spiritual leader for the people of God.

It is important that shepherds keep perspective, however, and do not try to assume more power than God intended them to have. Barrs discusses the kinds of inappropriate behavior in which past concepts of shepherding resulted, all in the name of authority. Too often spiritual leaders set themselves up as demigods and misapply the “priesthood of all believers” (1 Pet 2:9) concept to sustain their folly. To counter this, writes Barrs, “the church must seek its direction and authority not primarily in leadership structures but in the authority of Scripture interpreted by the collective sensitivity and maturity of the whole body of Christ . . . guided by the Holy Spirit.”²

Sometimes churches become so steeped in tradition that the truth becomes hidden in their worship services, and the members cannot see the subtlety of such power over them. All worshippers are longing for reality, but conformism, legalism, lack of

¹Ibid.

²Barrs, 84.

commitment, and spiritual unreality are real problems for churches today and sometimes these problems frustrate and estrange many believers.¹ Many worshippers have fallen for popularity rather than the truth. Since in this way they can never find satisfaction, they end up having to continue their search for it. Where truth is lacking there is a longing of the soul. As the Bible says, “You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free” (John 8:31-32).

Spiritual fulfillment comes only after truth has been found and embraced. In Eph 4:14-16, Paul says that the promises of life come to a believer after accepting biblical truth. Barrs writes that “when the church functions as Paul describes it in Ephesians 4, . . . members will be built up into maturity in truth and love, united with the church’s Head, Christ.”² Shepherding calls for spiritual discipline. The one doing the shepherding must set the pace for those who are following. He or she must set the spiritual tone. The sheep are always looking for shepherds they can trust to lead them safely into “green pastures,” as the Psalmist declares in Ps 23.

The most explicit Old Testament motif on shepherding of sheep is found in the book of Psalms. The shepherd-king motif that is prevalent therein, and clearly reveals an ancient concept that is representative of the kind of nurturing that was entrusted to a king or a spiritual leader, as seen in Old Testament literature. Thus, the Psalmist in Ps 77:21 describes Yahweh as a Shepherd-king when he says, “Yahweh led His people through the wilderness like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.” And the book of Samuel

¹Ibid., 24.

²Ibid., 59.

reveals a similar motif: "He gave the shepherding of His people to David" (2 Sam 5:2; 7-8).¹

Other Old Testament motifs are found in Jer 23:1, where Jeremiah talks about unworthy shepherds scattered God's sheep, Ezek 34:7-10, that says the unworthy shepherd feeds on the sheep, and Isa 40:11 a reference to Jesus the shepherd Who will feed His flock and take special care of His lambs. There are numerous other passages with the shepherd-king motif, and each one reveals the common thread of nurturing the flock or sheep. The contrast is very clear between the two kinds of shepherds, one whose acts are deceitful and wicked and the other whose acts are representative of the Shepherd-King Jesus. The good shepherds are those who have led God's people aright and have provided shelter and security for the sheep.² Interestingly enough, the shepherd-king metaphor is also popular in ancient near-eastern literature. In fact, the shepherd-king figure is common to practically all ancient literature. In all cases, the shepherd-king leads, protects, provides for the physical needs of, brings fertility to, and provides watchful care for the sheep, so that they may prosper. The most fundamental presupposition that is clearly evident in the Old Testament is the concept that the righteous shepherd-king is the instrument to bring deliverance from distress to the sheep.³

We also find the shepherd-god motif in the Old Testament. The shepherd-god concept is that which designates Yahweh as the Shepherd of the flock. He is seen as the

¹Ferris Lee McDaniel, "The Relationship Between the Shepherd and Banquet Motifs of Psalm 23" (Ph.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1987), 39.

²Ibid., 41.

³Ibid., 42-50.

ultimate shepherd who gives the responsibility to His under-shepherds. “The most extended use of the shepherd-god motif in the Old Testament is in Ezekiel 34:13-16. The use of shepherding words in this chapter demonstrates that this is a major theme and provides the most extensive inventory of divine shepherding activities.”¹

David’s most classic Psalm on the shepherd-god motif is Ps 23. This Psalm declares the activities and responsibilities of the shepherd-god as leading, protecting, providing for the needs of His sheep, and relieving their distress completely. The fact that the shepherd takes such special interest in the nurturing of his sheep suggests that they will not lack anything needed in order to remain free from distress. This is both a comforting and a sobering thought for pastors. Pastors must transmit to their congregations by their own personal demonstration of confidence in a distress-free life that they are in the care of the Good Shepherd Who will lead them only to “green pastures.” The concept of shepherd or sheep-herding that is commonly used to apply to the role of the pastor and his congregation is an extrapolation from the ancient concept of shepherd-god and shepherd-king leadership role. Scripture applies the concept to Moses and Aaron and other biblical characters as under-shepherds. The same concept of awesome and sacred trust and responsibility is entrusted to pastors and spiritual leaders who find themselves in the same leadership role.

The terms shepherd and sheep are not as commonly referenced in the New Testament as they are in the Old Testament, but the concept or principle of shepherding has the same connotation in the New as in the Old Testament. In both, it connotes disciple, discipling, and witnessing. The commissioning of the disciples in the New

¹ Ibid., 62.

Testament to go and make disciples and for the shepherds to care for the sheep is the same in principle. And the terms overseer, disciple, and servant carry the same motif as shepherding. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, in 1 Cor 14:1, 3, 39, saying that every one should desire the gift of prophecy, he actually meant for them to get their authority from the Holy Spirit to spiritually nurture the church. Looking at Acts 20:23; 21:11, the concept of responsibility is very evident. Although the idea of prophecy is quite pronounced in these texts, the concept of responsibility to strengthen, encourage, and comfort is also very evident. As Barrs says when commenting on Paul's understanding of the gifts of prophecy in Acts 21:4,12-14: "Paul does not question the accuracy of prediction. He even confirms it. He does not, however, regard the prophet's demands that he go to Jerusalem as a command from the Spirit; he sees them as the people's human conclusion from what the Spirit had revealed."¹

The word pastor and shepherd are synonymous with respect to responsibility to people and congregations. Both words derive their meaning from the biblical motif of care-giving. A pastor or a shepherd is expected to give care to those for whom he or she is responsible. A shepherd must be one who loves the sheep and has a passion to see them nurtured with tender loving care. It is the only safeguard against abuse. We read in Matt 9:36, "Jesus saw the people and had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." A shepherd, therefore, is one who is responsible for the pastoral care of the flock. Benjamin Coe references the shepherd's care of his flock this way:

The pastor/shepherd can see his congregation from two points of view: as a group and as individuals. What he sees in private contacts with them is probable the clearest

¹Barrs, 84.

picture of all. They are yearning, searching, errant, indifferent, loyal or resistant, needy or self-sufficient. They are the tears and wheat, a loving friend or a troublemaker, a prime complainer or supporter. He may counsel with a fearful mother, a wayward child, a faithless couple, a lonely widow, or a person crying in the wilderness. But most of all, if he is a true shepherd to his sheep, he will see a group that sorely needs his help. They are his flock, a needy people, some loyal, some forgiving, God's forever family. Collectively they are a conglomerate, worshippers together, often pagan on week days but still searching for the way.¹

Thus Jesus makes the claim to being a shepherd: "I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd gives his life for his sheep" (John 10:14). The shepherd leads, feeds, and protects his sheep, and the disciple does the same. In 2 Tim 2:2, Paul emphasizes the role of his under-shepherd Timothy by admonishing him to take note of the things he said and did so that he would be able to commit the same unto reliable and capable men.

Discipleship for Jesus and the apostles was meant to have a domino effect. Along with commissioning others was the responsibility to continue to oversee the flock. Paul cites another classic example of shepherding or discipling in 1 Thess 1:5-7. Here Paul says:

Our gospel came to you with not only words but with power through the Holy Spirit Who brings deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord Jesus; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia.²

The shepherd motif in the New Testament runs parallel to that in the Old Testament, with a difference only in wording. The shepherd nurtures the sheep until they are matured for reproduction. In the same sense, the pastor feeds the flock spiritually, brings them to maturity, and empowers them to produce. The primary purpose of the shepherd is to lead the flock to experience God for themselves. When this is

¹Benjamin Coe, *Christian Churches at the Crossroads* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1980), 67.

²1 Thess 1:5-7 (NIV).

accomplished, it is the first step toward spiritual renewal. As Ralph W. Neighbour, Jr., explains:

God's aim for believers is maturity, and the provision He has made of gifts and ministries are for this end. They are given to prepare and repair God's people for works of service so that the body may be built up and attain that goal of maturity (Eph 4:11-16). Just as it is the responsibility of every parent to prepare and guide their children toward maturity, so it is the responsibility of Christian leaders to disciple believers towards maturity.¹

The pastor-shepherd's role is a representative of the Good Shepherd's role. The shepherd must be a model for the flock, just as Paul counseled Timothy: "Be an example of the believers in words, conduct, and conversation" (1 Tim 4:12).

The idea of shepherd and sheep alludes to a lot of parabolic messages. Expressions such as "gathering the sheep" and "scattering the sheep" are commonly used in reference to the good and bad shepherds—the good shepherd gathers and the bad shepherd scatters. This leads to the idea that the sheep are always at the mercy of the shepherd in whose care they find themselves. Hammett references the sheep that are scattered as being "sent into exile or dispersed and in the process lost their identity." Thus, he says, "they become powerless."² He continues: "Yet in the New Testament the world begins to find its partner in the word increasingly used to describe the community, the church. We are 'gathered' as the sheep are gathered by the shepherd. As the church, we are gathered and called out of the world."³

¹Ralph W. Neighbour, Jr., *The Shepherd's Guide: Spiritual and Practical Foundations for Cell Group Leaders* (Houston, TX: Touch Outreach Ministries, 1996), 51.

²Edward H. Hammett, *The Gathered and Scattered Church: Equipping Believers for the 21st Century* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys Publishing, 1999), vii.

³Ibid.

The Shepherd as a Model for Spiritual Renewal

A congregation will grow spiritually if the spiritual leader is a model for his or her congregation. Worshippers are looking for model leaders to lead them into a renewal experience in worship, and this is an opportunity for a spiritual leader to bring his or her congregation into an encounter with the One who renews. The shepherd must always take the initiative to lead his flock into a renewal adventure. Spiritual renewal is often individualistic, but revival is holistic. Spiritual renewal comes when the heart is in a right relationship with God and with fellow believers.

The nature of worship at the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church, over the first years of the twenty-first century, has been people centered. Spiritual renewal has thus become inevitable for those who have their affection fixed on experiencing it. The worship services have been made more practical and are geared more toward leading the congregation into an experiential encounter with Jesus. Spiritual renewal can become contagious in a congregation when all members have the same expectancy. When church members combine their efforts in a passionate way for soul winning and revitalization of their own hearts, phenomenal things will begin to happen within the community of faith.

The spiritual experience that a spiritual leader wants his or her congregation to learn, he or she must demonstrate by example. Spiritual truths that have the most lasting effect are those that are demonstrated. Jesus' teaching of spiritual truths was sustained by His exemplary life. Thus, the values He wanted His disciples to learn were both taught and caught. This is the most potent way for any spiritual leader today to transmit values to his or her congregation. The complexity of human needs from wounded to broken lives gives the pastor a golden opportunity to structure programs to minister to these needs. The process of ministering to people's needs can help them find spiritual renewal.

A Biblical Model for Spiritual Renewal

The experience of the early church in Acts 2:42-47 is a typical example for all congregations of the twenty-first century. The quickest way for spiritual renewal to be experienced in a church is to have an evangelistic revival with good gospel singing and dynamic preaching. “Values are both taught and caught” says Michael Gleason, interpreting Luke 6:40.¹ Jesus taught values and lived them, and after His disciples learned from Him the real values of His mission, they began to live them and teach them by precept and example so that people who came in contact with them realized they had been with Jesus. The typical ministry of Jesus was to minister to human needs whatever they were and it was in that setting that many found wholeness. It was what made Jesus’ ministry very successful. Ministering to crucial needs of people will often bring success to any spiritual leader who finds him or herself in a position to fulfill them. Other than public evangelistic or revival meetings, weekly worship services provide some of the greatest opportunities for spiritual renewal. After a week of broken spirits on the job and broken relationships with family or friends, members should be able to come to a worship service and find renewal that helps counter lost hope and weakened faith. Worship service should always be a place for them to find consolation and hope for their troubled souls.

Ways the Church Congregation May Experience Spiritual Renewal

It is very important that every facet of church life is geared toward spiritual renewal. People are renewed in Jesus by several different means because people respond

¹Gleason, 39.

to God in different ways. Some may find renewal through Bible studies, some through music, some through relationships, some through fellowship, some through healing, and some through the spoken Word. These are just some of the reasons why spiritual leaders should try to model Christ before their congregations so that those who are looking to find fulfillment in their lives will model their leaders. This is aptly put by Benjamin Coe:

The church staff whether composed of ministers or lay-men, paid or volunteers should be mirrors of the pastor's heart. It is the pastor who sets the tone and direction, the degree of faith and the measure of theological purity for which the local church will finally come to stand. If all are in harmony, they will become a closely knitted unit going in one direction. If they work at odds, the direction will be down.¹

At a time of acute needs like serious illness or disaster, a pastor can bring great relief from the anxiety and stress that parishioners may be experiencing. The pastor is often made privy to information about a parishioner's private life. It is sometimes in these circumstances that the pastor has a special opportunity to present God as the only hope or solution for the prevailing circumstance, and as a result people may find spiritual renewal. Sometimes the privilege that is given pastors to enter into parishioners' private hurts opens up windows of opportunity for them to bring the hurting ones into an experiential relationship with God. Craig L. Nesson makes this point as follows:

The pastor is privileged to witness to the unfailing power of God to sustain his parishioners in life's most challenging hour. Sharing prayer or private communion places through the entire period of crisis from a different perspective, shares God's unceasing kindness and friendship. Pastors who respond faithfully to the acute needs of people make a tremendous testimony to the goodness and mercy of the One they represent.²

¹Coe, 69.

²Craig L. Nesson, *Beyond Maintenance to Mission: A Theology of the Congregation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 63.

Spiritual renewal in the church brings unity to the congregation. It is when vertical connection takes place in a congregation that horizontal connectedness revitalizes it. When cohesiveness becomes the operative force that drives the congregation toward spiritual renewal and a passion develops to move the church toward spiritual healing, it is evident that renewal is shaping the congregation. Beneath the vitality of good preaching and good organization of worship services must be the spiritual revitalization of every member. Renewal, as Howard Hanchey suggests, is finding joy in worship and in the common things of life, not in seeing things that need to be done and doing them.¹

Revival happens when God is doing the work of revitalization among the converted. There is a strong corollary between revival and renewal from the Bible's perspective. Revival and renewal are actually derived from the same root word "revive." The word "revive" is mentioned in the Old Testament eleven times and for each reference it meant "to make alive" or "to cause to come alive." The term "revive" is used only two times in the New Testament but in both instances the meaning is the same, "to live again."² David L. Larson refers to an apt definition of revival offered by Stephen Olford: "Revival is ultimately Christ Himself, seen, felt, and heard in and through His body on earth." Larson goes on to refer to Finley, who "in his classic lectures defines revival as 'the renewal of the first love of Christians resulting in the awakening and conversions of sinners to God' and 'nothing else than a new beginning of obedience to God.'"³

¹Hanchey, 39.

²David L. Larson, *The Evangelism Mandate: Recovering the Centrality of Gospel Preaching* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1992), 165.

³Ibid., 165.

Revival and conversion go hand in hand. The church that experiences renewal invariably experiences conversion. Evangelism that is people-centered usually breaks through the spiritual bankruptcy of the church and generally results in renewal. This is why the church that keeps evangelism a priority for church activity is most likely to experience the highest level of spiritual renewal. And the more involved members become in spiritual activities, the more likely spiritual renewal will envelop the church. In the Old Testament, revival and reformation was a constant call by God to His people who so often wandered off into idolatry. In 2 Chr 7:14 the biblical mandate for spiritual renewal is made clear. Revival is based on the grace and power of God in the believers' lives. This text calls for action on the part of the believers. This action is spiritual reform and when the people repent, God brings them into a renewal experience with Him.

Ellen G. White talks about revival and reformation for the church as an important vitality that is lacking among those who are preparing for the soon return of Christ. She writes:

Christians should be preparing for what is soon to break upon the world as an overwhelming surprise, and this preparation they should make by diligently studying the word of the God, and striving to conform their lives to its precepts. . . . God calls for a revival and a reformation. . . . A revival of a true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all needs. To seek this should be our most urgent work.¹

As a strong advocate for revival and reformation within the church, White points out that when reformation begins to take place in the church, it will be quite evident by the unity that the believers will manifest among themselves. She continues that there will be an absence of discord and strife. Furthermore, a prayer life among all believers will

¹Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1887), 41.

inevitably sustain them in the spirit of unity.¹ White distinguishes between revival and reformation as follows:

Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from spiritual death. Reformation signifies reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the fruits of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this they must blend.²

There is always a need for spiritual renewal within the church of God because Satan makes his assault on God's people every day, and those who do not fall by the wayside are struggling to keep walking upright. Revival and reformation should be a constant appeal coming from every message presented and every sermon preached. The Silver Springs Shores SDA Church's awareness of this consistent need for spiritual renewal and revival among its congregation has made the demand stronger for a more meaningful way to maintain growth and yet keeping revival alive among members.

The church's evangelistic outreach programs usually begin with a revival emphasis within the church. This is part of the equipping of church members to demonstrate to the guests in word and conduct the power of conversion by the Holy Spirit. Every public evangelistic effort should be preceded by a revival among the believers. Quoting Edward Hammett on the importance of assembling to be empowered to dispense:

The outward mission will not happen if it is not supported and strengthened to experience and celebrate the power of the Lord. On the other hand, the gathering is sterile if happens in such a way that gathering becomes an end in itself. The reality of our calling is to the rhythmic flowing in and out. To gather without being sent is narcissistic; to be sent without first being gathered is an exercise in pointless activism.

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 42.

We must be gathered to be scattered. We must live out the scattering to make the gathering a sign of the coming kingdom.¹

Central to any successful spiritual adventure is recognizing that the Holy Spirit is the one who guarantees success; therefore, having an encounter with Him through a revival experience is the best way to be prepared to meet the challenges of the adversary and gain success in spiritual adventures. As influential and effective as a person may be in communicating the gospel to unbelievers, he or she will not achieve conviction without the presence of the Holy Spirit. This is why it is absolutely necessary that a revival or renewal precedes any evangelistic campaign so that there will be a witness to the truth that all selfishness and pride have given way to the work of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit is first engaged in leading out in a spiritual process, success is guaranteed.

“The Priesthood of All Believers”

Definitions of the Expression “Priesthood of All Believers”

The “priesthood of all believers” concept gives the idea that each convert to Christ becomes responsible to make converts of others. The gospel presented by Jesus imparted to all believers the obligation to disciple others to Him. James Gunn refers to the “priesthood of all believers” as conceptual. It begins with an urge in the human heart, as succinctly expressed by Gunn: “The concept expressed by the noun priest is a dual one for it answers to the urge of the human heart, and to the divine provision made to meet that urge. Men, who by sin broke relationship with God, being conscious of God, out of

¹Hammett, ix.

this inherent consciousness, seek after God; 'if haply they might feel after Him' (Acts 17:27)."¹

A priest is one who has dual ministry to God and man. Gunn cites three biblical concepts of priesthood: biblical priesthood in general, the New Testament spiritual sanctuary, and the Christian priesthood.² For Gunn, the "priesthood of all believers" fits into the category of "Christian priesthood." Citing 1 Pet 2:10, Gunn points out that consideration for the Christian priesthood should first look at its institution, its extent, its character, and its purpose.³ Gunn also discusses Exod 19:5-6 as the foundation of a promise God made to Israel that under the condition of obedience to the old covenant, He would make Israel a kingdom of priests. Israel's disobedience made them forfeit God's promise, but later, in the New Testament, a remnant of the Jewish believers by the Spirit of God asserts that, through grace in the new covenant, God's people have fulfilled that promise as a kingdom of priests. They are those without any imposed conditions because they have experienced the graciousness of God's mercy.⁴

Biblical Origin of the Expression "Priesthood of All Believers"

Gunn believes that the Christian priesthood is coextensive with the holy nation, the chosen generation mentioned in 1 Pet 2:9. The extensive and inclusive rendering of the text makes every generation of God's people inclusive. This priesthood is not

¹James Gunn, *I Will Build My Church* (Kansas City, KS: Walterick Publishers, n.d.), 99.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 105.

⁴Ibid.

ascribed distinction, rank, or position; it is distinguished from the Levitical priesthood that had ranks and position.¹ This suggests something exciting and reassuring for the people of God. “You are a holy nation, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood,” can be seen as referring to an elect group of Israelites who by adoption have been exalted to nobility by God, who adopted them. That they are a “holy nation” makes them worthy of being in God’s presence. The election and exaltation by grace was sanctioned by their obedience in their adoption relationship. God’s favor expressed by justification, sanctification, and adoption is not based on merit but rather purely by grace. Grace requires that the adopted remains faithful in that relationship as an expression of gratitude.

Calling them a “holy nation” is a characteristic of God’s bestowal of grace upon His people, thus God’s way of showing His favor is to make them equal with Christ in royalty, priests, and being set apart for holy purposes. Gunn further suggests that under the broken Mosaic Law there could not have been a royal priesthood. But because in the new dispensation grace brought royalty and priesthood together in the one person as Rev 5:10 declares, the dignity and honor has been bestowed on God’s people.² Peter is very clear that God cannot be accused of being partial in the way He justifies His act of grace. Peter vindicates God’s justice for exalting His people by saying they are those who accept God’s call to leave the darkness of sin and enter into His light of truth (2 Pet 1: 16-18). People with such bestowal of honor and dignity will praise Him. Gunn suggests that Paul himself talks about his apostolic priesthood in Rom 15:16 when he writes the

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 107.

following: “That I should be the administrator of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, priestly ministering, a royal priest, the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles as they are dedicated by me as a holy priest may be acceptable to Him through the Holy Spirit.”¹

Based on 1 Pet 3:7, the equation is clear about God’s people being joint heirs together in the kingdom of grace with Christ and being the royal priesthood together with Christ. It is sobering to think of the honor and dignity that God has bestowed on His people. The apostle Paul in Rom 8:17 talks about the redeemed becoming joint heirs together with Jesus and in Gal 3:29. And in Titus 3:7 he reiterates the same principal. James picks up the same theme in chap. 2:5. The concept of exaltation for the people of God runs almost parallel in New Testament writings as the texts above reveal. Therefore, for Peter to use the New Testament concept of fulfillment of an Old Testament promise forfeited is quite common to the belief of New Testament writers.

It is not surprising that this concept of the “priesthood of all believers” has been misapplied by many spiritual leaders to favor their position of authority. Literally interpreted from the text, the expression “priesthood of all believers” could be misleading, but a careful examination of the passage would definitely reveal that the text does not apply it to a master-servant role but rather to an exalted honor of accountability and responsibility. The accountability that is implied in the text is to keep the adopted responsible for maintaining the relationship with God. The responsibility is ministerial, in that the priestly role is always ministerial in the sense of praise, worship, adoration, obedience, and sanctity. For one to maintain his or her equated royalty, holiness, and

¹Gunn, 107.

peculiarity with Christ, the elected one has to fulfill the requirements of the covenantal relationship.

The following scenario may best illustrate the election passages quoted above, demonstrating that it is not about merited favor but about maintaining a relationship congruent to the bestowal by grace. The son or adopted son of a prince is called a prince without his having to prove that by works or merit. His displeasing behavior does not deny him his entitlement to being a prince. His position as prince or his entitlement as prince is not based on merit but on being born a son of the king. However, it is expected of the prince by virtue of his son-ship or heir-ship to maintain his relationship with his father to merit his father's kingdom. Thus his only disqualification to inheritance is an estranged relationship with his father. He will nonetheless still be a prince because he is the son of a king. This is similar to the entitlement of God's people as articulated by Peter, Paul, and James. "The priesthood of all believers" is an entitlement to God's people given purely by His grace, an unmerited favor, which must be sustained by a relationship that continues to set them apart as peculiar, holy, of royal descent commissioned with a sacred responsibility to invite others to join the people of God.

Sakae Kubo explains that the concept of the "priesthood of all believers" is derived from the early New Testament Christendom notion that there was no longer a distinguished priestly caste from the lay people. All Christians had become a "holy priesthood" (1 Pet 2:5, 9). Kubo interprets Heb 4:16 as demonstrating that the need for access to priestly intervention was no longer necessary for Christians. The people's personal access to God, therefore, gave them the right or entitlement to claim "a chosen

generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation” as their mark of distinction (1 Pet 2:9).¹ In 1 Cor 12, Paul applies the same principle as Peter. Kubo renders this text as implying that the “same Spirit, Lord, and God” appropriates to every believer gifts and abilities that show a correlation between believers endowed with gifts and abilities as being interdependent. There is no cause for distinction of rank but interdependence of services.²

Kubo references 1 Cor 12:7, 24-25 as support for the claim that there was an interdependency that bound the believers together in an equal relationship. There was active participation among the believers because there was no structure to their worship services. Therefore, much spontaneous activity went on during the services. The texts that Kubo referenced in Corinthians sustain his point that God’s bestowal of honor seems to be more in favor of the underprivileged to discourage dissension within the body of believers in Christ. This would lend to a greater reciprocated care within the body of Christ.³

The concept of oneness is very plausible when considering the personality of Paul. Paul’s life and ministry seem to have been characterized with “down to earth” humility, and it would not be surprising to see that he would want his disciples to exhibit the same deportment in fellowship and worship. The concept of oneness or being in “one accord” in Paul’s counsel to the believers may have been deeply reinforced in his mind as it did for the apostles at the Pentecost experience (Acts 2). The concept that God works

¹Sakae Kubo, *The God of Relationships: How the Gospel Helps Us Reach Across Barriers Such as Race, Culture, and Gender* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1993), 147.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

best and works wonders among people who are in singleness of heart may be a significant derivative from that encounter with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Therefore, for Paul to reinforce this among believers should find inclusion in his writings.

Relevant Scholarly Concepts Regarding the Expression “Priesthood of All Believers”

Many authors have distinguished the change in meaning from the concept of equality among believers to the concept of differentiation between clergy and laity as something that started after the first century AD. The gradual drift away from early Christendom led to the evolution of distinction in the expression the “priesthood of all believers.” Down through the centuries the gap between clergy and laity widened until a clear distinction was made that another self-proclaimed order of priesthood was introduced. This was indeed a contradiction to biblical mandate since, as demonstrated above, Christ ended the era of priesthood as mediator between man and God. As joint heirs, according to Paul and James, and by election to that order, according to Peter, Christendom of the twenty-first century may make claim to such fame only in a ministerial role and not in a mediatorial role. The distinction between clergy and laity became polarized during the period of the reformation when the disparity of service between clergy and laity removed all dignity and honor from the service of the laity. According to Joyce Rupp: “The reformation went off ‘half-cooked’ on the subject of the laity. Martin Luther’s application of Galatians 3:28 to his day was ‘There is neither priest nor layman, canon or vicar, rich or poor, Benedictine, Carthusian, Friar Minor, or Augustinian, for it is not a question of this or that status, degree, order.’”¹

¹Joyce Rupp, quoted in *ibid.*, 149.

The reformation did much to infuriate the laity to rebel against the degrading distinction of the order of service between them and the clergy, and, as Kubo puts it:

Some lay people began to make their Christianity what they did in the world apart from church and clerics. Others sought to fulfill their mission in the world but with the inspiration and fellowship of the church. While the lay people have achieved new prominence in the church as a whole, their status may need correcting in individual churches or in certain parts of the world. The dichotomy between clergy and laity still lingers on in some areas.¹

Edward H. Hammett uses the title of priesthood to symbolize models of ministry. Priests were representatives of God who also represented their community before God. He applies Exod 19 as an implication that Israel, as well as priests, was to be holy unto the Lord. Thus for him, God's nation today is expected to relate to the world in a manner comparable to the relationship between individual Israelites and the priests to Israel. "In today's world the scattered church can perform its priestly function by taking a Christian stand, representing Christian concerns, and reminding Christians of their service role."² Hammett concludes his comments on the priestly function of the church in today's world as one of affirmation and encouragement among believers every time they meet for worship, fellowship, and celebration. This is what he believes the church draws its energy and resources from to keep it vibrant and strong.³

This biblical interpretation is in favor of an application that means the exaltation to honor and the dignity of God's people. Pastors have a responsibility to share with their parishioners that God in His infinite love and grace has bestowed unmerited favor upon

¹Kubo, 149.

²Hammett, 25.

³Ibid.

His people by exalting them to the rank of priest, royalty, and elect (1 Pet 2:9). This is reason for God's people to give Him praise and return the honor in faithful service. The "priesthood of all believers" concept gives every believer the right of ministry as a representative of Christ.

As Paul puts it, the appropriation of gifts to some is no entitlement for any to feel that he or she is more favored by God. It is a privilege given to all to use their gifts interdependently for the care and preservation of all. Therefore being heirs and joint heirs with Christ and being royalty and priest together with Jesus carries with it a responsibility to God and to one another.

CHAPTER 4

AN EVANGELISTIC PROGRAM FOR THE SILVER SPRINGS SHORES SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Introduction

“Evangelism is our real work. . . . It is the opening of the Scriptures to others, warning men and women of what is coming upon the world.”¹ This is the counsel of Ellen G. White. According to T. R. Glover, “Witnessing is the whole work of the whole church in the whole world throughout the whole age.”² Howard Hanchey divides evangelism into three categories: (1) “Pre-evangelism . . . directed toward ministry in the world”; (2) “primary evangelism . . . [which] identifies and celebrates God’s action in the world to those not in the church”; and (3) “secondary evangelism . . . [which is] the ministry of evangelism the church directs toward itself.”³

In these three quotes, evangelism is well defined. Running through all is the message that evangelism is a ministry of witnessing Christ’s saving grace to unbelievers. Evangelism within the church setting relates to the church as pretext, context, and post-text. As pretext, it is what initiates the church’s existence and gives its existence

¹Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1974), 17.

²T. R. Glover, quoted in Larsen, 13.

³Hanchey, 201, 202.

meaning; as context, it sustains the vitality of the church through spiritual renewal and numerical growth; and as post-text, it continues to give the church its direction and impetus to fulfill its global mission.

Evangelism is what defines mission for the church as well as what fulfills the mission. Without evangelism, a church becomes spiritually dead. Evangelism is the vehicle for the gospel, which in turn introduces Jesus to those who do not know Him. It is an active ministry in the world identifying evidence of Jesus and celebrating Him. Evangelism is derived from the Greek word *euangelion*, which means “good news” or “gospel.” Where the gospel is presented efficiently and effectively, it will become the means of making disciples for Christ.

The current chapter describes the new working evangelistic model for church growth and management developed by this research project. It begins with recommendations for fully utilizing the gifts and leadership abilities of church members. It then follows with an explanation of the restructuring of public and personal evangelism. The implementation of the evangelistic model is then discussed, followed by a detailing of the various church-growth goals and objectives that specifically focus on evangelism. This is followed by a detailing of the church-growth goals that have more to do with maintenance and the everyday running of the church. While these latter may not be in a direct way evangelistic goals, they all affect evangelistic growth in some indirect way. The final section explains the new approach to decision making within and for the church. And the conclusion outlines the mission statement of the church.

Utilizing Gifts and Talents in Creating Spiritual Leadership in the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church

A critical issue church leadership faces in the twenty-first century is either having too many gifted people in congregations or having too few. Where there are too many, the selection of who will lead sometimes poses a great challenge because the choice of one above another may sometimes spark jealousy and cynicism. James Gunn defines spiritual gifts as “the divine bestowal of a special faculty upon a member of the body of Christ. In each thus endowed, the gift embodies qualification, fitness and strength.”¹

Paul mentions the diversity of gifts and the qualification and purposes of each gift in 1 Cor 12 and Eph 4:7-14. In 1 Cor 12, he says that individual gifts are for the benefit of all. I take Paul to be conveying the message that the greatest benefit comes to the one who uses his or her gifts to bless others. The unselfish use of one’s gift causes interaction, dependency, and cohesive bonding among people who have something in common. Gunn makes a distinction between gifts and natural abilities and talents. The following statement is in response to Eph 4:7-14:

Paul acknowledged that by himself and all his Ephesians readers some gifts had been received. . . . These are the specific gifts that were used in the founding, developing and maintaining of the Church Universal, particularly in apostolic times. . . . Paul mentions those to demonstrate that all gifts, specific and general, come from Christ. . . . Unity does not necessarily mean sameness, nor does diversity suggest disagreement. While unity does not require uniformity, the exercise in the church of the diversified gifts should be in complete accord with the divine, absolute unities in the Word of God.²

The gifts that Paul mentions are for specific purposes. One of these purposes is to unify the believers’ faith in Christ. Here, Paul implies that the believers’ greatest defense

¹Gunn, 111.

²Ibid., 112.

against the subtlety of Satan is to have a cohesive faith in Jesus. Another purpose of the gifts is to bring maturity to the believers' confidence in Christ as their salvation. The third purpose that Paul gives is the transposition of character or character exchange between believers and Christ. What Paul is trying to convey by these tri-functional purposes of the gifts endowed is that the believers' lives must experience transformation from mere human characters to divine. Therefore, gifts should be life transforming for all who receive them and those who are blessed by them. The change in dynamics regarding the need and use of gifts, says Leith Anderson, is for the widespread cause and effect of the Holy Spirit working simultaneously by the employ of human agencies to bring about spiritual renewal. In essence, this diversity of gifts bestowed by God reveals that He has broken away from the monopoly that clergy once claimed. The clergy are no longer the prime repositories of God's benevolent blessings of spiritual renewal. "Spiritual gifts have been both a cause and effect of spiritual renewal as ministry has been liberated from the clergy alone and increasingly become the privilege and responsibility of the laity."¹ This is good news for the laity because they now have the assurance that God will empower them as much as He will the clergy with spiritual gifts. They only need to make themselves available for the use of the Holy Spirit. Thus, this assurance of a broad-base empowerment by the Holy Spirit and diversification of spiritual gifts to all who make themselves available for God's use in His service, ensures less dependence on any single agency or few human agencies as repositories of God's grace.

The new model proposed by this research project for the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church is based on Paul's declaration that gifts are imparted to create inter-

¹Leith Anderson, *Dying for Change* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House

dependence among believers. The church is seeking to discover the gifts of members of the congregation, which can then be utilized for the edification of the community of faith. Of late, the church has seen an increase in young talented couples who are willing to give their services to the church. They vary in profession and skills. Some of these young couples are leading out in programs created by the church with them in mind, such as Youth Church, Social Club, Computer Programs, and many more. Through youth leadership programs, there has been more commitment demonstrated among young people than has been witnessed before.

In the area of retreats, the church's Family Life personnel have been doing a wonderful job planning for member and community togetherness and wholeness. This department has been actively planning field trips that take members and invitees from the community around the United States and abroad. The church and the community have continued to give full support to these activities, which have become much anticipated events by the church family every year. The Family Life Department and the young people's Social Club have added vibrant life to the social life of the church.

The church calendar has two health seminars and two family life seminars scheduled per year. They are designed to encourage wellness and wholeness in the lives of families and members of the church. Guest speakers and seminar presenters are usually invited for those occasions. Recently, a wife and husband, both of whom are medical doctors, joined the church. They have been asked to plan and coordinate the Health Festivals for the next year. Meanwhile, the church has an ongoing Wellness and Fitness Program. This program is coordinated with the Florida Hospital and Loma Linda

Wellness and Fitness Programs. The response from the church has been positive, and the individual in charge is very diligent in coordinating the program between the church members and the hospitals.

The Women's, Men's, and Personal Ministries teams have combined their programs to create and maintain a spiritual and prayer life for all the members of the church. These departments have already been doing devotional activities and organizing and encouraging prayer partnership for different times of the day. Some people pray with their partners in the early part of the morning and others have organized themselves according to convenience. This is also a vibrant, ongoing activity among church members. An early Sunday morning Prayer and Praise Meeting has been in progress to bring those together for prayer who like to have early morning devotion. At times seminars are also conducted at these times, followed by an early morning breakfast. The Men's and Women's ministries have formal dinner banquets every year alternately. These are just some of the vibrant ongoing programs of the church and they are meeting spiritual, social, and emotional needs of the congregation.

The church on a whole is an activity-oriented church. Most of these programs are well supported by the members, and the church is always finding ways to expand programs to attract and include people from the community. Young people are actively recruiting talented musicians to join their newly formed singing group for which enthusiasm is high. Leadership programs are planned for every department of the church, and leaders and their associates are sponsored and encouraged to attend them. All programs of the church are representative of its principles to reflect Christ in all that is done. All church programs reflect an integration of the church's belief system.

Training Congregational Participants for Leadership Roles in the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church

A church with a mission to succeed is a church that needs strong leadership. The success of any organization, including churches, depends on the right kind of leadership. It may not always be easy to determine the causes of failure, but it is clear that strong leadership can lead to success. Education, training, and skills are all important. They are all clearly distinct. George Barnier differentiates education and training as follows: “Education typically refers to the passage of knowledge or a way of thinking. Training is used . . . to address the development of skills and perspectives that translates into practical applications toward facilitating change.”¹

In the twenty-first-century dynamics of church life, church work is no longer the domain of paid personnel. Recruitment of personnel to assume leadership responsibilities is an ongoing process because vacant positions are created by people dying, resigning from office, and leaving the area and these are sometimes important positions that need to be filled urgently. But the comprehensive nature of church ministry sometimes makes it difficult to find the right personnel to fill certain responsibilities. A church that has more available positions to fill than available leaders to fill these positions may have to do its own leadership training. At other times, a church might find itself with a surplus of leaders to fill positions. Yet another dilemma is having to fill positions with untrained or unwilling personnel. The problem here is that people who accept responsibilities unwillingly or without the requisite training tend not to finish their terms of office,

¹George Barna, *Today's Pastor: A Revealing Look at What Pastors Are Saying About Themselves, Their Peers and What They Face* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993), 148.

especially when they are faced with overwhelming difficulties. These are all situations the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church faces from time to time. In order to avoid the third of the above problems, the church is engaged in an ongoing process of leadership training. This is especially important because of the high rate of members with leadership responsibilities transitioning out of the area.

Kenneth Chafin makes some interesting observations about the nature of churches in the twenty-first century and the leadership roles therein: (1) “There are more people than the pastor. . . . The hope of the ministering church is the informed, inspired, committed layman”; (2) “there are more days of the week than [the day of worship],” therefore, more trained laymen are needed to maintain the operation of church life than the pastor; and (3) “sometimes a witness begins by meeting some needs.”¹

When the church finds capable people to fill responsible positions, these people need to be committed to the task for long periods of time. The greatest challenge that faces leadership in these situations is to sustain people’s motivation in order to keep capable people committed over extended periods. Based on a survey he conducted, Bennett offers some recommendations for leaders with this problem.

1. From the very beginning of an individual’s enlistment for service he or she needs to be made to understand the value of time and investment of service. This is very important to the expectation of the finished task.

¹Kenneth Chafin, quoted in G. Willis Bennett, *Effective Urban Church Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1983), 121.

2. Conduct training and orientation programs for the service. People who are familiar with their job description and know what is expected of them, usually have a higher performance rating.

3. Make sure that the person assigned to a particular task is comfortable with the work environment it entails. Dissatisfaction with work environment can result in a poor job performance.

4. Give recognition of progress and achievement. Sometimes even the most gifted person has difficulty assessing the value of his or her own efforts and some because of recognition develop a sense of making a valuable contribution.¹

For quite some time now, the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church has been engaged in training its laity to give Bible studies and to initiate Bible studies interests within the community. The Florida Seventh-day Adventist Conference, which services the Silver Springs area, usually schedules leadership training sessions for their churches on an annual basis. The Silver Springs church takes advantage of the opportunity to send its leaders to these training sessions. Those who receive this training are then usually required to train the rest of the group members who will have leadership responsibilities. When needed, people are called in to conduct training seminars for special needs within the church. The church conducts its own training for nurturing of new members and giving Bible studies. Nurturing within the community of faith is usually done by the Men's and Women's Ministries Departments in conjunction with the Community Service. They seek out the needs of missing, shut-ins, and indigent members and minister

¹Bennett, 123-125.

to their physical as well as spiritual needs. The leaders are quite enthusiastic about their services and they operate an active program in the community.

The following quote by Harold R. Fray, Jr., can be used to describe the role of the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church in critical moments of need:

At every critical juncture in these outgoing efforts, the role of the laity has been decisive. This is no courtesy compliment but a manifest fact that is relative to the church's experience in the dynamic flow of events. The involvement of the laity in church ministry is a reality of their practical way of service. There are moments when the service of the laity is more effective than the pastor's because they can communicate better with one another. Some of them have professional skills that are not within the competence of the pastor and at times they are most vital to the church.¹

In *Testimonies for the Church*, Ellen G. White writes:

God works with our efforts. We may close the way for sinners by our negligence and selfishness. . . . We must not enter into the Lord's work haphazardly and expect success. The Lord needs men of mind and men of thought. Jesus calls for co-workers, not blunderers. God wants right-thinking and intelligent men to do the great work necessary to the salvation of souls. . . . Mechanics, lawyers, merchants, men of all trades and professions, educate themselves that they may become masters of their business. Should the followers of Christ be less intelligent, and while professedly engaged in His service is ignorant of the ways and means to be employed?²

Congregational Participation in the Process of Renewal

It is the responsibility of the pastor to set the goals and the stage for congregational participation. He or she must also focus on setting the pace for almost all that happens as well as to initiate creative programs. The pastor should remain one step ahead of the people he or she is leading while creating the latitude and scope of further congregational involvement. The pastor must at all times strive for excellence and for

¹Harold R. Fray, Jr., *Conflict and Change in the Church* (Boston, MA: Pilgrim Press, 1969), 69.

²Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1984), 4:67.

success, always keeping in mind that he or she is in an experience-sharing capacity. All the while, the pastor must work carefully in his or her role as a pace-setter, keeping in mind, as writes George Barna, that “to allow logics and foreseeable problems to hinder your work is a mark of unprofessionalism. No one should ever permit such sloppiness of preparation and conceptualization to mar their work.”¹

There must be reciprocity in expectations regarding the pastor and his or her congregation. Sometimes the expectations of one side or the other are unreasonable. Sharing expectations and openly discussing them can help to make both sides have expectations that are achievable. The chance of success decreases when expectations are too high. The greatest, most intelligent, and skilled person can end up failing and experiencing a sense of worthlessness when unreasonable expectations are not met. It is the pastor’s responsibility to make sure this does not happen. The pastor must take special care not to allow the congregation to have unrealistic expectations of him or her, something that can easily happen when the pastor sets him or herself up as the one with the answer to all the church’s problems. The focus should always be on collaboration and cooperation. Congregational involvement and interaction will help clarify issues regarding programs and their implementation. It will help members of the congregation to understand the time and effort they must commit for the completion of projects and allow them more willingness to make the necessary commitments. The importance of this cannot be overstated. George Barna explains that

many paralyzed churches are in their current state because pastors have failed to capture God’s vision for the church to create a plan of action and to rally the people around the plan. Consequently, whatever expectations people have on behalf of the

¹Barna, 154.

church are not tied to the larger reality of what the church is, what it is striving to be, or what it could consider in establishing new ideas and strategies for the days ahead.¹

The image of the pastor is a key part of this process of “rally[ing] the people around the plan.” A pastor perceived as a dominant leader, rather than one with a servant-role attitude, will have a more difficult time engaging people in a work relationship. People are more likely to willingly get involved and to volunteer their services when the pastor shows him or herself to be practical, relational, and rational. Barna explains the role of the pastor to the congregation as one of providing “guidance, motivation, example, and spiritual depth in conduct of church’s ministry. His task is not to be sole representative of the church.”²

The Silver Springs Shores SDA Church congregation has a consistent record of involvement in the process of church building and other church-related programs. When an idea relative to changes in any type of church program evolves, it is first discussed with the board of elders. If the elders approve of the idea, it is presented to the Church Board for further discussion and approval. Upon approval by the Church Board, the proposal is then presented to the church at a Members Meeting. It is at the Members Meeting that final approval is given. If the proposal pertains to program change or building, there is usually a committee set up to direct and implement the program. Feedback usually follows the same order: from the committee to the Church Board and then to the church body. Evaluation is also usually done by the committees responsible to

¹Ibid., 155.

²Ibid., 156.

direct the program. Then the process of feedback to the congregation follows the prescribed order.

This format is proven to be very successful with no complaints from members that there has been any lack in feedback information on programs implemented in recent years. Aside from minor decisions that the Church Board is entitled to make alone, the church body has been brought in to the decision-making process. A sense of belonging among members of the congregation has accompanied these opportunities to accept and reject any program that has been presented to them. As a result of this approach, the church has consistently taken an interest in setting new goals and striving to reach them as well as enjoying the opportunity to celebrate its achievements.

The Silver Springs Shores SDA Church is fast becoming a trend setter for many of the other Seventh-day Adventist churches in the area. Although the demand for more personnel with leadership capabilities continues to be strong, the recruitment of younger people to leadership positions is improving. The need for more musicians and music directors is still a great demand, but the church spirit of togetherness and the visionary spirit of those making a difference will not be quenched. The future of the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church shows great prospect.

Setting Evangelistic Goals for the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church

The new working model created by this research project has primarily entailed setting goals and definable objectives for church growth at the Silver Springs Seventh-day Adventist Church. This model should lead to a more consistent pattern of membership and church growth over the short and long term. The success of several of these objectives has already demonstrated the great potential for this new model in

achieving its goals in evangelism in the years to come. Since implementation of the model, the church has already experienced better public response at public meetings, a more consistent pattern of attendance by guests, and better baptismal results from public campaigns.

This project aims to maximize the effectiveness of the new working model and to give greater success in soul winning for the next ten years in the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church. In the beginning months of 2003, the Church Board began a process of planning a three-year program. The process ended in May of that year, and a working model for the church was submitted to the Florida Seventh-day Adventist Conference (see Appendix C). The plan included five goals. The three-year time span was chosen because it was determined that it would take at least this much time for significant changes to take place. The changes proposed by this project include both short-term and long-term goals covering the next ten years, however.

The following outline of the goals and objectives is given in a manner that reflects the sequence of the process of change in which this project has been engaged. Goals are stated topically to reflect their intentions or targets. The term “observable indicators” is used to define the goal target, and the goal’s objectives are defined as “activities.” Activities also explain the steps that have been taken or will be taken to achieve these goals.

Church Growth Goal 1: Evangelism and Numerical Growth—Public and Personal

The most observable indicators of this goal are as follows:

1. To use evangelism committees to plan and implement evangelistic campaigns for the church (This method will ensure the reliability of means, materials, and personnel

used to achieve maximum success. Committees will be utilized in the entire process of planning, implementing, and evaluating the achievements and success.)

2. To use pre-evangelistic campaign preparation of Bible worker teams and Bible study groups to work with prospective candidates for baptism (This should increase the number of baptisms. Emphasis will be put on training the laity and equipping them to work with interests resulting from personal and public evangelism.)

3. To use pre-cursors to public meetings, such as Bible studies and literature distribution, and other tools, such as Discover Bible Lesson Studies to introduce to non-members of the community, as an ongoing preparation for harvest

4. To use special Bible classes for prospective candidates for baptism. (This will help to consolidate messages heard and ensure conviction of the Word.)

The evangelistic activities that have already begun to be used to fulfill the goal of public and personal evangelism are as follows:

1. Evangelistic series have been conducted once or twice per year. These have involved preaching evangelists and laity. Although the initial goal was to have two of these per year, this had to be narrowed down to one because of finances. The community of faith has consistently kept working toward achieving both personal goals and the church goal in baptisms for each year. The evangelistic series have revitalized the church and kept spiritual renewal on a high momentum. Lay efforts have kept personal evangelism alive through one-on-one contacts with the public.

2. Church members have been engaged and involved in personal evangelism on an ongoing basis. They have worked as recruitment agents for the church in the community through one-on-one contacts with neighbors, friends, and relatives, regularly

inviting and bringing those they have contacted to participate in programs of the church. This has been very effective as church members have tended to be comfortable working with friends and relatives and inviting them to participate in church activities on an ongoing basis. This has enhanced the disciple-making principle that Jesus instituted when He asked brother to call brother and friend to invite friend. The resultant cohesiveness of this approach has led to a dynamic team spirit.

3. Members have been asked to complete the Discover Bible School Lessons so they can be better able to help prospective members with whom they are studying. This method has had a two-fold effect. It has encouraged more Bible study among members and it has equipped them to assist in Bible studies with their contacts.

4. Twice per week the pastor has offered Bible studies, and these have proven to be quite beneficial to the church. These Bible studies have been conducted on Sabbath afternoons and at Wednesday night Prayer Meetings. Half of the prayer meetings have been devoted to these Bible studies, which has led to a big boost in Wednesday night attendance. Interest has been quite high, and attendance has been very consistent.

5. Church members have actively engaged in door-to-door literature distribution during Sabbath Field Days. On Sabbath Field Days, members have distributed literature and acquainted themselves with the community, looking for interest in Bible study. This has generated a large amount of energy and enthusiasm among members who have enjoyed the opportunity to return to the church and share their experiences gained from the venture. The motivation to keep Field Day Sabbaths a vibrant part of the evangelistic outreach for the church is very high.

6. The church has posted a literature rack filled with materials that members can take and share with their contacts. There has been an almost overwhelming demand for supplies of this literature.

Church Growth Goal 2: Church Growth Accommodation and the Nurturing of New Members

Some of the observable indicators of the goal to accommodate church growth and nurture new members are as follows:

1. To make the church atmosphere more inviting and to make worship services more meaningful (This should help cultivate a sense of belonging and encourage the freedom of participation.)
2. To establish a Bible Study class specifically geared toward new church members (Prolonging the initiation process should help new members feel more comfortable when they are placed into regular Sabbath School Lesson Study groups. This should help participants develop a sense of fellowship and decrease any feelings of intimidation they might experience when studying with those who have been members for longer periods. It will also be an exceptional way to discover the gifts and talents of these new members for use in church services.)
3. To create a buddy system, partnering up each new member with someone with whom he or she feels comfortable and who can function as a mentor. (Mentors will provide follow-up support, nurturing new members and keeping track of their attendance at church meetings.)

Church growth and nurturing activities that have sustained the program so far include:

1. Planned follow-up work by the church and those involved in the mentoring program for fellowship activities has been carried out on a regular basis. Mentors have been encouraged to have fellowship dinners with new members on Sabbaths and, when possible, to invite them to their homes. The approach is for this to be carried out for as long as the new members needed this kind of support.

2. A special Sabbath School Class for new members and non-member visitors has been conducted on Sabbath mornings. This has helped to reinforce teachings the new members received during the evangelistic outreach. The new members have responded positively to this class, reporting that they feel more at home and more comfortable asking questions in the midst of other new members. Specifically, this has helped alleviate the fear of asking the wrong question.

3. New members have received a special welcome into church membership and fellowship by the pastor and other church officers and members. This open welcome and extended friendship from members of the church has made them feel warmly welcomed.

4. Each Sabbath morning, a five-minute greeting has been held during fellowship time with the entire congregation. This time of friendship sharing has increased the comfort levels of the new members in their new church family.

Church Growth Goal 3: Community Outreach Programs

Observable indicators for this goal are:

1. To do a needs assessment of the community and plan programs around these needs to develop greater church and community interaction
2. To encourage more membership participation in community activities. This is one way members can represent the church in community affairs

3. To do more and better advertisement of the church in the community through sponsored programs

4. To encourage clergy-to-clergy interaction at community-planned meetings

5. To engage in program exchange with community churches.

The following activities fulfilled the above objective for outreach in the community:

1. The church's Community Service Department has planned community activities. Some of these have included the distribution of foods, goods, and other services, which has brought many to the church who would not otherwise respond to invitations to attend church meetings. Many of the people who have participated in these programs have gone on to become friends and supporters of the church.

2. The church has started to offer free GED classes and other remedial learning classes to members of the community. These classes have attracted a number of non-Adventists. Many of the attendees have reported that this was their first time to enter a Seventh-day Adventist Church. The church has started an entertainment club along with other social activities and invited community participation.

3. The church has had Summer Day Camps open to both members' children as well as children from the community. A large number of non-Adventist children from the community have participated in these camps.

4. The Pathfinder Club and Vacation Bible School have continued their long-time practice of involving children and parents from the community in their annual events.

5. The church has been regularly organizing international-day festivals and annual birthday celebrations involving both members of the church and the community. These events have raised monetary support for the church, thanks to the active community involvement in these events.

Church Growth Goal 4: Retention Program Aimed at Decreasing Church Dropouts

The following observable indicators could minimize the dropout rate:

1. To network with employment agencies in order to help find employment for church members.
2. To develop a better communication network in order to stay in constant touch over the long term with members who leave the area, whether it be to go attend college, join the military services, or for any other reason
3. To develop a support system among professionals within the church who may be in positions to influence hiring at their places of employment
4. To encourage training or reorientation programs for those without the job skills necessary for employment within the community.

The following activities have helped to achieve the objectives above:

1. The church has been engaged in networking with some of the employment agencies in the community, working toward providing jobs for unemployed members. Although this has been a slow process, there have been a number of successful employment opportunities cultivated for members of the church in this way. Prominent church members with good job references and influential positions have also sought out employment opportunities and made recommendations for qualified unemployed members. This approach has proven very successful.

2. The church has started keeping a list of all professional members willing to provide references for other members.

3. People without the necessary job skills for employment in the area have been encouraged to go through training to obtain certificates for jobs for which they are seeking employment.

4. The church's communication personnel and clerk have been working together to keep in contact with missing or delinquent members. Those who continue to live in the community are usually visited and encouraged to return to church fellowship and services.

Church Growth Goal 5: A Recruitment Program for Youth and Young Adults

The following observable indicators will promote recruitment among youth and young adults to bring their friends and relatives:

1. To use stimulating youth and young adult programs and activities as devices to attract both young members of the church and their friends to join the group
2. To let youth and young people plan and manage their own programs (The goal is to give young people adequate latitude and freedom to feel that they are capable to be in charge while at the same time providing appropriate supervision.)
3. To allow for creativity, spontaneity, and flexibility in the way young people worship and do ministry, always with adequate supervision of course.

Activities that have helped to promote recruitment among young people include:

1. Young people have been given the latitude to plan their own worship programs using their committee. Adult sponsors have been assigned to give guidance and direction as necessary. Young people have responded positively to this, embracing the

privilege of being empowered with the responsibility to lead out in their own activities. This has given rise to commitment and enthusiasm among young people, which has resulted in tremendous growth in youth and young adult attendance and participation in church meetings and activities. The youth and young adult population has now become the fastest growing group in the church.

2. The youth leader or sponsor has been made a representative at the Church Board to obtain approval for all youth and young adult programs and activities they propose to implement.

3. The youth and young adults have been held responsible for their own fund-raising programs to support their activities with guaranteed church assistance.

4. Adults have been, overall, very supportive of young people's programs and activities.

5. All youth and young adult programs and activities have been encouraged to keep in line with the mission statement: to keep Jesus the focus of all church-related activities.

Vision of the Florida Seventh-day Adventist Conference for Its Churches

The following is a modified version of the Florida Seventh-day Adventist Conference's vision for its churches. The vision articulated by the conference has been slightly modified in order to bring it into line with the revitalization program for the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church formulated by this research project:

1. Pray for the empowering of the Holy Spirit so that the church will become passionate about evangelism and spiritual vitality.

2. Have a clearly revealed passion for the lost, and give leadership and ministry priority.
3. Make every member a minister, and train, equip, and empower every member to become a soul winner.
4. Care about the witness the church provides through its first impressions, quality of services, and the condition of its facilities.
5. Offer Christ-centered worship services that include meaningful praise to God, opportunities to grow spiritually, and calls for decisions to follow God.
6. Disciple members into ministry, and continually encourage each one to discover his or her spiritual gifts for use in service to God.
7. Encourage healthy relationships through small groups that build close fellowship, accountability, and support through prayer, Bible study, and personal testimony.
8. Conduct church self-evaluations to ensure that the church is organized and functioning in support of its biblical mission and mandate.
9. Be a warm and caring community that values fellowship and demonstrates love and friendship for its people.
10. Provide significant time and scope at Board meetings to discuss the church's mission to the community.
11. Be deliberate in incorporating the church's children, youth, and young adults as active participants in the life of the church, and make it a safe and accepting place for them to grow and mature in Christ.

12. Revitalize the church's mission by trying to engage and encourage every active member to get personally involved in the work of the church.

Summary

Care has been taken in the process of creating a new evangelistic model for the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church to incorporate into that model the above-outlined mission of the Florida Conference for its churches. The five evangelistic goals and objectives for the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church (outlined above), which have grown out of this project, have already begun to yield positive results. A time span of at least ten years is necessary to do a real comparative study of improvements resulting from this project, but there is already evidence of evangelistic renewal in the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church as a result of the implementation of the project's goals. The evangelistic renewal that has already been experienced in the church provides evidence of the potential to gain maximum success within ten years of the project's implementation.

In a presentation made at one of the Florida Seventh-day Adventist Conference's Ministerial Retreats, Russell Burrill said something about creating a disciple-making church that caught my attention. He quoted Ellen G. White as saying, "Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary."¹ Mobilizing church members to take an active part in an ongoing personal witnessing program in the church is a big challenge for spiritual leaders. Burrill further strengthens White's statement with a quote from Charles Van Engen, who says that "a case could be made that full and complete conversion in the biblical sense is a three-part process involving (1) conversion to God in

¹Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1952), 195.

Jesus Christ; (2) conversion to the church, the body of Christ, and (3) conversion to ministry in the world for whom Christ died.”¹ An understanding of discipleship that calls every member a disciple maker makes each person accountable to God for discipling someone to Christ.

Setting Short-term and Long-term Maintenance Goals for the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church

While the following goals are distinguished from evangelistic goals in that they are more directly related to ongoing church operations in the area of maintenance, they are nonetheless important in that they relate to the overall picture of church growth. Albeit indirectly, they also affect evangelistic growth.

Church Growth Goal 6: Church Building Improvement

Observable indicators for building improvement include:

1. To improve the physical appearance of the building and property to give it a more attractive and appealing look from the inside to the outside
2. To increase the seating capacity of the sanctuary to make room for better accommodation for newcomers and guests/visitors
3. To improve public facilities like the restrooms and other public services
4. To improve pulpit exchange and pastoral networking.

Activities to achieve this end include:

1. The church began a very large building project some years back, which is now in its final building stage. It is a project aimed at renovating the sanctuary and adjacent

¹Charles Van Engen, quoted in Russell Burrill, *Recovering an Adventist Approach to the Life and Mission of the Local Church* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center,

buildings, including offices, bathrooms, and mothers' room. A lack of funds and other permit requirements are some of the factors preventing the completion of this.

2. As part of the church improvement program, the church has planned to increase the paved parking area to accommodate more vehicles.
3. Church improvement has included landscaping around the church and parking areas in order to increase the external appeal of the church to the community.
4. A plan has been developed to turn a vacant parcel of land adjacent to the church building, which until now has been used as overflow parking, into a park for recreational activities of the church, primarily on picnic days at the church.
5. Plans have been made to replace the old church sign board with a new and bigger one and to add more signs giving directions to the church.
6. The church's Web site has been improved to give better access to the church's information.
7. The church has voted to start a radio evangelism broadcast or tele-evangelism broadcast program for the church as soon as funds were available.
8. The Church Board has decided to organize more pulpit exchanges among pastors in the area and to plan more program exchanges to encourage greater harmony among area pastors and churches.
9. The church has been making an effort to make its membership record reflect more accurately membership in good and regular standing.

Church Growth Goal 7: Transportation Services for Church Related Activities

Observable indicators to achieve this goal include:

1. To purchase a bus so that the church can provide transportation service to members who need pick-up and drop-off services
2. To provide transportation services for church-related activities such as Field Trips and Pathfinder camping trips
3. To provide transportation service to the community for hire on Field Trips as a source of revenue to the church.

Activities for goal #7 include:

1. The church planned to increase the size of its bus to offer better services to members who need pick-up and drop-off services on Sabbaths at an arranged minimum fee. If the same service is required at other times, a similar arrangement will be made.
2. The bus service would be extended to Field Trips sponsored by the church by Family Life or for Picnic outings and Pathfinder activities. This would provide some kind of revenue for the church and convenience for the departments that need transportation service.
3. It was voted by the Church Board that if the Community needs the service of the church bus for Field Trips, it would be made available to them for hire.

Church Growth Goal 8: On a Short-Term Basis to Rebuild a Strong Financial Base

Observable indicators to rebuild the church's financial base include:

1. To rebuild the church's financial base by increasing membership giving potential

2. To minimize spending to what is of absolute necessity
3. To free the church of mortgage loans and any kind of financial indebtedness as quickly as possible
4. To build a strong financial reserve for cases of emergency
5. To increase spending for community projects.

Activities to build a strong financial base are:

1. Increasing the membership potential for giving will help build the financial base of the church so that the church can pay off its mortgage debt at an earlier date.
2. Members with greater potentials to initiate activities for fund-raising drive will help to strengthen the church finances.
3. Engage the church in making pledges to clear all debts as a one-time project so the church can subsist on its weekly offering.
4. The church will continue to initiate programs that will bring revenue in so it can have a strong financial reserve.
5. The church will continue to build strong community-based programs that will require strong financial support from the community to help build a better financial base for the church.
6. Money that would otherwise be used for advertising has begun to be directed toward the training and employment of members of the laity. The idea is that once individual members are trained, the need to turn to the conference is decreased.

Summary

The above-mentioned goals and objectives, which have grown out of this research project, are an important part of the dynamic change that has already begun to take place

at the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church. They have all already been approved by the Church Board and by the church body at Members Meetings. The primary impediment toward the implementation of some of them is lack of available funds. The church is currently working to restore its depleted financial resources so that it can venture out to achieve its goals that depend on strong financial support. As stated above, while these latter goals are not in a clear way evangelistic goals, church growth also depends on improvements in such areas as building functionality and attractiveness and transportation.

Implementing the Committee Method for Setting New and Reachable Goals and Definable Objectives

The church's reform process has included adopting a committee-method approach to all planning and implementing of church goals and objectives. This includes planning as specific as organizing a Sabbath day service, to planning as broad as a building project or a new approach to evangelism.

The adoption of the committee method has entailed dividing the church up into departments and having each department form a planning committee. Each committee in turn has a representative on the Church Board. Because the primary focus of all departments is soul winning, each and every department develops its own evangelistic goals and objectives. These are then incorporated into the overall goals and objectives of the Church Board, which serves as the large committee for the whole church.

Departmental committees are given as much freedom and latitude as possible in planning programs and setting goals and objectives. An example of the kind of programs planned by the departments are the special days. For instance, each department is put in charge of at least one Sabbath day service per year. The departmental committees meet together to

plan the program and choose the speakers. As with every decision, the proposal is then placed before the Board for approval.

Having each department represented on the Church Board and all decisions cleared by the Board, among other things, ensures against conflicts of interest. The overall approach to decision making leads to a better internal control of the Church Board and prevents breaches in communication of vital information for proper coordination of administration and departments. The Church Board looks at the feasibility of all proposals, especially when they require monetary support from the treasurer, before giving its approval. No approval will be given to a proposal or program that does not have the endorsement of its committee. Furthermore, matters that affect the whole church are decided upon by the entire church body at the Members Meetings. It is at the Members Meetings that every project of change and implementation of new programs for the church gets its final approval. This method has saved the church from internal conflicts between departments and leadership and has helped ensure that all decisions work for the best of the church body as a whole.

Conclusion

The Silver Springs Shores Mission Statement is "Each one will win one." This mission statement works in harmony with the New Testament concept that every disciple of Christ is a disciple maker. It would also fit Peter's concept of "The priesthood of all believers." The church members are aware that soul winning is every member's responsibility. The challenge of leadership in the twenty-first century is to make church members feel responsible for soul winning as an integral part of connection to Jesus. This membership responsibility should be regarded as an ongoing activity for every capable

member. Some members have comforted themselves with the thought that they have already won someone to Christ; therefore, the responsibility now rests upon other members to win their souls to Christ. The new emphasis on personal goal setting for each member has kept the work ethics more in focus for those who are diligent workers of the Lord. The writings of Ellen G. White are repeatedly referenced for all members to keep in mind their accountability to God. In a favorite passage from her writings regarding God's dependence on human agents, White writes:

As His representatives among men, God does not choose angels who have never fallen, but human beings, men of like passions with those they seek to save. Christ took humanity that He might reach humanity. A divine-human Savior was needed to bring salvation to the world. And to men and women has been committed the sacred trust of making known "the unsearchable riches of Christ."¹

The themes of the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church are as follows: "To have an experiential relationship with Christ," and "Who knoweth whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" These are printed in the church's weekly bulletins and mounted on the sanctuary wall for all to see. This helps to keep the spiritual focus of the church as a constant reminder to the members of their mission as a church in the community. It is strongly emphasized that although the church is interested in expanding its programs to win as many souls as possible, a primary purpose of the weekly worship service is to lead worshippers into a spiritual renewal. The church holds as the primary purpose for its existence in the community, making worship an experiential encounter with Christ for everyone who enters the sanctuary. When the place of worship becomes the center for spiritual catharsis, it will also become the center for mission expedition

¹White, *Christian Service*, 7.

because members will become so in tuned with their mandate from Jesus in Matt 28:19-20 that they will burn with passion to witness.

The work ethics of the church is well established among the believers but working to get everyone to have an experiential relationship is still a challenge. There is a strong determination to revitalize the church spiritually. Ellen White says that the real character of the church is measured by its commitment to preserving the faithful workers, and the renewal experience that is hoped to be achieved from this project will fulfill exactly what she says in the following:

The real character of the church is measured, not by the high profession she makes, not by the names enrolled upon the church book, but by what she is actually doing for the Master, by the number of her preserving, faithful workers. Personal interest and vigilant individual effort will accomplish more for the cause of Christ than can be wrought by sermons or creeds.¹

The new model proposed by this research project is taking shape, and a paradigm shift is already evident. My hope is that the Silver Springs Shores Church may become a model for evangelistic renewal in the Florida Conference as well as a model of spiritual renewal for other Seventh-day Adventist churches in the region. More time is required for all the proposed goals and objectives to be fulfilled, but the motivation is to continue to make changes happen. The project for increased and improved public evangelism is dependent upon the fervent prayers and diligent work of the members. At the same time, the outcomes of this project will not be an accomplishment only through the prowess or the skillful manipulation of intelligence but by the mighty workings of the Holy Spirit. The paradigm shift currently under way in the shaping of the future of the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church makes every tomorrow a vision of hope. The advent of a new group

¹Ibid., 12.

of youth has declared a moratorium on the status quo in worship that has kept the spirit of praise dormant for several years. They are very intentional and purposeful in making change happen in the way worship and praise is being presently done in the Silver Springs Shores Church.

CHAPTER 5

DESIGNING, IMPLEMENTING, AND EVALUATING THE NEW WORKING MODEL

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the design, implementation, and evaluation of a program that is more adaptable to the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church's evangelistic outreach profile. The new model emphasizes numerical church growth resulting from personal and public evangelism. It is geared toward a more consistent pattern of increase in baptisms resulting from public campaigns. And it introduces a retention program for new converts that will help to reduce the rapid dropout rate of members leaving the church. The new model solicits the participation of more members in the process of soul winning and focuses on retaining more members of the church. It also promotes a higher level of accountability among members of the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church for church growth over the next ten years.

Before beginning the process of designing a model specifically tailored to the church, research was conducted which included exploring a wide range of literature written on church growth and development both from Adventist and non-Adventist perspectives. The Bible and works by Ellen G. White also provided valuable insights and information. The Bible provided the basis for biblical motifs that illustrated certain

methods of soul winning. And Ellen G. White's writings provided counsel on methods and approaches to evangelism. Other materials such as church records and community statistical reports, including those relative to population, employment, cultural mix, church-growth ratio, and nominal churches, were very useful.

Various areas of concerns for the church's outreach programs were explored and evaluated in order to identify probable causes for the inconsistent pattern of membership growth over the ten-year period under study, 1993 to 2003. Discovering reasons for the slow growth in membership and for the high dropout rate would provide helpful input into the design of a more adaptable working model for the church. The new program would require more strategic program planning for the church. Careful attention would need to be given to programs to retain the interest of new members of the church in order to ensure their effectiveness. Careful attention would also have to be focused on programs targeting young people in the church.

This stage entailed looking at the church's history of pastoral and membership staffing and change for the period under study. The process also entailed looking for barriers within the church and the community that would present difficulty for the new model to achieve its goals and objectives. In the design and implementation of the program it was important to consider such issues as resistance to paradigm shifts, demographics of the community, mission emphasis of the church, personnel used for evangelistic outreach programs, and ways to promote more successful church growth for the community. Once barriers for growth are determined, attempts can be made to overcome them through careful planning and strategic implementation of programs. Discovering removable barriers to church growth also made it easier to perceive

potentials for growth. Therefore, determining barriers before the planning and implementation process began enabled the planners to pursue success more resolutely. A pre-evaluation process of the project looked at ways to ensure success for the new model and how success would be measured once it was achieved. The objectives used to achieve success and the reliability of methods and programs used to achieve success were given much attention.

Designing the New Working Model for the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church

Assessment of the Membership Growth Problem

To begin the process of project design, a thorough investigation of the church's history of membership growth was conducted. This helped isolate the direct causes of the very inconsistent pattern of church membership growth from 1993 to 2003. In most years, baptismal results were very low. Furthermore, oftentimes, the number of baptized members balanced out the number of members dropped out of the church for the same period of time. The record shows (see Appendix A, Tables 1-4)¹ that membership growth between the years 1993 and 2003 was destabilized by the high dropout rate, which, in turn, was the result of transfers out of the area, deaths, and members who showed up as non-reporting or missing on the membership record. Partially in order to help isolate the reasons for the high dropout rate, a thorough demographic study of the local community was conducted (see chapter 2) as well as a study of the church's population and history. Several factors emerged: Inadequate employment opportunities in the area were one of

¹See Appendix A, Tables 1-4, for further reference on the inconsistencies of membership growth relative to addition and subtraction for the years 1993-2003.

the largest reasons for the high transfer rate of members. Families that left would take their children with them, which meant another generation of church members gone. Furthermore, younger church members who reached college age would often leave the area to attend institutions of higher education or to join the military services. And the average age of church members naturally entailed a higher than average death rate for church membership. All of this, in addition to members who dropped out for no clear reason, meant that although the church was regularly conducting evangelistic campaigns, the impact on church membership growth was minimal. It became clear that the church would have to find creative ways to attract new members as well as approaches to better retain current members. Part of the investigative process was to have a closer look at material resources used in the evangelistic process, personnel used as facilitators for programs, and retention programs used to sustain new converts in a long lasting church relationship. The intent of this assessment was to target any specific factors that were responsible for having severe negative impact on church growth.

Examining Other Models of Successful Membership Growth

This research project entailed an examination of other Seventh-day Adventist churches that have had successful membership growth patterns. These churches included the Willow Creek Church in Chicago and other model churches that have experienced explosive growth over the last ten to fifteen years and that have had good retention programs for their new members.¹ The purpose of this assessment of the model churches

¹The examination process of model churches was based on lecture series attended during Intensives Studies for the Doctoral Studies and lectures attended at Ministerial Retreats sponsored by the Florida Conference on different occasions. Therefore, there are no material resources available for these references.

was to see how the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church could benefit from adopting some of the successful principles of church growth. These adopted principles would naturally have to be made relevant for use in the new working model. Some of them, in the end, were indeed incorporated into the model developed by this research project, but they were always contextualized to the needs of the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church community. One important goal of the model was to give the community of faith more impetus to evangelize the non-Adventist community.

Exploring these working models reinforced the idea of the need for need-based programs. Evangelistic programs that are based on a type of profiling of programs, personnel, and needs of the community in evangelistic campaigns tend to produce better results in membership growth. This meant tailoring the message and messengers in accordance with the needs of the congregation and the community. People often become more attracted to a religion or a religious institution that caters to their own personal social, cultural, emotional, and spiritual needs. People are looking to make their church life a life-long association. The evangelistic model thus needed to focus on making the church as attractive and appealing as possible for people who are looking to establish life-long associations.

Designing Strategic Plans for Changes in Programs

The study revealed that the effectiveness of the church's evangelistic programs might be enhanced in a number of ways. With the ideas associated with the "priesthood of all believers" concept (see chapter 3) as a foundation, the model called for increased participation of the laity in the planning and implementation process of soul winning programs. Increased and enhanced training of member volunteers who would be involved

with personal witnessing was seen as a way of increasing the productivity of personal and public evangelistic campaigns. Additionally, the study of the approach to programs between 1993 and 2003 revealed that church worship services could be made more attractive and exciting for all worshippers. Specifically, the study revealed that the church's youth and young adults were not being fully engaged. Furthermore, not enough was being done to draw new members of people affiliated with other denominations. Nor were worship services interesting and engaging enough to keep the interest of non-believers. The key seemed to be to make the church more attractive to the community, to make worship services more engaging, to excite and engage young people as much as possible, and most importantly to get the entire church congregation involved in every step of the process.

The formulation of proposed changes in program were all done in collaboration with and with approval of the Church Board and the Personal Ministries Committee. In April 2003, the new program that developed out of this project was implemented as a three-year plan, designed to focus more on church growth. (See Appendix C.)¹ The three-year plan was a short-term goal for evangelism within the larger ten-year time span devoted to promote church growth with the use of the new model. Church growth is more than just increasing membership. It entails an overall improvement of programs. The following are some of the results of the study and proposals for the new, improved model. The specific goals and objectives are outlined in Chapter 4. (For the sake of

¹See Appendix C for more details on the three year-plan for evangelism in the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church.

clarity, the following has been divided up into separate categories. There is by necessity much overlap, however.)

Personal Contacts

As stated above, the new program was designed to encourage and solicit more membership participation in the soul-winning aspect of church growth. It was also designed to encourage ongoing participation in this venture so that the church presence in the community would be better felt and appreciated. Perhaps the most important change that was implemented in this regard had to do with the type of contact between members of the congregation and the community. For instance, in the past, members of the community were invited to evangelistic meetings in impersonal ways, such as through the media. There was very little personal contact before meetings started. Even literature was merely left on doorsteps. The new model called for a dramatic increase in and improvement of contact between members and the community before, during, and after evangelistic meetings. The new program was designed to encourage all age groups in the church to become engaged in recruiting friends and family members who are non-Seventh-day Adventists to join in the church life. Training helped teach members how to best engage in this kind of personal witnessing and how to keep from making people feel pressured to become members of the church. Individual involvement was taken even a step further. Members were encouraged to participate in various church departments and their committees.

The Committee Method

The new model focused on encouraging and soliciting more leadership accountability on the local level. This entailed empowering church members to take charge of committees and subcommittees that would micromanage program development and would train and equip members to play more active roles in the various aspects of programs. (See chapter 4 for a fuller explanation of the committee method.) This approach meant forming committees that would represent various church departments. The responsibility of the committees would primarily be to recommend necessary changes in programs, changes that reflected areas of need for each department that was represented by a committee. The goal of each department would be to focus more on membership outreach programs and to formulate retention programs for new members. Committees would be further required to submit their recommendations to the Church Board for the next stage of discussion and approval. Finally, any project that affected the entire church body would then have to get approval from the congregation at the Members Meetings. This approach was intended to generate more participation in the decision-making process of the church. The idea was that the more responsible the members felt for church activities, the more time and energy they would be willing to commit. Not only would this lead to increased and more productive personal evangelism, but it would lead to a more spiritually active church that would naturally be more attractive to non-members.

The priority of every department would be soul winning. One responsibility of department leaders would be to keep emphasizing soul winning at every given opportunity and to help set yearly goals in soul winning for each department. The departments would be encouraged to work as support groups for those involved with their

activities. This would partly entail having each member report missionary contacts at department meetings as a way of providing motivation for those engaged in the missionary endeavors.

A New Approach to Finances

The more active involvement of the laity served another purpose. The study had determined that the church needed a new approach to finances. The church had become too dependent on the conference for funding, and when the financial resources were short, the church would have to hold off on evangelistic meetings. During the latter part of the ten-year period under study, there had been a shortfall in evangelism funding from the conference, which had decreased the number of public meetings that could be held within the church. The training of the laity to be more involved with personal evangelism as well as with basically every aspect of the church's day-to-day activities seemed to be the best solution to this problem. Money that would otherwise be used for advertising was to be directed toward the training of and employment of Bible workers.

Community Services and Activities

Some of the key objectives of the new program were geared toward soliciting more favorable community responses to public meetings and finding ways to encourage people to be more receptive to Bible study invitations from Seventh-day Adventists. The decision was made to make a deliberate attempt to work through community outreach campaigns to change the negative perception of Seventh-day Adventists that the public was found to have. A general view of Adventism in the community was found to be that it was a church with very restrictive doctrines regarding diet and foods, dress code, and

other general lifestyle issues. Furthermore, Adventists were perceived to be antisocial. Considering these perceptions, it is not surprising that non-Adventists have tended to be reticent about taking part in community outreach activities. An important project goal became to work toward changing these perceptions.

One important way to change these perceptions would be through community outreach programs. Activities such as the distribution of foods, goods, and other services needed by members of the community would improve the image of Seventh-day Adventists while at the same time serving the needs of the community and drawing people to the church. An increased emphasis on the church's Wellness and Fitness Program would also serve this purpose. One proposal was to offer GED classes, free of charge, as well as other remedial learning classes to members of the community.

In addition to isolating and fulfilling needs, the decision was made to engage community members in the church's entertainment and social activities including day-long festivals. Furthermore, Summer Day Camps and Pathfinder Club activities geared toward both church and community members could increase community involvement in the church and improve the church's image in the community.

Better Support for New and Prospective Members

As stated above, the study found the need for better retention programs for new members. It also found that not enough personal contact was being made with prospective members. Once contact was made and members of the community expressed interest in the church, the study found that personal contact was lacking. Even with respect to prospective candidates for baptisms, interpersonal contact was at a minimum. This lack of interpersonal relationship development generally continued through the

baptismal stage and even into the time that people were transitioned into church membership. It was into this kind of family setting that relatively new and often scared people were introduced. Research conducted in the context of this project led to the conclusion that this could have been an important factor that led to problems with new converts feeling at home with the congregation and the message. Perhaps this even led to new members losing interest in their new-found faith and returning to their old lifestyles. A focus on developing personal relationships with prospective members became a priority of the new model.

The church was also found not to have any formulated program for retaining its new members and concerns for dropouts never got beyond being looked at as a concern. It was important that a better approach to keeping track of new and prospective members was needed. The plan included creating a Sabbath school class specifically geared toward new members and developing a kind of buddy or mentor system.

More Engaging and Interesting Programs

The study further found that church programs needed to be radically revised. The church had followed the same system of program planning for soul winning year after year. There was no change in the methods used, and people in the community had become very familiar with that system, which is perhaps partly why the evangelistic programs lost interest and appeal. Even Saturday morning worship services were a constant repeat, and as a result, attendance was down to a minimum. There was also little change in people being appointed to offices and people participating in worship services. There tended to be a rotation of the same people year after year. Even Bible studies and many other instructional classes had lost their appeal because of monotony and boredom.

Clearly, the new model needed to focus on the planning of more engaging worship services designed to stimulate interest and better engagement of participants.

Better Engagement of Youth and Young Adults

Before the introduction of the new model, church life was largely perceived by the younger generation to be boring and meaningless. Programs were not designed to stimulate interest among the youth, and many young people stayed in parked cars in the church parking lots during services. Overall, there was very little emphasis on programs for children, youth, and young adults. Furthermore, the leadership monopoly held by senior adults was quite evident. Frequent conflicts of interest arose between young people and adult worshipers over worship services. This sometimes led to the young people being branded as anti-religious, which naturally led to their increased alienation. Adults and young people could not come to a compromise on worship styles, so young people would sometimes drift off to far away churches to find fulfillment in worship. The problem was further compounded by a widening of the generation gap due to culturally different philosophies of worship. Parents, who most often had a West Indian worship orientation, saw things very differently from their children, who had adopted an American cultural appreciation of worship.

The new model proposed giving as much freedom and latitude as possible to the church's youth and young adult population in planning their own worship services and activities. Stimulating youth and young adult programs and activities over which the youth had a large amount of control would be a way to reinvigorate the interests of young members in the church. It would also give these members reason to reach out to their non-Adventist friends, and in this way to be engaged in their own personal evangelism.

The hope was that this new model would help create a progressive and vibrant church for young and old members alike.

Implementation of the New Model for Church Growth at the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church

Challenges to Implementation of the New Model

Implementation of the new model began well, with the majority of the congregation expressing a willingness and readiness for some type of change in the way evangelistic campaigns were being conducted at the church. Most members either immediately understood or were easily helped to understand the benefits that most of the above-outlined proposed changes would bring to the church. This allowed for the achievement of some realistic goals and was a major victory for the new model. At the same time, one of the biggest challenges to model implementation was persuading all members of the congregation of all the changes proposed by the model. Implementing changes to programs that have long tenures of operation and that in many cases church members did not perceive as flawed was often quite difficult. People must see change as progress in order to be accepting of that change. The challenge was to change the mind-set of those who were not open to some of the new adventures. Through patience, perseverance, and honesty, this was successfully achieved, and those who were skeptical of the proposed changes came to see them as beneficial and non-threatening to the church. They thus gave their support to the model.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to model implementation was finding a way to implement programs that incorporated all age groups of the church into a harmonious blend, one that created a balance and appreciation between groups with very different philosophies of worship. It was precisely some of the proposed changes geared toward

young people, for instance, that caused the greatest resistance from the congregation. For example, steps were taken to introduce more of the type of music that stimulated interest among the young people and led to their increased participation. But it was not easy to reach a happy medium in light of the apprehensive group of adults who were afraid that the young people would introduce heretical styles of music into the worship service. Many older members found the music that was appealing to young people to be too “worldly.” Efforts at compromise were made. The goal was to introduce programs that were more representative of each group in the church with the goal of breaking down barriers that so often threaten to divide congregations.

One successful solution to the conflict between the older and younger generations was the implementation of two separate groups at worship time. This worked well especially in light of the dramatic increase in the population of young people. Fortunately, adequate accommodations were able to be arranged for the two groups to worship separately. This compromise alleviated much of the apprehension on the part of senior adult worshippers who were still quite conservative in their approaches to style of worship.

Strategic planning required a lot of input from various committees. It was important that every group felt well represented. It was also important that every church member felt represented and no proposed change was implemented without first receiving a vote of approval from the entire church. All proposals followed the above-described steps from committee to Church Board to Members Meetings. The most challenging part of getting final approval before implementation was reaching a compromise with programs that would continue to give fulfillment in worship to all

groups. Getting final approval from the entire church body was also a challenge. An environment in which everyone has a voice by necessity leads to many different subjective opinions regarding almost all details of any plan. It was important to keep an open mind to the different perceptions and reactions of various members. The interpretation of change varied from one individual to the next. Honesty, sincerity, and simplicity were found to be the best ways to help bring together people with sharply divided opinions.

The congregation has been kept informed throughout the implementation process. Honesty regarding successes and failures has helped increased members' commitment to the model for change. Furthermore, changes were often introduced gradually, with leadership ensuring the confidence of the congregation each step of the way. Changes that yielded positive results would then, often gradually, help to shape the thinking of the congregation. For instance, when the older generations came to understand that after the introduction of various styles of worship, everyone was better enjoying worship, they became less resistant to this type of divergence. The congregation came to understand that styles of worship were culturally dependent and that prescribed styles could be restrictive and detrimental to meaningful worship for certain groups. The dramatic increase in youth participation and the phenomenal growth of the young population of the church further led many—who had at first been skeptical about proposed changes to appeals to the young—to be persuaded of its importance. The different flavors of worship actually became contagious in the community. The congregation had come to understand that acceptable worship of God does not have to be tailor-made to suit every cultural or ethnic group, but rather, by and large, acceptable worship to God is an expression of the

heart. As a result, the spirit of worship has gained momentum within the congregation and the level of appeal to non-worshippers and worshippers alike has risen to higher levels.

The Training of the Laity

Training new workers and equipping them with the tools to work to create interests in Bible studies and conducting Bible studies have given rise to a new wave of excitement among members of the church. The fear factor that has inhibited many for years has been put behind and the motivation to get involved is like the spark of a new flame of fire. The greatest challenge that leadership now faces in the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church is to keep the level of motivation high among the members who have an insatiable desire to work for souls.

Structure of and Attendance at Training Sessions

The church began a training session for the laity, inviting all members of the church to participate. Attendance varied from time to time depending on work schedules and conflicts of interest of attendees. Training was conducted on a rotation basis by the pastor and other eligible leaders, as they were available. The training program graduated new Bible workers, moving the number of previously trained Bible workers from three to twelve. The number of volunteers for literature distribution and solicitation of interest in Bible studies quadrupled because of the training conducted for fieldwork. Volunteer assistance in Field Evangelism increased to an unprecedented level because of the motivation to increase participation in soul winning. The training given to the laity on how to make contacts and conduct Bible studies in the community was enhanced and

reinforced by having experienced Bible workers going out with the newly trained workers. Trained church members became actively involved in ongoing personal witnessing programs, soliciting interest, making personal contacts, and developing friendships in the community prior to the launching of campaign meetings.

In preparation for the task, the church had begun nine months of personal preparation training for its members, with training programs being assessed to determine effectiveness and results each step of the way. The Personal Ministries' Department started with the study of the Discover Bible Lessons from the Voice of Prophecy. This preparation helped members get well acquainted with the material and prepared them for the questions and answers that would be a part of their engagement with members of the community. Those who took advantage of these training sessions found it to be an enriching experience. They felt better equipped to answer certain fundamental questions of the church and more confidence in their own abilities as evangelists.

The Discover Bible Lesson training session was followed by a Bible workers training class in which various training materials were used. The class was opened up to all church members who could attend. As a result of this class, the number of volunteer Bible workers for the church went from three to twelve, and the number of lay people trained or equipped for the field work multiplied. The training classes sparked a great deal of enthusiasm among those who felt ready for fieldwork. Three months before the first post-training evangelistic campaign, the church started to plan Sabbath Field Days.

The First Evangelistic Campaign after Project Implementation Began

In preparation for the first evangelistic campaign after implementation of the new working model for the church began, members joined together in a coordinated effort on Sabbath Field Days. On designated Sabbath Field Days, the church rearranged its programs. Divine Hour began at 9:00 AM and finished at 10:00 AM. The church members who were capable of going with the “footmen” went out in the community according to their assigned groups and territories. They distributed literature, initiated Bible studies using the Discover Bible Lessons, and passed out handouts for the upcoming 2004 evangelistic campaign. They also conducted a survey of those whom they contacted and who were willing to be surveyed. The church then did follow-up visits with their personal contacts. This approach meant that the community was saturated with soul-winning literature by the time of the evangelistic meetings. Many community contacts came out for the meetings from the field witnessing, and the evangelistic campaign was indeed a success.

When time came to launch the campaign meetings, the church had already preceded the media advertisement and mail distribution of invitations relative to the upcoming campaign event. The newly trained workers had made personal contacts and developed friendships with those invited to attend the meetings before public meetings were advertised and invitations sent out announcing the coming evangelistic campaign. This led to a far better response from the community than had past efforts at evangelism. Two weeks before the meetings were held, a follow-up letter was sent out to remind members of the community of the event and to confirm the information previously recording during personal contacts. This evangelistic campaign held by the church ended

up with better results in baptisms than had previous evangelistic campaigns, largely thanks to the personal involvement of the laity in the pre-planning and pre-preparation programs of evangelistic meetings.

The New General Approach to Personnel and Evangelism

Personnel who conduct public meetings were carefully selected to reflect the type of congregational, community, and pastoral need in order to ensure the best possible results in baptisms coming from public campaigns. The deployment of personnel for active ongoing services in soul winning in the community was reoriented to ensure that they received the highest possible training and the best tools available to work with the community. Materials distributed in the community received much attention so that the correct information was relayed to the people. The change in dynamics was to ensure maximum effectiveness through personal witnessing of the congregation in the community in preparation for harvesting of souls at public events.

Personal witnessing has supplemented media advertisement and given the church more visibility in the community. People who received reward for their labor stayed committed and consistent to the task for a much longer time and success was more apparent by this method than it has been in the past. The design has revealed that the harvesting of souls is more fruitful when the laity are trained, equipped, and empowered in the process of soul winning.

Ellen G. White points out that “the manner in which the truth is presented often has much to do in determining whether it will be accepted or rejected.”¹ The outcome of an evangelistic meeting will be determined by the presenter of the messages and the pre-preparation that was made by the messenger in conjunction with the needs of the community. This is why careful and thoughtful study and planning should be given in the preparation for public campaigns.

Since the implementation of this project, greater emphasis has been placed on creative presentation of messages. While in the past respondents would come to hear only what appealed to their needs and quit attending the meetings never to return again, with the new approach, the repackaged old messages have had a great appeal. One change has been a greater emphasis on congregational singing. Old-time revival Gospel singing has been reinstituted in public evangelistic campaigns, and as a result the audience has felt more involved at each meeting and attendance has been more consistent. When revival singing is an integral part of public campaigns, it gets people more excited and motivated to attend them.

Before implementation of this project, there was a heavy reliance on a media or technology approach during meetings. With a return to the more congregational participation of the old-time revival system, people are beginning to feel more connected to the messages. Revival singing in evangelistic meetings engages congregational participation, attracts a larger audience, and yields better results in baptisms. While this may not be true for all social groups, it has certainly been the case at the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church.

¹White, *Testimonies*, 4:168.

The new model conducted, as part of its pre-evangelistic preparation program, surveys to solicit interest from the community. The community responded very well to the surveys every time the members did them. This was also another way of getting better acquainted with the community and getting the church's literature out in the community. The response was more favorable this way. The church's presence in the community on a regular basis gave the church its visibility in the community. Personal witnessing was observed to be one of the best ways for people of the community to identify the church as a caring and unselfish church. Thus, the church was perceived by the community as more than just interested in disciple making. The church has also been perceived as a Bible-believing church and one that reflects the biblical model of mission with a message of care-giving and disciple-making.

Overview of Initial Success after Model Implementation

Overall, the results of the initial implementation of programs has been extremely promising. The committee method has led to greater member participation in the program-planning process at various levels of the church, and it has engendered a greater sense of involvement and ownership in members. The design has stimulated more interest in planning and implementing programs and activities in the church, and the working force of the soul-winning action teams has increased and strengthened.

New Member Retention Programs

The retention programs designed as part of the new model have yielded great success. New members have appreciated the opportunity to attend their own Sabbath school classes where they can freely ask questions, and the new membership mentoring

program has proven helpful to those still in the adjustment stages of entering their new church family. Mentors have been trained and provided with materials that would help minimize the dropout rate of those who were likely to get lonely and discouraged because they felt like misfits in their new social settings of the church family. The skills and expertise of new members are now identified as soon as possible, and new members willing to do so are initiated into areas where they feel comfortable serving. Attention is also given to placing them with people with whom they feel comfortable working. Under this new program, new members, much more quickly than in the past, come to feel at home in the church. Many of them have already become willing volunteer participants in services. Mentors have been trained to regularly engage with those they mentor. This might mean inviting the new members to their homes, introducing them to new groups, and continuing to initiate them into the entire church life and membership until they feel comfortable being on their own. Support is also provided to mentors, who give regular accounts of those they mentor. The mentoring program has been extremely successful and the church became known as “the caring church.”

Targeting Youth and Young Adults

As mentioned above, the programs targeting youth and young adults have also experienced enormous success. Allowing young people to have separate worship services has worked exceptionally well. For one, incorporating music more attractive to young people has helped increase their participation. Young people now feel a sense of freedom to express themselves in worship without feeling condemned for their interests or alienated by the church body. As a result, they have also been more active in recruiting

their friends and relatives, which has helped increase the youth and young adult population in the church.

The new approach taken by the church in general toward prospective new young members is to build friendships with them and invite them to social activities of the church as the first initiation process into church life. The new feeling of acceptance and belonging has led to increased fellowship. Careful attempts have been made not to push religion on young people, but rather to show them love and acceptance. This has proven successful and many more of the community's young people have begun to accept invitations to visit church services. Many have become actively involved in church life and some are soon to become members of the church.

As explained in chapter 2, the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church community is highly religious. In this context, it is easy for young people who are not actively involved in religious activities to get the feeling that they are perceived as immoral. Unconditional acceptance of these young people by church members is the best way to help them dispel their sense of being misfits. It is also the best way to draw them into the church family. Oftentimes, the very reason these young people are not associated with a church or a religion is that they are rebelling against a group with which they have had bad experiences, a context in which they have felt judged and rejected. Loving tender care from church members along with unconditional welcoming into the church fellowship is the best way to help them overcome their resistance to church attendance and involvement.

Thanks to the new recruitment program and increased involvement of young adults in leadership roles, the church has seen remarkable strides in the participation of

young people in worship services and other church-related activities. While always keeping in line with the mission statement of the church, to keep Jesus the focus of all church-related activities, younger members now have a representative on the Church Board, they plan their own programs and activities, and they are held responsible for their own fund-raising programs to support their activities (with guaranteed church assistance). Young people have responded positively to and embraced the privilege of being empowered with the responsibility to lead out in their own activities. This has given rise to commitment and enthusiasm among young people, which has resulted in tremendous growth in youth and young adult attendance and participation in church meetings and activities. The youth and young adult population is both a vibrant part of and the fastest growing group in the church.

Engagement of the Community in Church Activities

As outlined above, the new pre-evangelistic meeting strategies have increased interest of the community in attendance at public meetings. Planning church events that involve the community has received special attention, and there has been marked improvement in public interest in church activities. Even the evangelistic program for outreach to the unchurched population of the community has been successful. These members of the community have exhibited a special need for love and acceptance from church members. And when this is given, members of the unchurched population have shown a willingness to engage in the church's activities. Through friendships newly formed and church-related activities in which members of the community have been involved, the church now benefits from strong community support.

The social activities that the church has planned and in which members of the community have been engaged have included international festivals, concerts, and field trips. The international festivals have helped to expose the cultural composition of the church to the community and helped to boost multi-cultural participation from the community. With a deliberate attempt to use new strategies to penetrate the non-Adventist Christian population with the Seventh-day Adventist message, church activities have been more community oriented. The Youth Church, for example, has incorporated into its worship services different types of musical instruments. This has entailed inviting expert or experienced players from the community. Non-member players involved in these musical programs have become more comfortable with the church life. Some of them have even become members of the church.

Social activities geared toward youth are another featured attraction for non-Seventh-day Adventist members of the community. The local community does not have many social outlets for young people on weekends. In response to this need, the young people of the church now plan regular weekend social activities at the church and invite their non-Adventist friends to participate. These social events have been very successful with good attendance by both community and church members. Furthermore, the Pathfinder Club, Vacation Bible School, and other activities have attracted a large number of non-Adventist children from the community to participate.

Some members of the community have participated in the Family Life Field Trips. People who have been a part of these trips have become good friends and supporters of the church. The Family Life Department, which plans these trips, is a vibrant part of the church. They regularly plan events such as Family Life Seminars,

marriage revitalization programs, and cruises that provide opportunities for recreation and vacation. To all these programs both members and non-members are invited. This department has been especially active in keeping the church and the community constantly interacting through social programs.

The community outreach programs have brought many to the church who would not otherwise respond to invitations to attend church meetings. Many of the people who have participated in these programs have gone on to become friends and supporters of the church. Programs such as the free GED classes have attracted a number of non-Adventists. Many of the attendees have reported that this was their first time to enter a Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Responding to the Needs of Different Groups

Since implementation of the new model began, the church has kept before itself the challenge to maintain a balance in the programs it provides and the speakers it invites. While it is often difficult to fulfill everyone's needs, the effort is made to make everyone feel at home spiritually within the body of believers. Through the involvement or blending of different cultures into the planning process, there has not been any manifest feeling of discontent among the believers. Careful attention has been paid to the needs of various groups within the church in planning church programs. Speakers are regularly chosen based on the needs of the congregation and respondents from the community. All of this has helped enhance attendance at public meetings and acceptance of the Seventh-day Sabbath-keeping message. Addressing the needs of the congregation and of the community has, in fact, been the common theme running through all programs.

One program in particular is worthy of mention here. A program for young couples has been launched. These young, often newly married, couples meet once every month at one of the couples' homes on a rotation basis. They meet to fellowship together and share common interests and concerns about marriage life. This has been a dynamic program with very positive responses. The pastor and his wife have served as mentors for this group. Sometimes the concerns expressed during these meetings have been extremely personal. Young couples involved in the program are clearly looking for answers to their particular concerns about certain marital issues and problems, and this has provided a nurturing outlet and support group for them. In many instances, the sessions have been helpful and therapeutic for all present. Young couples, who in the past had been rather lax in church attendance, are now attending church more regularly, and there has been evidence of revitalization in their marriage relationships.

Final Thoughts

The divine worship service has been revitalized to give greater meaning and spiritual enrichment to the congregation. For instance, preliminaries have been minimized to make more room for praise through singing. Congregational participation has increased tremendously, and this has made the worship service more vibrant, which has improved church attendance of members and visitors alike.

While the church congregation has overall responded favorably to the changes introduced through this project, and while overall project implementation has met with success, there is nonetheless still some resistance on the part of some church members to certain aspects of the new model. There is reason to believe, however, based on the success thus far and the active participation of the members in general, that these

problems too can be overcome. The advantage of this new model is that there are positive signs that the project has sparked new life into the church programs. Furthermore, many of the members have shown excitement about the changes in worship. Perhaps one of the most exciting parts of this whole process has been the positive response of younger members of the church. A new generation of members is growing into fully devoted, active participants in church life.

Financial Resources Used by the Model since Implementation Began

Since implementation of the new model, monetary spending has gone down to a minimum while baptismal results have increased. This new model has focused less on exorbitant spending for media coverage and for message presentation and advertisement than had been the practice in the past. The model has initiated more effective programs for recruitment of non-member youths by the use of youth programs, and emphasis has been placed on the involvement and training of the laity for ongoing Bible work in the community and providing them with the tools to do their job.

The first evangelistic campaign held after the project was launched was actually scheduled to take place two years earlier. Because the Florida Conference financial budget for evangelism had been drastically depleted, however, appropriation for church campaigns was minimal in some churches and zero for many. The Union Evangelist in charge of conducting the campaign was gracious enough to offer his service despite the small conference budget. His consent to conduct the campaign with such a small budget came with a stipulation that the church would have to do the fieldwork in preparing the community for the event. The church accepted the challenge and through training and organizing of volunteer services of the church, the groundwork was successfully and

efficiently accomplished. The Silver Springs Shores SDA Church had not had any evangelistic meetings for two consecutive years because of insufficient conference funds. At the time the church was already struggling to finance its new building project and could not finance evangelism itself. The appropriation that was awarded for evangelism in 2004 was only one quarter of the usual appropriation for the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church.

This evangelistic campaign, which used a smaller than normal financial budget, resulted nonetheless in big miracles in soul winning. The successful baptismal results coming from evangelistic campaigns show that when more emphasis is placed on active involvement of the laity in evangelism, evangelistic outreach programs do not always have to be based on extravagant spending and elaborate advertisement programs. As it turned out, the approach that grew out of this research project ended up having a far greater impact on soul winning than did past, more expensive approaches. In this new approach, money that would otherwise be spent on advertisement or big public awareness programs was spent on the training of the laity. Individuals were also given some monetary reward for being Bible workers. This was just one way a new spark of interest in congregational participation was quickly obtained. Incentives usually boost the work spirit and produce better results. Nonetheless, the trained laity of the church who worked on a stipend basis were augmented by the volunteer services of members of the congregation who rallied to the task of substituting for media coverage to the community, by making personal one-to-one witnessing and volunteer Bible studies. The small budget that was supplemented by personal contributions of volunteer members covered the incentive awards as well as all other monetary-funded programs for the meetings that

could not be obtained from volunteer services. The success of this approach has been quite encouraging. A report of it was even written up and published in the March 2005 edition of *Southern Tidings*. Financial support can never replace the dynamic, concerted effort of the laity working together toward soul winning.

Baptismal Results from the Model since Implementation Began

Baptismal results from evangelistic campaigns that have been held since the implementation of the new model have been gratifying and have helped spiritually revitalize the church. As a result of just one campaign, twenty-nine members have been added to the church through baptism and twenty-one members have renewed their covenant by baptism. The number baptized in just that one event was higher than the total baptism for the preceding ten-year period. A follow-up baptism from that same event added another seven members to the church. Although this one event cannot be used to determine the rate of success for the new model, it is still an indicator of the potential baptismal growth that this new model has introduced in the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church. All of this has been thanks to the use of new techniques and new approaches to the way the church conducts personal and public evangelism.

Since implementation of the model, the church has experienced success in (1) membership growth, (2) the recruitment program of young people, (3) the change in programs to make Sabbath services more meaningful and attractive, (4) community relationship with the church through interfaith interconnection, (5) young couples finding more meaningful enrichment in their marriage relationship through therapeutic group sessions within the church family, and (6) social outreach activities of the church involving community participation. These programs have given rise to a church-growth

revitalization experience just over the first two years after model implementation. There is still work to be done, however. Some of the programs are advancing very slowly because of the lack of financial support. Programs are being added or expanded based on the availability of funds. New plans to replenish the financial resources offer hope that all the programs will be implemented within a few years.

Church life in general is more inviting and exciting for members and visitors alike. The potential for growth is much greater now because of the changes that have already taken place at the church. Regular church attendance has increased because worshippers are finding more fulfillment and spiritual enrichment from worship. The spirit of togetherness and cooperation has taken on a new dimension, and the atmosphere of love and care envelope the congregation.

Conclusion: Model Evaluation

The new working model for the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church, tailored around the socio-economic, socio-cultural, and socio-religious situation of the church and its community, has thus far been very successful as evidenced by all that is written in the present chapter. The process of initial evaluation was simple but effective. The basis of evaluation was feedback from each department responsible for the implementation of a program. The initial assessment process was carried out by the Church Board, which consists of all departmental leaders. The Personal Ministries Committee also acted as a sub-committee of the Church Board to ensure that the process of evaluation was thorough and fair. The process of assessment was conducted in a well-defined and systematic manner. The committees listened to and addressed complaints or criticisms of the programs. Every comment made at each meeting regarding the project was carefully

documented. The Church Board then assessed the validity of the comments from sub-committees and made adjustments where necessary before reporting to the church at Members Meeting.

Evaluation was based on the effectiveness of every method and program implemented by the project. This meant evaluating things including but not limited to the following: (1) the speakers used for evangelistic meetings, (2) the materials used as literature during campaign meetings, (3) the effectiveness of the training of personnel and the employment of personnel for the task, (4) effectiveness of the tools used in soul-winning campaigns, (5) the method of advertising public meetings, (6) responses of the community to church invitations to attend public meetings, (7) pre-campaign strategies used in the process, (8) and programs implemented for retention of new members. The assessments were overall positive. Success was determined and greater potential pinpointed. The congregation had responded well to being intimately involved in the process of soul winning for the church and clearly worked more favorably because of the incentive rewards offered them for their services.

Speakers engaged for public meetings were evaluated based on their experience in evangelism as well as their expertise in presenting messages at public meetings. When looking for evangelists for public meetings, their track record of success in soul winning was also taken into account. Before engaging speakers, the committees looked at their history of working with different ethnic groups and their resilience or flexibility to work with the local congregation in pre-campaign strategies based on the prescribed method of the new model. When speakers met the criteria prescribed above, they were invited to conduct the meetings. This approach to evaluating speakers proved to be successful.

The method of evaluation for literature was simple. Materials were chosen by the Personal Ministries Committee that was used for the evangelistic campaigns. In the decision-making process, the opinions of evangelists were solicited. They were asked to state their preferences of literature to be used before the campaigns as interest or attention-getting devices. The chosen materials were hand-delivered in the community, in a systematic manner, organized by the Personal Ministries Committee. Results showed that the literature had stimulated interest from the respondents. This interest often led to an engagement in Bible studies. It also led to members of the community becoming acquainted with the doctrines of the church and being made aware of upcoming events such as evangelistic campaigns. This method of literature distribution had the further benefit of spreading the Advent message even to those who did not end up attending meetings.

The widespread training of the laity gave more courage and impetus to those who were willing to get involved in soul-winning activities. They felt more equipped to deal with the challenges of Bible study. The confidence level of workers increased and apprehension was decreased. As a result, the spirit of motivation for witnessing increased overall. The increased number of workers also led to a more widespread coverage of the community to be evangelized. Organizing the laity to work together in groups or pairs gave them a sense of courage, confidence, and determination. More experienced members were paired off with the less experienced ones, which also worked to raise confidence levels. This method brought more success to the work of the laity than any previous adventure in evangelism.

People engaged in evangelistic efforts are more equipped to work with in the field. These included Bible study books and materials to help them to be more systematic and deliberate in conducting the studies. They had more available access to Bible questions and answers for their Bible students. This gave them the advantage to ask and answer more questions that students may want to know about their faith.

Advertising public meetings depended more on church members announcing the meetings in a more personal way than media coverage. Although the media were used to advertise meetings, this was based primarily on reaching those who could not be reached by personal contact. This method led to less spending on media advertisement and spending more on engaging the personal one-to-one contact. Every available medium of contacting the people was employed, but the one that proved to be most effective was the personal one-to-one contact. Responses to the meetings were greater through use of this method than had been in the past.

Pre-campaign strategies were launched long in advance of the meetings. All of the things mentioned above became part of the pre-campaign strategies employed by the new model. This approach resulted in better attendance and increased numbers of baptisms. This of course is just an initial evaluation process. Time is needed for a full evaluation of this kind of project, but thus far the results are better than expected. Clearly the greatest measurement for success for this project was the results of baptisms, which have already been higher than during the entire ten-year period before project implementation. Spiritual renewal has also been achieved in the process as a result of the increased experience of togetherness among members. Members of the congregation have been more earnest in working for numerical and spiritual growth than they had been in

preceding years. Fellowship among the believers has escalated to a new level and the church is at a spiritual high in its worship services. There is good reason to be confident that the new model for the church will ultimately lead the church to fulfill its mission to make disciples of all men.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Evangelism has taken center stage in the lives of the members of the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church. The church has seen it as the catalyst for any kind of spiritual or dynamic change in the body of Christ and as something that will take church growth to new levels. Evangelism is like an indispensable vehicle that transports a highly inflammable cargo just waiting for the right moment to explode. It is like a dual-purpose mechanism that can defuse confusion and conflicts in people's mixed-up lives. At the same time, it can infuse flames of passion in the lives of those who desire to do witnessing. Evangelism within the church has crushed and defeated plans of the devil to erode God's plans for peace and harmony in the church. Evangelism is what has made the place of worship a place of fellowship. People who could not find peace in their personal lives have found peaceful living in the church. Societies that can still enjoy peace and freedom in the world today owe much to evangelism.

Evangelism rightly executed is the most powerful weapon against evil and the greatest potency for spiritual renewal. It has been the experience of many evangelists who have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to witness demonic forces subdued, rebellious hearts changed, and people living and scavenging from garbage dumps to find hope to start anew. Through the influence of the Holy Spirit, messed-up lives can be rescued from the ravages of sin. Evangelism is a force for every conceivable good. It is the one thing in

which Jesus invested His life and ministry to redeem the lost. It is the only thing that has been preserved by God over the centuries to reconcile mankind back to God. Evangelism is the avenue through which every human being who comes into this world finds life and light. It is the only means that gives real meaning to a world in turmoil and confusion out of which people may find better hope to live and die. Evangelism is the only hope for spiritual survival, revival, and renewal of the church. The church should not abuse it, misuse it, or substitute it, because apart from the Holy Spirit, it is the only life-saving device and the only divine agent that changes a life of vice to virtue.

Evangelism that is void of the Holy Spirit's approbation is void of power, virtue, and conviction. The person who uses it for his own glory and gratification will be shallow and spiritually bankrupt. The counsel of Ellen G. White and the Bible to all who become engaged in evangelistic outreach ministry would be that it is both centripetal and centrifugal in scope. As a centripetal force it deploys an attractive message that, like a magnet, draws people to the center, where they can encounter Christ or the Holy Spirit. This magnetic force (evangelism) must be communicated with conviction strong enough to evict men and women from the evil that detains them. Evangelism rightly dispensed has the power to convert hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. Evangelism as a centrifugal force must compel men and women who are converted to command others to repent. The essence of reciprocation is quite evident in evangelism as these words have illustrated. The work of evangelism can be measured in terms of its achievement.

This research project has largely been about evangelism. In this chapter, the research project as presented in chapters 1 through 5 is summarized, conclusions are

offered, as are my recommendations for other church leaders who wish to engage in this kind of change in their churches.

Summary

Over a ten-year time span, from roughly 1994 to 2003, the Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church experienced difficulty attracting and retaining members. This was despite evangelistic campaigns and other efforts at soul winning. The purpose of this project was to find a solution to this problem, which meant creating, introducing, and beginning initial evaluation of a new plan that would solve the problems of high membership attrition rates and low baptismal rates at the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church. The hope is that, as a result of this project, baptisms will increase for the church and that public campaigns will be more successful and effective. Naturally, no fixed formula will work everywhere or even work at the same place all the time. Nonetheless, it is important to have a model that is designed based on the needs of a particular church. It is also important to have built into that model the flexibility necessary for it to be adapted as necessary. The evaluation of the church's situation and the resultant evaluation and adaptation of the model used for evangelism are thus ongoing processes that never end.

The project began with a research phase which included exploring literature on church growth and development. In order to develop a model that would specifically address the needs of Silver Springs Shores Seventh-day Adventist Church, a thorough demographic study of the local community was conducted. This included community statistical reports, including those relative to population, employment, cultural mix, church-growth ratio, and nominal churches. All of this is thoroughly reported in chapter

2. A study of the church itself was also conducted. This included a look at the history of the church, an analysis of various relevant factors related to its members, its membership retention record (including baptisms and member dropouts), a look at its pastors, the social climate of the church, the members' responses to change, and the kinds of spiritual renewal they have experienced. All of this is also covered in chapter 2.

The project has attempted to address problems that were identified through analysis of the church and its community. While focusing on evangelistic renewal always retained the highest priority for the project, it was also important to address factors that could minimize membership dropout rates. In order to achieve this goal, the project has launched programs including ones that address the issue of unemployment, for instance, helping find job opportunities for unemployed members. And it has initiated training programs for those without skills in order to alleviate the frustration levels of many unemployed of the church. These programs are fully detailed in chapter 5.

The design of the new evangelistic model for the church included the examination of patterns of success in other ministries. These included the Willow Creek Church in Chicago, which was analyzed from a videotape presentation at a class lecture at Southern Adventist University in Tennessee. It also included evaluating programs at churches that have experienced explosive membership growth that were presented in a lecture series by Pastor Russell Burrill and other guest lecturers at several Florida Conference Retreat Seminars.¹ Relevant information was gathered from these various models of success and applied and adapted to the working model for the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church.

¹The new model has applied some of the principles borrowed from lecture series presented at Florida Conference Ministerial Retreat sessions. The principles were just observations made during continuing education presentations at retreats.

The new evangelistic program for the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church needed to be biblically based. It is when a church program is founded on biblical principles that it has its greatest success. Chapter 3 outlines the various biblical texts, principles, and lessons used in formulating the biblically based evangelistic program designed by this project.

Chapter 4 outlines the specific goals and objectives that were formulated. These proposals included (1) making changes to evangelistic meeting structures and styles, (2) focusing on methods of engaging individual church members to become more involved in church activities, including evangelistic meetings themselves and community outreach programs, (3) increasing and improving involvement of young people in church services and other church programs, and (4) revising the church service itself to make it more meaningful and interesting for various age groups. A number of the project's recommendations have already been implemented with initial promising results. The changes thus far have sparked excitement and enthusiasm among members. Chapter 5 goes on to give a fully detailed analysis of the project's design, implementation, and evaluation.

As is made clear in chapter 5, the greatest success of this new model has probably been the change in the attitudes of members toward soul winning and the greater success in baptism of new members. This has been evidence of propulsion by the Holy Spirit, but it has also come as a result of the members themselves being renewed in their determination to let their lives shine for Jesus. The results of the first evangelistic campaign after the initiation of the project has made clear the great potential that is possible when members are fully engaged. The spiritual renewal that resulted worked as

in a domino effect. The members whose lives were transformed by Christ became almost invincible. In the Scriptures, the disciples demonstrated after Pentecost that they were empowered in ways that made their determination to evangelize unstoppable. Men and women who have been empowered by evangelism develop a passion for souls that is undaunted by any force of evil. They usually prevail over their obstacles to fulfill their commission to make disciples. People with a passion for evangelism see possibilities where others give up hope. They see potential where others have failed. They find hope where others despair. And it is under some of these circumstances that God gives the best results when people are willing to let Him lead.

Soul winning today has been made more difficult by materialism and secularism. American society strongly promotes these two, and people have gotten enticed by the thrill of either being financially well-off or popular in society. It is true that we live in a secular society and that this necessarily spills over in the church life. Many people in the church seem to be comfortable living lives that are both materialistic and spiritual at the same time. They want the church to manifest secularism, camouflaged by spirituality. In other words, if they can be half committed to the church and be half committed to a secular lifestyle, it is good for them. At the same time, they expect the fullness of God's salvation. T.R. Glover tries to put in perspective what evangelism should achieve in every believer's life and service: "Witnessing to the transformation that takes place in believers' lives through evangelism, they should make it their bound duty to manifest in a holistic way the whole works of Christ to the whole world with every given opportunity."¹

¹T. R. Glover, quoted in Larsen, 13.

The proposed model for evangelism for the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church may not solve all the problems of growth for the church, but it has already made a positive difference. The purpose of this project was not to discard what was workable, but to modify the unworkable for more desirable results in soul winning. The world around is changing rapidly, and unless we make changes to keep current with the flow of things around us, we will continue to look for meaning where it is already lost.

The church has implemented programs that are effecting change in several respects. The young people have new motivation toward worship. They are generating new ideas for worship activities and church-related activities that will attract young people of their age within the community. The church's young people are volunteering to use their gifts and talents for the church by incorporating a blend of traditional values and twenty-first-century values in their programs, which has helped maintain a connection between the younger and older generations within the church. Young people have been empowered to recruit other young people to join their group in activities that do not superimpose the church's beliefs on them but will eventually initiate them into becoming members of the church.

One important and successful aspect of the new evangelistic model is the assimilation program for the community. Assimilating the community into the church life before public meetings are held has made people of the community feel at home with the church. As a result, those among them who might wish to become members of the church, can do so without starting out feeling like total strangers. Results of the first evangelistic campaign after implementation of this project have shown that people who are friends of the church will experience smoother transitions into the church. For this

reason and others, this project strongly emphasized the need for the church to keep a presence in the community. It calls for church members to engage on a continual basis in personal witnessing.

An important part of the retention program for new members that was initiated by this project was the training of those to be involved with this maintenance work. Mentors who are personable and experienced and who had a common interest with those they are mentoring have proven to be the best support for new members and the best way to help them feel that they belong. Part of the new-member retention program has also entailed creating classes geared toward these people. When participating together with more experienced members in Bible talks or study, new members often feel intimidated. Having Sabbath school classes specifically geared toward new members has helped alleviate this problem. Furthermore, the more experienced members working as mentors are always available to provide support and to engage in discussion of issues with those they mentor. This too has helped alleviate fears. People newly joining the church need to feel they belong. One way to help assimilate them into the church is to help them become active participants in church life as soon as possible. One approach that has grown out of this project is to isolate as soon as possible ways in which new members would be comfortable making contributions to the church and quickly getting them involved. Sometimes it is not the big things that matter to people as much as the recognition of their worth. The program to engage new members as quickly as possible in church life has worked beautifully since its implementation.

Ebbie C. Smith, the proponent of a philosophy that mutual love and fellowship within the church enhances growth, says that any church fellowship that becomes an end

in itself, that separates the church from the unchurched, is pathological and furthermore is destructive to the mission of that church.¹ There must be a clear distinction between new members being (1) welcomed into and (2) being assimilated into the membership and fellowship of the church. Mentors have helped with the process of assimilating new members into the church life. This has been accomplished primarily through friendship and trust. New members should feel at home with their mentors. They should know that they can share with them and that everything will be kept in strict confidence. Joel D. Heck suggests that a congregation's spirituality is identified by the way the congregation treats its new members, because spirituality reflects the willingness of members to reach out to others who are not part of their circle of friendship.² Church fellowship should be based on spiritual connectedness to one another whether new or old in the faith.

Involvement of the laity in the pre-evangelistic preparation work is one of the areas in which this project has had the greatest success. Upon initial evaluation, some of the success of this was found to include the following: (1) the cost of funding evangelistic meetings was dramatically reduced by having the laity engaged in the evangelistic efforts; (2) the involvement of the laity in a personal way in the pre-evangelistic preparation was found to be an exceptional way to bring together members of the church and of the community and to help the church gain visibility; and (3) personal evangelism has been shown to be a great way to make the congregation feel that soul winning is team work. The sense of partnership that members have developed through witnessing and

¹Ebbie C. Smith, *Balanced Church Growth* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1984), 130.

²Joel D. Heck, *New Member Assimilation: Practical Prevention of Backdoor Loss Through Frontdoor Care* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1988), 10.

with those who have given their lives to Christ, has given members greater incentive to continue their work for souls. Keeping the church busy and working for souls will minimize conflicts, enhance spiritual growth among members, and give more personal value and meaning to the place of worship.

Conclusions

The project has already begun to help improve the evangelistic efforts of the church. Church members have already begun to be more active in distributing literature in the community and soliciting potential members for Bible study. The church is engaged in more community projects and has participated in programs that combined its own choir members with those of other faiths. Church services have been revised to be more engaging.

This project has brought to light the importance of not only depending on evangelistic meetings and campaigns, but also depending on the personal involvement and committed participation of the laity in pre-evangelistic preparation. Furthermore, the project has shown that the best method of evangelism is the one that is developed in the context of the community where evangelism will be done. Thus need-based programs guarantee the best results. It is no easy task to help bring about a change of faith in people. This is not a work of art alone. It is also a work of the heart, the center of operation of the Holy Spirit.

People are generally apprehensive about change, particularly when they do not immediately perceive the necessity of change. Reluctance, hesitation, and resistance are natural responses to proposals for change. Helping members of a congregation, especially older members, to understand the need for change requires patience. Helping people

through the process of understanding requires wisdom and tolerance. The process of change introduced by this project for the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church was both important and exciting. While many people were initially apprehensive, most of the congregation is now fully in support of the changes. This support came about as people came to understand the benefits to the church. Initial success also helped persuade some who continued to resist through the implementation state. The church body as a whole is now enjoying the benefits of the changes introduced by this project. Members are happy with the new format of Sabbath school lesson study. Praise time was introduced into the worship hour and has become an expression of delight. The increased involvement of the laity in evangelistic efforts, such as Sabbath Field Days, has been supported with enthusiasm. The young people's music program is now a featured attraction, and they are very excited about their contribution to the church. Their singing group will be featured in the next Christmas Cantata.

This project has been a revitalizing and energizing force behind the exciting things that have begun to shape the Silver Springs SDA Church into a new adventure in evangelism for the future. The current climate of the church seems to suggest that it is moving toward making a difference in church growth particularly among young adults. Young adults are taking advantage of the latitude they have been given to recruit other young people. They are enthusiastic about the empowerment they have been given to create new programs for church growth. Out of this project has grown a fuller discovery of the potential of every youth and young adult members of the church. Deliberate efforts will continue to be made to utilize their gifts and talents as well as those of all who are willing to become a part of the soul-winning action team of the church.

The training that members received helped them gain confidence and show much more willingness to go into the community to witness to others. When member feedback was requested during the process of evaluation, the responses were positive. Members shared their evaluation of the task in exciting testimonies. They talked about how they felt inspired and motivated to continue forward with personal evangelism. Some of the parents who took their children along with them talked about the rich experience it was to have their children share in witnessing. The members concluded as a whole that they had enjoyed what they had been doing in the community and were willing to continue on until there was no one else to contact.

The combined efforts of the laity in personal evangelism in the community and the follow-up series of meetings by the evangelist preacher produced fruitful results in baptisms. The joy of witnessing all that happened during those events brought abundant satisfaction. The sense by the congregation as a whole is that the days of great harvesting of souls for the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church are just ahead. It was such a pleasure to see people filled with the zeal and passion for evangelism and to see them express their joy with tears. It was even more heart warming to hear people say that working for the Lord was a privilege they wanted to experience more often.

The best way to achieve success is with the help of others. The events that unfolded during the first evangelistic campaign held after the implementation of this project were gratifying for the whole church. It was even more meaningful to those who had worked on committees formulating plans and putting them into action. The team spirit that had developed as they had worked together had made what might have been tiresome labor into something joyous. And it heightened the motivation level among the

players. The success that was achieved with so few funds suggests that the success of soul winning in evangelism is not in the amount of money spent and the sophistries of technology but in the dedication of the consecrated members who submit themselves to the use of the Holy Spirit. The most difficult task can be made easier when people work together in harmony for success.

Evangelistic efforts require much prayer, team spirit, faith in action, and spiritual renewal of those engaged in it. Public and personal evangelism succeeds best when adequate preparation determines the readiness of those to be evangelized. Getting people to respond to invitations to accept Christ and keeping them in church fellowship must mean more than good preaching. The congregation needs to see more than a well-planned worship service and good organizational skills. People are attracted to these things but beyond these, they are looking for care and compassion for one another. They are looking to see that the church is a place where they can find healing to their hurting, friendship to soothe their lonely hearts, and spiritual revitalization to give them hope beyond the dark despair. When a church fulfills these needs for its members and visitors, pews will by necessity be fuller. People are looking for meaning and fulfillment in worship, and when they find a church that provides for their needs, they will attend regularly. When care-giving and friendly love relationships permeate the congregation, this is adequate preparation to bring others to join the faith.

Recommendations

While this project has shown remarkable success in the evangelistic renewal it has helped bring to the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church, there is clearly potential for it to achieve greater success over a longer period of time. Furthermore, the limited financial

support from the Florida Conference and the church's present financial struggles have made it difficult to fully fund all the programs proposed by this project. Nonetheless, the tremendous success of the one campaign that was held in the Silver Springs Shores SDA Church since project implementation indicates that the new model has the potential to yield great success in soul winning. Especially when the problem of funding is resolved, successful public evangelism should be a constant within the church.

The involvement of the laity in planning pre-evangelistic strategies clearly played an important role in the success of the above-mentioned evangelistic campaign. This seems to be the beginning of a new era for membership growth through public meetings. The importance of laity involvement cannot be overemphasized. Furthermore, this project has shown the importance of the training people undertake in equipping them to accomplish their evangelistic goals. With the acquisition of knowledge and the development of skills brought about through training, people develop confidence in what they are doing. They even tend to be more committed to what they are doing. The greatest success comes, by necessity, from a collaborative effort. All the while, there must be leaders, however.

This project has reinforced the idea of the pastor as facilitator. It follows that as a facilitator, the pastor must have the right fit with the congregation. C. Kirk Hadaway suggests that there should be a profiling of pastors to meet the needs of a congregation. He argues that conflicts of interest between pastor and congregation can become the greatest obstacle to success. In such cases, failure can result, even where there is great potential. Hadaway proposes that the best working model for church growth and evangelistic success is to first look at the needs of the congregation and assign a pastor to

that congregation that fits the profile of the congregation.¹ A pastor must furthermore be a visionary leader. If the congregation does not have a plan for growth, he or she must introduce one. The pastor must be working one step ahead of his congregation with plans to keep his or her congregation actively involved in the work of evangelism. The pastor as leader is one of the key formulas for success of a project such as the one described in this dissertation.

Throughout the process of planning and implementing a project such as this, there must be a leader with certain skills to use the necessary tools to successfully lead a congregation into making these kinds of changes. What follows are my recommendations for such leaders.

Leaders must always remember that the greatest success is shared success. No one person celebrates meaningful success if he or she has no one to celebrate with. Leaders should expand opportunities to include others and always be open to continuously expanding the circle in order to include those who might want to volunteer. When ventures of this magnitude depend on the support of others, the worth of everyone should be exalted and the achievement of everyone should be applauded. As is usually said, "Encouragement sweetens labor." Incentives do not always have to be tangible rewards. Recognition given for diligent services is often sufficient.

An excellent way to minimize conflicts and cynicism is to employ the group or committee method. The implementation of the committee method in the context of this project yielded enormous success. When people work together in small groups toward common goals, the greatest success can be achieved. Care must be taken, however. Those

¹Hadaway, 197.

who are put in charge as facilitators or coordinators must be careful to give everyone in the group or committee the latitude or freedom to offer input. The ideas of all must be both shared and respected. This way, the spirit of cooperation will be greater.

The progress of any plan is dependent on the process. The following does not dictate the order but suggests a logical sequence of a process: idea, proposal, planning, implementing, evaluating, and celebrating. All the while, all information should be shared with all members of the committees. A leader is expected to be ahead of those he or she leads with initiatives, but this should not blind him or her to the initiatives of brilliant minds of those being led. Blending all ideas as much as possible into a single project and soliciting the support of everyone along the way is the passage of development. Determine a sequential pattern of development before any implementation takes place, and follow the process. All the while, it is important that leaders do not depend on just one idea to always work. Leaders should always be open to as many ideas as possible that might be needed as backup. Proactive leaders plan with alternatives in mind and a good leader is open to others providing those alternatives.

Everyone should always be involved in the evaluation process. When this is done people will not only be more critical but also fairer with their remarks. Leaders must be open to criticism whether it is constructive or destructive. They should not always try to diffuse negative criticisms with angry responses. Sometimes it is the critic who can help show the leader where he or she is misguided. The leader who is flexible and resilient will encounter less opposition and resistance from people who want to be involved as observers.

It is important for a leader always to watch out for people who want to do more than others, especially the things that require public appearances. It is important to deal with ego problems but always to do so without causing embarrassment. In every situation of work and service, especially volunteer services, one can expect to find people who are willing to give their service but have ulterior motives for wanting to become involved. Some people will use every given opportunity of exposure to promote themselves at the expense of others or services. People with selfish ambitions may sometimes use a system to achieve their own ends, and sometimes they may even become manipulative in getting things to go their own way.

Look for leaders and people with potential leadership abilities and train them. Train more than the present need. Sometimes a shortfall may occur suddenly, especially when several people begin to resign. When leaders are given leadership responsibilities they should be empowered to make certain decisions. Spend less time supervising them and require more accountability from them. Spread the workload more evenly among people who are capable of managing well. Leaders should beware of the feeling that they are superstars and that they can command everything. This will only lead to burnout. The most productive leaders are those who see themselves as facilitators. They usually get more accomplished in a shorter time.

Meanwhile, leaders should give their full support to people who have been made responsible. This will be reciprocated. People are looking for support from their leaders. In many instances a word of commendation or a compliment may re-energize someone who is losing momentum on the job, or a pat on the shoulder may revitalize hope in someone who is losing hope in ever being productive. Leaders should give no occasion to

those who support them that they are less important. Every team player should be impartially recognized. If commendations should be given as special recognition, it should be done in the context of the role the person played. Some people are made to feel inadequate because leaders play favorites by singling out special people from among others who played the same role.

Leaders should take time to listen to complaints and make themselves available for advice or information when needed. When people are going through frustration and trying to solve problems for which leaders can supply the solution, leaders should be ready and willing to offer assistance. It will ease the pain and lessen the burden.

Leadership should exercise internal control on all matters relative to his or her administration. Familiarization with the operation of things under his or her control is an asset and good administrative sense. When leaders are aware of all that is happening in their departments, they will gain more respect, and necessary information will get to them through the chain of command. Leaders must demand that information they require is given appropriately. Leaders should also be organized and execute their responsibilities with professionalism. People expect leaders to show leadership skills, demonstrating them in an organized and professional way. When leaders are disorganized, people who are organized and have to work with them become confused. Being organized includes being punctual for appointments. Leaders must set the precedent for those who like to show up late for appointments and either start meetings on time or set new appointments.

There are people who will use discouragement to distract leaders in an effort to impede or stall progress, but leadership should be careful not to accept defeat by discouraging or cynical remarks and should not take criticism too much to heart. When

leaders do have to respond to criticism, they should do it in a professional way. Success is sometimes the only solution to a problem. Therefore, leaders should allow success to prove some people or some things wrong instead of taking the defensive all the time.

Leaders should communicate with everyone involved in the plan. Keep the communication lines open, sharing information regarding both successes and failures. People like honesty and will sympathize more readily when it is present. Always remember that communication relieves tensions and misunderstandings. People learn to trust more when they are constantly filled in on the details of things they have a vested interest in. People are more apt to sympathize when things go wrong on matters that they are informed about before the sudden surprise of failure. Therefore, leaders should be open with their communication and be honest with it.

Church leaders should solicit the help of the Holy Spirit all the way and let the members know that nothing worthwhile is achieved without the help of the Holy Spirit. Members learn to trust their leaders more when they perceive them as prayer warriors. The leader who commits everything to God in prayer suggests to his or her congregation that more things happen with the approval of God than things that are done independent of God's blessings. Spiritual leaders should set the tone for dependence on the Holy Spirit, and this will motivate the congregation to become a praying one. Religious leaders should encourage every member to pray for success because prayer signifies support or approval from those involved in the process. It is also more power to the ones leading out.

Leaders should be visionaries. They should be quick to perceive trouble-makers and impending conflicts and do an immediate conflict resolution. It is much easier to

prevent a conflict than it is to erase the scars from the wound it creates. Leaders should never take for granted that prayers and faith alone in God can solve all the perceived impending conflicts. Sometimes leaders should be resolute in their approach to trouble-makers, exposing them before they wreak havoc in the congregation. At the same time, leaders should be discerning without being judgmental. If a leader finds that he or she makes a false accusation of someone, he or she should not let pride get in the way of making an apology to that someone. Too often we become judgmental and find that we are wrong, and sometimes pride gets in the way of restitution. When people find out that a leader is prideful and deceitful, then they have the tendency to lose faith and respect for him or her.

Those who are appointed to be leaders must take on this responsibility. They must take charge of the delegation process and let all associates be accountable to them. There are people who will want to take charge if leaders are not assertive enough. Some people have strong leadership abilities and if they perceive that their leaders are weak, they will take over. Leaders must take care not to let this happen.

The above-stated ideas on leadership have all proven to be important through the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating this project. These pieces of advice can become powerful safeguards against failures and obstacles that leaders often encounter when making changes. This project has been a real learning experience for me. I have gained further insights into some of the skills and tools that leaders may need in order to successfully lead a congregation into making successful changes. The recommendations I offer here may help to smooth the way for leaders who have not yet

gone through some of these experiences. It must be understood that the process of change must be spiritually motivated and task oriented.

It cannot be emphasized enough that no single individual should feel that he or she has the answers to every question or the solutions to every problem. Egocentrism should not come to bear upon the work of God. The best intellect may come up with flawed ideas and the most skillful and experienced artisan can make mistakes. Sharing ideas is the mark of wisdom, and when people perceive that something is good for them, they will examine it critically and look to get the best out of it. Leaders who work with a sense of openness to the scrutiny of others generally have the greatest success. It is, therefore, my recommendation to all leaders to have an openness about themselves regarding ideas for improvement and development that may give others the latitude to be critical whether perceived as constructive or destructive. Parishioners take special interest in the work and plans of the pastor, but they must be allowed to give their opinion without opposition or negative retorts from the pastor. This approach will guarantee support from members and success in the end. I recommend these suggestions for more careful scrutiny to see how they can be improved and made available to leaders of the twenty-first century to enhance their effectiveness in the leadership role when making congregational changes.

APPENDIX A

STATISTICAL DATA PROFILE ILLUSTRATIONS ON THE SILVER SPRINGS SHORES COMMUNITY

Figure 1. Median range profile 2000.

Figure 2. Marital profile 2000.

Figure 3. Ethnicity profile 2000.

Figure 4. White non-hispanic profile 2000.

Figure 5. Industry employment profile 2000.

Figure 6. Population growth of 350 from 1997-2000.

Figure 7. School profile 2000.

Figure 8. Education profile.

Figure 9. Changes in membership.

Figure 10. Members dropped.

Figure 11. Members added.

TABLE 1

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP DATA: MEMBERSHIP

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
As of January 1st	180	187	193	209	207	231	230	232	228	214
As of December 31st	187	193	209	207	231	230	232	228	214	208

TABLE 2

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP DATA: MEMBERS ADDED

Category	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1	2	3	
a. Baptism	9	4	21	15	22	7	3	6	0	6	93
b. Profession of Faith	1	0	0	3	1	0	2	1	0	0	8
c. Transfer	6	9	6	4	10	6	10	6	3	10	70
Total	16	13	27	22	33	13	15	13	3	16	171

TABLE 3

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP DATA: MEMBERS DROPPED

Category	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
a. Death	2	0	1	3	4	5	3	2	5	4	29
b. Letter Transfer	3	7	9	4	5	8	7	6	5	1	55
c. Apostasy	4	0	1	6	0	1	3	2	0	1	18
d. Missing	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	7	7	16	41
TOTAL	9	7	11	24	9	14	13	17	17	22	143

TABLE 4

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP DATA: ENDING MEMBERSHIP

(December 31st)

1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
187	193	209	207	231	230	232	228	214	208

APPENDIX B

NEW MEMBERS MENTORS GUIDE

You have been selected as the Spiritual
Guardian for the following individual(s)
recently accepted into membership in your
Seventh-day Adventist Church Family:

Age Levels:

Background:

Child	teenager
young _____	young
single	married
mid-age	mid
single	married
elderly	elderly
single	married

_____ former SDA
had SDA friends
_____ had SDA relatives
Bible study lessons
SDA magazines
_____ SDA TV/radio program
Literature Evang.
Ingathering Donor
Today Plan interest
_____ previous evang. series
_____ First contact with SDA
(brochure ,TV/ radio, sign,
newspaper advertising)
other: _____
having opposition etc.
had former church ties
others in family not SDA

PLEASE KEEP THIS INFORMATION CONFIDENTIAL

DO

1. Do LOVE THIS SOUL for whom Jesus died.
2. Do COMPLETE EACH ASSIGNMENT in sequence,
Make it your week's goal to complete the
project and to make it as spontaneous as
possible.
3. Do GIVE YOUR ASSIGNMENT CARDS to the
coordinator as soon as project is done.
4. Do greet the new members at all church
services and programs.
5. Do look for ways to INVOLVE THE NEW MEMBERS
in church projects, programs and activities.
Introduce the new member to other members
and church leaders.
6. Do make frequent reports to your pastor
concerning the progress of the new member.
7. Do verbally express your love to the
new member often.

8. Do speak in only positive terms regarding the church, the pastor, the conference, etc.
9. Do leave each visit on a happy note. Keep visits short and sweet.
10. Do add any comments you wish to the assignment cards when you return them to the coordinator, or write your suggestions for improvement of our program to:

We would appreciate hearing from you.

DON'T

1. Don't answer doctrinal questions. Call the pastor to answer questions.
2. Don't preach or give advice. You are a special friend, not the pastor.
3. Don't let two weeks pass without contacting your new member.
4. Don't be shocked at new member's suggestions (i.e. TV on Sabbath, etc.) They will grow with love and understanding.
5. Don't act superior or condescending because you have been a member mentor.

Don't give EXTRA READING MATERIAL above that which is provided. If you feel they need a particular book, CONTACT YOUR PASTOR, asking him to present it.

7. Don't ever tell the new member that you are assigned to CHECK UP" on him.

8. Don't ever tell the new member that you fill out an assignment card. Don't ever let the new member see your assignment cards. Make your projects as spontaneous as possible. Don't take your assignment cards with you on a projet.
9. Don't share church problems or gossip with the new member.
10. Don't DOWNGRADE OTHER DENOMINATIONS!
she mentions another church, say, "There are many wonderful people there."

Assignment No. 1 for New Member _____

Your name _____ Date _____

Project Description: Friendship & Fellowship.

Personally invite the new member to the church social to be held on Saturday night. Offer to take them, if necessary. Look out for him/her at the social; make sure he/she has a good time.

Introduce new member to another church member whom they have not already met. Just say, "I want you to meet someone I know you'll enjoy getting to know." Make certain after your introduction that the two individuals are not left awkwardly fumbling for conversation. It is best to previously alert the church member that you wish to introduce a new member to him/her.

Circle any services this new member attended:
(Which week after Welcome Sabbath)?

Sabbath School, Church or Mid-week Study

Note any areas needing Pastor's attention:

1. Family opposition (especially close relatives under the same roof)
2. Previous Church friends including the pastor ("We miss you . . .", etc.)
3. Personal habits (drugs, tobacco, alcohol fallen back into)
4. Job problem (worked out, then fell through later on)
5. Sabbath observance (list of "don'ts" instead of "do's")
6. Standards (jewelry put back on, recreation
7. Diet, health (vegetarianism prematurely urged on them)
8. Friendship(social needs not being met by church)

Assignment No. 2 for New Member _____

Your name _____ Date _____

Project Description: Friendship & fellowship.

Choose from the following:

Invite new member into your home for sabbath dinner.

Invite new member to eat Sabbath dinner with you on a picnic in a park or nature setting.
Invite new member into your home for a meal during the week.

You may invite another member to join you in this activity. Please do not let vegetarianism become an issue. If you are a meat eater, feel free to serve meat. Never offend them in this area of personal conviction.

Note any services this new member has attended:

Sabbath School, Church or Mid-week Study

Note any areas needing Pastor's attention:

1. Family opposition (especially close relatives under the same roof)
2. Previous Church friends including the pastor ("We miss you . . .," etc.)
3. Personal habits (drugs, tobacco, alcohol fallen back into)
4. Job problem (worked out, then fell through later on)
5. Sabbath observance (list of "don'ts" instead of "do's")
6. standards (jewelry put back on, recreation)
7. Diet, health (vegetarianism prematurely urged on them)
8. Friendship (social needs not being met by church)

Assignment No. 3 for New Member_____

Your name_____ Date_____

Project Description: Southern Tidings-Current Issue

Note: You must provide this item! Read it first to be able to interest them in a specific detail

1.

Visit the new member's home and show him/her a Southern Tidings magazine. Explain that this monthly periodical will begin coming to his/her home free in the new future. Explain that it tells about the work of the SDA Church in the Southeastern Tidings States and will be an inspiration to him/her as he/she reads about God's wonderful blessings to the work of the Church in the County. If appropriate, have SHORT prayer.

Leave on happy note -"How fortunate we are to have you as a part of our family!"

Maximum time of visit: 5 minutes.

Note any services this new member has attended:

Sabbath School, Church or Mid-week Study

Note any areas needing Pastor's attention:

1. Family opposition (especially close relatives under the same roof)
2. Previous Church friends including the pastor ("We miss you . . .," etc.)
3. Personal habits (drugs, tobacco, alcohol fallen back into)
4. Job problem (worked out, then fell through later on)
5. Sabbath observance(list of "don'ts" instead of "do's")
6. Standards (jewelry put back on, recreation)
7. Diet, health (vegetarianism prematurely urged on them)
8. Friendship (social needs not being met by church)

Assignment No. 4 for New Member_____

Your name_____ Date_____

Project Description: Fellowship & recreation.

Plan a recreational activity to suit the new member's interests and age group. Here are a few suggestions:

Miniature golf Ping Pong Golfing

Nature walk Swimming Concert

Hobby (Especially good for elderly people.)

Show them one of yours or let them show you theirs. (Gardening would be a good one.)

*** **

Note any services this new member has attended:

Sabbath School, Church or Mid-week Study

Note any areas needing Pastor's attention:

1. Family opposition (especially close relatives under the same roof)
2. Previous Church friends including the pastor ("We miss you . . .," etc.)
3. Personal habits (drugs, tobacco, alcohol fallen back into)
4. Job problem (worked out, then fell through later on)
5. Sabbath observance(list of "don'ts" instead of "do's")
6. Standards (jewelry put back on, recreation)
7. Diet, health (vegetarianism prematurely urged on them)
8. Friendship (social needs not being met by church)

Assignment No. 6 for New Member _____

Your name _____ Date _____

Project Description: Friendship & fellowship.

The goal of this project is to involve the new member in some project of the church along with you.

Invite new member to share in a literature distribution!

Invite new member to share a talent with the church!

Invite new member to visit another church member with you.

OR-Choose another involvement project other than these.

Please share briefly the new member's involvement below: Check one.

"Ready and willing" before, during, after project.

Reluctant at first; later enjoyed it.

Enjoyed at first; enthusiasm waned later.

Didn't seem to enjoy it at all.

Other response.

* * * *

Note any services this new member has attended:

Sabbath School, Church or Mid-week Study

Note any areas needing Pastor's attention:

1. Family opposition
2. Previous Church friends, opposition from
3. Personal habits
4. Job problem
5. Sabbath observance
6. Standards
7. Diet, health
8. Friendship

Assignment No. 7 for New Member_____

Your name_____ Date_____

Project Description: These Times-current copy

Note: You must provide this item! Read it first to be able to interest them in a specific detail.

Visit new member's home taking a copy of These Times with you. Leave it and explain that this is our church's magazine prepared for the general public.

It contains articles on Biblical prophecies and important topics of Scripture. If appropriate, have SHORT prayer. Leave on happy note-"It was a joy to share our hope in Jesus' return with other!"

Maximum visit time: 15 minutes.

** ***

Note any services this new member has attended:

Sabbath School, Church or Mid-week Study

Note any areas needing Pastor's attention:

1. Family opposition (especially close relatives under the same roof)
2. Previous Church friends including the pastor ("We miss you . . .," etc.)
3. Personal habits (drugs, tobacco, alcohol fallen back into)
4. Job problem (worked out, then fell through later on)
5. Sabbath observance(list of "don'ts" instead of "do's")
6. Standards (jewelry put back on, recreation)
7. Diet, health (vegetarianism prematurely urged on them)
8. Friendship (social needs not being met by church)

Assignment No. 8 for New Member_____

Your name_____ Date_____

Project Description: Fellowship & recreation.

Plan a recreational activity to suit the new member's interests and age group. Here are a few suggestions:

Miniature golf Ping Pong golfing

Nature walk Swimming Concert

Hobby (Especially good for elderly people.)

Show them one of yours or let them show you theirs. Gardening would be a good one.)

Note any services this new member has attended:

Sabbath School, Church or Mid-week Study

Note any areas needing Pastor's attention:

1. Family opposition (especially close relatives under the same roof)
2. Previous Church friends including the pastor ("We miss you . . .," etc.)
3. Personal habits (drugs, tobacco, alcohol fallen back into)
4. Job problem (worked out, then fell through later on)
5. Sabbath observance(list of "don'ts" instead of "do's")
6. Standards (jewelry put back on, recreation)
7. Diet, health (vegetarianism prematurely urged on them)
8. Friendship (social needs not being met by church)

Assignment No. 9 for New Member _____

Your name _____ Date _____

Project Description: The Adventist Review-current
copy.

Note: You must provide this item.

Read it first to be able to interest them in a
specific article.

Visit the new member's home taking a copy of
The Adventist Review and explaining that this is
the World-wide general paper of the Seventh-day
Adventist Church and will begin coming weekly into
his/her home free of charge for one full year.
Explain that it gives inspirational articles and
editorials and reports on the progress of the
church all around the world. If appropriate, have
SHORT prayer. Leave on a happy note-"Isn't it
wonderful to know that we are part of such a
wonderful world-wide family."

Note any services this new member has attended:

Sabbath School, Church or Mid-week Study

Note any areas needing Pastor's attention:

1. Family opposition (especially close relatives under the same roof)
2. Previous Church friends including the pastor ("We miss you . . .," etc.)
3. Personal habits (drugs, tobacco, alcohol fallen back into)
4. Job problem (worked out, then fell through later on)
5. Sabbath observance(list of "don'ts" instead of "do's")
6. Standards (jewelry put back on, recreation)
7. Diet, health (vegetarianism prematurely urged on them)
8. Friendship (social needs not being met by church)

Assignment No. 11 for New Member_____

Your name_____ Date_____

Project Description: Liberty magazine-current copy.

Note: You must provide this item Read it first to be able to interest them in a specific detail.

Visit new member's home taking a copy of Liberty with you. Leave it and explain that it is our church's magazine prepared for the general public to keep before them the current issues on religious liberty. If appropriate, have SHORT prayer. Leave on happy note- "How precious it is to be able to worship as the Lord would have us to."

Maximum visit time: 15 mm.

Note any services this new member has attended:

Sabbath School, Church or Mid-week Study

Note any areas needing Pastor's attention:

1. Family opposition (especially close relatives under the same roof)
2. Previous Church friends including the pastor ("We miss you . . .," etc.)
3. Personal habits (drugs, tobacco, alcohol fallen back into)
4. Job problem (worked out, then fell through later on)
5. Sabbath observance(list of "don'ts" instead of "do's")
6. Standards (jewelry put back on, recreation)
7. Diet, health (vegetarianism prematurely urged on them)
8. Friendship (social needs not being met by church)

Assignment No. 12 for Old Member_____

Your name_____ Date_____

Project Description: Something Special!

Because of you unselfish service and devotion
to your new member friend, make this
assignment for

you:

Treat yourself and your family to something
special. This does not involve your new
member friend. Have fun and remember,
we appreciate your good work.

Maximum assignment time: Indefinite!

Have fun!

Have fun!

Have fun

Have fun!

Have fun!

APPENDIX C

THREE-YEAR PLAN FOR CHURCH GROWTH FOR THE SILVER SPRINGS SHORES SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

MAY 12 2003

Three Year Plan For The Silver Springs Shores S.D.A.Church, 2003-2006.

Observable Indicators for Goal #1: Church Growth and Nurturing of New Members

- (a) Assign someone as Buddy/Partner to each new member to do follow-up nurturing.
- (b) Establish and promote a new members' class for initiating new members into church fellowship and the discovery of their talents and gifts to be used for church services.
- (c) Make the church atmosphere more pleasant and inviting

Church Growth and Nurturing Activities:

- (a) Assign someone as Buddy/Partner to each new member to do follow-up nurturing.
- (b) Follow-up work and fellowship activities on a regular basis
- (c) A special Sabbath School Class for new members and non-members (visitors) each Sabbath.
- (d) Officers will greet new members whether by transfer or baptism
- (e) Do a five minutes greeting during fellowship time in the Divine Hour

Observable Indicators for Goal #2: Evangelism (Public and Personal)

- (a) To plan Evangelism Campaigns with Evangelism Committees.
- (b) To organize Bible Workers Team and Study groups to conduct Bible studies with prospective candidates for baptism.
- (c) To offer Discover Bible School studies as an instrument to introduce non-members to our church.
- (d) To conduct Bible Class for prospective candidates for baptism

Evangelism Activities:

- (a) Campaigns (involving Evangelists and Lay-Evangelists) once or twice a year.
- (b) Personal Evangelism (members will be mobilized to do one-to-one contacts with neighbors, family members, and friends).
- (c) Discover Bible School studies.
- (d) On-going Bible Studies, twice per week.
- (e) Door to door literature distribution by members (U Literature Rack with literature posted for guests.

Observable Indicators for Goal # 3: Community Out-reach Programs

- (a) To invite participation from the community or to encourage community involvement in certain planned community activities within the church.
- (b) To do a needs assessment to determine what programs we will take to the community.

Activities:

- (a) Community Service Room for:
 - 1. The sale of Vegetarian Foods
 - 2. The distribution of foods, goods, and services
- (b) GED Classes for adults
- (c) Annual Summer Day Camps
- (d) Annual Vacation Bible School

Observable Indicators for Goal # 4: Building Improvement

- (a) To create a more pleasant worship atmosphere
- (b) To improve the physical appearance and accommodation of the sanctuary and its facilities.

Activities

- (a) Renovation of the Sanctuary and its facilities.
- (b) Bring the church Record up to date to reflect membership.
- (c) Improve our paved parking area to accommodate more vehicles.
- (d) Improve our landscape around the church and adjacent areas.
- (e) Install a new Sign Board at the front of building and signs directing visitors to the church.
- (f) Develop a Web Site for the church.
- (g) Have Radio Programs Broadcasting services and other church related activities.

Observable Indicator for Goal # 5: Bus/Transportation services for church related activities.

- (a) To provide transportation services for all church related activities by purchasing a bus large enough to accommodate 45 passengers.
- (b) The bus can also be a source of revenue for the church by rental contract.

Activities:

- (a) Family Life trips
- (b) Church trips
- (c) Pathfinder trips
- (d) Hiring services to the community

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