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ABSTRACT

THE HISTORY OF THE EMERGENCE OF THE
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
IN THE STATE OF MANIPUR, INDIA

by

Cornelius R. Kamei

Adviser: Kenley D. Hall

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: THE HISTORY OF THE EMERGENCE OF THE SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH IN THE STATE OF MANIPUR, INDIA

Name of researcher: Cornelius R. Kamei

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Kenley D. Hall, DMin

Date completed: February 2010

Problem

The Seventh-day Adventist church emerged in the state of Manipur, India, through a lay-led church planting movement. Currently, no written account exists of the early history of this work in Manipur. Today, the work in Manipur is clergy-dependent and growth in this region has stagnated. In order for the work to move forward successfully, there is a need to remember the early history of the work in this region.

Method

In the absence of earlier written works on the rise of Adventism in Manipur, oral sources were relied upon as primary sources for accuracy. The sources were gathered through personal communication, observation, email, letters, and telephone. The response

of pioneers and/or their children who journeyed through the rise and growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Manipur was the core reflection out of which this dissertation was written.

Results

This dissertation has shown that the Adventist church in Manipur experienced a quantum leap of church membership during its formative years as dedicated lay people diligently worked to advance the gospel mandate. The history of Manipur suggests that the involvement of lay members in gospel activities is crucial to the growth and unity of the church. Engaging lay people in evangelism/church planting enriches their faith and enhances the spread of the gospel.

Conclusions

In order to resume the growth of the church in Manipur, it is essential to re-ignite a lay-led movement where every believer is equipped and empowered to fulfill the Gospel commission. The doctrines of spiritual gifts and the priesthood of all believers should be understood by clergy and laity. Church leadership should mobilize church members to exercise their ministry based on their areas of giftedness.

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

THE HISTORY OF THE EMERGENCE OF THE
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
IN THE STATE OF MANIPUR, INDIA

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

Cornelius Kamei

February 2010

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6 December 2012
Date approved

To
Eric and Rebecca Koester

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Personal History

I was born in Manipur, a mountainous state in Northeast India. The state of Manipur lies adjacent to China in the north, Myanmar (Burma) in the east, and Bangladesh in the south (See Appendix for Map). I am a third generation Seventh-day Adventist and the son of an Adventist Minister. I come from a large and loving family. My parents introduced me to Jesus in my childhood. They taught me the importance of prayer and, through their teaching, I learned dependence upon God. Maintaining a right relationship with God is a priority in my life. Daily communion with God through prayer and Bible reading are channels for me to know God's will. I have taken to heart the gospel commission found in Matt 28 "to go and teach all nations and baptize them." This desire to share the gospel is born out of genuine Christian love for fellow human beings and the desire to share the hope that comes from a relationship with Jesus Christ.

I am passionate about the history of the emergence of Adventism in the state of Manipur, India, because I believe that God revealed His truth in a unique manner. Before any Adventist missionary ever landed in Manipur, there was a Sabbath-keeping family in Ukhrul, an eastern district of Manipur. The Sabbath seed was sown in the village of Tolloi, Ukhrul, during World War II through a book left behind by an unknown soldier.

In like manner, Adventism emerged in the western region of Manipur through a political upheaval.

I am connected to this work since my grandparents Mathiuchung and Kailabonliu Kamei were two of the pioneers who brought Adventism to the western region of Manipur. During a political upheaval between pro-independence fighters and loyalists, my grandparents and their children fled for their lives to Khoupum Valley. As refugees, they led a terrible life during their exilic period. However, it was obvious that the Lord was paving a way for them to embrace the Sabbath truth. Eventually, my grandparents became pioneers to spread the Adventist truth in the western region of Manipur. They zealously promoted the Sabbath message to the people in Tamenglong region. My dad joined them in proclaiming the gospel and he became a great church planter in Northeast India.

The Sabbath truth progressed slowly but steadily in Tamenglong region. The people were antagonistic about the Sabbath. They tried to abolish Adventism which they called a “strange faith.” At one point, they fasted and prayed every single Sunday asking God to destroy the Sabbath-keepers. Evangelism was kept in check by the villagers. Stone-throwing during worship services and Bible crusades, forceful evacuation from the church, shutting the church by nailing shut the doors and windows, etc. were some of the sorts of persecutions the Adventists went through. They were marginalized and ridiculed by the people because of their faith.

However, God was faithful to the Adventists all through those trying years. He protected and guided them. He blessed the efforts of the Adventist people in spreading the Sabbath truth in Tamenglong region. Today, this region has become one of the fastest

growing regions in north-east India. There are more than twenty-four churches and companies with over three thousand church members. Dedicated lay people were instrumental in planting churches. The contribution of lay people in spreading the truth enabled the Adventist church to grow into a movement that has impacted the entire state.

There is currently no written account of the history of the Adventist work in Manipur. As the grandson of two of the founding pioneers and the son of a church planter, I have a passion to flesh-out the history of the Adventist work in this area. In particular, I desire to shine a spotlight on the lay-led church planting movement that led to the early success of the Adventist movement in this region.

Purpose

The task of this theoretical dissertation is to compile the oral history of the Adventist work in Manipur into the first written history of the work done in this region.

Statement of the Problem

The Seventh-day Adventist Church emerged in the state of Manipur, India, through a lay-led church planting movement. No written account currently exists of the early history of this work in Manipur. Today, the work in Manipur is clergy-dependent and growth in this region has stagnated. The lack of a written account of how God led the Adventist church in Manipur in the past is a possible contributing factor to the declining rate of church growth in the region.

Justification for the Dissertation

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Manipur, India began as a lay-led movement in 1952. Lay leaders and church members have played an important role in

church planting. However, over time, the progress of the Adventist work has slowed significantly. A possible contributing factor to this decline is apparently the poor coordination between clergy and laity. The clergy tends to believe in a hierarchical form of leadership, rather than equipping and empowering lay people to exercise their spiritual gifts in gospel activities. This attitude set the stage for the Adventist work in Manipur to become clergy-dependent. Consequently, lay leaders have lost their zeal for evangelism and often leave the work of soul winning to salaried workers. This hampers the gospel work in Manipur.

A potential first step in resuming the growth of the church in Manipur is to re-ignite a lay-led church planting movement. A written history of the early work in this region could be a contributing factor in inspiring lay members with this vision.

Expectations from this Dissertation

This work will serve as a primary written source on the emergence of Adventism in Manipur and it is intended to help to advance the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in this region. The project will hopefully accomplish this by increasing the faith of the Adventist believers in Manipur by directing them to look back at a time when they had tangible evidence that God was with them in their faith journey. It is hoped that this work will inspire lay people in Manipur to view the soul winning ministry as their calling by clearly documenting the contributions of lay members to the early success of the Adventist movement in Manipur.

The project helped me to deepen my own understanding of the importance of lay-led ministry. It also enhanced my faith in God as I became grounded in how He has led this work in the past.

Limitations

Data for compiling a written history of the work in Manipur was gathered through personal communication and observation and through the responses of early Adventist pioneers and/or their children who journeyed through the rise and growth of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Manipur. In the absence of a written account of the history of the rise of Adventism in Manipur, oral sources are depended upon for the authenticity and accuracy of this work.

Description of the Process

A theological foundation for church planting requires an understanding of the concept of “church” in the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT). “Church” is often understood to mean a building, a place of worship. However, the essential meaning of church in its biblical context goes beyond a mere structure. Thus, theological reflection for this work began by examining some basic definitions of church. Additional theological reflection centered on the essence of church-planting as seen in both the OT and the NT.

A literature review of literature from 1999-2009 was conducted that provides direction for church-planting in general and, more specifically, for church planting in a Seventh-day Adventist context. In reviewing the literature, three interconnected subtopics emerged: the foci of church planting, equipping the laity, and tentmaking (bivocational ministry).

Research was done on the history of the emergence of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Manipur, India. Since no written history of the Adventist church in Manipur existed prior to this work, oral sources were utilized as primary sources. These oral

accounts were compiled into the written history contained in this project dissertation.

Conclusions were drawn from the data collected from personal observation and the oral accounts of early Adventist pioneers and/or their children regarding the lay-led nature of the early work in Manipur and its success. Recommendations were then made regarding how to re-ignite a lay-led movement in Manipur today.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR CHURCH PLANTING

Introduction

A theological foundation for church planting requires an understanding of the concept of church in the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT). “Church” is often understood to mean a building, a place of worship. However, the essential meaning of church in its biblical context goes beyond a mere structure. To begin, it is important to examine some basic definitions concerning church. The purpose of this chapter is to define church and the essence of church planting through an exploration of Scripture.

Old Testament Concept of Church

The actual term *church* is not used in the Old Testament. However, the church as a community of God’s people motif is seen in the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew word קהל translated “gather together,” “convoke,” “call together,” “assembly,” “religious community,” “congregation” (VanGemen, 1997, p. 888) appears to be the principal term used in the OT to designate the people of God “especially of those ‘within the covenant’” Livingstone (2005, p. 346). קהל can also mean “assembly of the political and ritual community” (Lacoste, 2005, p. 300).

Botterweck and Ringgren (1974) write:

The Hebrew primary noun *qahal* was adopted by later languages, including Jewish Aramaic, Christian Palestinian Aramaic, and Syriac, but is not found in earlier

languages. The subsequent history of the word suggests the original basic meaning “assembly, assembled group of people.” This meaning corresponds to *qhl/qhlt*, which can refer both to the “assembly” of the council and the “congregation” or “community” of a god. (p. 547)

While *קהל* has more than one meaning, the basic meaning of the word suggests that this term is mainly used in the Hebrew Bible to indicate the chosen people of God. Lacoste (2005) states that *קהל* is translated *ἐκκλησία* (the principal term used to designate the Church in the NT) in the Septuagint (LXX), and he points out that the term “people of God” in the OT is later called the “Church” in the NT. Neufeld and Neuffer (1962) agree with Lacoste and they declare that *ἐκκλησία* in the LXX is the equivalent for *קהל* in the Hebrew Bible and the two terms denote “assembly,” “congregation,” and “gathering.” Livingstone (2005) adds: “In the Septuagint *ἐκκλησία* was used of the ‘assembly’ or ‘congregation’ of the Israelites” (p. 346). It should be noted here that the above two terms are interrelated and that they refer to the community of the people of God as described in the following passages.

When the term assembly or congregation appears in the OT, it refers to the community of the people of God—the community of believers. According to Unger (1966), the word congregation implies: “The Hebrew people in its collective capacity under its peculiar aspects as a holy community, held together by religious rather than political bonds” (p. 218). Youngblood, Bruce and Harrison (1995) confirm Unger’s view by stating that the term *congregation* is used in the OT to identify “Israel as the community of the law, a sacred assembly gathered together by God and appointed to be His covenant people” (p. 295). The chosen community or the people of God (Heb 4:9) can then be defined as the church of God in the OT.

William Gentz (1986) argues that the standard translations of the Old Testament

do not use the word *church*, but that two prominent Hebrew terms, יָדָה (to appoint) and קָהָל (called by God), are used to suggest the idea of the assembly and congregation of God's people. He defines church as "the people of God, created and called by God, to be God's worshippers and witnesses both in this world and in eternity" (p. 199).

Gentz' definition of church indicates that by creation and by election (called by God) humanity has become the church of God. When the Lord declared, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness" (Gen 1:26), He foresaw the establishment of a perfect community.

The motif of the church as God's people is more complete when believers maintain a loving relationship with their Creator. Life in Eden before the fall was a perfect revelation of this relationship. From day to day, Adam and Eve communed with God (White, 1893), and when God instituted the first Sabbath worship, "Hallowed by the Creator's rest and blessing, the Sabbath was kept by Adam [and Eve] in [their] innocence in holy Eden" (White, 1911b, p. 453; see also Gen 2: 1-3).

The creation of humanity is the culmination of God's work. He was so pleased with His loving act of creating Adam and Eve in His own image that on the sixth day of creation He pronounced, "it is very good" (Gen 1:31). God established the first community where love, faith, and trust reigned and instituted the first worship. From that day onward, the concept of community, relationship, love, and worship began on this earth. Hence, the concept of church started in Eden.

In describing the concept of church in the Old Testament, M. G. Hamilton (2005) writes, "The Christian church as identified in the New Testament (NT) is an outgrowth of the people of God in the Old Testament (OT)." In addition, he states that "In the Old

Testament the people of God is seen as a community of believers who have a common focus and a common relationship with one another and with God” (p. 50). Having a common goal and a common relationship among the community of believers seems to be one identifying characteristic of the church of God in the Old Testament.

The earth was in a perfect state before the fall (Gen 1:31), and the relationship between God, Adam and Eve, and all creation was in perfect unity (Gen 2:7-25). However, the disobedience of Adam and Eve affected the wholesome nature of this community. Fear, guilt, and shame took control of Adam’s and Eve’s lives. As “they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden” (Gen 3:8).

Sin ruined God’s perfect community. Jon Dybdahl (2007) believes that sin specifically destroys four relationships: (1) human to God relationship—Adam and Eve flee from God and hide among the trees; (2) human to human relationship—Adam and Eve start blaming each other; (3) human to self relationship—as Adam and Eve become aware of their nakedness, they experience guilt and shame; and (4) human to nature relationship—God tells Adam and Eve that some of the consequences of their sin will be pain in childbirth, toil, thorns and thistles, death and decay.

Sin destroyed God’s perfect community and prompted Him to “curse the ground” and pronounce a fearful verdict upon Adam and Eve: “For dust you are, and to dust you shall return” (Gen 3:17, 19). However, God did not abandon them to live in total misery and despair. He gave them hope of restoration. He would restore the fallen couple at the expense of His only Son, the promised Seed (Gen 3:15), “the Lamb slain from the

foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8). Genesis 3:15 may even be considered the first gospel proclamation.

God was putting into action a plan to restore broken community and relationships. A plan that would culminate with God’s seed being struck on the heel by the serpent and the head of the serpent’s being crushed by God’s seed (Gen 3:15). From the moment God made this promise to Adam and Eve, He has been working with and through human beings to restore sin—broken relationships and reestablish His holy community of believers among the fallen human race.

After the fall, the human race became so corrupt and demoralized that God could no longer bear with them. For “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen 6:5). To save man from the impending destruction by the flood, God raised a community of believers in Noah and his family. White (1913) calls Noah a great preacher of righteousness who passionately preached repentance for 120 years while his family diligently bore witness of their faith in God by building the ark. This community represented God to the antediluvians.

The concept of church as the community of God is also seen in God’s calling of Abraham. He was not called alone, but within community. White (1913) says that Abraham’s wife Sarah and Lot, the son of his deceased brother Haran, chose to share his pilgrim life. They left their country of origin and led a nomadic life to form God’s community. Afterward, Abraham became the father of the chosen race. From him, the nation of Israel, the holy community of God’s people, was born, as seen in the following discussion.

Israel: God's Holy Community

The origin of the chosen race or holy community can be traced back to Abraham.

The early chapters of Gen described God's promise to Abraham that he would be the progenitor of a great nation (Gen 12:1-3; 17:4). The Lord's promise to Abraham, "I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, kings shall come from you" (Gen 17:6), was much more than making him a mere father of the nations. It suggests that God was calling Abraham to take part in the work of redemption as Boice (1998) argues:

No one can understand the OT without understanding Abraham, for in many ways the story of redemption begins with God's call to this patriarch. Abraham was the first man chosen by God for a role in the plan of redemption. The story of Abraham contains the first mention in the Bible of God's righteousness imputed to man as the sole means of salvation (Gen 15:6). Mathew includes the genealogy of Jesus in his Gospel in order to trace the beginnings of salvation back to Abraham (Matt 1:1). Luke declares that the birth of Jesus occurred in response to God's promise to Abraham (Luke 1:68, 72-73). (p. 14)

God set apart Abraham's family by means of a treaty or covenant. Abraham, the father or primary ancestor of the Israelite people, had a role in the plan of salvation because the Redeemer of this world came through him (White, 1913).

Boice (1998) adds another dimension to the solemn pact God made with Abraham. He believes that God's promise made to Abraham was fulfilled physically and spiritually. Physically, Abraham became the father of the Jewish people, through whom Christ the Messiah was born. On the spiritual side, Abraham has become the father of all "believers whose numbers are now swelled by Christians of countless tongues and nations" (p. 13). Christians become the spiritual children of Abraham or "the Israel of God" by obedience to God (Gal 6:16) because Abraham became "the father of all those who believe" (Rom 4:11).

God chose Abraham and, based on the covenant promise, his progeny became the holy community of God. Kittel, Friedrich, and Bromiley (1985) note: "Israel is the fellowship of those who worship the true God and who have been chosen by Him to do so" (p. 372). This indicates that true worshippers of God became spiritual Israel, and by faith in Christ they became the holy community, the outgrowth of the holy community of ancient Israel.

Gottwald (2001) rightly attributed the founding of Israel as a community to a single migratory family that proliferates into twelve tribes through population growth. He further states that, following the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, "the community covenants with the deity Yahweh and agrees to organize itself around a body of laws divinely revealed to Moses. The people as a whole (*ha'am*) are also referred to as a "congregation" (*'edah*) or an "assembly" (*qahal*)" (p. 37). Based on the covenant, the Israelites became the chosen community of Yahweh.

The purpose of God in choosing Israel as the holy community is described by McBride, Strong, and Tuell (2005) as follow:

The Hebrew Bible insists that ancient Israel was forged on the anvil of history for a singular purpose: to be an enduring witness among the world's nations to the beneficent sovereignty and providence of the God who has fashioned it. This sublime consciousness of corporate vocation is expressed most fully in the books of the Pentateuch and Prophets. (p. 89)

The Lord chose Abraham and called him His friend (2 Chr 20:7; Jas 2:23). As stated, Abraham had the privilege of working with God in the plan of redemption. Abraham's descendants (both physical and spiritual) are chosen by God to bear witness of His love and salvation to the entire world and "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17).

As exemplified, *church*, in the Old Testament, is a community of believers composed of God's chosen people. Tenney (1975) compares church to the assembly or congregation of those who are the recipients of God's grace, who have been *called out* to be the witnesses of Christ in the world. The community of God's people is identified through its work to restore humanity to God's image.

New Testament Concept of Church

The concept of church does not change in the New Testament. It is a continuation of God's people (community of believers) motif from the OT. Achtemeir (1985) rightly observes: "The first Greek speaking Christians used *ekklesia* in order to show that their roots lay in the OT and that they continued the OT people of God." He further states that "In the NT, church always denotes a group of people it never signifies a building or a denomination" (p. 168).

Couch (1999) adds:

Ekklesia is the common Greek word for church. Often it is translated as assembly and congregation. Generally, it refers to a religious or even a political gathering. Technically, the word means "the called out ones." Ekklesia is many times used in the Greek Septuagint (LXX) to refer to different assemblies within the Old Testament. In Acts (7:38; 19:32) the word can simply mean a crowd or gathering. However, most often in the New Testament, the word *ekklesia* is used to describe the entire body of believers, the universal church, or the assembly of Christians in the local church. (p. 25)

In like manner, Hastings, Grant, and Rowley (1963) point out that the word *ἐκκλησία* —assembly or congregation is adopted in the LXX to translate the Hebrew word *קהל*. As was stated, *קהל* refers to God's people in the OT. The similarity of the usage of this term is confirmed by Neufeld and Neuffer. They observe: "In NT times this term (*ekklesia*) is most frequently applied to a body of people who believe in Jesus as the

Messiah and who accept Him and His teachings, and who are joined to the organization originated by Him” (1979, p. 224).

In both the Old and New Testament eras, God founded a special group of people who would represent His character and lead others to Him. These groups of people are called $\epsilon\kappa\kappa\lambda\eta\sigma\iota\alpha$ or $\epsilon\kappa\kappa\lambda\eta\sigma\iota\alpha$. The concept of church or chosen community does not change in the Bible. The Lord had His chosen group of people in the OT. Jesus established a faith community in the NT. They are called the church or the holy community of God.

Kittel Friedrich and Bromiley (1985) state that many Bible dictionaries tend to define $\epsilon\kappa\kappa\lambda\eta\sigma\iota\alpha$ as “assembly” and “church.” To them, “assembly” is the best single term for the word $\epsilon\kappa\kappa\lambda\eta\sigma\iota\alpha$ because it “particularly has both a concrete and an abstract sense, that is, for the assembling as well as the assembly,” and they define church in the following words:

In the case of the church it is God (or the Lord) who assembles his people, so that the church is the ekklesia of God consisting of all those who belong to him (cf. Acts 5:11, 15:22). Applied to believers, the term is essentially a qualitative one, the assembly of those whom God himself gathers.” (p. 397, 398)

The term church then can be best understood as a “supernatural entity” where all its members are in Christ and are knit together by a “supernatural kinship” (Elwell, 2001). More fully stated, church is the community of believers founded by Jesus Christ and anointed by the Holy Spirit (O’Collins & Farrugia, 2000) to continue the ministry of Christ to save the whole human family.

Elwell (2001) concludes that the word “church,” is used first of the house of the Lord, then of his people, while Born and Hartman (1963) equate church with God’s people of the last days. They believe this concept has its origin in the OT when they write:

The full sense of *ekklesia* can be better understood by considering the other expressions which Paul uses as more or less synonymous with it, viz., “the saints” “the called” “the beloved (of God).” These terms, which go back to OT usage, characterize the church as the people of God at the end of time, as the “elect” or specially chosen. They emphasize the eschatological aspect of the concept of *ekklesia*, and they are entirely in line with the spiritualization which the idea of the Chosen People and of the Kingdom of God underwent in the OT and especially in the last centuries before Christ. (p. 378)

Despite the intensity of the influence of sin that pervades the human race there are certain groups of people in all ages that chose to remain loyal to God. These groups of people who responded to the Lord’s loving call are known as *לִקְוָה* or *ἐκκλησία*. They comprised a community of believers who sought to promote Jehovah worship and who looked forward to the coming of the Redeemer.

By the time Jesus came to this earth, there was apostasy everywhere. Even the Israelites, the chosen community who had been waiting for the Messiah, failed to recognize Him (John 1:11). Jesus reinstituted the church by forming a community of the twelve disciples. The twelve were a special group of people chosen from the congregation for the noble purpose of establishing a community of believers all over the world. With them and other followers of Christ, Jesus formed the first Christian community in NT times.

Immediately after Jesus formed the community of believers, He empowered them and entrusted them with a mission to seek and save the lost. Mark writes, “And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits” (Mark 6:7). Merely forming a community of believers is not the goal of Jesus. His mission is to employ the little band of followers who have been *called out* to be His witness in the world, turning sinners’ hearts to God, and making them recipients of God’s grace and forgiveness.

Apart from the chosen twelve, Jesus had another group of followers. These were the people who paved the way for Him in every city and place. "After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go" (Luke 10:1). The concept of community is plainly revealed in the example and teachings of Christ. His disciples were sent out for gospel activities not in isolation, but as a community. Following the example and teaching of Jesus after Jesus' ascension, the activities of the early church were communal in nature.

The NT church became a strong community of believers. According to Demoss and Miller (2002), everyone from everywhere who accepted Christ became the church of God. This included people from other nations such as the Gentiles and Samaritans who became part of God's community of believers by virtue of their faith in Christ.

The communal relationship and activities of the believers is recorded in Acts. It took the whole community of about 120 believers to choose a replacement for Judas. They sought God's will by prayer and supplication. The Lord honored their prayers and He chose Mathias to take part in the apostolic ministry (Acts 1:12-26). The communal nature of the early church is further seen on the day of Pentecost. The record says, "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place" (2:1). As a community they received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Imbued with God's Spirit and power, self was forgotten among the believers. They were of one mind, sharing in all things with gladness and simplicity of heart (Acts 2:46; 4:32).

In Acts 6:1-6, we see the community of believers working in unity to advance the cause of the church. Jesus commissioned the twelve to be His representatives. In turn, the

disciples commissioned the seven deacons and empowered them to promote the welfare of the church. Both the twelve and the seven served the church in different capacities but with one accord. As a community of believers, they willingly gave their lives for the service of humanity.

In Acts 9, the involvement of the early church in the conversion of Saul is recorded. It was Jesus who connected Saul with the early church in Damascus. White (1871) states that Saul was directed to the church at Damascus for further instruction and knowledge regarding his duty immediately after his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. Ananias laid his hands on Saul, making him the Lord's "chosen vessel" to bear His name "before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15). The very fact that Saul received commissions from the church indicates that no one receives a ministry without connecting himself with the church, the community of God.

Church Planting in the OT

The reason God established a community of believers identified as the church was to pave the way for the advent of the Redeemer to this earth. At the fall of man, God promised a Redeemer. Genesis 3:15 contained a gospel message that revived hope in Adam and Eve as they looked forward to the coming of the Redeemer. God's community of believers was supposed to point others to the promise of God's coming seed, the Savior of the world.

The Lord has had a community of believers in every age that has taken an active role in spreading His message of love with varying degrees of success. The contributions of some members of God's community of believers will be examined.

Enoch

When Enoch became “a preacher of righteousness,” there were two distinct groups of people on the earth. Genesis 4:16-26 narrates the account of the families of Cain and Seth. Upon receiving the curse of God (v. 11) for murdering his brother Abel, Cain “went out from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden” (v. 16). There he built a city and formed his own community. Five generations later, Lamech the great-great-great grandson of Cain, committed a double homicide (v. 23).

To Seth “also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call on the name of the Lord” (v. 26). Thus, two classes of people emerged on the earth. One accursed and the other appointed seed (vv. 11, 25). White (1913) mentions that the two classes of people remained separate for some time. Gradually the two races mingled and that association resulted in intermarriage.

The intermarriage between Seth’s and Cain’s children displeased God. Humanity plunged into depravity. The holy race became corrupt. “And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart” (Gen 6:6). God’s judgment was about to visit the world. The faithful Enoch, who “walked with God,” foresaw the impending danger and preached repentance to the rebellious people.

Enoch’s burden was more than merely protecting the holy race of Seth from conformity to the evil and idolatrous practices of Cain’s descendants. White (1913) declares that, while he tirelessly labored among the “Sethites,” he also fearlessly preached in the land where Cain had fled from the Lord. His preaching was universal. God rewarded Enoch’s untiring labor. “The power of God that wrought his servant was

felt by those who heard. Some gave heed to the warning, and renounced their sins” (p. 86).

Enoch was able to win back the hearts of some people to God. Those who listened to his warning and repented from their sins became the church (community) of God. It is possible that he even established a small community of believers in Cain’s land. The work of Enoch in reaching out to the accursed children of God has application to modern church planting. His work among the children of Seth has parallels to nurturing church members.

Abraham

It did not take long for the generation after the flood to abandon God. Soon after the dispersion from Babel, men grossly transgressed God’s law, and White (1913) says that idolatry again became almost universal. To check this downward spiral in apostasy in the postdiluvial world, God chose Abraham as the founder of His holy community (Gen 12:3), a responsibility that was to be passed on to his descendants. Ultimately, Israel would arise as the chosen people of God tasked with preparing the world for the coming of the Messiah who would redeem people from their sins and reconcile them to God.

Abraham fulfilled God’s commission and, wherever he went, he represented God and His holy character. He brought good news to the heathens and established a community of faith in their lands. “During their stay in Haran, both Abraham and Sarah led others to the worship and service of the true God (White, 1913, p. 127).

It was not only the people of Haran that Abraham brought to the truth. The Canaanites, “who received instructions from Abraham repaired the altar, and there worshipped the living God” (p. 128). Abraham the friend of God (Isa 41:8) was

successful in revealing God's love to the heathens. Much of his success can be attributed to an exemplary life in his household and among the heathens.

However, it does not mean that Abraham was a perfect man. He committed major mistakes. There were moments of great faith and deep lapses which revealed that he was human. Despite his weaknesses, Dianne Bergant (2001) believes that "Abraham's openness to God's call and his trust in God's promise have since become a model after which other believers are invited to pattern their lives" (p. 26). And concerning Abraham, "the father of all who believe" (Rom 4:11), the Lord declares, "Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws" (Gen 26:5).

It appears that Abraham's faith in God and his unquestioning obedience to Him were sufficient to redeem his character flaws. His great faith in God must be the reason he survived a severe test when God commanded him to sacrifice his only son Isaac (Gen 22).

Bezalel and Oholiab

In addition to choosing Israel as His unique community of believers, God intended to dwell with them. Therefore, He instructed Moses saying, "Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them" (Exod 25: 8). Stuart (2006) writes, "The tabernacle, its furnishings and implements reflect the only intelligent God in his covenant relationship to his specially chosen people" (2:562).

The Hebrew Sanctuary system specifically points to the coming of the Messiah and is central to the plan of redemption. Its sacrificial services offered on the altar tell of the grand sacrifice that Jesus would make for the world. For the construction of the tabernacle where the work of salvation was exemplified, God chose ordinary men.

The Lord could have chosen the Levites, priests, or other influential men for the construction of the tabernacle, but He was pleased to pick two ordinary laymen from the tribe of Judah and Dan, Bezalel and Oholiab (Exod 31:1-6). Of Bezalel the Lord said, "And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship" (v. 3).

This indicates that lay people play an important role in doing the Lord's ministry. The work done by Bezalel and Oholiab was just as important and crucial to the sanctuary as the work done by the Levites and the Priests. Nichol (1953) writes: "The church as verily needs among its members those who are Bezalels and Aholiab as it does those who are Isaiahs and Pauls" (p. 661). In making this comparison and modern day application to the church, Nichol is implying that the work done by laypersons for the church is as necessary and essential as the work done by the "professional clergy."

During the forty years of the Israelites wilderness wandering and after their settlement in the Promised Land, there are no records of church planting activities being carried out by the Lord's community. The sanctuary itself serves as the means of evangelism to attract the heathen nations to recognize the Creator God. George Buttrick (1990) notes, "Thus the first church was built: the dwelling or the tabernacle, the tent of meeting. It was a tent of witness containing the law of God" (1:1020). The purpose of the Hebrew sanctuary was for God to dwell with His people and to be a "tent of witness" to other nations. Couch (1999) further notes:

God had a distinct dispensational purpose for the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. Through them the Lord's perfect and righteous demands would be displayed through the Law. The temple and all its ceremonies would reflect and foretell the coming of the Redeemer, Jesus the Messiah. And through this nation, Jesus would be born. (p. 27)

Here Buttrick and Couch are suggesting that the model of evangelism practiced by the Israelites in the Old Testament is different from that which was established by Jesus Christ in the New Testament. The former model of evangelism was to attract the people through the “tent of witness” (sanctuary), and the later model was to reach out to the people through preaching.

Burrill (1998) agrees that the mode of evangelism practiced by Israel and early NT Christians are vastly different. Whereas the great commission of Christ to the new Israel (NT Christians) was to go to all the nations and make disciples, Israel was commissioned by Yahweh to create a caring community that reflected the true Creator God. In other words, all nations would come to them and learn of Yahweh.

Gibbs (1992) helps sum up the above arguments when he declares:

The Old Testament emphasis is not on Israel moving out in mission, but on the nations spontaneously converging on Jerusalem. They are attracted by the evidence of the God of Israel uniquely and gloriously present in the midst of his people. So they come to pay homage to a foreign deity, not compelled by conquest but convinced by the covenant God has established with Israel and extends to the world. (p. 33)

Yahweh dwelt gloriously in the midst of His people and true worship practiced by the Israelites in the sanctuary served as a means of evangelism that attracted the heathen nations to come to Jerusalem and learn of the true God.

The Hebrew Maid of Naaman's

The little Hebrew maid who served Naaman's wife (2 Kgs 5) was carried away from her home during one of the raids of the Syrians against Israel. Instead of lamenting her plight and complaining about the hardships she bore as she “waited on Naaman's wife,” she became God's instrument to touch the heart of the leprous Syrian general. She told her mistress of the prophet in Israel who could cure Naaman's leprosy. “She did not

hide her faith in God; she used it” (Buttrick, 1951, p. 210). Ellen White comments on the zeal of this maid to witness: “A slave, far from home, this little maid was nevertheless one of God’s witnesses, unconsciously fulfilling the purpose for which God had chosen Israel as His people” (1917, p. 244).

This little girl, a lay preacher in her own right, convicted Naaman of the power of Yahweh as she “bore witness to the God whom she had learned to honor” (White, 1917, p. 246). And the convert of this little maid proclaimed: “Indeed, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel” (2 Kgs 5:15). Naaman came to know the true God of Israel through the brave testimony of his slave girl.

Hubbard declares that the unusual gift which Naaman sought from Elisha, Israelite soil (5:17) to take back to Syria “implied that he [Naaman] wanted to build a private shrine, perhaps an earthen altar, for Yahweh in Damascus” (1991, p. 155). The faith of this little Hebrew maid and her courage to witness for the Lord was so powerful and convincing that it led Naaman to embrace Yahweh worship.

Daniel and His Friends

Judah’s apostasy finally led to its downfall in the third year of Jehoiakim king of Judah (Dan 1:1-2). Among the captives were Daniel and his friends of the royal family. The four Hebrew youths were faithful to God even in captivity. While their faithfulness “did not prevent them from being taken into exile, but it did give them the opportunity to witness for their faith during that exile” (Shea, 1996, p. 56).

Nebuchadnezzar planned to indoctrinate Daniel and his friends by sending them to the royal school of Babylon where “The wisdom of the Chaldeans was allied with idolatry and pagan practices, and mixed sorcery with science, and learning with

superstitions” (Nichol, 1977, 4: 769). The king thought that by soaking the minds of the four Hebrew boys with pagan teachings, he would convert them to paganism; thus he even changed their names (see v. 7). The king did not realize that, ultimately, the Hebrew learners would convert him.

In process of time, Nebuchadnezzar’s pride led to his downfall. From being the most powerful king of his time, he was reduced to an animal-minded maniac. Nichol (1977) states that the mental malady which Nebuchadnezzar suffered was a form of insanity in which the sick person actually believes that he is an animal and imitates its behaviors. Exell (1960) gives a name to the Nebuchadnezzar’s malady. He concluded in his research that Nebuchadnezzar was “A man, smitten with the melancholy madness known as lycanthropy,” and the king “imagined himself an animal, and that animal an ox” (p. 196).

Nebuchadnezzar’s malady was a turning point for his conversion. He found God the hard way “But when he was restored to his right mind he became a believer in the true God” (Shea, 1996, p. 81). “In a hymn of praise he confesses that not man but the Most High is Lord of all” (Laymon, 1971, p. 442). A pagan king determined to spread heathenism to the entire world, finally became a devout follower of God who “endeavored to spread abroad before all the peoples of earth his conviction that the power and authority of the God of the Hebrews was worthy of supreme adoration” (White, 1917, p. 510).

The faith of Daniel and his friends and their loyalty to Jehovah turned Nebuchadnezzar’s plan upside down. Rather than the king’s converting them, they converted him. Shea adds, “At the close of chapter 4, we leave Nebuchadnezzar rejoicing

in the salvation that had come to his royal house that day” (1996, p. 82). Daniel and his friends established a community of believers in the kingdom of Babylon that ultimately included the King of Babylon. After the king experienced the joy of God’s salvation, he devoted his life to seeking to promote the worship of Jehovah. White (1917) affirms that Nebuchadnezzar “earnestly sought to promote the fear of Jehovah and the happiness of his subjects” (p. 521).

Church Planting in the NT

While there are glimpses in the OT of the planting of communities of believers in places like Syria and Babylon, church planting reaches its advanced phase in the New Testament. The book of Acts gives testimony to a church planting movement. A church planting movement not carried out strictly by Jesus’ twelve disciples, but instead led by laypersons like Paul and Apollos. Burrill (1998) believes that the rapid spread of Christianity in the New Testament was the result of the involvement of lay people in church planting. Some prominent contributions of lay people in church planting will be discussed.

The Samaritan Woman

In Sychar, a city of Samaria, Jesus met a Samaritan woman who came to draw water at Jacob’s well. This woman who had gone through five divorces and currently had a live-in-lover was an outcast among her own people (John 4:18). The Savior stooped low to reach out to her and address her spiritual needs. As the conversation progressed, the woman was convinced that the One with whom she was talking was the Messiah (vv. 25-26). Therefore, she left her water pot and went into the city and brought out the people

to see Jesus. Filled with earnest zeal to tell her countrymen about the Messiah, the woman apparently forgot to give Jesus a drink of water.

The Lord used this lay woman mightily and her simple testimony of the man whom she met at the well aroused the curiosity of the people of Sychar. The zeal of this woman to spread the good news of salvation is described by White in the following words: "With heart overflowing with gladness, she hastened on her way [to the city], to impart to others the precious light she had received; she spoke unmistakably as to the effect of His words" (1990, p. 97). The immediate result of her testimony about "a man, which told me all things that ever I did" (v. 29), is recorded in John 4:39: "And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, 'He told me all that I ever did.'"

The Samaritan woman was an outcast, living in open sin (John 4), but as soon as she found Christ and drank the living water from the Savior, she became a fountain of life to all the people in her city. Without delay she brought them to the Savior. The effectiveness of this lay woman in spreading the good news was immense. White (1990) states, "As soon as she had found the Savior the Samaritan woman brought others to Him. She proved herself a more effective missionary than His own disciples" (p. 99). According to Ellen White, the Samaritan woman accomplished more evangelistically in a single afternoon than any of the twelve disciples had done.

The disciples might not have thought of evangelizing the Samaritan city. Based on Christ's previous instructions when He sent them out to preach (Matt 10:5), perhaps Samaria was not where they intended to work. "But through the woman whom they despised a whole cityful were brought to hear Jesus. She carried the light at once to her

countrymen” (White, 1942, p. 102). The Samaritan woman is an example of what lay people can accomplish when they are willing to share what God is doing in their lives.

The Restored Demoniacs

After the Savior calmed the raging storm on the Sea of Galilee, “they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee” (Luke 8:26). Immediately as they stepped out on the land, they met “two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way” (Matt 8:28). The “two madmen rushed upon them as if to tear them in pieces. The disciples and their companions fled in terror” (White, 1990, p. 189). As the two demonized men approached Jesus “gnashing their teeth, and foaming at their mouth” Jesus faced them and “With authority He bade the unclean spirits come out of them” (p. 189).

Immediately after their deliverance, the men begged Jesus to become His followers, but Jesus had a work for them to do in their region. He bade them “to go to a heathen home, and tell of the blessings they had received from Jesus” (White, 1990, p. 190). We read in Luke that they followed Jesus’ command: “And [they] went [their] way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for [them]” (8:39). It is ironic that people who have been Satan’s instrumentalities now become God’s messengers. The transforming power and grace of God enabled the two helpless demoniacs to spread the good news of salvation in unentered regions of the Decapolis.

The restored demoniacs had spent most of their lives under the devil’s clutches. They were devoid of knowledge and were ostracized by their countrymen. “But as soon as Jesus pointed out their duty they were ready to obey. Not only did they tell their own households and neighbors about Jesus, but they went throughout Decapolis, everywhere

declaring His power to save” (White, 1990, p. 190). Apparently, they were not great preachers, but their testimony about Jesus changed the hearts of people.

Jesus did not have an opportunity to preach to the bewildered citizens of Gadarenes because “the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region” (Matt 8:34). The loving Savior did not go against the will of the people of Gadarenes. He departed from them, but He entrusted the precious work of soul winning to the restored demoniacs; and they remained as witnesses to His mighty power. They were more than mere witnesses of Christ’s power. Indeed “The two restored demoniacs were the first missionaries whom Christ sent to teach the gospel in the region of Decapolis” (White, 1942, p. 99).

As the result of the two laymen’s work, “A door was opened to the gospel throughout that region” and the people who bade Jesus leave their country were eager to see Him again. “When Jesus returned to Decapolis, the people flocked about Him, and for three days, not merely the inhabitants of one town, but thousands from all the surrounding region, heard the message of salvation” (White, 1990, p. 191). Heathens came to know Jesus through the ministry of these two men. Their love for their Master motivated them to work zealously for Him and they established a community of believers in Decapolis.

Apollos

Apollos was born at Alexandria. He was a well educated Jew, “an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures (Acts 18:24). Murphy-O’Connor points out “Apollos was a trained orator acquainted with the teaching of Philo of Alexandria” (1996, p. 173).

Chilton adds, Apollos was “a master of both philosophical rhetoric and Israel’s Scriptures.

Apollos had mastered the art of rhetoric more than any other Christian teacher, including Paul” (2004, p. 176, 177).

He is described as having knowledge of the story of Jesus (Acts 18:25). Probably, he learned about Jesus by studying “Israel’s Scriptures” since there are many prophecies which foretold the advent of the Messiah in the Hebrew Bible. White (1911a) points out that Apollos was John the Baptist’s disciple who played a prominent role in the early Christian movement. He worked hand-in-hand with Paul in raising churches. His knowledge of the Scriptures and his Alexandrian educational background fitted him well to work among the Gentiles.

Ephesus was his first missionary field and, most likely, he came to Ephesus as a missionary after the death of John the Baptist. According to Chilton (2004), the twelve men in Ephesus who were re-baptized by Paul for their lack of knowledge about the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-2) had already been baptized by Apollos. Though Apollos was ardent in his missionary endeavor, the fact that Aquila and Priscilla had to take him aside and explain to him about God “more accurately” (18:26) affirms that his knowledge about God was incomplete. And, if Chilton is right, it is clear why Paul had to re-baptize Apollos’ new converts in Ephesus who were ignorant about the Holy Spirit and devoid of His gifts (19:6).

Apollos and Paul were a good missionary team. Their different gifts covered the deficiencies found in the other. The early church greatly benefited from these two Christian pillars, though there were times when misunderstanding took place among church members. For instance, the believers at Corinth nurtured a competitive spirit and favoritism. “When Paul writes his first letter to the Corinthians, he is concerned that there

are groups of Christians claiming allegiance to one Christian leader or another: some to him as founder of the church, some to Apollos, and others to Peter (Ehrman, 2006, p. 81). Paul wisely dealt with those problems and quenched the spirit of competition and dissension at Corinth. "In saying 'I planted, Apollos watered' (1 Cor 3:6), Paul explicitly confirms that Apollos exercised a ministry subsequent to his own in Corinth" (Murphy-O'Connor, 1996, p. 274).

Apollos was quick to discern the problems at Corinth and he, too, did his part to bring a lasting solution to the issues. As his coming to Corinth led to some unforeseen consequences (1 Cor 1:12; 3:4, 5-23), after this incident, "Apollos took the hint and never returned to Corinth, where his presence could have made matters worse" (Gentz, 1986, p. 59). Apollos had a true missionary spirit. He was not only committed to planting, but also to doing his best to bring unity and growth in the church, no matter the cost.

Aquila and Priscilla

Wallace and Williams (1998) say that Aquila and Priscilla were tentmakers (like Paul) from Pontus on the Black Sea. They moved to Rome where they became victims of Emperor Claudius' edict. The edict "commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome" (Acts 18: 2). Then they settled in Corinth where they met Paul and provided him with a base when he first went to Corinth (Acts 18:1-3). Soon they became co-laborers with Paul. When Paul "met them, Priscilla and Aquila were already well on their way to becoming among the most influential agents of Jesus' message in the Greco-Roman world" (Chilton, 2004, p. 162).

Priscilla and Aquila visited Ephesus when Paul left for that city (Act 18:18), and it was there that they had the privilege of mentoring Apollos (v. 26). They also formed a

church in their home in Ephesus (I Cor 16:19). In addition to training Apollos for ministry and making their house a place of worship, Priscilla and Aquila were active church planters. Murphy-O'Connor (1996) says that this lay couple was the “real founders” of the church at Ephesus.

In like manner, Aquila and Priscilla had been Paul's partner in the evangelization of Corinth and they “had helped Paul establish the church” (Richards, 1997, p. 281). Their influence could also be seen in connecting Paul to the city of Rome. Capes, Reeves, and Richards declare, “Indeed, Prisca and Aquila may have been the connection whereby Paul learned of the church in Rome and the Romans heard about Paul” (2007, p. 170).

This couple did all they could to plant churches. Ehrman (2006) praises Priscilla's untiring endeavor in promoting the gospel to the Gentiles. He calls her a woman “who promoted the Gentile mission and supported a congregation in her home” (Ehrman, 2006, p. 159). The couple's zeal to uplift Christ's gospel commission can be summed up in the words of Gentz when he writes, “They are a Christian couple who jointly exercised a teaching office and moved around the churches with a considerable degree of mobility” (Gentz, 1986, p. 62).

Barnabas

Barnabas was “a business man from Cyprus” who frequented Jerusalem and “traveled back and forth from his own country in order to develop and oversee a thriving real estate business” (Getz, 2000, p. 63). His original name was Joses but the apostles changed his name to Barnabas, meaning the son of encouragement (Acts 4: 36).

Schnelle observes: “Barnabas was one of the leading personalities in the history of the early Christian mission. The personal legend of Acts 4: 36-37 and the list in Acts

13:1 indicate his special importance” (2005, p. 115). As Christianity began to take root in Antioch “Paul joined the Antioch mission as junior partner of Barnabas” (p. 113). They worked together for a whole year at Antioch teaching many people about Jesus. God honored their humble efforts and “a great number believed and turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:21).

The greatness and success of Paul as a missionary can be attributed to Barnabas. It was Barnabas who introduced Paul to the apostles in Jerusalem. Luke writes, “But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus” (Acts 9:27).

Based on Barnabas’ report, the apostles accepted Paul. In introducing Paul to the apostles, Barnabas was preparing the ground for church planting in the NT era. Besides being a fellow laborer with Paul, “Tradition says he [Barnabas] founded a church at Antioch” and “The mission of his compatriots from Cyprus led to the founding of a church in Syrian Antioch” (J. C. Cooper, 1996, p. 20). Barnabas was truly an encourager. The results of his encouragements bore fruits in Paul and his other friends.

Paul

People are divided regarding Paul’s apostleship. Elwell (1984) validates Paul’s claim of apostleship when he writes, “His [Paul’s] apostleship was recognized by the Jerusalem authorities in accordance with his own claim to rank with the original apostles. However, he never asserted membership in the Twelve, but rather stood on an independent basis” (p. 71). On the other hand, Getz (2000) states that Paul’s “calling to be an apostle differed greatly from the other men outlined in Scripture as apostles of

Jesus Christ” (p. 45). Apparently, there is a distinction between Paul’s apostleship and the twelve disciples whom Jesus named as apostles (Luke 6:13).

It seems that Paul’s apostleship was not universally known or accepted by Christians in the first century AD. Perhaps the title “the Apostle” was posthumously awarded to him. Chilton (2004) states that after Paul’s death Christians from the second century on recognized Paul as “the Apostle” of the whole Church. In other words, though some acknowledged Paul as one of the apostles, his apostleship was not fully recognized by all the churches until the second century AD.

In view of the above arguments, Paul can be viewed as a lay church planter. Chilton (2004) says that Paul’s family ran tent-making firms; and, by profession, Paul was a tentmaker. And he continued “this trade following his apostolic call, as a means of support” (Barnett, 2008, p. 28). Barnett is supported by Paul himself when he mentioned that he did not depend on the churches for his gospel ministry (See 1 Cor 9:13-15).

The book of Acts gives a detailed description of Paul’s missionary journeys and how he raised churches in the early Christian era. Seven books of the NT bear the names of churches established by Paul and other workers. Hindson and Kroll (1994) declare that out of the seven major churches, Paul established five of them: Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, and Thessalonica, and, while they are not sure who founded the church at Rome, they agree that the church at Colossae was founded by lay people who, possibly, were Paul’s associates.

In addition to Hindson and Kroll’s statement, Di Berardino (1992) thinks Paul founded churches at Laodicea in Asia Minor, on the island of Crete, and that he evangelized Spain. Still, Bercot (1998), citing Origen, believes “Paul was, after Jesus, the

founder of the churches that are in Christ” (p. 504). No matter how many churches ultimately are attributed to Paul, he clearly was successful as a lay church planter.

Theological Understanding of Church and Ministry

It was the Lord’s intention that His ministry should be an ongoing ministry on this earth. Therefore, Jesus performed a watershed event in establishing a ministry by choosing a band of followers who had serious faults (White, 1990). Luke 6:13-14 says, “He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.”

The Savior did not take lightly the establishment of His ministry with fallen humanity. He knew well that all His apostles differed widely in habits and temperaments. He knew all their weaknesses. They strove to be the greatest. Some of them indulged in a spirit of jealousy. Some had an evil temper. There was among them a miser and thief (Matt 18:1-4; Mark 9:38-40; Luke 9:51-56; John 12:3-6). So He spent the whole night in prayer and supplication to God just before He ordained the twelve as the pillars of His ministry. Thus, Jesus established His team of ministry.

Before Jesus sent His disciples out as His witnesses to declare to the world what they had seen and heard of Him, they were given the privilege of closely associating with Him. This indicates that one of the most important criteria to become Christ’s witness is to be with Him before beginning to witness for Him. In order for the disciples to be given authority and ability to cast out demons, they were required to be with Jesus on a personal basis and fully receive His instructions. Mark writes, “And he goeth up into a mountain and he ordained twelve, that they *should be with Him*, and that he might send

them forth to preach, And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils” (Mark 3:13-15, emphasis supplied).

The method of apprenticeship to Christ has not changed today. The example of the twelve disciples indicates that the whole process of spiritual formation is to be with Jesus. White (1915) urges Christians to go through the process of preparation of the heart, mind and soul before taking up ministry. It appears that, only after these steps are taken, will the church be ready to minister to people.

Theological understanding of ministry makes us aware of the fact that God’s ministry is Trinitarian in nature, that the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are actively involved in working for the salvation of humanity (Anderson, 2001). Through the sacrifice of His son, God reveals Himself to the world in such a way that a knowing relation is established and upheld between Him and repentant sinners. Christ’s ministry of reconciliation and the on-going ministry of the church through the Holy Spirit will be examined.

The Church as a Self-emptying Community

In order to save the world, Jesus emptied Himself and took the form of a servant (Phil 2:7) and dwelt with us. John writes, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt with us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Jesus came in the flesh to dwell with humanity and reveal the Father’s love and glory. John says that His was a ministry of grace and truth. His obedience and dependence on the Father is seen in His entire ministry.

The self-emptying ministry of Jesus is demonstrated in Christ’s taking our place: “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” and “we were reconciled to God through

the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Rom 5: 8, 10). Christ’s death accomplishes two things for humanity: reconciliation with God and sinners and salvation for those who believe in Him.

The Apostle Paul rightly declares that Christ’s death is more than a mere reconciliation between God and sinners. He points out that, after Jesus emptied Himself and died to reconcile humanity to God, He passes on the ministry of reconciliation to the church (2 Cor 5:18). In order to become a reconciling community of salvation, the church needs to empty itself and do the very thing Christ commissioned it to do.

The church is made up of the community of believers whose lives are grounded in the very being of Christ. The term *Christians*, designating the followers of Christ (Acts 11:26), indicates that the believers should be one in mind, and spirit, and in their ministry just as the Father and the Son are one (John 10:30). Christianity loses its significance and the reason for its existence if it is made independent of the early church stream of unity and believing life (Acts 2:44-46). It is obvious that the church can effectively serve the world for salvation of humanity if the mutual love and understanding that exists between Jesus and His Father is present in the church.

As noted, God has committed to the church the ministry of reconciliation. His grace sustains the church and enables the believers to bear witness to the transforming power and life of Christ (2 Cor 5:20). Jesus was in the world as “one who serves” (Luke 22:27). He assumed the role of a servant in His ministry. He absorbed human hurt, weakness, sickness and sin: “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows” (Isa 53:4). He extended mercy and served the people. He prayed for the sinners and reconciled them to the Father. The life of Jesus can continue to live in the self-emptying

community through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The Church as a Healing Agent

The gospel accounts reveal that a large portion of Jesus' ministry was healing. The healing of Christ was a blending of physical and spiritual: body, mind, and soul linked with deliverance from sin (White, 1915). People flocked to Jesus because He healed. People were as desperately in need of healing then as they are today.

Through God's power, the church can become a place of healing and serve humanity. John, in the book Revelation, warned that the last day generation would face the danger of spiritual lethargy (Rev 3:14-16). Even more dangerous is that the ones suffering from spiritual disease are unaware of it. However, the result is vivid in their lives (v. 18) in broken relationships, crises in the family, abuse, fights, etc.

The analogy of the true vine and the branches (John 15) implies that the church that abides in Jesus is a healthy church that "bears much fruit" (v. 5). The church must be healthy to become a healing agent to sin-sick people. A healthy church can help others who are suffering. Many churches are not as healthy as they should be. John encourages the church to buy free of cost the "eye salve" from Jesus so that the church can see its own depravity and seek help from Him who is able and willing to heal (v. 19). It appears that if the church prayerfully diagnoses its problems and experiences healing through the power of the Holy Spirit, it will be more effective as it goes out to do ministry.

Seamands (2004) believes that through our fallen nature, willful disobedience, or as victims of the hurtful actions of others, many of us struggle with damaged emotions and that all needs healing in one way or another. The church can become an agent of healing where forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God is made possible and

tangible for struggling people by pointing them to the source of healing.

The key point of ministry is to let people know that Jesus is always there to heal a wounded and repentant sinner. The church needs to endeavor to present to the world the five basic truths that clearly define the problems, and the solutions to the problems of humanity (Seamands, 2004): (1) all are broken and need healing, (2) brokenness comes from our broken relationship with God which affects our relationship with one another and with nature, (3) Jesus is the healer, (4) Jesus heals by healing our broken relationships, and (5) Jesus restores relationships.

In presenting the five basic truths, the church can directly connect God and humanity through its vertical ministry—of prayer and intercession for the sinners—and horizontal ministry—of caring, forgiving, and healing of physical, psychological, spiritual, and social pains. There should be a balance in carrying out the vertical and horizontal ministries.

While it is true that one of the main goals of the church is to fulfill its gospel commission of evangelizing the entire world, its mission can hardly be accomplished unless it serves as a healing agent to those who are in pain by introducing Jesus, the mighty Healer. Also, the church should always remember that it is a mere channel of God's blessings to people and not the source of blessing.

The Church as a Serving Community

The Pentecostal experience was still fresh in the minds of the disciples. The work of God was mightily wrought forth through their ministry. There was growth everywhere. The book of Acts reveals that the ministry of the church has the two dimensions of preaching and serving. In other words, it is crucial for the church to look into the spiritual

and physical needs of people. Luke writes:

Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." (Acts 6:1-4)

The above passage indicates that the primary work of ministers is to devote their time to prayer and preaching. However, this does not diminish the role of serving tables. The disciples appointed "seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom" to do this business. Even the humble act of serving the table was done by spirit-filled men.

There is as much a need for spirit-filled men and women to minister to the physical needs of people as there is for spirit-filled women and men to preach the word with passion. Speaking of how Jesus met the physical needs, White (1990) observes: "To those who were in need He would give a cup of cold water, and would quietly place His own meal in their hands" (p. 87).

Scriptures reveal the concern Jesus had for the physical needs of the people. When they ran out of wine at the wedding feast in Cana, He provided good wine for them (John 2). He fed a great multitude twice, "because they have now continued with [Him] three days and have nothing to eat" (Mark 8:2; Matt 14). His compassion for the people motivated Him to meet people's physical needs.

Christ's ministry was much more than meeting people's physical needs. He went "about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom" (Matt 9:35). Mark declares that Jesus' main purpose of coming to this

world was to preach the gospel (Mark 1: 38). He labored hard, doing everything to save people “to the uttermost those who come to God through Him” (Heb 7:25). The self-sacrificing ministry of Jesus, combined with the zeal to preach God’s word, can serve as an example to believers as they labor for the Master.

The church’s devotion to God’s word and its commitment to the physical needs of people are manifested through various ministries according to the different gifts given to the church. However, all ministries are forms of Christ’s ministry, and all ministries are His ministry. As Christ’s own ministry is unfolded, the church discovers its own ministry, and its members discover their own particular ministry.

From Paul’s list of spiritual gifts which God generously gives to His church (see 1Cor 12; Rom 12), each believer can discover his/her particular gifts. Based on those gifts, he/she should work “for the profit of all” (1Cor 12:7) and for the advancement of the Lord’s ministry on earth. All spiritual gifts are not the same. Some are called to serve tables while others are called to preach the word. This means that the church does not set the agenda for ministry, but the Father, who loves the world and seeks its good, sets this agenda so that His faithful believers can carry out His mission.

Jesus’ Model

The church is commanded to imitate the ministry of Jesus. He is the church’s true model, and every believer needs to recognize the fact that Christ Himself is present in the church and continues His ministry in the world through the Holy Spirit. The church in its entire ministry needs to emulate Jesus. The ministry model of Christ can be generally characterized into seven groupings:

1. *Jesus healed and preached*: “Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages,

teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people” (Matt 9:35). Bruce Bauer (2007) states that one fifth of Christ’s ministry was devoted to healing. He healed all who came to Him. However, Jesus was very balanced in His ministry. The church should make its ministry proportionate for preaching (teaching) and healing.

2. *Jesus was motivated by compassion:* On several occasions, the gospel writers state that “He was moved with compassion” (Mark 6:34; Matt 9:36) and, “I have compassion of the multitude” (Mark 8:2). Having the mind of Christ means to have compassion on the people who are struggling from sin, poverty, diseases, brokenness, etc. and introduce them to Jesus, the compassionate Savior and friend. The compassionate Savior did all He could to save people. A church motivated by compassion will become a disciple-making church (McDonald, 2004), recruiting and releasing its members for missions of mercy to the entire world.

3. *He stayed connected with the Father:* Jesus prayed, “That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You” (John 17:21). The mission of the church is to connect people to Jesus. Communion and fellowship with God will protect the church from the snares of Satan and the believers will be prepared to meet God when He comes again. Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1995) states that our communion with Jesus “is richer and more assured than it was” with the disciples because “the communion and presence which we have is that of the glorified Lord” (p. 236).

4. *Fasting and prolonged prayer:* Fasting and prayer kept Jesus going in His earthly ministry. He often withdrew to a solitary place and prayed, at times spending the entire night in prayer (Matt 14:23; Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12). Persistent and sometimes

prolonged and heart-searching prayers may be the condition to receive an answer, power, healing and blessings from God. Answered prayers thrive and revive the soul. However, it is not biblical to claim that all prayers will be answered. The Lord knows our great need, "But to claim that prayer will be answered in the very way and for the particular thing that we desire, is presumption" (White, 1908, p. 96). Therefore, even as we fast and pray, we must allow God's holy will to be done in all things. This is one of the secrets to answered prayer.

5. *Deliverance ministry*: The Savior delivered many people from demon possession and intended for His followers to be involved in bringing healing and deliverance from the clutches of Satan. So He gave His followers authority to do what He did. His command in sending out the twelve was "Heal the sick, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give" (Matt 10:8). In the name of God, the church can carry on the deliverance ministry of Jesus. However, great care should be taken while doing this ministry. A sanctified life and the infilling of the Holy Spirit will empower the church for deliverance ministry. The experience of the seven sons of Sceva (a Jewish chief priest) who tried to cast out demons from a man is an example of how those who are not spirit-filled are no match for an evil spirit. Luke writes, "Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding" (Acts 19:16 NIV).

6. *Miraculous deeds*: Jesus performed quite a few miraculous works including raising the dead, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, feeding the five thousand with just two fishes and five loaves of bread, turning water into wine, walking on the water, calming the storm, and many more. John wrote: "And there are also many other things

that Jesus did which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” (John 21: 25). Miracles will be performed by the church today if the Holy Spirit is allowed to work in and with its members. White (1882) states that during the “Loud Cry” (the third Angel’s Message), “Mighty miracles were wrought, the sick were healed, and signs and wonders followed the believers” (p. 278).

7. *Servant ministry*: The King of glory who proclaimed, “The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my foot stool” (Isa 66:1), stooped low and condescended as the lowliest man on earth. Throughout His earthly ministry, He served people and finally laid down His life for their salvation. Humility and ministering to human needs was the lesson He taught His disciples. He washed their feet and served them. To the warring and power-crazy disciples, who always wanted to be the first, best, and highest, He said, “And whoever desires to be first shall be slave of all” (Mark 10:44).

Whereas self-exaltation originates with Satan, humility and servanthood dwell in the heart of Jesus. The motto of those who minister to the world should be “just as the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matt 20: 28). There is one option for the church today, and that is to build a program of member-involvement based on the Christ-imitating model of servanthood (Fulenwider, 1997).

Before His ascension, Christ assured His disciples that the Father had given Him all authority in heaven and on earth. His final commission to His disciples was “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have

commanded you” (Matt 28: 19-20). If the church understood the concept of true ministry as intended by the Savior, it would be possible for the church, through Christ, to do the entire ministry He entrusted and empowered unto her.

The early church, grounded in *Christopraxis*, was very successful in her mission and ministry (Anderson, 2001). Anderson uses the term *Christopraxis* to refer to “a ministry of making disciples” where “the particular competence demanded of a maker of disciples is that Christ himself be revealed as the discipler” (p. 53). The Bible bears witness that there was ecclesial multiplication of the church: “and day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). Taking the face value of what Jesus said, the church did global evangelism of the then-known world by making “disciples of all the nations” (Matt 28:19) even “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8), as they were empowered by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

This same manifestation of God’s power may be experienced today if the church, as a ministering community, would exercise her God-given authority of evangelism, preaching, baptizing and accepting members, nurturing, exhorting, caring for the erring ones and reclaiming them, and establishing them firmly in the Lord. All these ministries are necessary to bring true order and growth in the church. As the church endeavors to fulfill Christ’s great commission, it must remember that ministry serves as the divine work of reconciliation whereby sinners are brought into the sanctifying fellowship of Christ’s body.

Conclusion

Down through the ages, God has always had a group of chosen people who represented Him to the world. The Lord’s chosen people raised communities of faith

worldwide. In this chapter, the church as a community of God motif has been examined. In both the Old and New Testaments, people of God are seen as a community of believers who are bound to God and to one another with a loving relationship.

The emergence of sin destroyed this relationship, but God restored the broken relationship and reconciled the sinners to Himself through the sacrificial death of His Son. There were a few faithful descendants of Adam and Eve, like Enoch and Noah, who carried on the legacy of building God's community of faith before the flood. In Noah and his family, God preserved the chosen race.

Abraham and Sarah formed another community of believers after the flood. Through them, Israel became a holy nation to the Lord, and through this nation, the Savior would be born. The Israelites witnessed to the nations through the sanctuary system. In the OT, the sanctuary and its services served as a means to display and reflect the mission of the Messiah to the world. People came to know about the Redeemer through the "tent of witness" which foretells the coming of the Savior. However, as a whole, the chosen nation would reject their Messiah. God would create a new nation (community of believers or the church) called Christians through His son Jesus Christ. Through this new nation, the entire world would be evangelized.

The New Testament church is an outgrowth of the people of God in the Old Testament. The concept of God's chosen community does not change in the transitions between the Old and the New Testaments. However, the model of evangelism practiced by the Israelites and the NT church is different. The OT Israelites emphasized attracting people through the sanctuary services, while the NT church promotes reaching out to people. In the NT, the sanctuary no longer reflects the mission of Jesus. Rather, Jesus

commissioned His disciples to go out and preach the gospel to the entire world.

One of the main goals of God's chosen people in every generation is working to raise a community of believers (church planting). In both the Old and New Testaments, church planting was usually a lay-led movement. Clearly, ministry is not just the domain of the clergy, but belongs to the entire community of believers. Paul, Barnabas, Apollos, Priscilla and Aquila were all laypersons who were active leaders in the church planting movement. The early church commissioned all believers to teach and admonish one another (See Col 3:16). The assumption was that anyone in whom the Spirit dwells was gifted and called to ministry.

When Jesus established His ministry on this earth, He intended it to be an ongoing ministry. He ordained the twelve, that they should be with Him and empowered them that He might send them out to preach (Matt 10:1; Mark 3:14). The method of apprenticeship to Christ remains the same. As believers whose lives are grounded in the very being of Jesus, the church needs to be with Jesus in order to work for Him. Then it can fulfill Christ's ministry serving the world as an incarnational community: representing Christ and His humility in working to save people, as a healing agent: sharing God's love to others and pointing them to Jesus the mighty healer, and, as a ministering community: devoted to preaching God's word and ministering to the physical needs of people.

The next chapter will review some related literature on the lay church planting movement. It will also examine the importance of bivocational ministry and equipping lay people for gospel ministry.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

On the Mount of Olives, Jesus told his followers that preaching the gospel to the entire world as a witness to all the nations (Matt 24:14) was a prerequisite to the Lord's second coming. The early NT Christians took Jesus at His word and zealously spread the gospel by planting churches throughout the Roman Empire.

Many present day church leaders as well as believers have embraced the gospel mandate. They endeavor to spread the gospel of Christ to every nation, tribe, language, and people (Mark 16:15). Christians from different denominations appear to be more earnest in church planting than ever before. The leadership of the church in general apparently realizes that unless they follow the biblical model of church planting where laypeople took an active role in church planting, the professional clergy alone cannot evangelize the whole world. In recent years, they recognize the importance of involving lay members in church planting. Increasingly, they depend on lay people for this crucial work of bringing people to Jesus.

What are some of the essentials for successful church planting? This chapter will begin to answer these questions through a review of literature from 1999-2009 that provides direction for church planting in general and more specifically for church planting in a Seventh-day Adventist context.

The chapter will be organized around three interconnected subtopics. It will review literature on church planting, equipping the laity, and tentmaking (bivocational ministry).

Church Planting

A biblical study of the great commission of Christ reveals that church planting plays an important role in the divine plan of global evangelization (Stetzer, 2006). The risen Savior gathered His eleven disciples on the mountain and gave them the Great Commission: to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19, 20 NIV). Thus, the Great Commission becomes the foundation on which the church continues to build its outreach program.

The commission of Christ in Matt 28 lists three vital tasks related to congregations: (1) baptizing, (2) teaching, and (3) making disciples. Stetzer (2003) says that the present day churches often fail to relate these responsibilities to planting new congregations. Instead, the church today views these activities as concerns only for existing churches. This is in contrast to those who first heard Christ’s commission and left their homes and went out to plant churches, assuming that the fulfillment of the commission required multiplying disciples and forming new congregations. Yet, the present day church is apparently satisfied with building up large congregations, settling together in large communities, and hovering about already well established churches while there are still many unentered places. Stetzer argues against this concept and stresses the importance of teaching members how to plant churches and how to be missionaries by moving out of the existing established church.

Amberson (1979) points out that the note of spontaneity which existed in the first hearers of Christ's Great Commission produced churches in the New Testament, as all the believers witnessed to the Lord Jesus Christ. He argues that starting new churches and church planting are the direct and inevitable consequences of believers' involvement in witnessing and proclaiming the gospel of Christ. He encourages the church to recapture the spontaneity which the believers in the early NT church exhibited upon hearing the commission of Christ.

Planting churches was the normal expression of New Testament missiology. To the early NT believers, raising new congregations was not a novel concept, but a normal part of their lives, a primary activity (Stetzer, 2003). Walls and Ross (2008) claim that the concept of mission has not changed in the twenty-first century. Church planting should still be a primary activity in this century.

Schaller (2003) makes a compelling case that the Great Commission ministry must focus upon desired outcomes and results and not upon the preservation of traditional ways of doing ministry: taking care of and serving the believers in the established church. He sees two prevailing trends of thought struggling for precedence in the church: (1) those committed to perpetuating old institutions, old systems/ways of "how to do church," and (2) those creative and entrepreneurial individuals who believe in giving birth to the new. Efforts to perpetuate the old naturally hinders church planting ministry, while efforts to create the new focus on raising new missional congregations.

Many denominational leaders and scholars tend to ignore the former pattern of thoughts and focus on inventing the new (Payne & Beazley, 2000; Driggers, 2000; and A. Hamilton, 2002). They present a clear line of demarcation between the two trends of

thought. They promote the latter, and emphasize engaging the church in God's mission of seeking and saving the lost.

Schaller (2003) challenges the church to shift paradigms and to move from "maintenance to mission" with a vision to put the church back on the right track toward fulfilling Christ's commission. He insists on placing a much lower priority on perpetuating old institutions, regulating congregational life, and taking care of the clergy, and highly promotes equipping the congregations and facilitating the transformation of church members into devoted disciples of Jesus. He expresses that one good way to proclaim the gospel of Jesus is for a team of three to seven deeply devoted Christians to design and plant new churches instead of depending only on the clergy and the old systems of the church.

Schaller (2003) points out that unlike the 1870-1906 era, church planting is relatively slow today. Why is church planting not gaining momentum in comparison to the 1870-1906 period? A primary reason is that most of the present-day congregations and denominations are handicapped because they do not have to be missional (Stetzer, 2003; Schaller, 2003). According to Stetzer, a missional church is a church that has moved from being a "mission minded" church to a missional church. In other words, a missional church constantly engages in spreading the gospel to people. To make this era one of the greatest periods of church planting would require all faithful Christians to witness diligently for the Lord.

Several studies (Wagner, 2004, 2006, 2008) show that one essential for successful church planting is to involve believers in ministry outside of the church as well as inside it. The true church does not only meet together for worship and for other congregational

activities, it believes in taking the gospel out in the workplace all throughout the week. The ultimate goal for the church is to bring as many people as possible to Jesus and transform the society by placing Christian leaders into positions of leadership where they can shape society. Wagner and other authorities in church planting such as Stetzer (2003), think that another essential for “greater harvest” is for church planters to be very cautious in using the name of their denominations. They suggest church planters to use neutral or generic names such as “Community/Christian or Bible Church,” to attract anti-denominational/and or unchurched people. They admit that most of the new churches which have been planted today do not identify their denominations in their names.

However, Elmer Towns (1985) believes that the church planter should not conceal the name of his/her denomination. Even if her/his denomination has a bad name in the community, the church planter should work to make it a good name. He points out that people come or will come to church because of what the church is doing and not because of its name. As a church planter, telling people who you are, or what denomination you belong to, may not hinder church planting. Conversely it may help to develop greater trust because people do not feel that they are being deceived.

Recent studies (Boren & Tillman, 2002; Comiskey & Wagner, 2002; Boren, Beckham, Comiskey, & Neighbour, 2003) indicate the effectiveness of a cell church in church planting. A church that has placed evangelistic small groups at the core of its ministry is called a cell church. The cells or small groups are evangelism-focused groups that meet weekly to encourage and build each other up and move out to spread the gospel in the community/neighborhood. Each cell has one goal, to multiply itself through

evangelism and raise new congregations. This is how cell groups work to add new members to the church.

While evangelism that leads to cell multiplication can be effective in fulfilling the Great Commission, the principle of involving all members in gospel activities appears to be limited in a cell church, since only evangelism-focused small groups are selected to spread the gospel. So who can do evangelism/plant a church? Do only selected small groups/cells plant churches? Stetzer (2006) answers these questions by declaring that God calls church planters and He can use teams, individuals, laypeople, agencies, and other churches to plant churches.

Barna (2005) claims that there are millions of Christians (whom he calls revolutionaries) who are not satisfied with merely going to church, they want to be the church. Every week they meet together in one another's homes to worship and each week they go into the world to minister. They are true Christians who are desirous of being genuine representatives of Christ in the world. Hirsch (2007) would argue that a true encounter with God results in discipleship, following Jesus, and increasingly becoming like Him. The ultimate goal of a disciple is to engage in mission. Hirsch defines mission as extending the redemptive purposes of God through the activities of His people. When believers actively engage in the redemptive work of God, a movement takes place. Roberts (2008) calls this a "Jesus movement." Three vital steps result in a Jesus movement: (1) a person finds Jesus, (2) Jesus revolutionizes his/her life, and (3) as a result, she/he spreads Jesus to the lives of others. The witnesses of believers about Jesus change the lives of people. So many end up following Jesus that churches are built to

assimilate all the people who gave their lives to Jesus. Thus, churches are planted through this movement.

Most Christian leaders believe that church planting is primary in the church's mission of world evangelization. However, Logan (2006) argues that church planting is not enough. He calls for a further step in the church planting movement. To him, the calling of God on the church is not just for starting churches, but to engage in a church multiplication movement where churches plant churches that plant many more churches, until the church fulfills the Great Commission of Jesus. Murray (2001) would name this "the mother/daughter model" of church planting. In Murray's model of church planting, the planting agency is a local church. The local church works with all its members to raise a new church in a locality. Once a new church is raised, the mother church will empower the daughter church to carry on the mission of church planting. This gives opportunity for the whole church to take the gospel to the whole world.

The process of church planting is not finished when a church plants a new church. That would not be enough to fulfill Christ's commission. The church must continue to plant more churches, exponentially more (Logan, 2006). Rightly trained and empowered, the new churches will continue to start more new churches. The very first step for the church to plant reproducible churches is to cultivate a spiritual atmosphere in the church. It is impossible to carry out the Great Commission simply using human power or resources. The best church planting strategies will fail apart from the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Only Spirit-led churches can start churches that will carry the gospel to the entire world.

The second reproducible method is to develop a system that empowers ordinary

lay people to do extraordinary things, depending on their spiritual gifts, interests, and calling. Roberts (2008) aptly named this the “doing church.” In the doing church, laities are not “into” buildings, they are more “into” engagement. They assist church leadership in carrying out gospel activities and increase ministry capacity. Pastors and lay people sharing the burden of proclaiming the gospel are crucial to cultivating church multiplication movements that sweep across the whole world.

The underlying values of the churches that plant churches must be rooted in Scripture. Seeking God’s will as it is revealed in Scripture, the church mobilizes church planters who have a vision and a zeal for the harvest. Man’s vision is flawed, so Barna (2009) encourages church planters to grasp God’s vision for their ministry. Church multiplication movements can happen anywhere, anytime if church planters follow God’s vision and depend on Him for success in raising reproducible churches (Logan, 2006). While mobilizing church planters, the church will also work toward developing new leaders/planters from the harvest. This process eliminates the fear of losing leaders to a new church plant, since planting churches raises up new leaders both in the parent and in the new church (Gladden, 2003), enabling the continued progress of church multiplication movements.

Christianity has always expanded through church planting movements (Gladden, 2000). However, it is apparent that witnessing work is limited in certain domains. Arinze (2008) encourages the church to bring the gospel message to everyone, everywhere. While there are people who may not be very keen to attend church or Bible studies, lay people can reach them through relational connection. This method of evangelism aims at

introducing non believers to God by maintaining good relationships without challenging their views.

Seltman (2008) advocates starting a small group of dedicated church planters who will focus on reaching out to people through relational connection with family and friends, coworkers or neighbors, and common interest groups of people. The church planter prayerfully works toward leading the attendees to experience God's transforming power in their lives. The attendees will, in turn, invite more of their friends to attend the small group. This can lead to a steady growth, and an attendance from which still more non-believers can be expected. If the gospel workers are trained to reach out to their own families and friends skillfully, they can enlarge their sphere of church planting among their families, relatives, clans or castes. The gospel preached by a close friend or family members can be more effective and less provocative.

The mission of the church is neither to collect new people nor to fatten them up for show (Mallory, 2001), nor to build the size of the parish (Werning, 2003). One of the reasons for the existence of the church is to become a disciple-making church. In other words, the church exists as a training ground where time and energies are wisely spent to recruit, train, empower, and release committed members to make disciples (McDonald, 2004). To achieve this goal, the mission of the church must begin at the grassroots level and promote its congregation's mission (Ogden, 2003). The NT points toward the rapid deployment of congregations as the model Jesus intended for building His church. Instead of colonizing in a mega church, believers should take part in "aggressive church planting" wherever the Lord opens the door (Moore, 2002). According to D. Cooper (2008), a church grows faster and rapidly multiplies when leaders and members

participate in evangelism. If the present-day church concentrates on its members' mission, the church multiplication movement would sweep across the entire world today.

God can accomplish His mission without anyone's help. Franklin Graham (2008) confirms this by stating that, in recent years, churches in China have been rapidly growing without the help of missionaries. However, God expects His followers to take part in spreading the gospel. Hence, Jesus gave the Great Commission to the church. The gospel mandate of Christ assumes aggressive, continuous, and spontaneous church planting (Gladden, 2000). The noblest reason for the existence of the church is to communicate God's word. Its mission is to evangelize the world, and every believer has a responsibility of sharing the gospel wherever he/she goes (Warren, 2006). Throughout church history, faithful followers of God knew that sharing the good news was more than a responsibility, it was their great privilege. Thus, they planted churches wherever they went.

Church Planting in a Seventh-day Adventist Context

The Seventh-day Adventist church was born in the aftermath of the great disappointment of 1844 (C. M. Maxwell, 2000). The origin of this church was humble (Loughborough, 1892). It was a religious movement heralded by William Miller, a layman (farmer), who was not licensed by any church for about two years since he became a prophetic speaker (Jenks, 2005; A. S. Maxwell, 1937). However, since its inception, the Seventh-day Adventist church has never considered itself to be just another church; it is a religious movement divinely instituted to proclaim the good news of Christ's soon return and to prepare the world for that glorious event (Snook, 1863). If Snook is correct, then Seventh-day Adventists are church planters, and the Seventh-day

Adventist church is an agency that facilitates a global church planting movement.

A. S. Maxwell (1937) observes that the Seventh-day Adventists inherited the early Adventists' zeal to spread the good news of Christ's soon return; shortly after the great disappointment, they took up church planting as one of their main mission goals. They were resolved at any cost to proclaim the tidings of Christ's second coming to the whole world, and gather out from every nation a people prepared for the Lord. On the other hand, Knight (1993) believes that the Adventists were less enthusiastic missionaries during their formative years; they took up church planting at a much later phase of their movement.

Apparently, Knight (1993) is right in saying that the Seventh-day Adventist church members were anything but missionaries in the early decades of their history. God had to direct the church through Ellen White to fulfill the Great Commission. Accordingly, in 1871, Ellen White recommended that Adventist young people should learn other languages to communicate the gospel to those of other nations (White, 1943). Then in 1874, she had an impressive dream of giving the third angel's message to the entire world. In the dream, the Lord told her that she was "entertaining too limited ideas" of His work. The gospel must go in power to all nations, tongues, and people. God plainly told her that her faith was "limited" and "very small," and that her "conception of the work needs to be greatly enlarged" (p. 208-209).

Following the divine vision, Ellen White (1946, 1948, 1951, 1963, 1970) counseled the Seventh-day Adventist church to make church planting their main mission focus. The Seventh-day Adventist church believes and recognizes the prophetic gift in the life and ministry of Ellen White. It respects the guidance she gave the young Adventist

church. Though the Adventists were not mission-minded during the formative years of their movement, as Knight (1993) claimed, they heeded the counsel given them. They prioritized evangelism. Soon they took up mission initiatives with the hope of evangelizing the entire world.

People like William Hunt, LaRue, and George James volunteered for missionary services and they went to Africa, India, China, Australia, etc. on their own (C. M. Maxwell, 1977). Missions and mission service began to capture the hearts and minds of Adventist youth, too. By the year 1889, the Seventh-day Adventist church was poised for a mission explosion throughout the world. With the help of volunteers and young people, Adventism had been established on every continent and in many island groups by the end of the 1890s (Knight, 1993).

Emmanuel Missionary College sought to advance the Adventist world mission by training “missionaries for Emmanuel.” The 1919-1929 decade was considered an era of excellence in evangelistic training at Emmanuel Missionary College (Canon, 1971). Canon adds that the ministerial student was required to participate in two evangelistic crusades. In the first series, he would observe, assist, and do some of the preaching. In the second series, he would get actual experience in conducting the effort. In addition, Courville (1921) states that advanced ministerial students were to be involved in crusades the last two years in school; and upon their graduation, they were directly sent out to various mission fields.

While A. S. Maxwell and Knight (1937; 1993) have different observations regarding the mission of the early Seventh-day Adventist church, Burrill (1998) points out that the Seventh-day Adventist church made church planting the focus of its mission

strategy based on Christ's mandate, just like the early NT church. In addition, he says that the Seventh-day Adventist church developed a lay-driven, non-clergy-dependent church based on three factors: (1) the Seventh-day Adventist church emerged with a clear mandate for mission, (2) with its roots in Methodism, the Seventh-day Adventist church developed a ministry of the laity model from the Methodist church, and (3) the Seventh-day Adventist church adopts a lay ministry model following the inspired guidance of Ellen White.

The Adventists practiced a model where church planting was one of non-pastor-dependency; involving believers in evangelism (Burrill, 1999). The Apostle Peter's concept of the "royal priesthood" (1 Pet 2:9) teaches that all God's people are ministers. Even the new converts are not exempted from working together with other members to fulfill the great commission (White, 1902).

The work of Gottfried Oosterwal is included in the literature review because his work is considered to be foundational for an understanding of missiology in the Seventh-day Adventist church. Oosterwal (1972) points out that there was a remarkable growth and expansion of the Adventist missionary movement from 1919 to 1939. According to him, three factors effectively promoted the church's missionary outreach in these two decades: (1) the missionary vision of church leaders such as A. G. Daniells, W. A. Spicer, C. H. Watson, and J. L. McElhany, and their commitment to world mission, (2) the new organizational structure which decentralizes the rigid vertical structure of churches (conferences and General Conference) where every aspect of work was marked out and controlled by a few leaders at the top, and (3) the formal theological unity achieved in the 1920s and 1930s, which resolved the great theological debates which had divided the

church in the decades just before and after the 1888 Minneapolis General Conference session.

Oosterwal (1972) says that the Adventist church has undergone four phases of missionary movement. First, the object of Adventist mission was those who believed in the soon return of Christ. Second, the Adventist mission expanded all over the world, but the gospel was largely proclaimed to the Christian world. Third, the Adventist mission work and message targeted the literates of the world through denominational publications. A large percentage of illiterate non-Christians were not evangelized. Fourth, since the late 1950s, the Adventist church has really begun to see the whole world as the true object of its mission.

In the first three phases, emphasis was on the warning/judgment aspect of the Adventist message. The fourth phase, with its salvation message, has ushered in a new era of Adventist world mission (Oosterwal, 1972). Oosterwal believes that with the ushering in of the fourth phase, the Adventist mission has, for the first time in its history, truly become a world mission. Now the Adventists begin to rediscover that their mission involves salvation for every person.

In Oosterwal's words, for Adventist mission to be effective, "the gospel must constantly be shaped to the needs, interests, and sensibilities of the recipients of the message" (2009, p. 25). In other words, true mission strategy will emphasize adapting the gospel message to meet the particular conditions of the recipients of the gospel. This justifies the Apostle Paul's strategy of spreading the gospel to all people by identifying himself with them. He became all things to all men and women that he might by all means save some (1 Cor 9:22).

Further, he states that the objectives of Adventist mission include the proclamation of the gospel and soul winning, the planting of churches and nurturing them, and the restoration of broken relationships among fellow human beings and between God and humanity. He points out that the developing church in the non-western world is a lay church, where the laity wins the converts. This concept characterized the early New Testament church, and it also marked the early Advent Movement. Hence, the mission of the Adventist church must rest upon every Adventist (Oosterwal, 1972). It is apparent that the success of the Adventist missionary movement will greatly depend on the ability of the church to rally all its members to the task of mission.

Gladden (2000) affirms the need of active participation of all believers in evangelism in the Adventist church. To him, church planting is the Great Commission at its finest, and church planting is not optional, but a calling for Adventist Christians. In general, the Adventist church apparently recognizes the potential each church member possesses to do gospel ministry through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. However, Gladden (2003) is concerned that many Adventist churches have stopped growing and are no longer missional. There are several reasons, but the primary reason for churches to stop growing lies in how the churches do or do not do evangelism. Lay people hardly get involved in church planting. Most of the church planting activities are carried out by some specialized evangelistic teams/groups or pastors. And “anything else the church does is pooh-poohed as not really evangelism” (p. 54). The rate of success in church planting can be greater if Seventh-day Adventist churches involve the whole congregation in the church planting movement. This gives rise to the necessity of building a system in the Adventist church where all the believers are trained and

empowered to proclaim the gospel of Christ.

Adventists tend to forget that the church does not exist for the sake of the church, to keep on nurturing people who already have the hope of salvation (Gladden, 2003). The church exists to continue the work which Jesus started, to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). Gladden advocates making everyone an evangelist. Adventist Christians are not to wait for someone more qualified to communicate the gospel. Every follower of Christ can do evangelism that really works. A person who endeavors to connect others to God experiences two things: (1) he/she experiences spiritual growth, and (2) the gospel exerts its power and the church multiplies.

If Adventist Christians think that not every individual is called to plant churches, they still need to realize that every believer is called to support, encourage, and pray for those on whom God has placed the burden of raising up churches. True evangelism that leads to planting new churches includes building friendships with others, showing genuine love and care for the lost, and communicating in a language they can understand. Every Adventist Christian can do this, though everyone may not be able to plant churches (Gladden, 2000).

The Seventh-day Adventist church should exhibit spiritual maturity, a must for the remnant church if it is going to represent Christ on the field and fulfill Christ's mandate. God has given each member different spiritual gifts and the church needs to encourage believers to use their gifts to promote and advance the work of God. Burrill (2004) is right in saying that "gift-based ministry" often fails in the Seventh-day Adventist church because most churches do not make plans to involve members in ministry. This breeds dependency, and dependency is a counter-productive model of

ministry. The chain of dependency can be broken when the church moves from a pastor-centered to a people centered ministry (Ogden, 2003). Unless the church employs the varied gifts and talents of its members, the spiritual life of the believers will be weakened and the progress of God's work will be hampered.

Paid workers alone can not accomplish God's work on earth. White (1911a) calls for consecrated lay people of varied talent who have knowledge of the word of God and who know the power of His grace, to join hands in church planting. More lay people must get involved in gospel ministry. Church leadership should not feel challenged by the ministry of the laity. God designs that His church prosper. The leadership of the church needs to emphasize more on encouragement, involvement, and empowerment of believers for gospel ministry.

Equipping

Christensen and Savage (2000) propose that Christianity in the twenty first century should be a movement where lay people take an active role in ministry. Believers are not to find fulfillment by merely supporting the clergy doing ministry for them; they should insist on participating in ministry. They point out that there are not two missions (one for clergy and the other for laity) in the church. The church has only one mission, and that is God's mission: to seek and save the lost. In order to fulfill God's mission, they hope to set in motion the one doctrine which was introduced, but not implemented during the Protestant Reformation: "the priesthood of all believers."

They argue that unless the church adopts and implements the doctrine of priesthood of all believers and mobilize the laity as ministers, the Lord's mandate to evangelize the whole world will not be accomplished. To order all believers for ministry

in the world, they call, once and for all, to replace the traditional distinctions between clergy and laity with the concept of *laos*. The term *laos* according to Christensen and Savage (2002) is the called and equipped people of God.

Burrill (1993; 1996) thinks that the church can achieve its mission only when pastors and laity engage in doing the work of the ministry. He contends that the pastors have been reluctant to release church members fully for ministry. Conversely, the lay people are satisfied in passing on their evangelistic privileges and obligations to the pastors. Burrill argues against this concept and states that pastors should no longer spoon-feed the believers. They should train them to become participants in the ministry. On the other hand, he encourages the church members to change their lifestyle from “passivity to activity” and rediscover the power of the priesthood of all believers.

Trueblood (as cited in Christensen & Savage, 2000) states that, based on the priesthood of all believers, Christians are ministers and there is no mere layman in the church. He argues for the abolition of the laity. Burrill (1993) agrees with Trueblood and states that, if the church accepts the NT teaching of priesthood of all believers, every Christian is a minister and all members, as priests, have a ministry. They must discover their ministry and become “performers” of ministry.

Ogden (2003) asks: If it is true that laity is to be abolished, and if the ministry is for all the believers, then what role do pastors have in the church? Will not the concept of priesthood of all believers create an identity crisis for the pastors? Trueblood (as cited in Ogden, 1990), gives the best answer to Ogden’s questions when he declares: “the ministry is for all who are called to share in Christ’s life.” However, “*the pastorate is for those who possess the peculiar gift of being able to help other men and women to*

practice any ministry to which they are called" (p. 97, italics added). Trueblood indicates that the reason for the existence of the pastorate is to train, equip, and deploy church members in ministry. In addition, Burrill (1993) states that, in the New Testament, "the laity were seen as the performers of ministry and the clergy as the trainers and equippers of ministry" (p. 49). Burrill's statement implies that the main job description of the clergy is to train and equip the lay people for ministry.

Mallory (2001) points out the distinction between equipping and non-equipping churches. According to her, the church that equips serves as a training ground to train and empower its members and release them back into the world to share what they have learned. The non-equipping church is satisfied with collecting new people and fattening them up for show. She states that when pastor and lay people serve together and share the burden of proclaiming the gospel, the work of global evangelization will be more effective.

Ogden (2003) affirms that all the people of God are ministers; and the equipping pastors are those who are committed to giving the ministry away to God's people. He does not believe that the pastors are called to be the "star on center stage," leaving no roles for God's people. What concerns Ogden is lay people are frequently not allowed to exercise their spiritual gifts to build the church. Sweet (as cited in Christensen & Savage, 2000) adds that most often lay men and women have been forced to make their own way in ministry and in the use of their spiritual gifts. In other words, the gift-based ministry of the laity is often ignored or discouraged by church leadership. Ogden points out the need for a shift in the work of ministry. Ministry in the present century must depend on called, trained, and committed lay people. To shift the church from a pastor-centered to a people-

centered ministry, the leadership of the church should develop new models for training and equipping believers for all the ministries of the church.

Mickelsen (2005) declares that one of the greatest roadblocks to world evangelism is the failure of the church to train, equip, and empower men and women to use their gifts together in advancing the gospel. If Christian leaders are committed to the evangelistic advance of the church, they should encourage lay people to discover and use their spiritual gifts in ministry. When each believer discovers his/her spiritual gifts and engages in ministry the church will grow and there will be no frustration in ministry (Burrill, 1993).

The three Pauline lists of spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12, Rom 12, and Eph 4) which God bestowed upon the church to accomplish His will reveal twenty specific gifts (Dick & Miller, 2003). Every believer is endowed with the gift or gifts of the Spirit given in unique ways in proportion to his or her ability and faithfulness (Matt 25:14-27) to fulfill Christ's commission.

What are spiritual gifts? Couch (1999) defines spiritual gifts as a divinely imparted and empowered ability to carry out a particular task to serve and build up each other in the church. Couch claims that there are no second-class Christians, and the gap between clergy and laity should be bridged by recognizing and appreciating the spiritual gifts which are sovereignly given to every believer to be exercised for the benefit of the body of Christ.

Couch, Dick and Miller (1999; 2003) gleaned the spiritual gifts from Paul's lists (writings) and come up with the following list: (1) Prophecy, (2) Service/Servanthood, (3) Teaching, (4) Exhortation, (5) Giving, (6) Leadership, (7) Mercy/Compassion, (8)

Wisdom, (9) Knowledge, (10) Faith, (11) Healing, (12) Miracles, (13) Discernment/Distinguishing of spirits, (14) Tongues, (15) Interpretation of Tongues, (16) Apostleship, (17) Helps/Assistance, (18) Administration, (19) Evangelism, and (20) Shepherding/Pastor.

Couch (1999) omits Shepherding in his list, and unlike Dick and Miller (2003) he combines the office of teacher-pastor to Teaching. This leaves him with only nineteen spiritual gifts in his list. He points out that there are several overlaps in comparing the lists of spiritual gifts he examined from Peter and Paul's letters. This work does not limit spiritual gifts to a specific list/number. God's power is infinite, so are His spiritual gifts.

To be good stewards of the gifts of the Spirit, every believer must first know what his spiritual gifts are. Many people come up with different spiritual gift tests, such as the gifts workshop and inventory to help discover a person's spiritual gifts. The Spiritual Gifts Inventory tool designed by Dick and Miller (2003), which has 200 inventory statements and a score sheet, seems to be one of the most elaborate and practical tools. While it may be important to attend gifts workshop and take spiritual gifts inventory to discover specific gifts, this writer believes that one good way to assess it is to ask God, the Giver of the gifts, directly in prayer. The Holy Spirit will enlighten the minds to discern His gifts to each believer (1 Cor 2:13).

What methods or tools a person should use to discover her spiritual gift/gifts is left to each individual. Congregations and clergy both have spiritual gifts, and they must inventory their gifts and work to develop those gifts for which they have promise and potential. Stewart (2001) believes that inventorying and evaluating spiritual gifts of believers is a foundation for equipping and empowering the church spiritually for

ministry. Church leadership encouraging believers to use their spiritual gifts by providing congenial avenues where they can employ those gifts can advance the gospel rapidly.

People must be taught to discover, develop, and use their gifts in ministry.

Each person can gain new insights about what it means to be Christ's disciples by discerning her/his spiritual gifts. This author believes that it is imperative for church leadership to encourage the discovery and use of each member's spiritual gift or gifts by creating an opportunity for expression. Burrill (1993) thinks that to keep the gifts of the Spirit alive, pastors must develop an equipping and empowering program of training and support for lay ministry. This can transform the entire congregation to grow as a faith-forming, spirit-filled community. When the believers know themselves and God in deep and powerful ways, they will not only live faithfully, but also contribute to a purpose much greater than themselves (Dick & Miller, 2003).

Crabtree (2003) believes that spiritual gifts are a provision of the Lord Himself to equip the church in the area of supernatural works. They are biblical in faith and practice, and they are a means to edify the body of Christ corporately; Paul wrote the most on the value of spiritual gifts and insisted upon their being operational in the local congregation. He further states that the gifts are vital to the life of the church, and they are a mighty spiritual standard against the subtlety of the devil. Another reason for God to equip the church with spiritual gifts is to commission her to bring people into His family (Warren, 2006). Clergy and laity with their different spiritual gifts can complement and assist each other in nurturing and growing those gifts as they join hands in ministry.

Stewart (2001) rightly paints the picture of the church when he expresses that the church has reached a point of stagnation, mediocrity, and complacency. In order to fulfill

Christ's gospel mandate, the church must equip and empower the members. The church that equips and empowers will allow its members to make right contributions, share their experiences, and learn from each other as they work to build up the kingdom of God (Michael, 2008). Committed pastors will put the life changing power of the gospel in motion by equipping and empowering the congregation (Love, 2002).

What Burrill (1998) calls "the traditional model of pastoral care" (p. 152), where the clergy is seen as the sole or primary care giver in the church seems to pervade most of the present day church. Dunavant (2006) expresses that the responsibilities of the church members are much more than just sitting in the pews. They should use their spiritual gifts and experience the joy of sharing the gospel to friends, neighbors, and people who need Christ. He points out that the Holy Spirit is the source of equipping the church for ministry; the church will achieve its mission goal when (1) the spirituality of the pastors and members is increased, (2) pastors create a "culture of volunteerism" in the church where laity freely share the gospel, and (3) clergy develops means to recruit, equip, and retain the volunteers in the church.

Jones (2004) calls for an end to a "malignant" separation between the clergy and the laity. He believes that ministry belongs to the whole church and not just to the clergy. His emphasis is to reclaim an understanding of ministry that focuses on equipping lay people for ministry. The ordained clergy's main responsibility lies in equipping the laity. He states that baptism is the "signal rite" of initiation into ministry for all believers. Further, Moy (as cited in Christensen & Savage, 2000), mentions that, according to Martin Luther, baptism consecrates all believers without exception, and makes them all

priests. All baptized believers are priests and they are called to take part in gospel ministry.

While equipping the church members is important, the task of equipping begins at home (Barcalow, 2006). Barcalow suggests that parents must think that they are like an ambassador of Christ. Parents should build a deep intimacy in raising their children. He believes that if there is no avoidance of parental responsibility, they will not end up handing off their children to the church, the church school, or Christian leaders for counseling, etc. By training and equipping their kids, they are making them to be ambassadors of Christ to their friends.

Mapes (2005) adds another dimension to equipping the saints for ministry. She thinks that seminaries are starting places to teach, mold, and equip church leaders to be proficient in communicating to their congregations. Theological educators must design programs to help students become competent church leaders. If the seminaries are committed to helping students by providing quality academic support, they will, in turn, become effective workers in the world.

Galindo (2004) mentions that there has recently been a resurgence of active laity participation in ministry. Some congregations have been able to reach different groups of people including some members of “generation X” through the help of the laity. He believes that the understanding of the priesthood of all believers and the engagement of lay people in ministry is crucial to the success of God’s mission. In addition, Fulenwider (1998) points out that Church’s involvement in ministry is a sign of growth. The faith of the members will be strengthened and effective outreach programs can be carried out. A church becomes weak when pastors and only a few people take control of the ministry,

that is, when the rest of the members are left as spectators. He suggests that church members should be trained based on their gifts, and that releases every member for ministry to take God's message to all people. While pastors (mission workers) and lay people will always be needed to fulfill the missionary mandate, new kinds of specialists such as tentmakers must be deployed.

Tentmaking

Biblical Basis of Tentmaking

Tentmaking is not a new concept of ministry. This principle of self-support was true in the Scriptures. While the main biblical model we have for tentmaking is the Apostle Paul who made tents for a living while he preached the gospel (Acts 18:1-3), all the patriarchs, as well as most of the prophets, worked for their own living (Wilson, 2002; White, 1911). Wilson further states that only the Levitical priests were supported by other people through tithes and offerings. Even Jesus, our Lord and Savior, was a carpenter for most of His life in Nazareth (Mark 6:3), except for the three-plus years of His ministry in which He was supported especially by women believers (Luke 8:1-3).

Since the time of the early church, many faithful and committed Christians have followed Paul's pattern of self-support and evangelism. Priscilla and Aquila, who were tentmakers by trade and Paul's co-laborers, did the same thing. They were instrumental in discipling Apollos during the course of their secular work (Acts 18:26).

Definition

While the origin of tentmaking can be traced back to the Scriptures, it appears that missiologists are still struggling to come up with a precise definition of the term

tentmaker. Lai (2005) states that the definitions of the term *tentmakers* (tentmaking) given by missiologists like Greg Livingstone, director emeritus of Frontiers, Ed Van Baak, missions director of the Dutch Reformed Church, Don Hamilton, author of the book *Tentmakers Speak*, etc. are helpful but they fail to cover several key concerns.

The three missiologists' definitions of a tentmaker which Lai (2005) considers incomplete are examined below:

1. *Greg Livingstone* indicates three types of tentmakers. (1) Job takers: these tentmakers work for national or international companies and hold jobs that nationals might have had; they are viewed as job takers. (2) Job makers: these set up their own businesses and offer services for nationals by creating new jobs. (3) Job fakers: these find a legal way to obtain a resident visa. Their status enables them to engage freely in proclamation and discipleship of new converts.

2. *Ed Baak* (as cited in Lai, 2005, p. 12) notes, "A tentmaker is a missionary in terms of commitment, but is fully self-supporting."

3. *Don Hamilton* (as cited in Lai, 2005, p. 12) defines a tentmaker as a "Christian who works in a cross-cultural situation, is recognized by members of the host culture as something other than as a religious professional, and yet, in terms of his or her commitment or calling, is a missionary in every way."

Lai (2005) claims that these definitions are helpful, but they are still inadequate. According to him, these definitions would not qualify the Apostle Paul as a tentmaker; for Paul is recognized as a religious worker in several places in the NT (Acts 14:11, 15; 16:17; 17:18), and Paul also received help from churches (2 Cor 11:7-9; Phil 4:15). However, he expresses that Richard Chia's definition is one of the more concise

definitions that befits those working in restricted areas. Chia defines a tentmaker as

One who has a calling for full-time missionary service but is unable to enter a country of choice because of restrictions. One whose primary purpose is to do full-time missionary work but because of restrictions has to modify his mode of service. (p. 13)

Lai (2005) argues that the word *tentmaker* is biblical, and the term *tentmaking* is related to Paul's work. He adds that Paul was a missionary as well as a tentmaker. Hence, he is critical of the missiologists' definitions stating that they fail to qualify Paul as a tentmaker. Chia's definition, which Lai claims to be more concise, is ambiguous. It hardly qualifies Paul as a tentmaker. There is no scriptural evidence that "because of restrictions" Paul modified "his mode of service."

Many missiologists have attempted to fill the need for a definition of the term tentmaking/tentmaker. Bickers (2007) has another name for tentmaking. He calls it a bivocational minister. According to him, a tentmaker or a bivocational minister is "anyone who serves in a paid ministry capacity in a church and has other personal sources of income" (p. 2). Bickers' definition of a tentmaker suggests that tentmakers (bivocational ministers) are like regular missionaries but they do not depend on the church for their gospel mission.

Another definition that adds clarity to the understanding of tentmaking is Siemens. Siemens (as quoted in Lai, 2005) writes: "Tentmaking cannot be equated with lay ministry because it is a missionary mode, a mission strategy. But some of Paul's principles are equally applicable to lay ministry" (p. 13). Siemens indicates that tentmaking is more than a lay ministry, and tentmakers are missionaries.

The definitions of the term *tentmaker* will vary from one missiologist to the other according to their experience, their knowledge, or place and people they work with. It is

unlikely that missiologists will come up with a perfect term for tentmaker/tentmaking. Giving a precise definition for tentmaking may not matter much. What matters most is that every true believer be endowed with spiritual gift or gifts and that they should glorify God by using their gifts to advance the gospel, to make disciples of all nations and to establish churches in the entire world.

Growing Need for Tentmakers

Many Christian churches have discovered that one of the best ways to fulfill the gospel mandate and reach new people with the good news of salvation is to start new churches (Bickers, 2007). Though planting new churches appears to be one good way to reach the unreached, the progress of the church in this endeavor is relatively slow. One factor driving this is finances, as new church planting is expensive. A number of denominations (mainly evangelical and mainline churches) engage tentmakers for church planting. Tentmakers' financial independence of mission agencies benefits the church.

Stetzer (2006) points out that it is God who calls someone to start a church, and not a denomination; and lack of finances is not an excuse not to take up church planting ministry. He encourages those who do not have sufficient funds to plant churches to start as tentmakers (bivocational church planters) until the church grows enough to support a fulltime minister. Stetzer, along with other church planter authorities (Sjogren & Lewin, 2003), advises church planters to work outside the church until their congregation reaches two hundred in attendance, even if the church planter has sufficient funds to start a church. This puts the church planter into the community where he/she can develop friendship with people and minister to their spiritual needs and invite them to become part of the new church.

The restricting of missionary activities in areas where no missionary visas are granted and no Christian churches are allowed to function is another factor that leads to today's growing need for tentmakers. Normal evangelism is out of the question in most of those areas. Tentmaking is an entering wedge into these countries (Lai, 2005). More tentmakers can be deployed in many developing countries who are soliciting professional help from other developed nations in various areas such as education, health, science and technology, etc. Evangelism and other missionary activities are prohibited or restricted in most of these countries. However, tentmakers can play an important role to evangelize these countries as bivocational ministers (Gungadoo, 1993).

Ramsey (1996) suggests various good jobs for tentmakers (bivocational church planters). The following jobs can help tentmakers to penetrate and witness in restricted-access countries or unentered areas in the world: (1) Banking service, (2) Bookkeeping service, (3) Computer instructor/and maintenance, (4) Catering service, (5) Child care, (6) Teaching your skills, (7) Masonry service, (8) Research service, (9) Writer, (10) Translation services, (11) Tutoring service, (12) Newspaper stringer, (13) Crafts business, (14) Desktop publisher, (15) Newsletter publisher, etc. (pp. 227-228).

In light of the great necessity to fulfill Christ's commission and bring the gospel to the entire world, more tentmakers are needed in the church. A number of churches realize that tentmakers can cross religious and political barriers that may be insurmountable to conventional missionaries in an express effort to evangelize the world (Wilson, 2002). The church should inspire and encourage members to serve God as tentmakers around the world. In addition, the increasing opportunities on the international job market as God has opened new secular avenues, and the rising cost of supporting paid

missionaries, all point to bivocational ministers (tentmakers) as a mission strategy appropriate for present-day church (Bickers, 2007).

The Effectiveness of Tentmaking

Wilson (2002) believes that God has not only used fully supported Christians to extend the gospel, but that throughout the pages of church history, tentmakers have been effective in witnessing for Christ. The accomplishments of past tentmakers bear testimony to their effectiveness in the global mission era. Many of the advances made by Christianity can be attributed to tentmakers who went through all kinds of adversities in their efforts to spread the gospel. The literature on tentmaking ministry consistently points to two examples that illustrate the contributions made by tentmakers toward the development of global mission activities. The first is the Apostle Paul in the NT, the second is William Carey, who is known as the father of the modern missionary movement.

Apostle Paul, the NT Tentmaker

Little (2005) argues that tentmaking was Paul's primary means of livelihood in the various cities on his missionary journeys. While engaged in apostolic mission, Paul not only supported himself but his teammates by his trade. He supports his argument by pointing to the following verses that give evidence that Paul was engaged in tentmaking at (1) Thessalonica (1Thess 2:9), (2) Corinth (1 Cor 4:12; 2 Cor 12:14; Acts 18:3), and (3) Ephesus (Acts 19:11, 12; 20:34).

These are not the only places where Paul journeyed and worked. Little (2005) states that even where Luke is silent on Paul's trade, such as in Damascus, Philippi, and

Athens, one should still assume that he was engaged in it. Acts 28:30 has been read by some scholars as implying that Luke assumed Paul also to have worked even when in Roman custody toward the end of his life (Bruce, 2000). Even if the facts get obscured, it can be justified in generalizing that it was Paul's policy to support himself (and his teammates) by the work of his hands (1 Cor 4:12; 1 Thess 2:9).

Lai (2005) agrees that Paul is highly upheld as the NT model of tentmaking. Yet, he points out that Paul received some support from churches, and he is recognized as a religious worker by the apostolic church. In other words, Lai identifies Paul as both a religious worker and a "tentmaker businessman" who received personal income from both churches and his business.

On the other hand, Little (2005) fully supports the idea that Paul earned for himself and preached the gospel free of cost till his death. In contrast to receiving wages for his gospel labor, Paul concludes that he would rather die; his pay is to "receive no pay" (Best, 1988; Barnett, 1993, as cited in Little, 2005).

However, Little does not deny the fact that Paul was benefited from his churches in "other ways," but such assistance was not a payment for his services, it was a "love gift" to carry the gospel speedily to other regions. Hence, Paul should never be considered as a hired worker of the NT church (Hay, 1947; Martin, 1980, as cited in Little, 2005).

The Apostle Paul, for his part through his own self sufficiency, has consistently had the church's true welfare at heart. Working night and day, he provided for his financial needs while developing intimate relationships with people (Bickers, 2000). His policy of working for a living was a strategic means of evangelism (Little, 2005). He

wanted the Christians to be industrious by following his example. He commanded them to work with their own hands (1 Thess 4:11) as he did.

The life of Paul as a self sustaining worker in service to God, and the church in particular, was meant to be an example for Christians to emulate. The Thessalonian Christians understood this. They saw in Paul the value of hard work. They were enthused by his passion and zeal to preach Christ; their intimate relationships with him had made the church at Thessalonica the first great evangelistic church in the first century AD (Bickers, 2000).

God has done much to help further the evangelization of the world through fully supported missionaries like Paul, who used his vocation (tentmaking) to finance his witness to the church (Wilson, 2002). If the example of Paul and the Thessalonian Christians had been more carefully studied by other Christians, it is possible that the present-day church might have greatly progressed in expanding Christian world mission. The concept of tentmaking is of strategic importance if Christ's commission is to be fulfilled.

William Carey, the Father of Modern Tentmaking

Barlow (2009) portrays William Carey as a shoe maker (cobbler) by trade, but a missionary by God's calling, who cobbled shoes along with his preaching. Barlow, along with some other scholars and missionaries, agree that Carey was one of God's greatest giants in the history of evangelism who developed a strategic plan for missions (Walker, as cited in Barlow, 2009; Wilson, 2002; Lai, 2005).

Carey, who has been called the father of the modern missionary movement (Carter, 2000), was a tentmaker; "when he and his workers' fund ran low, he found

employment to supplement their needs” (Lai, 2005, p. 14). This suggests that Carey, like the Apostle Paul, earned for himself and for his teammates as they preached the gospel in India.

Mangalwadi & Mangalwadi (1999) equate Paul and Carey in various aspects. They state that the passage from 2 Cor 4:1-17 was very much the story of Carey’s life. Again, like Paul who did his missionary journeys on the seas (Acts 13; 15; & 18), they point out that Carey traveled on the seas to come to India, his missionary destination. After a tedious voyage of five months, the Careys and their teammates landed in Calcutta, India, in November 1793. There was no one to welcome them or offer them hospitality; they were on their own. That was how the great missionary began his work in Calcutta: undeterred by circumstances, but determined to bring the gospel to Hindus, Muslims, and heathens.

Carey’s deep love and commitment for the gospel motivated him to engage in different jobs to sustain his family and support his ministry. He worked as a cobbler, teacher, translator, and map-maker to pay his expenses while he witnessed for Christ in a largely hostile land (Engstrom & Larson, 1988). He said that his business was to witness for Christ. He made shoes just to pay his expenses. He continued to support himself and those working with him on the mission field as a tentmaker in India (Wilson, 2002).

Mangalwadi and Mangalwadi (1999) reveal that adverse circumstances such as financial crises, family illness and death, natural disasters, and strong opposition from the East India Company, etc. had little effect on Carey’s courage and perseverance during the forty-one years of his tentmaking ministry in India. The East India Company was a British commercial company in the process of transforming itself into an empire in India,

exercising military power and assuming administrative functions, gradually excluding its commercial pursuits (Wikipedia, 2009).

Wilson (2002) points out that, on further official opposition by the East India Company which threatened to deport him, Carey took his family to the interior of the country and labored to meet the needs of the Bengali people. There he got a job as head of an indigo factory. By associating with the local people in this position, he learned the Bengali language. His proficiency in Bengali language enabled him to translate the New Testament into the people's mother tongue within five years. The Holy Spirit enabled Carey to accomplish this great task (Mangalwadi & Mangalwadi, 1999).

Evaluating Carey's mission service in India, Mangalwadi, Engstrom, and Wilson (1999; 1984; 2002) declare that when he died, after more than forty years of untiring ministry, he had translated the whole Bible into six languages, the New Testament into twenty-three others, and parts of the Scriptures into eleven more tongues. He was known as a moral reformer, an educator, a media pioneer, a botanist, and a medical humanitarian. Carey also had founded what has become the largest newspaper in India, had established strong Baptist Church Union in India, and had founded what has become the largest seminary in India. Carey had done more than any other individual to bring the message of the gospel of Christ, and transform the Indian sub-continent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The Apostle Paul, a tentmaker who worked night and day with his hands (2 Thess 3:8), evangelized practically the whole Roman world. William Carey, a cobbler who started the modern missionary movement, said that, wherever possible, missionaries should support themselves completely or partially through their own efforts (Wilson,

2002). Then the churches could send out more missionaries to help complete the great commission of Christ.

Conclusion

The primary reason for the existence of the church is the evangelization of the world: to make disciples, baptize them, and bring them into the fellowship of believers. Church planting plays an important role in accomplishing God's mission on earth. The early Christians who first heard Christ's commission were zealous in church planting. They assumed that the fulfillment of the commission required multiplying disciples and forming new congregations. Present day missiologists and church planters point out that the concept of mission has not changed in the twenty-first century. Church planting should still be a primary activity in this century.

The ministry of global evangelism can not be fulfilled by only a select few. All faithful Christians are called to proclaim the gospel. In other words, the church planting movement is a ministry shared by the church leadership and lay people. The success of the church in carrying out the gospel commission greatly depends on the participation of every believer in gospel activities.

It is seen in many churches that there is a strong tendency for believers to cling to churches already well established, while there are still many unentered places. The calling of God on the church is to engage in a church multiplication movement where churches plant reproducible churches. Cultivating a spiritual atmosphere in the church and developing a system that equips and empowers laypeople to engage in ministry appears to be the best way to establish reproducible churches. This enables the church to continue to progress through a church multiplication movement.

Over the years, various efforts have been made to plant more churches. Some effective ways to raise new missional congregations are (1) for a team of three to seven faithful and devoted Christians to design and plant new churches, (2) involving believers in ministry outside of the church as well as inside it, (3) taking the gospel out in the workplace all throughout the week apart from coming together for worship and for other congregational activities, (4) starting a cell group: the cells or small groups are evangelism-focused groups that meet weekly to encourage and build each other up and bring the good news to the lost, and (5) starting a small group of dedicated church planters who will focus on reaching out to people through relational connections.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church believes in involving all church members in evangelism. Even the new converts are encouraged to work with other senior members of the church to fulfill the gospel mandate. However, some authorities in church planting point out that many Seventh-day Adventist churches have stopped growing. They reemphasize the importance of making the church missional. They promote the need of active participation of all believers in gospel activities. All the believers should be trained and empowered to proclaim the gospel of Christ.

Church planting is no longer an option, but a calling, for Seventh-day Adventist Christians. Every Seventh-day Adventist Christian is encouraged to do evangelism that really works. The church believes that each believer is endowed with a spiritual gift or gifts, and that all believers are called to take part in gospel ministry. Recognizing the spiritual gifts of church members, the Seventh-day Adventist Church must employ the varied gifts of all members in its endeavor to fulfill the commission of Christ.

Fulfilling the gospel mandate demands the attention of the present-day church.

This gives rise to an urgent need of recruiting and equipping church members to engage in the unfinished agenda of the Great Commission. The ministry of all believers, whether lay or ordained, young or old, male or female, is crucial in evangelizing the world. It is time for the church to implement the doctrine of priesthood of all believers and mobilize the laity as ministers in bringing the gospel to all the nations. The leadership of the church must equip, empower, and enable church members as servants of God in the church and the world.

Apparently, there is a need to replace the traditional distinctions between clergy and laity with the concept of the called and equipped people of God. Luther believed that all baptized members are priests. Ministerial leadership (clergy) should move the people of God (laity) from the baptistry into the full flow of ministry. The concept of the priesthood of all believers should not create an identity crisis for pastors. Priesthood is no longer limited to the hierarchical few, but is God's gift and God's intention for all believers. This indicates that, while ministry is for all who are called to share in Christ's life, the pastors have another responsibility. They should help other men and women to practice the ministry to which they are called. The church can achieve its mission only when pastors and laity engage in doing the work of the ministry.

The failure of the church to train, equip, and empower men and women to use their spiritual gifts together in advancing the gospel hinders global evangelism. Spiritual gifts are a provision of the Lord Himself; He pours out His gifts upon the church and equips the believers to carry out His mission and build up each other in the church. Clergy should help lay people to discover and use their spiritual gifts in ministry.

There is an increasing need for self supporting missionaries in God's work. The

church should encourage tentmaking/bivocational ministry. It appears that tentmaking ministry is still in the initial stage in most of the Christian churches, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Seventh-day Adventist Church primarily focuses on paid missionaries, student missionaries, and international volunteer service for spreading the gospel. Making use of the full potential of its qualified lay people in a bivocational ministry can help complete Christ's commission. The leadership of the church must mobilize church members for gospel ministry.

Biblical evidence and the testimony of many faithful tentmaking missionaries over the years makes one realize that tentmakers are instrumental in accomplishing God's purposes, purposes that might not otherwise be fulfilled. The effectiveness of self-supporting or bivocational ministers who have worked as tentmakers in all ages proves that tentmaking is a viable mission strategy. And tentmaking is one successful method of evangelism in places where career missionaries are unable to gain access.

The conclusion that can be drawn in this chapter is that Christ's missionary mandate is accompanied by divine power and the ways to carry out the mandate. The involvement of lay people in church planting/evangelism is a biblical concept. God-fearing leaders who believe in advancing the Lord's cause by involving all the believers in gospel work can change the status quo in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The next chapter will discuss the history of the emergence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Manipur, India as a lay-led church planting movement.

CHAPTER 4

HISTORY OF ADVENTISM IN THE STATE OF MANIPUR, INDIA

Introduction

Missionary Movement in Manipur, India

Christianity came to Manipur, India in the late nineteenth century. Sword (1935) states that the American Baptist Mission in Burma (Myanmar) made the first attempt to establish a Christian mission in Manipur in 1836. However, the move made by the American Baptist Mission was not successful because of strong opposition from the local native government of Manipur which had already embraced Vaishnavite Hinduism as the principal religion of the state by a royal edict in 1705 (Hastings, 1908).

After more than five decades of the American Baptist Mission's endeavor to establish a Christian mission in Manipur, William Pettigrew proceeded to Manipur. Pettigrew, the first missionary who went to Manipur, was from the Arthington Aborigines Mission Society. The Arthington Aborigines Mission Society was named after Robert Arthington, a millionaire from Leeds, England and the founder and sole contributor of this private mission society (Dena, 1988). Further, Dena states that Pettigrew began his missionary work at Imphal, the state capital, on February 6, 1894.

Tradition says that Porom Singh was Pettigrew's first Hindu convert. They gave the date of Singh's baptism as January 3, 1896. Another tradition claims that Ningol Kaboklei was the first Hindu convert. According to this tradition, Ningol Kaboklei met a

Christian missionary at Sylhet (now Bangladesh) and she embraced Christianity around 1893 (Wikipedia, 2009b), even before the arrival of William Pettigrew, the first missionary to Manipur.

Pettigrew's zeal to preach the gospel among the Meiteis (Hindus) gave rise to a critical situation. The Meiteis construed his missionary zeal as a deliberate attempt to enforce Christianity upon them, thus imposing the religion of the government (British India). Maxwell, the Political Agent of British India, expressed fear that if Pettigrew continued his work at Imphal, there could be political riots and attacks upon the government. He gave Pettigrew an ultimatum either to leave Imphal or stop his missionary work (Dena, 1988).

The Arthington Mission which sponsored Pettigrew did not believe in establishing a permanent mission station in any particular place or region. Its missional strategy was that if a Christian foothold was gained in a country, the missionary would press on to the next country. Missionaries were instructed to move to a new place every three years (Chirgwin, 1935). Pettigrew felt that his calling was to evangelize Manipur. Apparently, his calling and the Arthington's mission policy were incongruent. It was under these circumstances that Pettigrew applied for membership to the American Baptist Missionary Union in Assam. The Baptist Missionary Conference at Sibsagar accepted Pettigrew's petition and it designated him as a missionary to Manipur in 1895 (Dena, 1988).

Shimray (2009) states that within six months of Pettigrew's missionary work at Imphal, there was opposition from the British authorities. Therefore, Pettigrew had to leave Imphal and worked among the Tangkhul Nagas in the hill district of Ukhrul. According to Yangya and Songate (2009), Pettigrew claimed that by February 1896, the

gospel work was well established in Ukhrul, the most central village of the tribe, under the American Baptist Mission.

Ashlock (1980), the first Seventh-day Adventist missionary who came to Manipur in the mid twentieth century, states that Ninghei Luikham was the first Tangkhul Naga to become a Christian as a result of the dedicated ministry of a Baptist missionary [William Pettigrew]. P. Pamei (personal communication, May 6, 2009) adds that Thisan Luikham and Miksha Shimray were two of Pettigrew's earliest converts among the Tangkhul Nagas. Ninghei Luikham was not only the first convert of William Pettigrew, he was also the first Tangkhul to become a Seventh-day Adventist. The next section will focus specifically on the history of Adventism in Manipur.

History of the Seventh-day Adventist Mission in Manipur

The Lord planted the Sabbath seed in Manipur, India through His special agent, an Allied soldier of the South East Asia Command (SEAC) based there during World War II. This Unknown Soldier was probably killed in action, but left behind his backpack, which contained a copy of *Bible Readings for the Home*, in the village of Tolloi, Ukhrul, East District of Manipur. For a few years this book lay unused, as the villagers could not read English. Then, one day, a Baptist evangelist, Ninghei Luikham, came across the book during one of his pastoral visits to the book's new owner Mr. Luikai. As the evangelist borrowed the book and read, the Holy Spirit convicted him of biblical truth, including the sanctity of the Sabbath (Y. D. Luikham, personal communication, May 3, 2009).

Gangte (2002) points out that Ninghei Luikham was determined to find out more about the Sabbath. He wondered if there was a Sabbath-keeping church which upheld the

principles of the Bible. Meanwhile, he began the work of imparting the truths to others which God had unfolded to him through that book. He took up the challenge of reforming the churches in Ukhrul region on his own. He preached through any available platform, teaching the people to keep Saturday instead of Sunday. The Lord was with Ninghei Luikham; He blessed his endeavor as he traveled from one place to another zealously preaching his newfound faith. Many people accepted Ninghei's plain teaching on the biblical day of worship; and they joined him in proclaiming the sacredness of the Sabbath day. This movement was known as the *Reformed Church Movement* in the Tangkhul area.

Reformed Church Movement

William Pettigrew had converted almost all the hill districts of Manipur into Christianity. Under the umbrella of the American Baptist Mission, many tribal groups from different regions joined the Tangkhul Naga Christians and formed an association called the Manipur Baptist Association. All the churches were a part of this association.

Y. D. Luikham (personal communication, May 4, 2009), one of the sons of Ninghei Luikham and eye witness of the incident, says that during one of the conventions of the Manipur Baptist Association, Ninghei Luikham presented the Sabbath truth to all the delegates there. He declared that, according to the Bible, Saturday is the Lord's Day. He expressed that, as followers of Christ, Christians should honor God by keeping the Sabbath holy, not Sunday. The delegates of the Association were convinced of the Sabbath truth and they made a resolution to change the day of worship from Sunday to Saturday.

Shortly after, many influential leaders and elders changed their minds and recommended that the Association rescind the resolution. The reason for this change of

heart was that the White missionary (Pettigrew) had never taught them the sacredness of the Sabbath. They argued that if Saturday was the Lord's Day, the missionary would have told them to keep it. Most of the believers were illiterate; they were not able to find out the truth for themselves by studying the Bible. They blindly accepted what the missionary had taught them. Therefore, the Association annulled the resolution which they had made.

Again, Ninghei brought up the Sabbath issue during the general meeting (conference) of the Manipur Baptist Association. This time he was more determined than before to press the truth home to the hearts of all the delegates and bring about a complete change in the day of worship. The people readily accepted Ninghei's presentation. The Association unanimously passed a resolution stating that Saturday is the Lord's Day and that they would keep the Sabbath instead of Sunday.

However, after passing the resolution to keep Saturday instead of Sunday for the second time, many of the Baptist Christians were remorseful for what they had done. They thought that they had betrayed God and their revered missionary Pettigrew by deviating from the truth. They were not ready or willing to abandon the teaching of their first missionary who had taught them to observe Sunday. Hence, they broke their resolution again and went back to Sunday-keeping.

Ninghei and those who were willing to accept the Sabbath truth as revealed in the Bible could no longer tolerate the fickleness of the Manipur Baptist Association. They decided to break away from the Baptist church. Twelve churches with a membership of about 845 people broke away from the Association and formed the *Reformed Church Movement*. The Reformed Church Movement did not relate to the Reformed Adventist Church. Ninghei and his followers did not even know that there were Sabbath-keeping

churches in other parts of the world. All they knew was that Saturday was the Lord's holy day and their goal was to promote Sabbath-keeping in Manipur (Y. D. Luikham, personal communication, May 4, 2009).

The members of the Reformed Church Movement did not break away from the Baptist Association without paying a price. Apart from being ostracized by the main church, their children were not able to attend schools as they could not get a day off on Saturdays. The Lord impressed Ninghei to start a school where all the Sabbath-keeping children could study without breaking the Sabbath. Accordingly, Ninghei consulted with several village headmen (chiefs) and, with their approval, he started a school called H. H. R School (Hundung Headmen Reformed School) in 1948.

The School Board appointed Benjamin Luikham, eldest son of Ninghei Luikham, a former student of the Baptist missionary William Pettigrew, as the Headmaster of the School. A. S. Tungmaso was his assistant. This was the first weekday school in Manipur. Unlike the typical schools, this school opened Monday through Friday allowing the students to worship on Saturday. The children of the Reformed Church Movement believers and many other children from the neighboring villages attended the H. H. R. School (A. J. Luikham, personal communication, May 4, 2009).

Soon the Leadership of the Baptist church saw that the Reformed Church Movement was gaining ground. It threatened the existence of the already well-established American Baptist Mission in Manipur, especially in the Tangkhul region, where Pettigrew himself had started the work. Therefore, they restrained Ninghei from visiting and preaching in their churches. This restriction seemingly nipped the Reformed Church Movement in the bud. However, the Baptist church could not restrain Ninghei from

spreading the Sabbath message. He continued his work among his friends and relatives.

The First Adventist Missionaries to Manipur and Nagaland

Ninghei's quest to find out more about the Sabbath-keeping denomination was rewarded as he stumbled across the address of the Shillong Head Office where the "20th Century Bible Correspondence Course" was randomly mailed out all over India. In addition, his son Benjamin Luikham obtained another book called *Toward a Better Day* from one of the literature evangelists from Assam Training School. As the father and the son experienced the leading hand of God in their search for the true church, their faith in God was strengthened (Gangte, personal communication, June 22, 2009).

In the meantime, in response to Ninghei's correspondence, three White missionaries Pastor T. M. Ashlock, Pastor N. Dohlsten, and Pastor Spice visited Kohima and Ukhrul in the middle of 1951. The missionaries met with the members of the Reformed Church Movement in Ukhrul. They shared the Sabbath truth more convincingly and taught the people about the Seventh-day Adventist Church. For the first time, they came to know that there was a Sabbath-keeping church. Some of them decided to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church but no one was baptized during the first visit of those missionaries (Gangte, 2002).

Among the three missionaries, Tom Ashlock decided to make Manipur one of his mission stations. In the winter of that same year (1951), he made a solo trip to Ukhrul. In those days Ukhrul was a two-day walk from Imphal, the capital of the state of Manipur. Ashlock decided to conduct his evangelistic meetings at Phugcham, a village that was a day's walk from Ukhrul. The village is perched on the top of a mountain about 7,000 feet above sea level. Ashlock boarded a truck, an old World War II Dodge weapons carrier,

and headed for the village. The driver lost control on a mountain pass. Most of the passengers including Ashlock jumped clear as the weapons carrier rolled down the mountainside and crashed into a stream below. Ashlock had to walk on foot to the village from the accident scene to share the gospel (D. Hungyo, personal communication, April 25, 2009).

The week of evangelistic meetings had gone well and Ashlock was “in high spirits.” One evening, as he walked from the temporary meeting place to the guest house which the village chief had provided for him, he began “to feel weak and a little shaky.” He had contracted malaria. His first-person account of the incident is recounted below:

The thought stunned me, not because I might be coming down with malaria—I had contracted malaria on a number of occasions, but because I had lost my only bottle of nivoquine in an accident ten days earlier, and because of what I had heard about the virulent form of malaria prevalent in the area where I had been three weeks before. The symptoms, I was told, were high fever on the first day, normal temperature the next and subnormal on the third day. If the cycle is allowed to repeat itself, on the third time around, when the temperature drops to below normal, it usually continues to drop until life ceases. As I sat down on my sleeping bag and thought about the past few days, I realized that I was on my third three-day cycle. And I had nothing to take for malaria.

Unless I could get some type of anti-malarial drug soon, the next day might be my last. Two runners were sent to Ukhrul for any type of anti-malarial drug they could procure. There was none to be found. Fresh runners from Ukhrul immediately left for Imphal.

As the translator gave instructions about an all-night fire, I started writing what I thought would be my last letter to Betty. I also wrote one to the mission President. When I handed them to the translator, I explained to him what I wanted done about my burial.

Knowing my temperature would continue to drop during the night, the Naga people brought stack of blankets to add to my sleeping bag. Two fires were kept going all night. Toward morning, when I lost consciousness, a number of beer bottles were filled with hot water and placed next to me. (Ashlock, 1980, p. 10)

An epidemic had depleted all the anti-malarial supply in Ukhrul. The villagers knew that without any medical help available, the missionary was going to die. As Ashlock lay unconscious on his bed, the village chief, a non-Christian, prayed for the

missionary. Kneeling down in front of thirty-five to forty people who were gathered around him, the chief said this prayer at about ten in the morning:

O great God, the good-God, who created our forefathers, God of the Christians, we your children pray to you for help, please hear our prayer. We acknowledge your power over all spirits of dark places and over all evil gods. We beseech you to heal the missionary, for if you don't, today he will die. As chief of the people I speak for all in this place. Hear, oh, hear my prayer, O Creator God. (Ashlock, 1980, p. 9)

There was an immediate answer to the chief's prayer. About then Ashlock woke up. He crawled out of his bed with the "in-a-cold-fog-feeling" gone. He felt fine. He picked up his Bible and notebook and started for the meeting place. Ashlock (1980) recalled that as he walked into the temporary meeting place, the people were stunned by what had taken place: "There was a blank look on some faces, a frightened look on others. But when [he] greeted them, they responded with smile and tears" (p. 9). God saved Ashlock twice on that missionary trip: from the truck accident and from deadly malarial fever.

The runners finally returned with quinine from Imphal, but the missionary did not need it, for the Lord had miraculously healed him through the fervent prayer of the non-Christian village headman (chief). Ashlock testified that God hears His children, be they Christian or non-Christian. Today, there is an organized Seventh-day Adventist church at Phungcham village where Ashlock's temporary evangelistic shelter once stood in 1951.

Undaunted by his "memorable trip" to Phungcham village in December 1951, Ashlock made another trip there in January 1952 to meet with the members of the Reformed Church Movement and to attend their meeting. He encouraged the new enthusiasts to accept the Lord by becoming members of His remnant church. Many people took their stand to become Seventh-day Adventists; however, no one had yet been

baptized into the Adventist church. Gangte (2002) points out that the meeting of Ashlock and the Reformed Church Movement members at Phungcham in 1952 was later adopted as the first Annual Meeting of the Manipur and Nagaland Section of Seventh-day Adventists. Based on this date, the Adventist Church in Manipur and Nagaland celebrated its Golden Jubilee from January 24-28, 2002.

Training Fourteen Young Boys for Ministry

Ashlock saw the need to raise leaders for the Adventist church in Manipur. Immediately after the meeting, he selected fourteen young men from different villages who came for the meeting at Champhung village to receive an Adventist education. The names of the fourteen young men who first received an Adventist education at Assam Training School, Jowai, the only Adventist Boarding school for Northeast India are (a) Ramyang of Happy Ground, Ukhrul, (b) Ramyao of Happy Ground, Ukhrul, (c) Maiphuk of Happy Ground, Ukhrul, (d) Reading Luikham of Ukhrul, (e) Shamphung of Lungshang, (f) Stephen of Ukhrul, (g) Dharmasing of Ukhrul, (h) Yuimi Dearson Luikham of Ukhrul, (i) Chinaongai Grace Pheirim of Huimi, (j) Samson Luikham of Ukhrul, (k) Makathei of Lungshang, (l) Lungrei of Ukhrul, (m) Alungleng Riphung of Happy Ground, and (n) Chihanpam of Ukhrul (Gangte, 2002).

A. Riphung (personal communication, May 6, 2009), one of the fourteen students, states that Ashlock selected two other young men: Tensu and Teka from Nagaland. These two youth joined the fourteen young men from Manipur in pursuing an Adventist education at Assam Training School. The young people eventually embraced the Adventist truth while they were in the school; some of them became prominent leaders of the church, while the others served God as faithful lay leaders in local churches.

P. Gangte (personal communication, June 20, 2009) states that Ashlock conducted a major evangelistic meeting at Ukhrul (the district headquarters) in February 1952. He was assisted by Israel Chand and Barkley. Hundreds of people attended the meetings night after night, but there were no baptisms. As stated, Ukhrul is a strong American Baptist Christian center. William Pettigrew had laid a solid Baptist church foundation in 1896 more than five decades prior to Ashlock's arrival in Manipur. In addition, the people were taught that re-baptism is not biblical. Hence, though many sincere searchers of truth were convinced of the Adventist truth, they were not willing to be rebaptized. However, the evangelistic meeting of Ashlock and his team was not in vain. People began to see more clearly the truth in the light of the Scriptures. More and more people became inquisitive about biblical truth and expressed their desire to break away from the stronghold of the dominant Baptist mission.

In June 1952, Ninghei Luikham, the leader of the Reformed Church Movement, and his eldest son Benjamin Luikham, finally decided to be baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist church. They could not wait for the itinerant missionaries to come to Manipur for their baptism. They went to Shillong to meet with the Adventist church leadership. He and his son were baptized at Shillong Seventh-day Adventist Headquarters. They were the first converts in Manipur and exemplified to the people that it was biblical to be re-baptized in the Lord. Ninghei and his son diligently sought to promote Adventism among the Tangkhuls. They preached their new-found faith with great zeal to all who came in touch with them. As the result of the missionaries' teaching and the earnest efforts of the father-son (Ninghei and Benjamin) lay evangelistic ministry, many people were ready for baptism by the end of 1952 (Gangte, 2002).

The First 150 Adventist Converts in Ukhul

There was no ordained minister in Manipur. All the religious ceremonies were conducted by itinerant missionaries. In most cases, the converts had to wait for months to be baptized. Ninghei requested the Adventist Headquarters in Shillong to send a minister to baptize the Tangkhul converts before winter set in. The climate is severe during the winters in Ukhul. Temperatures rapidly drop until it freezes. The Seventh-day Adventist church Headquarters in Shillong was not able to send one ordained minister to Ukhul that winter. Instead, they authorized and sent a layman, Zuala Sailo from Mizoram, to officiate at the baptismal ceremony in Manipur. Sailo was not a native of Ukhul, and due to certain restrictions imposed on non-locals in those days, he was not able to go to Ukhul. Therefore, the Tangkhul baptismal candidates were invited to come to Litan, a village a day's walk from Ukhul (Y. D. Luikham, personal communication, April 21, 2009).

Esther Hungyo (personal communication, April 23, 2009) says that most of the parents of the converts were staunch Baptists and they strongly opposed the conversion and re-baptism of their children. As the day set for baptism drew near, the situation became tense. The week before the baptism, Ninghei Luikham, Pangaireo Zimk, and A.S. Tungmaso, along with some faithful elders, organized a three-day fasting and prayer program. They led the young people to the forest and fervently prayed to the Lord for blessing, inner peace, safety, and strength to stand for the truth.

In the midst of all the threats and tension, the baptismal candidates took courage in the Lord, and with one mind and purpose, they proceeded to Litan for baptism. By then, the temperature had already dropped, with a very cold and dry wind sweeping

across the Ukhrul district. There was no baptistery or heating system to heat the water. Despite the inclement weather, 150 people, undeterred by the freezing temperature, accepted the Lord through baptism in the ice-cold river at Litan on December 12, 1952 (D. Hungyo, personal communication, April 21, 2009).

This is the first and only record of mass conversion in the Adventist history of Manipur. Faithful lay leaders were instrumental in leading 150 people to Jesus. It was a layman who baptized those converts on that cold winter's day. The Unknown Soldier who left his book in Tolloi village was possibly also a layman. From this humble lay-led movement, the Seventh-day Adventist church in Manipur has grown into an organized work today.

In the absence of a written record, all the names of the converts who first gave their lives to Jesus are no longer available and most of them have been laid to rest in the Lord. Gangte (2002) states that out of those 150 people, only twenty names can be recalled today. They are as follows: (a) Pangaireo Zimik of Shimtang, (b) Mrs. Pamreiphi Zimik of Shimtang, (c) H. Ngathingkhui of Phungcham, (d) H. Yarho of Phungcham, (e) M. Luinam of Phungcham, (f) L. Yangman of Phungcham, (g) Mangarin, (h) Chilang, (9) Hangyang, (i) Tuingapai, (j) Yangmi, (k) Khavangsing, (l) Kahaoching, (m) Naomachum, (n) Theingaila of Happy Ground, (o) Kareiphi, of Happy Ground, (p) Maringrar of Happy Ground, (q) Ngakasi of Happy Ground, (r) Layik of Happy Ground, and (s) Ningchungla of Happy Ground.

The 150 Adventist converts were from different villages of the Ukhrul district. Some of the converts were afraid for their lives, while some expressed their fear to return to their homes. However, God was gracious to them. He answered their supplications. As

they returned to their respective villages after the baptism, they were gladly taken back into their homes. Huimi Hungyo (personal communication, April 23, 2009) states that the parents and family members of most of the first converts became Adventists after seeing the positive changes taking place in their children.

Formation of the Adventist Mission Office in Ukhrul

As membership increased, the Adventist Headquarters in Shillong saw the need for the establishment of a mission office in Manipur. They appointed Ninghei Luikham as Circle Director on January 28, 1953, with his office in Ukhrul, to oversee the progress of the Adventist church growth in Manipur. Along with Ninghei, nine other workers were appointed to assist him in the work. The list of the first mission workers and their monthly salaries are listed below. The difference in the monthly salary of the workers was based on the level of education, experience, and responsibility of the job they held (Y.D. Luikham, personal communication, May 5, 2009):

Still, there was no ordained minister to look after the spiritual and ecclesiastical needs of the believers in Manipur. To meet the growing spiritual needs of the Adventist members, the Seventh-day Adventist church headquarters in Shillong appointed Ninghei Luikham as an Elder of the Adventist congregations in Manipur. He was ordained to the Elder's office in the early part of the year 1953. After a short time, the Adventist church in Ukhrul was organized and accepted into the sisterhood of Seventh-day Adventist churches (C. Ragui, personal communication, June 22, 2009).

1. Ninghei Luikham,	90 Rupees
2. A. S. Tungmaso,	50 Rupees
3. Shomphang,	40 Rupees
4. Tuizar Luikham	30 Rupees
5. Maringrar	25 Rupees
6. Benjamin Luikham,	100 Rupees
7. Peter Ramrar,	45 Rupees
8. Maiphuk,	40 Rupees
9. Sanamla,	30 Rupees
10. Mangarin,	25 Rupees

Figure 1. List of first ten indigenous mission workers and their monthly salaries

First Organized Church

The Adventist church in Ukhrul, which was organized in 1953, became the first organized church in Manipur. The following are names of office bearers and church members: (a) Elder: Ninghei Luikham, (b) Treasurer: A. S. Tungmaso, (c) Clerk: Pangeireo Zimik. Deacons: (a) Shangching, (b) Philip, (c) Peter, and (d) Ngakaisi.

The reason for the exclusion of deaconesses in the first organized church is unclear. Perhaps, they were ignorant of the importance of the office of deaconess in the church, or possibly, their limited knowledge of the Bible might have prompted them to discourage women from holding offices in the church. Nevertheless, women constituted about fifty percent of the church membership as the prefix (Miss & Mrs.) indicates: (a) Ninghei Luikham, (b) Benjamin Luikham, (c) Mrs. Ngalaphui, (d) Miss Sanamla, (e) Miss Yangmila, (f) A. S. Tungmaso, (g) Miss Otcheila, (h) Miss Ngalanam, (i) Ngakaishi,

(j) Philip, (k) Maringmi, (l) Miss Mikshala, (m) Miss Labangla, (n) Miss Laphekla, (o) Miss Yangshila, (p) Miss Shaikhapla, (q) Miss Luinotla, (r) Miss Kasimla, (s) Hangyang, (t) Shongkam, (u) Vareichung, (v) Mangarin, (w) Shangching, (x) Maringthuk, (y) Yarnamchung, (z) Luinem, (aa) Ngathingkhui, (bb) Yorsha, (cc) Hanshi, (dd) Miss Pamreiphi, (ee) Miss Mainamla, (ff) Wungmayo, (gg) Miss Theingaila, (hh) Miss Luishomla, (ii) Miss Patangla, (jj) Pangaireo, (kk) Kahaoching, (ll) Vaorei, (mm) Raleng, and (nn) Luimaphang (Gangte, 2002).

Extension of Adventist Work Outside Ukhrul

Ninghei was determined to spread the Adventist truth to other regions of Manipur. He began his work in Imphal, the state capital of Manipur, among the Rongmei (Kabui) people. The Rongmeis are one of the largest tribal groups in Manipur. As Ninghei regularly traveled back and forth between Ukhrul and Imphal, Mupei Phaomei, a postal worker welcomed him into her house. They became good friends.

Mupei was a widow, a spiritual lady, who was searching for the true God. Every morning at 5:00 a.m. she would walk barefoot to Govindaji Temple (a Brahmin Hindu Temple) at Konung Mamang (Palace Compound) and worship the Hindu gods, offering flowers and coins to appease them. One day, the Meitei Hindus (Brahmins) discovered that she was not a member of their community (Meitei). Therefore, they expelled her from the temple. Her grand daughter, Chonchon (personal communication, April 24, 2009), says that Mupei left the Hindu Temple weeping aloud as she went. She was overwhelmed with fear at the prospect of losing her salvation and the impending disaster that would soon befall her and her family from the angry gods.

As she was going through that traumatic period, the Lord sent Ninghei Luikham

as a guest to her home. Ninghei plainly taught Mupei about Jesus, the loving God of the Christians, who gave His life to save humanity. Mupei saw the contrast between the angry, demanding Hindu gods, and the loving, forgiving, and saving Jesus of the Christians. She was impressed by the Christian God. She decided to become a Seventh-day Adventist Christian. Since there was no ordained minister in Manipur to baptize her, she got baptized much later than her son. In those days, the converts had to wait for baptism until the return of the itinerant missionaries to Manipur.

Meanwhile, she sent her son Khangchuga Phaomei to Assam Training School to get a Christian education. Her ultimate goal was to make her son a Christian missionary. Khangchuga was an honest and hard working student. Like his mother, he diligently searched for the truth. He accepted the Lord in 1953, and, along with his friend, Saheni Mao, was baptized by Pastor W. C. Reck at Assam Training School. He was the first Rongmei Adventist convert. The same year, in answer to his mother's prayers, he was appointed as a lay evangelist to work in Manipur (Ph. Khangchuga, personal communication, March 7, 2009).

The First Adventist Church in Imphal (Langthabal)

Ninghei and Khangchuga joined hands in spreading the gospel in the Imphal area. Ninghei became Khangchuga's mentor and father. He changed his name to Shomi, meaning *show me the way* in the Tangkhul Language. They made Langthabal Chingthak, Imphal, their missionary center to preach the gospel of Christ to the heathen Rongmei people (K. Ragailung, personal communication, February 4, 2009).

K. Graceson and P. Pamei (personal communication, February 17, 2009) state that the Rongmeis at Langthabal were receptive to the gospel message. Many accepted the

truth and were converted. Within a few months after Ninghei and Khangchuga began the gospel work among the Rongmeis, the Lord enabled them to establish the first Rongmei Adventist church (company) in Langthabal, Imphal in 1954. A business lady Mrs. Makingamlu donated her home for a worship place. The following leaders and members constituted the Langthabal Seventh-day Adventist Company: (a) Church leader: Kakukhing Gondaime, (b) Deacon: Ragailung Kamei, (c) Deaconess: Thanlunglu, and (d) Dorcas Society Leader: Athuatpi. Church Members: (a) Kakukhing Gondaime, (b) Ragailung kamei, (c) Makingamlu, (d) Pouzaina (Ashangpi), (e) Gaikuthonlu, (f) Thenchangzeilu, (g) Gaithaudailu Panmei, (h)Zaumupei, (i)Khuanthaina, (j) Thanlunglu, (k) Khangbam, and (l)Thoilungpu.

These new converts, along with their leaders, spread the gospel to their friends and relatives in different parts of Imphal. The Christmas celebration was one successful strategy to evangelize the people. They invited people from neighboring villages such as Lamshang, Sanjenthong, Kakhulong, Charoibung, etc. to celebrate Christmas with them and they taught them about Jesus, the Redeemer of the world. The story of Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection was received with joy. There are significant Adventist converts in some of these villages today.

Most of the time, the missional endeavors of the Adventists were opposed by non-Adventists in Langthabal, and the neighboring villages who were against Christianity. Under the leadership of Kakhuphun Kamson, Lanjailung Mariamei, Amurei Gondaime, and Poulung Pamei, the non-Adventists in Langthabal threatened to destroy the Adventist church and expel the Adventists from Langthabal if they continued their evangelistic efforts/activities. In response, Kakukhing, the church leader resorted to preaching the

gospel through his literary works. He published a tract called “Achumba Paotak” (The True Teaching) on his own and distributed them freely to the people. Kakukhing was a cultivator who adopted manual labor as a means of support while he actively engaged in preaching the gospel. Under his lay leadership, Langthabal became the first organized church in Imphal, the state capital of Manipur (G. Tampikhon, personal communication, February 26, 2009).

At the same time, Ninghei led his high school mate, Jamkithang Sitlhou, and his family to Christ. Jamkithang and Ninghei attended both the Baptist Mission Schools: Ukhrul Mission School in Manipur and the Jorhat Baptist Mission School in Assam. The American Baptist Mission groomed them to become Baptist ministers. However, Jamkithang chose a different route; he took a government job and eventually became a high ranking Government official. On the other hand, Ninghei became a Baptist evangelist; subsequently he became a Seventh-day Adventist leader in Manipur.

Thirty years later, both of them met at Imphal. After an evangelistic series by Ninghei and his son Yuimi Luikham, a lay evangelist, Jamkithang, his wife Pahat, and their daughter Mangpinieng made their commitment to Christ, and were baptized in January 1955 by Elder Burr, the Assam Seventh-day Adventist Section President. His son Mangkholien was baptized at Assam Training School in Shillong, and the remaining three family members were baptized later. The whole family of seven became the first Kuki (Thadou) Adventists in Manipur (P. Gangte, personal communication, May 17, 2009). Gangte says further that, immediately after his conversion, Jamkithang, along with his wife Pahat, took up ministry as volunteer literature evangelists at the age of seventy-seven. They zealously spread the gospel in Imphal. Their residence at Old Lambulane,

Imphal, became a worship center for the Adventist people in that area.

Mission Office in Imphal

As Adventism began to extend outside of Ukhrul, there arose the need to move the Circle Director's office from Ukhrul to a more centralized location. Accordingly, the office of the Circle Director was moved from Ukhrul to Imphal, the state capital of Manipur, in 1956. The Adventists rented a house at Keishampat Junction, Imphal, and made it their Headquarters and worship place for several years.

The landlord, Thokchom Somakanta and his wife Thokchom Yaima are Meitei Hindus. P. Pamei and Akim Kom (personal communication, May 6, 2009) state that the Hindu landlord of the former Seventh-day Adventist Headquarters in Imphal is well acquainted with the Adventist people and their teachings. The Adventist Headquarters and meetinghouse still stands at Keishampat, Imphal. It has since changed hands and has become a commercial center.

Ninghei, the Lord's old war-horse, was retiring soon from active mission service. Y. D. Luikham (personal communication, May 5, 2009) confirms that his father Ninghei spread the gospel message to many regions in Manipur and Nagaland States before his retirement. He had seen more than 2,000 from different regions accept the Adventist message. By the time he retired, the young lay evangelists, Shomi Phaomei, Y. D. Luikham, and C. Pheirim, were well trained to carry on the gospel mandate to all the regions in Manipur and Nagaland. These young lay evangelists worked under the leadership of the first in-residence foreign missionary D. Donesky, the new Circle Director of Manipur.

In-residence Foreign Missionary

D. Donesky and his family were the only in-residence missionaries from Canada to Manipur. They came to Manipur in 1956 and devoted their lives and services to promote the gospel work in Manipur. Their calling to evangelize the state of Manipur was unique, as seen in their letter written to the Adventist people of Manipur on the special commemorative occasion, the Golden Jubilee Celebration, January 24-28, 2002.

They wrote:

During our years in Manipur we were blessed manyfold. We shall, of course, never forget you for your kindness and love; for your strong moral integrity and for the high value that you, our dear members there, have consistently expressed for our heavenly Father and for a love that reaches to the ends of the earth.

It just may be of interest for our people there to know that our presence amongst you was not by a decision of a committee, but by the will of God alone—and indicated to us months before we reached Manipur, and moreover long before brethren had decided where we should go within the Division. Actually the Division's call to India was for Bangalore, South India.

God indicated to me directly over a period of several months and showed personally certain landmarks, people, places, buildings, the Manipur hill people in particular as well as those of the plains of Manipur, in a series of dreams before we even received our call in mission service with Southern Asia Division. We knew where we were to serve before the General Conference Mission Board had even called us to India. When we reached Manipur, all the things and people shown me in my dream came true. We never doubted that God led us to Manipur and had a plan for you dear believers before you even became members of His church body in Manipur. (p. xxv).

It is evident from this letter that the Lord chose the Doneskys as His messengers to strengthen the believers of the newly formed Seventh-day Adventist mission in Manipur. Their dedicated service made God's presence and salvation available to the people of Manipur.

During their short stay in Manipur, the Doneskys did all they could to strengthen the believers in the faith. Gangte (2002), the friend of the missionary, states that Donesky is a great preacher and a skilled auto mechanic. He repaired an old World War II Vintage

Dodge and put the vehicle on road for his gospel activities. He was known for his uncanny sense of direction and capability to drive his old Dodge to almost all the regions in Manipur through the winding, dangerous, and precipitous mountainous roads of Manipur. In those days, most of the villages did not have roads of any kind. They were connected from one village to another by a foot path.

D. Hungyo (personal communication, April 23, 2009) recalls that Donesky drove his vehicle into many remote villages in the thick jungles where even the trained Indian military drivers who knew the terrain could not penetrate. Donesky would walk on foot to places where he could not reach with his vehicle and minister to the physical and spiritual needs of the people. He was the only ordained minister for the entire states of Manipur and Nagaland. Therefore, he had to make extensive travels from one region to another to perform the ministerial duties. On several occasions, he walked on foot to remote villages for a baptism and/or to conduct marriage ceremonies for the believers.

Gangte (2002) recalls that the wedding of Makathei, which Donesky conducted at Lungshang village in 1956, was remarkable. It was a prized privilege for the villagers, especially the Adventists, to witness a White missionary officiating at the marriage of a humble couple in a remote village.

The Doneskys were philanthropists. They helped the poor and destitute people. They welcomed strangers and needy ones to their home. Some young girls who were expelled from their homes for becoming Adventist were raised in their home. In 1957, a famine broke out at Loajantiang (Joujangtek) village, because of crop failure. Donesky personally came to this village and distributed food, clothing, medicines, and other relief materials to the starving people.

Donesky saw the need of educating the Adventist children. He started a school for the Adventist children in 1958, at Yaingangpokpi (New Canaan) village, on the Imphal to Ukhrul road. He named the school "Advent Pokpi." The word "pokpi" in local language can mean "birth" or "one who gives birth to." Hence, the name of the school can be translated as the "birth or arrival of Adventism" or the "birth of the Advent message" in Manipur. This was the first Seventh-day Adventist school in Manipur. The school flourished for a while, but it was demolished during an ethnic clash between two belligerent tribes. With the departure of Donesky the following year, the young Adventist church could not renovate the school.

The Adventist church in Manipur was strengthened by the Doneskys. The believers loved and respected them for their untiring services rendered to the people. They taught the church to remain faithful to God. Their hard life in Manipur and the sacrifices they had made to share God's love and sacrifice on the cross to save sinners had left an impression on the hearts of the Adventists in Manipur. Undoubtedly, the church would have wanted the Doneskys to remain with them forever. However, due to certain new restrictions imposed by the Government of India, the Doneskys had to leave Manipur in 1959. They were the first and the last in-residence White missionaries who came to Manipur (H. Dickson, personal communication, April 23, 2009).

H. B. Lalkholiana, a minister from Aizwal, Mizoram, replaced Donesky as Circle Director in 1960 after Donesky left Manipur. The Adventist work in the Churachandpur district (southern region of Manipur) was expanded during his leadership in Manipur. With the help of lay evangelist Yuimi Luikham, Lalkholiana started an Adventist church at Uyungmakhong village among the Gangte tribe. Vumkhosei Gangte, the first convert

from the Gangte tribe, was the church leader of Ujungmakhong Adventist church. He was also the first Kuki (Gangte) evangelist. Mrs. Lalkholiana started a church school at their Old Lambulane house and taught the Adventists children in Imphal. When the Lalkholianas left Manipur, the church school was moved to Sanjenthong mission compound (P. Gangte, personal communication, August 10, 2009).

M. C. Kujur became the fourth Circle Director of Manipur in 1966. He constructed a makeshift building in the center of Sanjenthong mission property. That building became a worship place and church school. The church school was named Adventist English School (it was later renamed King's Way English School). With an initial faculty of three—Ngahboi Gangte, Miss Kujur (Kujur's daughter), and Lalkho Gangte—and an enrollment of forty, the sessions were opened in temporary quarters in Sangjenthong (Namthanpung), Imphal, in 1966 (Gangte, 2002).

Kujur took a special interest in establishing schools. The Adventist church in Manipur credited him for the selection and purchase of the site at Gelmol, Moirang where Manipur Boarding School (MBS), the first and only Adventist boarding school was established in 1968. Jamkithang Sitlhou and Lalkho Gangte, two faithful and influential laymen, helped Kujur in procuring the land at Gelmol. They bought the property at a give-away price from Ngulthang Lhungdim, a young chief of Gelmol, an intimate friend of Jamkithang and Lalkho. The land owner, Lhungdim was not an Adventist, but he believed in Christian education. His dream of starting a Christian school in his village came true when the Seventh-day Adventist Mission established Manipur Boarding School at Gelmol village in 1968 (Gangte, 2002).

Y. D. Luikham and his wife A. J. Luikham were the pillars in building up Manipur

Boarding School. Before he took up the responsibility of starting the school, Luikham was already a Departmental Director in the Shillong Section of the Seventh-day Adventist church. He lowered his status and volunteered to establish the school from scratch. He and his wife had sacrificed much in accepting the responsibility of educating the young people of Manipur and Nagaland.

Sanjenthong Mission Property

Donesky foresaw the rapid growth of the Adventist church in Manipur and bought a property at Sanjenthong, Imphal for the Adventist mission headquarters. Located in the very heart of Imphal, the state capital of Manipur, this property has become the mainstay of the progress of the Seventh-day Adventist mission. Donesky was assisted by a lay evangelist Khangchuga (Somi) in the purchase of the property. Perhaps it was Khangchuga who spotted that piece of land which is well suited for the Adventist mission headquarters (Gangte, 2002).

Gangte (2002) states that, at one time, the mission property at Sanjenthong became a bone of contention. Self-centered individuals, including some prominent Adventist lay members, encroached upon the property from three directions. The encroachers carved out pieces of land from the mission property and reduced it to one-third of its original size. The original property extended from Sanjenthong Officers' Colony to the present Namthanpung village; now, most of the settlers at Namthanpung village have become Seventh-day Adventist believers.

To prevent further encroachment, Lalkho Gangte, a lay-leader, constructed a mud-walled house called *Lairang* in the local language in the eastern corner of the property. This house became the official residence of the Circle Director. A. S. Tungmaso, who

replaced M. C. Kujur, the former Circle Director, occupied this house until his retirement. He went through tough times guarding the mission property from the encroachers. Eventually, his peaceful and calm demeanor won the hearts of most of the encroachers. The construction of Chingmeirong Seventh-day Adventist church, the central church in Imphal, began during his leadership.

P. Gangte, Lalkholiana, and R. Khorei registered the remnant of the property in the state Government office. Shri Yangmaso Shaiza, the late Chief Minister of Manipur, passed an order for issuance of the mission land patta (land regulation) in 1975-76. Under this order, the mission property became the first regularized plot of land in Sanjenthong (Namthanpung) area (P. Gangte, personal communication, August 10, 2009).

Adventism in Tamenglong and Mao Regions

Tamenglong district is situated in the western region of Manipur. The topography of this district is made up mostly of rugged hills, lofty mountains and rolling valleys. Four important rivers flow through Tamenglong. The people follow an agrarian economy. Rongmei (Zeliangrong Nagas) comprises the majority of the population, followed by other tribes such as Kuki, Chiru, and Hmar.

Graceson Kamei (personal communication, March 18, 2009) says that Laokeini Kamei and his younger brother Samuel Lamathai of Charoi Chagotlong (Changkanlong), were the first Adventist converts in Tamenglong region. Prior to their conversion, they were ardent followers of the American Baptist Mission from 1946-1956. The two brothers met an overseas missionary, D. Donesky, in the year 1956, at Keisampat, Imphal while they were going to school there. As Donesky presented to them the true day of worship (Sabbath) from the Bible, they were convinced of the truth. Without delay,

Laokeini and his brother Lamathai requested baptism. They were baptized at Imphal in May 15, 1956 along with fourteen other people.

Laokeini strictly followed the light he received from God. He was impressed by the lifestyle of the missionary and he adopted it, including his dietary practices.

Vegetarianism was unheard of among the tribal people of Manipur. Laokeini set a good example of temperance in diet by becoming the first vegetarian among the Adventists in Manipur. With zeal to evangelize the Tamenglong district, Laokeini became a tentmaker raising cattle to support his ministry.

A few months after his conversion in 1956, Laokeini made his first attempt to bring the Adventist message to Khoupum Valley, one of the most thickly populated areas in Tamenglong region. He worked with the village cultivators in their paddy fields and presented the gospel as he worked with them. He did not depend on others for his subsistence. He supplied his own needs with the daily wages he earned from working with the village folks in their paddy fields.

Five prominent leaders from three neighboring villages decided to become Adventists along with their households and relatives. They are (a) Gaikhangjeipou Pamei of Taolingpung village, (b) Napningpou of Duithanjang village, (c) Gaijuanlung Kamei of Thanagong village, (d) Poukhuanlung Kamei of Thanagong village, and (e) Lungpuibi of Thanagong village. Through this humble lay preacher's ministry, the villages of Taolingpung and Duithanjang became two major Adventist centers in Khoupum Valley. Today, these two churches flourish with more than 300 members in each church.

The same year, Laokeini expanded his ministry to another village called Wainem. His outreach strategy in Wainem village was helping in the construction of the inter-

village road. He dug a footpath with the villagers and preached the gospel to them. His willingness to help the villagers and his message aroused the curiosity of two villagers. They opened up their hearts and invited Laokeini to come and teach the Sabbath truth in their homes. Both of them accepted the Advent message and they became pillars in raising an Adventist church at Wainem.

Seeing the progress, the Adventist headquarters in Imphal appointed Laokeini, a lay evangelist, with a monthly salary of 20 rupees. He spread the Sabbath truth with passion to his family members, relatives, and friends. In early 1957, he started a small church (known as a Lamb Shelter in those days) in his village with the following members: Church leader: Gaihourei Panmei. Members: (a) Chariaklung Panmei, (b) Tunakhiam Gonmei, (c) G. Puakthaulung, (d) Kahauguangu, (e) Pougamthai Kamei, (f) Mrs. Lungrilu, and (g) David Khangaurei. Soon after, four more believers were added to the church: (a) K. Gaibibuan, (b) Kaipigalu, (c) Kamkurei, and (d) Buanpuizeilu.

Like Ukhrul, the Tamenglong Region was a staunch American Baptist Mission center. There was strong opposition to the growth of Adventism in this area. The prevalent method of evangelism was an open debate between two parties. To assist Laokeini in his gospel work, the Shillong Adventist Headquarters sent a lay evangelist Yuimi Luikham, a high school graduate of Assam training school. He was one of the fourteen boys whom Ashlock, the first White missionary, sent from Ukhrul to get Adventist education.

Upon Yuimi's arrival at Charoi Chagotlong (Kaluang Chingkao), the whole village was stirred up. They gave the young lay evangelist a choice: either to leave the village for good, or to answer all their questions with sound biblical proof. Yuimi agreed

to stay, promising to show them everything from the Scriptures. The Rongmei people gathered together at a playground with a chair and a table in the center. They sat Yuimi on the chair and surrounded him. They questioned and debated with the evangelist for the entire day. Yuimi Luikham (personal communication, May 4, 2009) declares that God gave him an answer to every question they asked him and he was able to give a Bible text to all their questions. Yuimi's plain teaching impressed the crowd. Thirty-five people decided to join the Adventist church.

The next thing the Baptist Christians did was to engage Yuimi and their Reverend Meingan in an open debate. The two parties met at Khongjarom village in the headman's house. As the Reverend and the evangelist debated, sometimes shouting at the top of their voices, a person from the crowd demanded that they show from the Bible the true day of worship. Without any hesitation, the Baptist Reverend told him that biblically, Saturday is the true day of rest. With that answer, the debate ended. The crowd dispersed; some were disappointed with their Reverend, while others made a commitment to study the Scriptures more diligently.

The impact of the debate was far-reaching. In most of the villages, the American Baptist Mission in Tamenglong district imposed a law through the Village Authority (court) restricting other denominations from preaching in any village where they already had a presence (members or church). However, the statement of the Baptist Reverend which upheld the Sabbath weakened the resolutions of the American Baptist Mission and opened a wide door for the growth of Adventism in the Tamenglong Region.

Donesky, the new Circle Director, came to Charoi Chagotlong and baptized the thirty-five people who had accepted Jesus through the ministry of the young lay

evangelist. The membership steadily increased and Charoi Chagotlong became the first organized church in Tamenglong region. From this church, the gospel was taken to the entire district of Tamenglong.

Next, Donesky went to Chowainu, in Mao (Senapati district), to baptize twenty-seven people who were led to Christ by C. Pheirim, a lay evangelist. With the baptism of the twenty-seven people in 1957, Chowainu became the first Adventist church in Senapati district. From Chowainu, the gospel was further spread to Pudunamei village. Chowainu and Pudunamei are two thriving churches in the Manipur Section. Pheirim worked among the Mao and Tangkhul people, while Yuimi Luikham worked with the Rongmei people in Tamenglong and the Manipuri people in Imphal. They were both the first successful lay evangelists among the fourteen boys who were sent by Ashlock to get an Adventist education.

Adventism in the State of Nagaland

Nagaland is a neighboring state of Manipur. The American Baptists began their gospel work in Naga Hills (Nagaland) among the Namshanghea Nagas as early as the 1840s. Miles Bronson was the pioneer missionary to the Nagas. The American Baptists abandoned their missionary work among the Nagas in 1841 as the prospect of evangelizing the Nagas was dim and since a controversy broke out between the missionaries in the field and the home board (in the USA) regarding the framework within which its missionaries were to work (Dena, 1988). Dena adds that the “serious controversy” that raged between the missionaries and the home board probably centered on the financial constraint due to the American Civil War, coupled with the unfruitful work of the missionaries in the field (North eastern region of India)

Dena (1988) points out that the gospel work among the Nagas, which was abandoned in 1841, was revived by F. W. Clark, an American Baptist missionary who came to Sibsagar, Assam in 1871. Unlike Bronson, his predecessor, who worked among the Namsanghea Nagas of Tirap region, Clark worked among the Ao Nagas. Clark (1907) declares that Godhula Brown, an Assamese evangelist, was instrumental in preparing the groundwork for planting Christianity in Nagal Hills.

Before the gospel message came to Naga Hills, the Nagas were headhunters. They were impoverished by famine, pestilence, and intertribal war (Clark, 1907). The missionaries ventured to Naga Hills at great risk. Dena (1988) states that without any assurance of protection from the British Government of India, Clark risked his own life and found a settlement among the Nagas and evangelized the Naga Hills. As the result of the sacrifices made by the missionaries, Nagaland is considered a Christian state in India. The motto of this state is, *Nagaland for Christ*, indicating that the Nagas are willing to sacrifice everything to promote the gospel of Christ.

Though Christianity is well developed in the state of Nagaland, the progress of Adventism is relatively slow in this state. The American Baptist church converted the entire state before the emergence of the Adventist church. This hinders the progress of the Adventist missionary work in Nagaland. The Adventist message had already been spread in Kohima, the state capital of Nagaland, in 1951 by the three White Adventist missionaries who came to Ukhrul, Manipur in response to Ninghei Luikham's request. However, it took a few years to germinate the gospel sown in Nagaland.

K. K. Angami, a medical doctor, was the first Adventist convert in Nagaland. She came to know about the Sabbath truth as she worked in a Government Hospital for

Women and Children at Ganesh Das Hospital in Shillong from January 1946 to July 1957. She attended two evangelistic efforts conducted by the Seventh-day Adventist pastors at Laitumkhrah, Shillong. The second one was conducted by D. K. Dawn, an Australian Adventist minister (Angami, as cited in Gangte, 2002, p. xxi).

Y. D. Luikham (personal communication, May 5, 2009) expresses that Dawn's plain answer to Angami's single question was enough for her to embrace Adventism. As Dawn was presenting one evening about the day of worship, Angami interrupted him and asked, "Which day did Jesus keep?" The answer was, "Saturday." That answer satisfied her quest for the true day of rest and Angami decided to become an Adventist. At the end of the crusade in January 1956, Dawn baptized her.

For several years Angami was the only Adventist believer in the entire state of Nagaland. She did not preach, nor did she try to coerce her siblings and friends to become Adventist. She represented Jesus through her lifestyle. People began to see Jesus in her. They gradually accepted the gospel and were converted. She donated the basement of her house for a place of worship. Thus, a Seventh-day Adventist Company was organized in Kohima, Nagaland. From Kohima, the Adventist message was spread to other regions such as Zunheboto, Samjiuram, Dimapur, Aghunato, etc. All the Adventist congregations in these regions of Nagaland merged with the Adventist church of Manipur and the two states formed a Section (Conference) called the Manipur-Nagaland Section of Seventh-day Adventists.

Keingamba, Rongmei Tentmaker

Peter Keingamba is known as "evangelist par excellence" in Northeast India (Gangte, 2002). Prior to his conversion, Keingamba was against the Adventist message.

Several times, he planned to attack C. Pheirim, the Adventist evangelist, during his evangelistic meeting in Khoupum Valley. After much prayer, Pheirim sought an interview with him in Keingamba's father's house. Keingamba agreed, but he warned the evangelist that his life was in danger if he failed to prove the sanctity of the Sabbath from the Bible. He also told Pheirim that unless he exposed the false teachings of other denominations from the Scriptures, he could not continue his crusade in Khoupum. As the debate went on, Keingamba was not able to resist the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Instantly, he made his commitment to Christ and embraced Adventism.

Keingamba was a paramedic. He worked for the Village Volunteer Force (VVF), a counter-insurgency unit of the Indian Army. Upon his conversion, he resigned his secured and well-paid government job and became a lay-evangelist. He immediately preached Christ in the demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit. He has no theological degree. He is self taught. Yet, Keingamba is an excellent speaker, preaching without notes and quoting from memory the most appropriate texts from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. He has carried forward a strong evangelistic advance, held crusades, and taught the believers the "how-to" of soul winning. Hundreds and thousands have heard the message. Many are keeping the Sabbath and being baptized.

His evangelistic tools include different versions of the Bible, a picture roll, a portable type writer, a blackboard, chalk and duster, a guitar, and a first-aid kit. With all these tools (which he often calls his weapons), Keingamba traveled from one village to another preaching the gospel. He earned for himself and his evangelistic team by charging a nominal fee for medical consultation and first-aid given to the villagers. He earned a substantial amount as a radio singer for singing in the All India Radio program.

All his income goes to his evangelism funds.

The Adventist message is not welcomed in many regions of Northeast India. Many villages prohibit Adventist preachers from entering into their villages. However, as a trained medic and an accomplished singer, Keingamba bargained admission into almost all the villages in Northeast India. First, he took care of the people's physical health, then he sang gospel songs with his guitar, and finally, he presented the gospel message to the people. Keingamba had the gift of tongues. He spoke more than seven different languages and, in most cases, he preached in the local language/dialect of the people.

This tentmaker is responsible for the soul-winning success of the Manipur-Nagaland Section of Seventh-day Adventists. His efforts have probably brought more people to Christ than those of any other Adventist evangelist in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist church of Manipur and Nagaland. The Southern Asia Division of Seventh-day Adventists recognized the success of this tentmaker. In appreciation of his mission endeavors, they chose him as a delegate (layman representative) to the April 17-26, 1980 General Conference Session in Dallas, Texas, USA. There, Keingamba gave a report of his evangelistic activities in Northeast India. His picture appeared on the front cover of the Review and Herald, April 24, 1980. Eventually, the Manipur-Nagaland Section of Seventh-day Adventists appointed Keingamba as an evangelist and they ordained him to the gospel ministry in January 1987.

Keingamba is my father. He has led nearly three thousand people to Christ and influenced thousands to share their faith. Just before his retirement, he was sent as the evangelist to the Meiteis (Hindus) at Kakching. There, he raised a church of forty members, the only Meitei (Hindu) Adventist church in Manipur. This tentmaker has

raised thirty-one Adventist congregations (churches and companies) in unentered areas in three states of Northeast India: Assam, Manipur, and Nagaland as seen in the following list: (a) Nungba, (b) Ruangdai, (c) Rengpang, (d) Piluan, (e) Taodaijang, (f) Longchai, (g) Rengkekuluang, (h) Siguiluang, (i) Mukti, (j) Sianpat, (k) Ruangdaikou, (l) Longkaiphun, (m) Taokuamjang, (n) Taoshang, (o) Luangjang, (p) Betiang, (q) Mahouter, (r) Truirmphaisen, (s) Khumji, (t) Machiang, (u) Rangkhung, (v) Kaikao, (w) Duiluan, (x) Tamenglong, (y) Chalungkhon, (z) Majuron, (aa) Kakching, (bb) New Jalukie, (cc) Mahainamchi, (dd) Lungbungjang/Ramgajang, and (ee) Sonai, Cachar (Keingamba, personal communication, November 8, 2009).

Keingamba, the tentmaker-turned-minister, is retired today. Though officially retired, his heart and soul is still in soul-winning ministry. The Adventist message was the vehicle God used to take a gospel-hardened paramedic and fashion him into an effective gospel minister, a participant in the Great Commission of Christ.

Formation of the Manipur-Nagaland Section

The Manipur and Nagaland Section came into existence in April 1982. Until the formation of this Section, the states of Manipur and Nagaland were under the leadership of the Circle Director. A. S. Tungmaso was the last Circle Director to lead these two states. During his leadership, the new Adventist Section (Conference) was formed with its headquarters at Sanjenthong, Imphal. The office of the Circle Director became the Section President's office.

The Manipur-Nagaland Section was comprised of four circles (regions). They are Ukhrul Circle, Tamenglong Circle, Nagaland Circle, and Manipur Central Circle. Each circle was supervised by the Circle Leader. Evangelists and lay members assisted the

Circle Leaders in their gospel work. Figure 2 shows the lists of Administrators, Departmental Directors, Circle Leaders, and Evangelists of the newly formed Manipur-Nagaland Section of Seventh-day Adventist.

List of First Converts

There are many tribal communities in Manipur and Nagaland. Figure 3 represents each tribe and caste of the first Adventist converts, followed by their names in the states of Manipur and Nagaland. Most of them were converted with their entire family.

The Adventist churches in the states of Manipur and Nagaland functioned under one administration for nearly two decades since the inception of the Manipur and Nagaland Section of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, with its headquarters in Imphal, the capital city of Manipur. During this period, the progress of Adventism in the state of Nagaland was promising. It became apparent that the Adventist church in Nagaland could stand on its own. Accordingly, Nagaland became a separate entity on April 4, 2000 by forming a Region called the Nagaland Region of Seventh-day Adventist. The church in Manipur became the Manipur Section of Seventh-day Adventist.

1. Administrators:

President:	R. Hungyo
Secretary:	K. A. Shimray
Treasurer:	G. G. Kandulna.

2. Departmental Directors:

Lay Activities:	Dickson Hungyo
Ministerial:	R. Hungyo
Education, Public Affairs:	Kungsong Wanbe
Youth, Sabbath School:	Johnny Shimray
Stewardship, Health:	G. G. Kandulna

3. Circle Leaders:

Ukhrul Circle:	Cornelius Ramrar
Tamenglong Circle:	K. K. Paul
Manipur Central Circle:	Dickson Hungyo
Nagaland Circle:	A. S. Tungmaso

4. Evangelists:

(1) K.B Peter, (2) Enoch Kamei, (3) G. Adai, (4) Honovi Sema, (5) V. Jonathan, (6) A. S. Khavangshing, (7) R. Barnabas, (8) A. S. Wunganing, (9) A. Shaiza, (10) Yangshi Shaiza, (11) L. Kanshel, (12) C. Chihanmi, (13) K. Suresh, (14) N. Somi, and (15) A. S. Moses.

Figure 2. List of administrators, circle leaders, and evangelists

(1) Aimol:	Tomang
(2) Anal:	Z. Lukhu
(3) Angami:	K. K. Angami
(4) Ao:	Mapfu
(5) Chiru:	Tharapuong
(6) Chothe:	Linthangthao
(7) Gangte:	Vumkhosei Gangte
(8) Rongmei (Kabui):	Khangchuga Phaomei
(9) Liangmei (Kacha Naga):	Guangthung
(10) Koireng:	Kungsong Wanbe
(11) Kom:	Kimneijang
(12) Mao:	Kapani
(13) Meitei (Hindu):	W. Ranjit Singh
(14) Mizo:	Kama
(15) Pangan (Muslim):	Md. Rahman
(16) Simte:	Paopu
(17) Tangkhul:	Ninghei Luikham
(18) Thadou (Kuki):	Jamkithang Sitlhou
(19) Vaiphei:	S. Vaiphei, and
(20) Zou:	Thangsuan

Figure 3. Tribes and Castes of first Adventist converts

Manipur Section Membership Statistics

As was briefly stated, the formation of Nagaland Region in the year 2000 divided the Adventist church membership into two parts. According to the General Conference statistics office, the church membership of the Manipur Section of Seventh-day Adventists for the year 2000 is 6471. Membership statistics from 2000 to 2008 are shown in figure 4. As of 2008, there are thirty-eight organized churches and fifty-four companies in the Manipur Section of Seventh-day Adventists. Figure 4 reveals the position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Manipur from 2000 to 2008. The church growth rate is slow and inconsistent. More emphasis should be given for its improvement.

While the growth rate in 2000 was negative (-3 %), there was small growth in each succeeding year. The highest growth rate was in 2004, and it was under 6% (See Figure 5). This 2004 growth was possible because the Manipur Section received evangelism funds from abroad. These funds enabled the Section to conduct evangelistic efforts in un-entered areas. Many people accepted the Adventist truth during this time, and congregations were raised in several places. Generally though, outreach programs are limited and financial constraints within the local organization hinder evangelism.

According to India's 2001 census report, the population of Manipur state is 2.17 million. The presence of only a little over eight thousand Adventists in the entire state is comparatively insignificant. Figure 6 shows populations by religious community in Manipur. The people of Manipur are staunch followers of one of following religions: Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, and Heathenism. Adventist Christianity constitutes less than 1% of the entire state population as seen above (Figure 6). There remains a great responsibility for Adventists to reach out to Hindus, Muslims and other groups.

As noted above, the presence of Adventists in the state is insignificant to the point of being almost unknown. This translates to a lack of social and spiritual support for new Adventist Christian believers. These believers, under pressure from their families, often leave their new faith if they do not receive encouragement from a church family. This makes it difficult to plant churches in new areas. This is not always the rule. There are quite a few new converts who adhere to their faith although they do suffer persecution. In some instances, these people will go and stay in the home of the evangelist or pastor after

having been rejected by their families. Others move out of their homes and live by themselves. Some of these families, seeing the positive changes taking place in their exiled child, join the church themselves.

Field	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Churches	32	35	35	36	36	36	38	38	38
Companies	60	57	57	56	56	56	54	54	54
Beginning Membership	6,679	6,471	6,728	7,005	7,159	7,573	7,808	7,850	7,990
Baptisms	186	297	288	161	485	212	149	250	129
Professions of Faith	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Transfers In	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
Transfers Out	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0
Deaths	5	10	5	7	5	0	23	28	9
Dropped	0	24	6	0	31	0	2	0	2
Missing	0	6	0	0	17	0	82	82	0
Total Gains	186	297	288	161	485	216	149	250	129
Total Losses	5	40	11	7	58	0	107	110	11
Adjustment	-389	0	0	0	-13	19	0	0	0
Net Growth	-208	257	277	154	414	235	42	140	118
Ending Membership	6,471	6,728	7,005	7,159	7,573	7,808	7,850	7,990	8,108
Growth Rate	-3.11%	3.97%	4.12%	2.20%	5.78%	3.10%	0.54%	1.78%	1.48%

Figure 4. Growth trend—the annual statistics for the Manipur Section (GC Statistics Office)

Figure 5. Manipur Section growth rate (GC Statistics Office)

Figure 6. Adventist, other Christian, Muslim, and Hindu populations

Demography

The majority of Seventh-day Adventists in Manipur are from the Rongmei tribe, followed by the Tangkhul, Anal, Mao, Kuki, Meitei and other tribal groups. The Meitei (Hindus), the dominant people of Manipur, and the Pangans (Muslims) are the least represented in Adventist membership. Statistical documentation of these observations is lacking. However, based on anecdotal evidence only, the demographics of Seventh-day Adventist members today are illustrated in Figure 7. Women and children are the most active church attendees, with women outnumbering men in significant numbers in most of the churches.

Figure 7. Demographics of Congregations

Most members are lifelong Adventists and continue to be very active in Church programs. In the villages, the believers often walk on dusty or muddy roads for more than a mile to attend church. Young and old, men and women are punctual in Church attendance. Older folks encourage young people by attending AY programs and all other church activities. The age group of believers who regularly attend church ranges from suckling babes to 80-plus-year-old people. They faithfully attend all worship programs such as mid-week prayers on Tuesdays, Vespers on Fridays, and Sabbath worship.

In other words, all age groups are good worship attendees. Cultural fidelity and integrity are highly valued. Divorce and remarriage is very rare. There are some widows and widowers who are remarried in the congregation. They are good Adventists. Married people with their children constitute the bulk of church members.

Most of the members in the congregations are illiterate. However, the younger generations are educated. Many of the youth have high school diplomas if not college degrees. These are the ones who take an active part in leading out in song service and teaching Sabbath school classes. Within a decade or so, literacy rates will be comparatively high among Adventists.

The Adventist Church in Manipur is largely comprised of poor people. On the other hand, the Hindu Meiteis are affluent and educated. Most Adventists earn their living by engaging in agricultural activities. Hence, the majority of believers are not otherwise employed except for a handful who are employed by the state government. Sabbath problems are common among employed members.

Financial Giving

Tithing is faithfully practiced by believers, although individual incomes are

usually quite low. The few Adventists who are government employees give higher amounts of tithe and generously support the church. The majority of the believers, living as subsistence farmers, mostly give their tithes in kind (the produce from their lands). Tithes given in kind are sold and the money is returned to the church. As throughout the world church, these tithes go for the support of the salaried ministry.

While members strictly follow the tithing of 10% of their income to the church, their contribution of additional offerings is rather low. In most of the churches, people give their offerings in coins (fractions of a rupee). There are two potential reasons for these small offerings. One major cause may simply be their poverty. Another factor could be that they are not well-informed on the principles of generous giving and Christian stewardship. These freewill offerings are split 50/50 between the local churches and the Manipur Section office.

Tithe and offerings are not the only way members give to their church. When major needs in the local church arise, for instance, to repair the church roof, replace its bamboo walls, buy new furniture, or conduct lay evangelistic efforts, Dorcas and Adventist Youth societies conduct fund raisers by selling food items or volunteering their time, working for a day or two as day laborers in a rice paddy. With these funds, they maintain the church and promote its gospel activities.

Outreach

Evangelism is not easy in this strife-torn state. There are certain patriotic groups of people, including Christians in general, who are trying to break away from India and form their own sovereign state. This makes life hard for all Christians. A number of Christian church buildings have been destroyed by Hindus who are tired of the presence

of Christianity. Several Adventist properties have been confiscated as well. Hindus are not the only opposition Adventists face. Other protestant churches are working to stop Adventist preachers from entering their territories.

Despite all these hindrances, God is working in the hearts of the people. Each year new members are brought into the church. Though the growth rate is rather slow, the average growth percentage could be estimated at about 3.5% annually. (See Figure1, last column). I am personally impressed by recent developments in the Hindu community. They are open and receptive to the gospel. It is uncertain how long this door will be opened. While there is the chance of leading the Hindus to Jesus, the Adventist church should seriously take up the soul winning ministry.

Conclusion

It was in the early 1830s that the American Baptist Mission in Burma discovered that the state of Manipur was a mission field where no Christian missionary had ever entered. Accordingly, the American Baptist Mission made the first attempt to establish its mission in Manipur in 1836. Their mission was not successful because of strong opposition from the Hindus.

Fifty-eight years later, William Pettigrew came to Manipur as the first missionary with full patronage from a British official, A. Porteous, the acting Political Agent of Manipur (Dena, 1988). Pettigrew was from the Arthington Aborigenes Mission Society in London. He arrived in Manipur in 1894, and began his missionary work among the Meiteis (Hindus) in Imphal, the capital city of Manipur.

However, Pettigrew's zeal to evangelize the Meiteis (Hindus) created a serious conflict. Therefore, he had to leave Imphal and work among the Tangkhul Nagas in the

Ukhrul district. By February 1896, Pettigrew's gospel work was well established in Ukhrul. His first converts include Ninghei Luikham, Thisan Luikham, and Miksha Shimray. Later, Ninghei became the first Seventh-day Adventist convert in Manipur.

Ninghei Luikham found the Sabbath truth by reading a book called *Bible Readings for the Home*. The book was left behind in a village of Tolloi, in the Ukhrul district by an allied soldier during World War II. Ellen White (1953) is right in saying that the truth is spread by printed page; it is one agency which God employs to reach isolated people who have no chance to hear living preachers.

After reading that book, Ninghei and his family began to keep Saturday instead of Sunday. He traveled extensively from one village to another and preached his new-found faith through any available platform. Many accepted his teaching and kept the Sabbath. Ninghei presented the Sabbath truth to all the delegates of the Manipur Baptist Association in two different conventions. Twice, the delegates resolved to change the day of worship from Sunday to Saturday. However, they changed their minds and that never happened. Eventually, Ninghei and those who believed in the Sabbath truth broke away from the Manipur Baptist Association and formed the *Reformed Church Movement* with a membership of about 845 people. This was how Sabbath-keeping began in Manipur.

The faith of the Reformed believers was strengthened when Ninghei stumbled upon the address of the Seventh-day Adventist headquarters in Shillong. Ninghei corresponded with them, and three White missionaries visited Ukhrul in 1951. They taught Ninghei and his followers about Adventism. Ninghei and his son Benjamin Luikham accepted the message and were baptized in 1952.

Immediately after their baptism, the father and son formed a lay-evangelist team

and earnestly sought to promote Adventism among the Tangkhuls. The Lord rewarded their efforts and many people accepted Adventism. By December 1952, one hundred fifty people were ready for baptism. There was no ordained minister in Manipur. The Adventist headquarters in Shillong authorized and sent a layman, Zuala Sailo, from Mizoram, to officiate at the baptismal ceremony.

Many other lay people were inspired by the evangelistic endeavors of Ninghei and his son Benjamin. Lay evangelists Y. D. Luikham, C. Pheirim, Vumkhosei Gangte, and Laokeini spread the Adventist message in Tamenglong, Churachandpur, Bishenpur, Senapati (Mao areas), Ukhrul, and Chandel areas. Ninghei and Ph. Khangchuga were instrumental in raising churches in Imphal area. Peter Keingamba, a self-supporting evangelist, planted thirty-one churches in the states of Manipur, Nagaland, and Assam. There were several other lay preachers and church members who helped spread the Adventist message in the states of Manipur and Nagaland. With the help of these dedicated believers, Adventist membership grew in Manipur and Nagaland states.

To sum up, Adventism began in Manipur as a lay-led movement. The Sabbath light reached the isolated home of Ninghei Luikham in the state of Manipur through a book. Ninghei and his son Benjamin became lay preachers of the Sabbath truth in the Tangkhul region, followed by many other lay preachers who extended Adventism in different states of Northeast India.

In other words, a single family spearheaded Sabbath-keeping in Manipur. And from this family, the Seventh-day Adventist Church membership has grown to nearly 8,000 baptized members. This growth was possible because the Ninghei's family, along with other faithful lay people, earnestly devoted their lives to advance the gospel mandate

and planted churches. From this humble lay-led movement, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Manipur has grown into an organized work today.

CHAPTER 5

THE APPLICATION OF HISTORY TO THE CURRENT WORK IN MANIPUR

The Biblical Mandate

As discussed in depth in chapter 2, the Bible reveals that the essential meaning of church goes beyond a mere structure. The term *church*, in its biblical context, designates the community of God's people, especially those within the covenant. Both the Old and New Testament concept of church is identical. In place of the Hebrew word **עֵדָוָה**—“people of God” the Septuagint (LXX) uses the word **ἐκκλησία**, the same word used for “church” in the NT.

In every age, God has had a group of chosen people who represented His character. These faithful ones raised communities of faith throughout the ages. People like Enoch and Noah worked to restore sinners to God before the flood. Abraham and his wife formed another community of believers after the flood. Abraham became the father of the chosen race through which the Messiah (the Redeemer of the world) was born. The descendants of Abraham (Israelites) were known as God's covenant people in the Old Testament. However, the nation of Israel was not exclusively the chosen people of God in the New Testament. All those who believed in Jesus formed the community of believers in the NT.

The New Testament church is an outgrowth of the people of God in the Old Testament. The concept of God's chosen community does not change in the transition

between the Old and the New Testaments. However, the model of evangelism practiced by the Israelites and the NT church is different. The OT Israelites emphasized attracting people through the sanctuary services, while the NT church promotes reaching out to people. In the NT, the sanctuary no longer reflects the mission of Jesus. Rather, Jesus commissioned His disciples to go out and preach the gospel to the entire world.

When Jesus established His ministry on this earth, He intended it to be an ongoing ministry. He ordained the twelve, that they should be with Him and equipped them that He might send them out to preach (Matt 10:1; Mark 3:14). The method of apprenticeship to Christ remains the same. As believers whose lives are grounded in the very being of Christ, the church needs to be with Jesus in order to work for Him.

One of the main goals of God's chosen people in every generation is working to raise a community of believers (church planting). In both the Old and New Testaments, church planting was usually a lay-led movement. This suggests that ministry is not just the domain of the clergy, but belongs to the entire community of believers. Paul, Barnabas, Apollos, Priscilla and Aquila were all laypersons who were active leaders in the church planting movement. The early church commissioned all believers to teach and admonish one another (see Col 3:16). The assumption was that anyone in whom the Spirit dwells was gifted and called to ministry.

The early NT Christians took Jesus at His word and zealously spread the gospel by planting churches throughout the Roman Empire. Today, church leadership from different denominations appears to be more committed to church planting. Simultaneously, there is a growing sense that the professional clergy alone cannot evangelize the whole world. Thus, it is important to follow the biblical model of church

planting based on a lay-led movement.

The commission of Christ in Matt 28 lists three vital tasks related to congregations: baptizing, teaching, and making disciples. The church today often defines these tasks within the narrow scope of existing churches. This is in contrast to those who first heard Christ's commission and left their homes and went out to plant churches, assuming that the fulfillment of the commission required forming new congregations in order to multiply disciples. To re-ignite this passion, churches need to teach members how to plant churches and how to be missionaries by moving out of the existing, established churches.

It seems evident that the ministry of global evangelism cannot be fulfilled by only a select few. All faithful Christians are called to proclaim the gospel. The church-planting movement is a ministry that needs to be shared by denominationally employed church leadership and lay leaders. The success of the church in carrying out the gospel commission greatly depends on the participation of every believer in gospel activities. Like other churches, the Seventh-day Adventist Church believes in involving all believers in evangelism. Even new converts are encouraged to work with other senior members of the church to fulfill the gospel mandate. The Adventist Church has never considered itself to be just another church; it is a religious movement divinely instituted to proclaim the good news of Christ's soon return and to prepare the world for that event. In its inception, the Seventh-day Adventist Church followed the example of the NT church and made church-planting the focus of its mission strategy, based on Christ's mandate.

Today, numerous church growth authorities point out that many Seventh-day Adventist churches have stopped growing. The primary contributing factor they point to

is the churches' loss of missional focus. They advocate that the active participation of all believers in gospel activities is crucial. All the believers should be trained, encouraged, and motivated to proclaim the gospel of Christ.

Fulfilling the gospel mandate must remain a primary concern of the present-day church. This gives rise to the need of recruiting and equipping church members to engage in the unfinished agenda of the Great Commission. The ministry of all believers, whether lay or ordained, young or old, male or female, is crucial in evangelizing the world.

There is a need to replace the traditional distinctions between clergy and laity with the concept of the called and equipped people of God. The concept of the priesthood of all believers should not create an identity crisis for pastors. Priesthood is no longer limited to the hierarchical few, but is God's gift and God's intention for all believers. Therefore, ministerial leadership (clergy) should move the people of God (laity) from the baptism into the full flow of ministry. While ministry is for all who are called to share in Christ's life, pastors have a distinct responsibility. They should help other men and women to practice the ministry to which they are called. The church achieves its mission most successfully when pastors and laity engage in doing the work of the ministry.

When the church fails to motivate, train, equip, and empower believers to use their spiritual gifts, the advancement of the gospel is hindered. Spiritual gifts are a provision of the Lord Himself; He pours out His gifts upon the church and equips the believers to carry out His mission and build up each other in the church. The church in Manipur must more fully implement the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and mobilize the laity as ministers in bringing the gospel to all the nations. The leadership of

the church must equip, empower, and enable church members as servants of God in the church and the world.

Additionally, there is an increasing need for self-supporting missionaries in God's work. The church in Manipur should encourage tentmaking/bivocational ministry. It appears that tentmaking ministry is still in the initial stage in most Christian denominations, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Seventh-day Adventist church primarily focuses on paid missionaries, student missionaries, and international volunteer service for spreading the gospel. Making use of the full potential of its qualified lay people in a bivocational ministry could help complete Christ's commission. The leadership of the church must mobilize church members for gospel ministry.

Biblical evidence and the testimony of many faithful tentmaking missionaries suggests that tentmakers are instrumental in accomplishing God's purposes, purposes that might not otherwise be fulfilled. The effectiveness of self-supporting or bivocational ministers who have worked as tentmakers in all ages gives evidence that tentmaking is a viable mission strategy. Tentmaking is also a successful method of evangelism in places where career missionaries are unable to gain access. The missional endeavors of the church members, whether paid or self-supporting, lay or ordained, have impacted the world. Through the ministry of dedicated believers, the gospel message has reached even the remotest regions of the world.

The involvement of lay people in church planting/evangelism is a biblical concept. As chapter four showed, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Manipur, India followed this concept and emerged as a lay-led church planting movement.

The Historical Example

As chronicled in chapter four, God strategically moved an allied soldier, sent to Manipur, to take a book along with him in the thick of World War II, fighting against the tough Imperial Japanese Army. The soldier left the book at Tolloi village, in the Ukhrl district, according to providence. Ninghei Luikham stumbled upon this book and, as he read it, the Lord led him into the Sabbath truth. He and his family became the first Sabbath-keepers in Ukhrl, Manipur.

Ninghei and his eldest son Benjamin Luikham formed a lay evangelist team and spread the Sabbath truth in Ukhrl and the entire state of Manipur. These lay evangelists led 150 people to Jesus in 1952. This was the first and only mass conversion in Adventist church history in Manipur. The Shillong Adventist headquarters authorized a layman to baptize the converts. This led to the organization of the first Seventh-day Adventist church in Ukhrl.

Ninghei trained and equipped many lay people as missionaries. Lay evangelists Khangchuga Phaomei, Y. D. Luikham, C. Pheirim, Vumkhosei Gangte, and Laokeini Kamei spread the Adventist message in the entire state of Manipur and Nagaland. Peter Keingamba, a bivocational evangelist, planted thirty-one churches in the states of Manipur, Nagaland, and Assam. There were several other lay preachers and church members who helped spread the Adventist message in the states of Manipur and Nagaland. With the help of these dedicated believers, Adventist membership grew in Manipur and Nagaland states.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was established in the states of Manipur and Nagaland as a lay-led movement in 1952 by a single family. There was a quantum leap of

church membership during its formative years. Apparently, the Adventist church membership growth rate in Manipur and Nagaland was at its peak during the first three decades of its inception. When the Manipur and Nagaland Region of Seventh-day Adventists celebrated its Silver Jubilee, held March 9-12, 1977, in Imphal, the Adventist church membership had grown to over 5000 members (G.S. Shimray, personal communication, June 29, 2009). This rapid growth was possible because lay men and women took the initiative to spread the gospel and plant churches.

Twenty five years later, the Adventist Church in Manipur celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 2002. However, there was no substantial growth in church membership during this period. The total membership for year 2002, as shown in figure 4, is 7005 compared to nearly 5000 members in 1977. The addition of about 2000 members in the church during these two and one half decades (1977-2002) was not the result of salaried workers' success in evangelism or church planting. Rather, it is biological growth within the Adventist church. Why has the Adventist church in Manipur stopped growing? The lesson of history suggests that a primary contributing factor is the inability or failure of the church leadership to engage laypeople fully in the gospel ministry.

Next to Hinduism, Baptist influence has been entrenched in Manipur from the time of William Pettigrew. Hence, conversion has always been difficult in Manipur. However, two remarkable conversion instances prove that the involvement of laypeople in evangelism/church planting is crucial to the success of the Adventist church in spreading the gospel.

1. Over half a century ago, the lay evangelistic team of Ninghei and his son led 150 people to Jesus in December 1952. This marked the beginning of the Adventist

church in Manipur. It took fifty years to repeat a similar phenomenon.

2. In October 2002, eighty-two people accepted Christ and were baptized in my crusade in Daithaolong village, Khoupum Valley, one of the most central villages of the Rongmei tribe. An Adventist church was raised in this unentered area. The secret to the success of this crusade was the full participation and involvement of lay men and women in the crusade. The first mass conversion was entirely carried out by laymen, while the second was assisted by a mission worker.

Since its inception, the Adventist church in Manipur has experienced only two mass conversions. Had the Adventist church been engaging lay men and women in church planting, its history of mass conversions and its membership growth rate could potentially have been different. The Adventist Church in Manipur needs to remember its early history and return to the lay-led model of church planting.

R. S. Lowry, former President, presented the report of the Southern Asia Division during the 1980 General Conference session held April 17-26 in Dallas, Texas. He reported the outstanding progress made by lay people in spreading the gospel in the states of Manipur and Mizoram in Northeast India. He states:

There are numerous indications of the mighty working of the Spirit of the Lord in our midst. An outstanding instance of this is the fact that groups of laymen have organized into bands for the education, employment, and support of lay evangelists. Two such are Daniel's Band of the Mizo Hill area and Paul's Band of the Manipur region. Numerous lay evangelists have been fully supported by these regularly organized groups and have thus been able to spend their full time as preachers of the Word. In consequence of their ministry hundreds have been won to the truth. In the same northeast frontier region of India, the latest development along these lines is the formation of a women's organization for the training and support of lady evangelists who plan to do a similar work among the women folk of this region. (1980, p. 32).

Lowry testified that the involvement of lay people in God's ministry is crucial to the fulfillment of the gospel mandate. Lay ministry served as the backbone of outreach

activities at the inception of the Adventist work in Manipur.

Couch (1999) points out that the great commission given in the Gospels (Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:44-49) is given to the church. Paul's letter to the Corinthians, where he talks of diverse spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12) given to the church by the same Spirit, can be considered as one good example of every believer's joining hands in advancing the gospel ministry based on the gifts he or she receives from the Holy Spirit. The potential each church member possesses to do gospel ministry through the gifts of the Holy Spirit can apparently lose its significance when the church began to become institutionalized.

If the Manipur Section of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is going to succeed in extending the Adventist message to Hindus, Muslims, and other unreached tribal communities, the church should return to the biblical foundation of lay-driven ministry. Church leadership and ministers should not guard the ministry but train and equip the laity and work with them in sharing the gospel. A team effort becomes necessary to have a successful ministry. The church should empower the laity and release them into the world to employ the spiritual gifts God has placed within them.

Christ's missionary mandate is accompanied by divine power and the means to carry out the mandate. God-fearing leaders who believe in advancing the Lord's cause by involving all the believers in gospel work can change the status quo in the Seventh-day Adventist church in Manipur.

Recommendations

Recommendations for the Manipur Section

Adventism began in the hill districts of Manipur. The Adventist churches are

largely located in rural areas. These rural churches grow much faster than city churches. The reason for this is the active involvement of laypeople in outreach activities. Out of ninety-two churches and companies (Figure 4), there are only five churches and two companies in Imphal, the capital city of Manipur, where almost the whole population of the state is concentrated. This unequal distribution of Adventist churches and companies between urban and rural areas (Figure 8) indicates that more focus is needed in the cities.

Figure 8. Distributions of Adventist churches and companies

The limited presence of Adventists in the city and suburban areas poses a serious drawback for urban outreach and evangelism. This is one of the important mission challenges for the Adventist Church in Manipur today. Unless a vibrant, lay-led movement is launched to evangelize the cities, the existing five city church workers will

not be able to minister to millions of inhabitants in the cities of Manipur.

I would recommend that Manipur Section train, equip, and mobilize the laity to evangelize the cities in Manipur. The churches must be spread out and capture the urban areas by engaging lay members in evangelism within the cities. Perhaps, lay men and women should be encouraged to take initiative in gospel activities.

The primary goal of the church is to fulfill the gospel commission. A short term, attainable objective to reach this goal would be for each church member to bring at least one soul to Christ each year. This will strengthen their faith in God and, if believers diligently pursue this course, church membership could even be doubled within five years.

A second, equally important objective is to shape new believers into disciples that can carry on a chain reaction of ministry. Each new believer will not be idle but will, in turn, create a new disciple who will create more disciples. I would highly recommend the Manipur Section to give opportunity for members to express their gifts and talents by engaging them in gospel activities. This can enhance the spiritual growth of the church members. They will remain active in the faith as they take part in fulfilling the gospel commission. Thus, they will potentially be less likely to fall away from the truth.

Believers in general are quite willing to be involved in evangelism. Most of the members actively participate in church programs such as Sabbath school, prayer meetings, and other group activities. Young people take active part in social work and other welfare activities for the community. Lay ministries like prison ministries, hospital visitation, and the giving of alms for the poorest of the poor are common among church members.

In addition, lay organizations like Lay Missionary Band (LMB), Chonmiyar,

Dingan, and Tengbanglup (Regional Women Societies), Adventist Youth Societies, and other village-based women's groups sponsor lay evangelists and help the churches in evangelism. They provide evangelistic tools such as Bibles, pens and notebooks, along with funds for evangelism. These lay organizations are not only active participants in outreach activities, they also donate food, clothes, and basic needs for the sick and needy.

While these lay organizations are venturing into mission, the Manipur Section faces the potential danger of focusing more on self-preservation than on mission. I have observed that little or no recognition is given to the contributions made by these lay organizations. I would strongly recommend that the Manipur Section design a support system that creatively recognizes and supports the vision and mission of the lay people. It should foster teaching and training the laity for successful ministry.

I have witnessed that when lay people get a taste of leading people to Jesus they want more and more. The intensity with which some lay members embrace evangelism is amazing. However, lay people often lack receiving appreciation and recognition for their efforts. Most of the time, there is a poor coordination between paid workers and lay leaders. Consequently, lay leaders have lost their zeal for evangelism and often leave the precious work of soul winning to salaried workers. These issues hamper the gospel work in Manipur. The Manipur Section should recognize the efforts of the laity and implement a lay-driven ministry in the local churches.

In most cases, potential lay leaders and church members lack training. Untrained lay people with their passion for the Lord and with good intentions often pursue a course that creates poor interdenominational relationships between the Adventist church and other faiths. I would recommend the local Section to conduct lay leadership training on a

regular basis and educate the believers, and then release them to present the gospel in the spirit of Christ.

Recommendations for Local Churches

One major weakness of the Adventist believers is their inability to tolerate the lifestyle and teachings of other denominational groups. In their zeal for the Lord, they often create a big barrier with other Christians. This makes outreach activities difficult. The wall of prejudices and intolerance should be broken down. Special training programs for workers and laymen are needed so that they will present Christ as He is, the Savior of the world, and not as a Seventh-day Adventist Christ. My recommendation to the church is to follow the Apostle Peter's advice in preaching the gospel: "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. *But do this with gentleness and respect*" (1 Peter 3:15, NIV, italics added). It is my earnest belief that God desires that His church reflect the love, intimacy, and gentleness of Christ in representing Him to the world.

Pastoral observation suggests that many of the Adventist believers are undiplomatic in outreach activities. Occasionally, they come across as judgmental and blunt in presenting the truth. They strongly emphasize Sabbath keeping and dietary rules (clean and unclean meat) and often ignore the grace aspects of the gospel. Some even proclaimed that those who do not keep the Sabbath and abstain from unclean meat will not get to heaven. At times, in their zeal and ignorance, church members do more harm than good in presenting the gospel to non-Adventists. Illiteracy and lack of proper training seem to be the main cause of their weaknesses. I would recommend that Adventist churches start adult literacy programs in the church in each region and educate

the illiterate members to read the Bible and present the gospel in the spirit of Christ.

I would also recommend that the church be diligent in studying the word of God. The need to take the time for personal preparation to preach the gospel cannot be overstated. The necessity of one's personal prayer life and diligent study of the Scriptures is crucial to successful evangelism. One aspect of the believers' preparation should include a thorough reading of the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy books, and materials on evangelism. Then, only, will the church members be prepared to preach the word "in season and out of season" (2 Tim 4:2).

Recommendations for Further Research

I have endeavored to maintain a focus on engaging lay people in ministry to fulfill the gospel mandate. The reason for the existence of the church, God's chosen people, is to evangelize the whole world and prepare people for the kingdom of God. This crucial task of making kingdom members cannot be accomplished by clergy or paid workers alone. Lay men and women should be fully engaged in this ministry. I would recommend further research in this area to refine and articulate a process where laity and clergy can join hands and pursue a common goal of reaching the unreached people based on the priesthood of all believers.

The Adventist Church in Manipur faces some issues in evangelizing the Hindus, non-Christians, and other denominational groups. I would recommend further research in the following areas:

1. I have observed that one real weakness the Adventist churches face is their relative inability to retain Hindu converts. Conversion is easy for Hindus, but their problem is remaining faithful to God and to their new-found faith. There is no one reason

as to why they so often leave the church. “Dualism” or syncretism seems to be the main problem with them. A prayerful case study may be the starting point in arriving at a solution to this problem.

2. I also see opportunities to improve the Adventist work among other non-Christians who often seem ‘gospel-hardened’. They may be more receptive to the gospel if Adventists would befriend them and try to understand their beliefs and worldviews. There are many similarities in their rituals and sacrificial systems with that of the Old Testament. If the Adventist Church missiologically formulates redemptive analogies based on the sacrifice made by Jesus with that of their (non-Christians) sacrificial rites and rituals, we might be able to reach them better and win their hearts for Jesus.

3. The winning influence of the Catholic and the Baptist churches is a threat to Adventist growth. Catholics do not believe in conducting evangelistic meetings. However, they convert villages through their deeds of kindness, the establishment of premier institutions and hospitals, orphanages, and the building of eye-catching cathedrals. The Baptist churches evangelize Manipur in a different way. They bring in their famous preachers from foreign fields and conduct mega-crusades. They claim that these foreign preachers are healers and miracle workers. People from all walks of life, especially Hindus, flock in and are swayed. In order to keep the converts in their faith, the foreign preachers donate large amounts of money and build theological schools and clinics. They also sponsor many students who graduate and are sent out to different regions in Manipur as evangelists. Today, the Catholic and Baptist churches are the fastest growing churches in Manipur.

The Adventists will not be able to compete with Catholic and Baptist churches in

wealth, influence, and in humanitarian services. We may have the truth, but we are not well equipped to share it. I think one good research proposal would be to study this area more and seek knowledge from God that He will empower the Adventist church to share His words in a mighty way.

The Adventist church in Manipur is relatively slow in church planting activities because of financial constraints. However, I believe that if the Adventist church makes church planting its priority, God will surely enrich and empower the church to fulfill the Gospel Commission. White (1908) is right in stating that “the church of Christ is God’s appointed agency for the salvation of men. Its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. And the obligation rests upon all Christians” (p. 81). The Adventists should be awake to duty and proclaim the gospel in unentered regions. They must believe that God shall “supply all [their] need according to His riches” and enable them to plant churches that will plant more churches. The Adventist church “can do all things through Christ who strengthens [her]” (Phil 4:19; 13 emphasis supplied).

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